

Shore Duty; The Kid

By Nathan Porceng

*Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes... Here are two wonderful case studies from Nathan Porceng's 'Practical Guide to Cynical Living.' Why would anyone trouble to mince words when they could compose something not unlike **Shore Duty**? A most novel way of nulling and muffling a noisy neighbor (unfortunately one would have to be more musical than I). For me, it circles around the tight little tercet: "She moans as if / she's proving a / point," just before it exits out of orbit. The second, **The Kid**, is a very poignant slant on a life in the Service; it is a most genuinely touching account in spite of the scoffs surrounding the sneers. "He'll put a ring / on the first hand / that touches his / cock..." Who doesn't love sailor talk? (Spacing and font size are poet's own.)*

Shore Duty

3 AM on the swing shift,
alone in my apartment
while my neighbor
fucks loudly.

Happens every night
same time
on this rotation.

I never hear
her partner,
but no one

masturbates
that intensely.

She moans as if
she's proving a
point.

I can't tell
if it's for
her partner
or her own
sake.

Tired,
a bit bitter,
and watching
television,
I grow sick
of her exorbitant
ecstasy.

In lieu of a noise complaint,
I finger my guitar
and sing a few bars.

"SOOOOO SALLY CAN WAAAAIIIIIT!!!!!"

The moaning stops.

I fall asleep
satisfied.

The Kid

Showed up today.

Midwestern, like

so many others,

he speaks

ambling from

word to word.

He's anxious.

He's excited.

He's never seen the ocean.

His uniform is neatly pressed.

He still believes the chiefs.

He still respects officers.

He has plans,

but so do we.

He'll bust his ass.

He'll qualify early.

He'll make third

then second class.

He'll put a ring

on the first hand

that touches his

cock. They'll

have two

good years,
then she'll break him.

He'll drink.

His work will slip.

He'll fall asleep on watch.

He'll smash up his car.

Third class again,

he'll think of

getting out, but

he can't

let go

of the

familiar.

He'll bounce

boat to boat,

port to port,

until he hits

his twenty.

He'll marry again.

He'll have two kids.

At thirty nine,

he'll be ancient

for a father.

Diesel fumes and

Evan Williams

will have long
deadened his eyes
and withered
his tongue.

Knowing little else,
he'll work at
the shipyard,
building new boats
for new kids to
claim his legacy.

His pension will be
a check he wastes.
American Legion stories,
and Veterans Day
honors at his
grandkids' schools.

He'll be loved
by a few,
and average
in every
respect.

An American flag
will drape his
coffin,
and the back

of his tombstone

will read,

“Here lies a United States Sailor.”

THE POET SPEAKS... *Poetry is deceptively honest. It's desperate. It's essential. It's the final uncorrupted art form. It's personal and universal. I love playing in bar bands. Oftentimes the best part isn't even performing. It's listening to the other acts. No one does it for the money, because there isn't any. None of us are trying to get famous. We don't have the looks for it. We play only to be heard, to connect. Picking up Hughes, Bukowski, Eliot or Rich, I sense the same desire. Poets write because they need to. They need to express themselves, to share their experiences, even if no one is listening. I got into poetry in earnest while stationed aboard a submarine. I had no guitar to play or venue to attend. All I had was a notebook and a chewed-up pen, so I wrote.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: Nathan Porceng is a Washington based poet, songwriter, and naval officer. As part of the band Bridge Out, he won first place at the 2014 Northeastern Songwriter Festival in Brookfield, CT. He enjoys the music of Joe Strummer and the words of Charles Bukowski.