LA Blues

by Oliver Hunt

Trent Corley moved to Chicago a couple of years after college. He'd graduated from UCLAs film department and worked as a PA on a few shoots, then decided he was done with film. It's like it was all surfaces, he told Jess, Boris and Benny- old Kansas City acquaintances he'd run into since his move. I couldn't, like, even watch a movie without seeing the storyboards. Nothing about any of it feels organic or real. Boris said So it's all posing and Trent rolled his eyes, chuckled and said Yeah, the poser-stench in Hollywood is thicker than the smog. Boris said Bet it smells prettier and Trent said You get sick of it like you get sick of anything. That conversation was early the night before, before they got all the way out of it, before Benny said he was done with all the shit they were doing.

Trent, Boris Pike and Jess Morrow all perched on barstools at Ginger Man, heads in hands, elbows on bar, pints of cheap liquid gold half-heartedly drunk before them. All of them woozy and bag-eyed. They'd all puked at least once earlier, and none of their stomachs had completely calmed yet. On the TV hanging over the bar, the G8/NATO standoff between police and protesters outside of McCormick Place played out in real time. It looked like small waves of people occasionally bumping up against a bank of cops in riot gear. The three sporadically looked up at the TV, but none commented on it.

Boris groaned and said Last night reminded me of Bell House and Jess said Yeah, well, with a few real notable exceptions. Both chuckled weakly and Trent- not in the joke, not really- just looked at the TV. Bell House had come up before and whenever Trent asked about it Boris, Benny or Jess would all looked at each other. One would say Yeah, well, dude, kind of a long story. Then somebody else would interject Kind of a lot of long stories. Then somebody else would say And they're not really that interesting, after awhile. Somebody else, usually Jess, might slyly hint You're really better off

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not knowing. They'd all laugh, sure, but Trent noticed the laughter was never all the way comfortable. There was something off in it, something forced. It may account for Benny's behavior the night before, but Trent knew he'd never really learn the whole story and didn't really feel like pushing for it. He wasn't there, it didn't involve him, and so he wasn't gonna waste a lot of thought on it.

Outside it was warm, overcast and dusty. The Cubs had just played their home crosstown stand. They lost, of course, and it was a Sunday, so the usual gaggle of drunken sports fans hobbling around Wrigleyville in the late afternoon was minimal. Boris ambled over to the jukebox and dialed in We Will Fall by the Stooges. The opening drone and druidic chant of Og gi ran ja/ ran ja ja ran wafted smokily through the bar and Jess and Trent nodded in approval. The three drank quietly, their thoughts swirling in their own heads. They listened to the Stooges' closing dirge and listened to noises outside of it- the clinking of glasses and crack of pool balls inside of the bar, cars motoring by and people talking and arguing outside of it, more sounds and more noises further and further out. The overhead TV was muted but they were all pretty sure they could hear what was going on, just because they'd heard so much like it before. They were all fine not talking, in shutting up and listening. They each separately knew- on their own terms and in their own words- that talk was noise but that noise was language. Everyone was on their own in sifting and parsing out what meant anything. So the Stooges droned and the men at the bar drank and thought their thoughts. They were quiet and the mood was dark and somber, but none of them would've called it a bad time.