

Old Friend

By Brian Fanelli

Friends say she's unfit to sit near.
They tell me she prowls clubs,
buys shots for young men,
sinks her nails into their hips and backs
until their skin purples and sores.

They tell me she disguises her age,
covers wrinkles with concealer,
reddens her hair on weeknights,
practices pick-up lines in public bathrooms.

When friends ask what she is to me,
I shrug, say a good friend,
someone I talk to until 2 a.m.
about Keats' rhythms or the war in Iraq.

When I ask them if they've ever seen her
dab foundation to cover up lines,
or buy drinks for young guys at bars,
they shove their hands in their pockets,
mumble about rumors and misunderstands.

Then I smirk when she walks in—
black cocktail dress, red heels that click clack
to a bar stool she steals from friends
to sit near me all night.

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