

When the Wall Came Down

The night the Berlin Wall came down
the bars on Haight Street filled up
with a mix of all of the neighborhood idiots:
wall-to-wall goatees eyebrow rings
black ink tats
hipsters punks goths
frat boys who smoked pot and thought Primus was rad
This crew of Belgian ravers from the hostel upstairs...

Over the jukebox
blasting Public Enemy and Jane's Addiction
I competed for the attention of a dreadlocked girl
against the best moves
of a Jaeger-shot dude
wearing a Red Hot Chili Peppers T-shirt.

One guy in the bar
wasn't having any fun.
In front of him was a beer and a shot.
He didn't touch the beer,
but did one shot after another.

Some dude who was with the Chili Peppers guy
wanted him to join the party.
"Dude, drink up, brah,
the arms race is fucking over."

That got a laugh out of the guy.

*Arms race?
What the fuck do you know about arms?*

"Chill out dude, let's do a shot."

*Chill out?
It was arms day
at the morgue today.
You fuckers have no idea.
Every time they amputate some junky's arm,
they're supposed to keep it up to 30 days to be claimed,
so you can have it buried if you want.
But the junkies never claim them.
They literally pile up in there every month
until they're cremated.
Well the fucker who had the job before me
hadn't kept up with it.
So for eight hours today
I did nothing
but throw arms into the furnace,
but I didn't get to them all.
Guess what I get to do at work tomorrow?*

I pulled the dreadlocked girl outside with me.

She was Dutch
or Swedish
or something,
I couldn't tell,
couldn't remember,
didn't care.
She wanted me to light her cigarette
but we were both
so drunk and weaving
that it wasn't going to work,
so I handed her my lighter.
I told her I would walk her home.
Right then this guy showed up.
He had tribal tats running
from under his short sleeves
down to his wrists.

Where the fuck did you go? He yelled.
I'm right here, asshole, she said back.
You better have my jacket, he warned.

She threw my Zippo at him,
yelled something in another language
and ran back into the bar.
He followed after.

I looked for the lighter
but somehow,
it was gone.