

How We Talk

Greta Cunningham

I wonder why he's called "*The Drifter*"
If it is his eyes,
drifting down the page
Looking at the cup of coffee on the table
Or the short cropped nails,
Perched on the corner of his eggshell white frame.
Maybe he's the bird
Maybe he's wondering what dirt is under those nails
Tiptoeing along the plot of paper where he grows
I'd like to know where the dirt under his are from
Where he's been
What he's done
I keep my nails there,
Poised,
Debating what I want to say next,
I'm not sure if I've gotten to know him well enough,
"*The Drifter*,"
I wonder why his collar is twisted
Like the corners of a kite in March,
And what's making him smile.
Is there something in his hands,
Out of my site?
Crossed in his lap,
Shoulders curving like a mountain,
Is there something swimming in a pool at its base?
But,
I think it's time
To say goodbye to "The Drifter,"
And let him *drift* away.
I flip through pages like writers erase words,
Not quiet right
Until I find him,
The man in "Grape Wine,"
Not cherry or strawberry.

The taste on his lips is not sweet,
It does not speak of summer
Or the lyrics of folk song
On the alternative radio's
"Acoustic Morning" Sundays,
It tastes of stale breath
And the sent that lingers in cellars,
I wonder what grape wine did to him.
His eyes are red and watery,
Like strawberries picked too early in the spring
They want to weep
Like strawberries what to bleed sugar,
But his tears are not sweet enough
To caress the calico face in his portrait.
Whatever makes his eye lids fall
Like oak leaves in autumn,
Raised his under eyes to be beds for his weary peepers,
Wasn't worth the martyrdom of his ocean,
But somehow I feel for this man,
Buried under his
Title
Grape wine,
And I want to share him.
Maybe my dad will know why he is crying,
And why his tears don't reach his cheeks
But I want to share him
Because that's how we talk,
Through the people in this book
Though silent,
They can say so much more
Than the two of us.