

The Party's Over

Maybe it's time to dry out...again

Hi, my name is Stephen, and I'm an alcoholic. Maybe.

Sip, type. Sip sip, type. Repeat.

This is probably the sort of thing that should be written but never published, especially after any reasonable amount of alcohol has been consumed. Or, in this case, is currently being consumed. 'Scuse me while I reach for my Makers on the rocks.

Type. Sip sip, type.

It's another lonely Tuesday night at Red Cap, see, and I'm trying—against all Kylie Minogue-pounding-in-my-temples odds—to sort through this mess of muddy feelings, prompted by a major familial arrival just hours ago. My parents are in town, “visiting,” and I've been anxious-nervous-sick-to-my-stomach just about all day because of it. Cue the vodka!

Hold up, the bearded boy bartender is shaking his butt to a loopy diva-pop remix with these cocksure codependent lyrics: “I've been waitin' up until ya get home/Cuz I can't sleep without ya baby.” He mouths along and tips back another pint glass under the pour spout.

If I was more sober right now I'd find some apt metaphor or interject some florid turn of phrase here, but words sort of escape me, so let's instead circle back, and quickly now, to the topic broached up top: alcoholism.

Yes, it's soon approaching my fourth anniversary of re-entrance into the “wet” world, of return-

ing to active drinking. To put it simply, I began imbibing around age 16, stopped at 20 and started again at 25. I turn 29 in a few months' time.

But a recent trip to Seattle gave me a seismic sober jolt and is causing me to reconsider what dry life might be like. Again.

I was kicking back vodka-sodas a couple of Saturdays ago at the Seattle Eagle (for an “Underbear Party,” no less, thanks) when a short-haired cub-type caught my eye: red T-shirt, goatee, wicked smile. He made a friendly come-to-me gesture; I obliged.

Turns out he'd seen my (don't laugh) Craigslist Seattle posting from that very afternoon, seeking drinking companions for the night, wherein I described myself as “bright, attractive but not an Adonis, comfortable with myself as a man but not hung up on masculinity, etc. etc.” and included a few photos. He recognized the face.

We talked and flirted in that every-sentence-contains-an-obvious-sexual-pun sort of way—we were drinking, there were many men in their underwear parading by (not us, strangely)—and hied ourselves to The Cuff for a dance. I was attracted to his self-assurance, his way with a sentence, his eyes. We did what guys of a certain age have been known to do; next morning I woke up in his West Seattle home.

There, wrapped in each other's hangover-heavy limbs, we lay and talked. He told me about his curious art collection; his mother, who's dying; and quitting his job as a registered nurse because

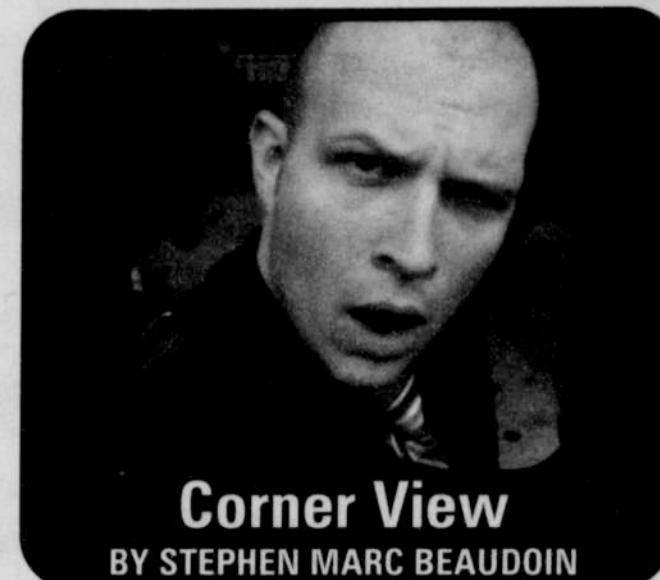
he was abusing prescription drugs on the job. I told him about my fascination with religious kitsch; my mother, who used to attend AA; and the time I blacked out in a Providence bathhouse. We laughed about that.

“I was sober for eight years,” he said to my back. “Really?” I answered to the air. “I was sober for four years.” Long pause.

Cut back to tonight, as the crowd swells and I pack up my laptop and fire off a few rounds of friendly text messaging. A few familiar faces emerge, their neon braceleted wrists gripping five-buck plastic-cupped swill. Chip, a good friend, arrives and saddles up with me—both with vodka-cran in hand—at a tall table on the patio; we scan the crowd.

Just then a tall brunette bumbles over, eyes swimming, and announces himself: “I shouldn't be drinking.” Then he lets out an exasperated long noise that sounds something like this: “uuuuuuuuuuwaaaah.” He puts his hand to his forehead, feigning illness. “You drank before you came out tonight?” I ventured. “Oh absolutely,” he said, and tipped back to his table. Chip and I roll our eyes: What a mess!

But really, I can't be so quick to judge, can I? It was only three weeks ago when, buzzing on Bud, I took a full-fist swing at a friend of a friend outside the Pita Pit. Or there was February, when I told a friend via drunken voicemail that I no longer needed him in my life. And last August?



Corner View

BY STEPHEN MARC BEAUDOIN

A haze of Captain, Jack and Carlo Rossi, much of it unmentionable here.

Maybe I exaggerate: After all, what's a bender now and then? What's the cost or harm? A little money, a few apologies, maybe a blank spot in the memory banks. Back in Boston I had a famous little ritual with a group of gay guy friends: After heading out for the “giddyup Fridays” (read: drunken debauchery) we'd meet up again, whatever it took, for a Saturday “regroup brunch” (read: sins and scones) the following morning. I recall it now as a charming rite, all laughter and mimosas.

Other times I recall these nights less affectionately. Or I catch glimpses of the stumbles-mumbles party boy, the bathroom vomiting suit-and-tie by day, the drink-spilling drama queen, and I wonder how long the party is supposed to last. Then I take a sip. And type. 

Staff Writer STEPHEN MARC BEAUDOIN writes about Portland arts and queer culture at fromeverycorner.blogspot.com. He welcomes feedback at stephen@justout.com.

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