

The Ex-Boyfriend Checks in on Saturday Night by Cell Phone

by Rusty Barnes

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Remind me never to call you
again after you get home late,
for the familiar fear of the deadbolt noise,
the shifty creak of your linoleum floor,
the way you throw your jacket over
the sofa and slide from your shoes
like a tap dancer long and slow,
the way you rattle the bowl
with beer-piss knowing that I'll crawl
between your ankles anyway,
part your legs and lips like the leaves
of an old familiar book whose margins
I've creased with my fingers and closed
with the certain knowledge I'd open it soon
and feel my way through the details
by heart. It's not genteel; it's what I know.
Baby, I'd eat your words raw.

I don't like those noises in the hum of your line.
Here I am hawk-eared to my cell,
finger stuck in my off ear waiting
to hear you answer and nothing
picks up but my tension, the hillbilly
band in the background twanging
into their next set. There are twenty women,

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open books, I don't want to talk
with here and eighteen men with cutthroat
late-night hearts and cash to spare.
Me with a dollar or two or my own
cold need worth nothing but gas money,
maybe a pat on the ass. While you're banging
heels on his ass I can leave with women
I don't want or go home to drink
another beer in front of the TV.

That choice is easy. Susana's alone
at the bar skinny-legged in her jeans
and long hair loose. While her cunt
warms beneath me I'll write a new chapter
in her lovely body but I know me.
In the morning I'll close the book.
Forget every word. Yeah.
Remind me to leave a message
next time. I'll say please baby-pick it up.

