

Bleeders

She can't believe he doesn't want to celebrate her birthday.

Closer to home, I've been bleeding.

Every time I brush my teeth or shave it's a bloodbath.

She and he are they to me. Them. A man and a woman walked into a bar. Hopeless.

If I were a hemophiliac I'd either be dead or God knows what is the bottom line. By that same logic I've often said if I were an Eskimo I'd kill myself, so where that leaves you I don't know. Although I'm not sure if that is in fact the same logic.

She has black hair and a gold wristwatch. He is wearing red suspenders. Near as I can tell neither of them is bleeding.

My fingernails when I clip them don't bleed. Removing thumb-tacks has on occasion caused bleeding beneath the fingernail.

They are not talking loudly but loud enough for me to overhear. Apparently she is upset over his not wanting to celebrate her birthday. Why I am listening to this is because there's nothing else. Just them and the bleeding. The bar is empty. She is drinking an apricot sour, he's having a gin and tonic and it's tequila shooters for me.

A man and a woman and a pint of spilling blood walk into a bar.

One of the most painful is the biting of one's tongue.

Other than that it's my appalling lack of a sex drive. It probably has something to do with the bleeding. The blood that should be flowing to the important areas has been tragically re-routed. Perhaps I should grow a beard. Not brushing my teeth is not a viable option.

I come from a long line of people with bad gums.

I am in this bar drinking and for the time being not bleeding. I've just come from the library. There I bled.

Doing research on blood and bleeding. I have yet to pass out, which I'm sure is next. I've been lightheaded. I drink a lot of orange juice to replenish blood sugar.

Some boxers are known as bleeders. They'll bleed around the eyes mostly, or from the nose. If I were a boxer, I'd rather be an Eskimo.

She and he are boxing. She is winning.

I hear him say, "You're being ridiculous." She says, "I just don't see

the point anymore.” She is strumming her nails against the glass.

I should want to have sex with her.

They order two more. I think about sending over the next round on me. This one has distance written all over it.

The three of us are in this together.

I try not to look at them. His back is to me and she is more or less facing me. From behind he looks old. At some point stamina will become an issue.

She looks like someone I could lose sleep over, lose money over, bleed over.

He says, “What is wrong with you?”

She says, “You are wrong with me.”

Now it’s vodka martinis. Ordinarily I don’t mix drinks.

She presents her arguments in a straightforward, almost methodical manner. He is scrambling. What he needs is for her to drop her hands, stick her chin out, something.

They are both oblivious to my involvement.

I am rooting for her, but I also want it to be competitive.

She says, “That isn’t even the point.”

He says, “Maybe it’s all pointless.”

I do incur nosebleeds from time to time. Often it is the right nostril, which in boxing parlance means trouble but not as much trouble as a cut above the eye.

Once he goes down there might be an opening. I could throw my hat into the ring, see what happens.

She takes her jacket off and re-positions herself on the barstool. He runs his fingers through his hair and lets out a breath.

They can’t tell that I’m bleeding to death here.

He staggers past me on his way to the men’s room to regroup.

She dismisses me with one look when she catches me staring at her. She realizes I’ve been in on it from the beginning. That I know the whole story. From one look she knows I’m a bleeder and would be no match for her too.

I tell her I can’t believe it either.

He comes back for more.

She lets him have it.

This work originally appeared in *Willow Springs*, and is protected by U.S. and international copyright laws. You may not reproduce this content without written permission from the author. © 2005 Willow Springs ISSN 0739-1277