

THE WHISKEY

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(HEY, PASS THE SUGAR!!)

By Rory Hughes

Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes... *Rory Hughes', "The Whiskey Sour," is as if Under the Volcano and Burroughs decided to hump each other's legs – the stream of consciousness, the underlying currents of addictions, the loss of control, the desperate need to grasp that control in order to function on the day to day, the knowing knowledge that love is more than likely gone and the unfunctional ability to make the choice between happiness and need, the terror that goes through each and every one of our brains as we decide our choices in life and whether or not we care or do not care about the consequences of our actions.*

All that and a drink.

I've woken up and chosen the bottle. Hell, I'm drinking a Yuengling now.

What I think that Hughes' piece does is to show the fractal nature of our choices.

How the heat or the sweat or the memory of a woman can outweigh the simple concept of getting up to do what you're supposed to do – live a normal have-a-job-and-support-your-life kind of lifestyle.

Certainly a hard choice.

Brain fractured, hungover-ness aside, this is a story not only about craft but also of the ability to see humanity created in the thoughts of a binge that make never break. There is power in the structure and craft and, I think (perhaps a character flaw of mine) a poetics in the ability show the disjointedness of the mind. Good work.

Five Stars

Senior Editor CHARLES writes: *'Stream of conscious' is a literary device that has suffered many deaths since James Joyce introduced it with Moll Bloom's soliloquy in his game-*

changing novel Ulysses. Because it can read almost too easily it's a common stylistic choice among emerging (and yeah, emerged) writers. In fact, it presents major challenges and makes serious demands upon the writer's understanding of both language and the heartbeat of the words beneath the lines. The story you are about to read is a textbook example of how to do it right.

Five Stars

QUALITY QUOTABLE (for the love of language...)

...and its buzz was like a masonry drill on his ear canal, sunburnt husk heavy on the infinite horizon of its haunted wings approaching from the alleyway with a store-bought blade for his jugular and just think of the ingredients for the drink, not the drink for the shower or even last night, the mind cocktail, the list of whatever; *50ml whiskey*, socks, towel, corn, infinity,
Aileen Wuornos;

The Whiskey Sour

by Rory Hughes

It was a cocktail day, morning, afternoon, whatever it was, in the mind, rather than in the glass; could have been the hangover, or the shouting outside; or the flashback pillow talk from sweating demons; maybe the people he'd have to talk to, exchange facial expressions with; the cold impression of something sick haunting the window's exterior; or inside, as in on the inside, as in all he had to do was make it to work; baby steps, shower, dress, walk, bus, that's it; he ran the ingredients; for the cocktail in the glass; not the mind; the mind has no ingredients; *50 ml bourbon* is how it started; coffee would make it worse, call in sick, which you've never done, as in, he's never done; you don't drink, he did last night, but that wasn't why he was sick now, just the thought, like the impression of cold fog or something on the exterior of the glass of the drink; fuck work, all he had to do was make it out the door, and keep listing the ingredients for the drink, the cocktail, start again, *50ml bourbon*; a spark of clarity: why choose a cocktail; this being the one thing you're supposed to avoid thinking about; just get to work, not even work, the bus, just get in the shower; *30ml lemon juice*; fuck,

that's right, that's two down, you left too much of a gap though so start again; okay, so, shower, socks, or gin, something clear; or it could have been the flashback, a whole evening of nocturnal sweat flat-pressing his pillow into a soggy husk; something about insects and husks, they have husks or live on husks, or eat on them, eat them, corn husks; that was it, ingredients, corn, shower, gin, socks, flashback, husk, *lemon juice*, the fucking cocktail; *50ml bourbon* and then get to work; he lifted his head from the soggy corn pillow and looked at the fridge; *50ml bourbon*; and then what; a car horn honked outside and his nerves went like popping candy, the husk, no that was a flashback, not the knives, the blade cutting your throat, someone coming from behind and placing a hot hand on your forehead and slicing right into the Adam's apple vinegar corn whiskey gin fuck anything please not that; he turned on the fan and blasted the sweat from his forehead; it was a cocktail day of the corn husk mind, insects slicing sweaty wings through the damp impression of something ill; he went through the hateful minutiae of the foreseeable day, the greetings, the questions, colleagues, commuters, chills, shakes, responsibility, money, security, love, and she would probably leave him soon enough, given how fucked up he was, he couldn't even get up to make a cocktail but he saw her on the beach in the frilly bikini, salt-drenched locks heavy on her sunburnt shoulders and irises that from his perspective were the same size as the sun weighing down its infinites on the window or insect husks or fucking lemon or whatever just take a shower, how many people would be at work, how many people would be on the train, are there any knives in the kitchen, for the lemons; Aileen Wuornos, that's who she looked like, a beautiful version of Aileen Wuornos, with her salt-drenched hair all pushed back into the horizon infinitely or; fuck the bus, we are focused solely on the shower now; he broke down the trip into its ingredients: get out of bed, towel, shower, cup of tea, wait no caffeine, and the sugar; *sugar syrup*; that was the next ingredient; what if I had a drink in the shower, as in, what if he had a drink in the shower when he eventually got there; but of course he'd

stopped drinking before work; a fly buzzed in through the damp something of the window and its buzz was like a masonry drill on his ear canal, sunburnt husk heavy on the infinite horizon of its haunted wings approaching from the alleyway with a store-bought blade for his jugular and just think of the ingredients for the drink, not the drink for the shower or even last night, the mind cocktail, the list of whatever; *50ml whiskey*, socks, towel, corn, infinity, Aileen Wuornos; maybe we should just have a drink; and all he had to do was get to the shower; or fuck the shower, just get to the towel; everything else can come later, work, life, career, money, death, she will leave you, you are fucked, you can't even make a simple drink; knives, corn, gin, husks, damp bread of soggy pillow, towel, you can't say towel, it's racist, but you're not even white? what does that matter, plus you're white enough, *egg whites!*; he was so close to the towel you could feel it; he watched the masonry drill fly husks around infinity and all he had to do was get the whole list done and he could make a run for the towel; there was only one other ingredient; start again: *50ml whiskey*; not that I can, as in could drink before work, because they'll know and all I or he needed was one more ingredient, you were sure you'd listed the rest, and then you could shower or get the bus or die on a beach and the fly buzzed masonry around the damp sickness haunting this vision of just one more fucking ingredient to get to work or just shower or perish or let it burn like the hot hand on his forehead as in my husk or the sound of sickness haunting the sunburnt goddess with salt-soaked hair pulling a blade from her horizon and splitting the bitter throat of the earth.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The first unusual thing about The Whiskey Sour is that it was written without the assistance of its namesake or any such drink. The second unusual thing is that the writing process itself was quick and seamless. I suspect there is no correlation here and therefore any potential relationship between the two requires no further deliberation.*

AUTHOR BIO: I work with underground music magazine Astral Noize, reviewing albums, conducting interviews and writing features. I have (some upcoming) short stories published through presses/zines such as Angel Rust, Alien Buddha and Literally Stories. I self-published a short

fiction/poetry collection, *Scape: Deselected Works 2013-15* in 2021, and am at this time being considered by a handful of presses for my debut novel, *Theseus 34*.