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Faces

Andrew Smith

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Faces

The little bar in the little town in Dearborn County was gray and bleak and strangely familiar. The doctor knew that he hadn't been here before. Had never been to Cincinnati and had certainly never traveled through Southern Indiana on I-74. But he still felt something about that bar, as if it was something from a dream. He was familiar with its qualities, as if they shared something unspoken.

He didn't like to travel. Preferred his comfortable hospital in Chicago. But as much as he hated driving, he hated his new apartment more. It's not like he had anything better to do anyway. The kids were gone, back to their mother's, and watching TV and playing golf didn't really cut it anymore. So he would spend that gloomy weekend making an expensive trip (expensive for the hospital, anyway) to Anderson Mercy in Cincinnati. Rhinoplasties were easy now; technology had a way of doing that in the medical field. He thought that not every innovation was convenient. Plastic surgery was practically child's play now, just let the computer think for you and do what it says.

There were very few people in the bar late that night. It was windy and snowy outside. He sat down and noticed the female bartender behind the counter, a pretty young lady with very tanned arms. When she turned to him, he noticed that her face was the same dark tint. He ordered a Scotch whisky and sat there with it in his hand, thinking about the woman who had looked like that, tanned and proportioned. She once came to a job straight from the tanning salon, and when he asked her about it, she laughed and said *Tanning salons can get you laid*. He said, How do you know? She just looked at him and gave a sultry smile. What happened next was the answer. He was the answer, and people like him were the answer.

His wife had been tanned too, before the affair, before the divorce, before the crisis of wealth that couldn't solve anything. Before. Now she was older and gone, and the gray hairs of his head testified to the struggle of his comfortable life.

The bartender asked about his drink. "It's okay," he shrugged, though he hadn't taken a drink. "But nothing's really as good as it seems."