

Crack

by S.H. Gall

It's the kind of neighborhood where the bar above the hot dog stand functions as a drug warehouse. Lowest prices, biggest selection, friendliest — highest — associates. I live here, a block over in the midst of sushi joints and frat boys, but I live here. I feel responsible for really understanding my surroundings. I like to drink. I like knowing there are cheap hot dogs downstairs for when the bar closes. I need to experience a new drug.

Walking up the steps to this bar is like walking into a *den of sin*. You might not find opium, but heroin is there; you might not find the mellow buzz of a dime bag of weed, but you'll find bags of crack like dollar bills, scattered on the bar, on the tables. And outside is an informal jitney stand — a series of black sedans illegally parked and ready to drive to the ghetto for a fix.

I didn't really enjoy smoking the rock, but I did learn some interesting facts. Many, if not most, of the black crack dealer population is on the down low. They have girls, kids, and have a lot of sex with other black men. The pure gay black men get nothing but respect. "He never got a bitch pregnant, he knows what he needs, man, Rico is gay and happy." I put the pipe to my lips and suck, the bus comes, we get to my condo, suck the pipe some more. Then I'm sucking something much, much bigger. It takes less than a minute to direct the huge load of semen out of my mouth and into a black wad of pubes. When he leaves I'm minus my Creed cologne and an electric razor. But I go to bed fulfilled. In the most craven way.

There is value in knowing what can't control you, of course. By can't, I mean, it can have no more than one night's domination. Waking up in the morning, you take your psych meds, an aspirin maybe, many vitamins. I did this a handful of times and don't regret it at all. In grad school I did a lot more powder cocaine than I ever

did the crack version, but I didn't ever need that either. These stimulants offered a very short term rush. They improved different experiences — crack for sex and getting robbed, cocaine for a superhuman ability to socialize with everyone at parties. Who on earth wants to wake up and become a socialite Lothario at 6:30 AM?

I stuck with the vodka. I let it kill me, turn me, ruin me, and finally humanize me. Full circle, you could say, but I don't ever aspire to achieve anything but a partial disconnect.

