

Nighthawk Postcards (from Easy Street)

Tom Waits

there's a blur drizzle down the plateglass
as a neon swizzle stick stirrin up the sultry night air
and a yellow biscuit of a buttery cue ball moon
rollin' maverick across an obsidian sky
as the busses go groanin' and wheezin',
down on the corner I'm freezin';
on a restless boulevard at a midnight road
I'm across town from EASY STREET
with the tight knots of moviegoers and out of towners
on the stroll
and the buildings towering high above
lit like dominoes or black dice
all the used car salesmen dressed up in
Purina Checkerboard slacks
and Foster Grant wrap-around,
pacing in front of EARL SCHLEIB
\$39.95 merchandise
like barkers at a shootin' gallery
they throw out kind of a Texas Guinan routine
"Hello sucker, we like your money
just as well as anybody else's here"
or they give you the P.T. Barnum bit
"There's a sucker born every minute
you just happened to be comin' along at the right time"
come over here now
you know... all the harlequin sailors are on the stroll
in a search of "LIKE NEW," "NEW PAINT,"
decent factory air and AM-FM dreams
and the piss yellow gypsy cabs
stacked up in the taxi zones waitin' like
pinball machines
to be ticking off a joy ride to a magical place
waitin' in line like "truckers welcome" diners
with dirt lots full of
Peterbilts, Kenworths, Jimmy's and the like, and
they're hiballin' with bankrupt brakes, over driven
under paid, over fed, a day late and a dollar short
but Christ I got my lips around a bottle and
my foot on the throttle and I'm standin' on the corner

standin' on the corner like a "just in town"
jasper, on a street corner with a gasper lookin'
' for some kind of Cheshire billboard grin
stroking a goateed chin, and using parking meters
as walking sticks on the inebriated stroll
with my eyelids propped open at half mast
but you know... over at Chubb's Pool Hall and Snooker
it was a nickle after two, yea it was a nickle after two

and in the cobalt steel blue dream smoke, it
was the radio that groaned out the hit parade
and the chalk squeaked, the floorboards creaked
and an Olympia sign winked through a torn yellow
shade, old Jack Chance himself leanin' up against
a Wurlitzer and eyeballin' out a 5 ball combination shot
impossible you say? ...hard to believe?, perhaps
out of the realm of possibility? naaaa
he be stretchin' out long tawny fingers out across a
cool green felt with a provocative golden gate
and a full table railshot that's no sweat and I leaned
up against my bannister and wandered over to the
Wurlitzer and I punched A-2 I was lookin' for
something like Wine, Wine, Wine by the Night Caps
starring Chuck E. Weiss or High Blood Pressure
by George (cryin' in the streets) Perkins - no dice
"that's life," that's what all the people say ridin' high
in April, seriously shot down in May, but I know I'm
gonna change that tune when I'm standing underneath
a buttery moon that's all melted off to one side
It was just about that time that the sun
came crawlin' yellow out of a manhole
at the foot of 23rd Street
and a dracula moon in a black disguise
was making its way back to its
pre-paid room at the St. Moritz Hotel (scat)
and the El train came tumbling across the trestles and it sounded
like the ghost of Gene Krupa
with an overhead cam and glasspacks
and the whispering brushes of wet radials
on a wet pavement and there's a
traffic jam session on Belmont tonight
and the rhapsody of the pending
evening, I leaned up against
my bannister and I've been looking
for some kind of an emotional

investment with romantic dividends
kind of a physical negotiation
is underway
as I attempt to consolidate all my
missed weekly payments, into
one-low-monthly payment
through the nose
with romantic residuals and leg akimbo
but the chances are more than likely I'll probably
be held over for another smashed weekend

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