

CLOSING TIME

JOHN WESTBROOK

I should like nothing more,
Coming in from the rain
To the tired café at the end
Of the street of my life,
Than to open the door
To the roar of mirth warm
In tall rafters, to the laughter
Of hearth-light vamping
A sprightly reel on the heels
Of inconsequence, floating
Like smoke on the wind
Of my imminent leaving;
Nothing more than to pick
Up my piece of the rhythm
And follow the line, holding
Forth my cup fluent with
Wine and the chorus of
Evening, with the nape of
My neck in the crooks of
Beneficent elbows leading
Me on to the mottling whirl
Of the floor through which
Your face from the depths
Draws itself into focus;
Nothing more than to move
And be moved as I sift
Through the crowd towards
The back of the room to
Greet and entreat and sit
Next to you in that low-lit,

Quiet place—our almost-
Impossibly—effortless human
Embrace the thrill of my life—
Till the night like the poem
Of the space between our lips
Comes smiling to a close.

THE LOW-LYING COUNTRIES OF DRAGONS

For ten years running
You've been beating me
To Scotland, but I'll take
The high road any day over
Graying at the temples like
Hera in eternal smolder.

Upon a time, my jawline
Turned heads on a dime,
I ate my heart out
Of Swarovski bowls
Quite unlike Ugolino,
And rusty nails didn't bore me.

I thought mercy would come.
I thought that above
(If there were one)
The saved wouldn't
So much be singing
As saved by song.

Maybe you'll find
In the low-lying
Countries of dragons
Your damsel's hopeful