

4-3-218

## The Neighborhood Bar

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### Recommended Citation

Brown, Kristen (218) "The Neighborhood Bar," *The Crambo*: Vol. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/thecrambo/vol1/iss1/11>

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# THE NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

*by Kristen Brown*  
*University of South Carolina*

The neighborhood bar,  
just south of the steel alloy border,  
recedes in the rhythm of the  
familiar songs that only metal can make.  
Some discarded and desolate memory  
clicks and churns into an almost knowable track.  
The regulars know the shakedown song.  
It is one that I so often danced to,  
as you watched from the half-lit corner.  
And if there is a timepiece master,  
Then I will soundly clean his clock.

For you deserve a lovely verse,  
measured slow and in sacrificial time,  
The sway of thirsty hips  
becomes a metronomic mire,  
a refusal of the raucous rupture  
just around the siding's bend.

Despite the stumbles where brambles once had been,  
the regulars remain true to their draughts.  
The weaving of stories and swears.  
And within the freight of memory, I grasp  
for that empty space in a neon night,  
a vacuous vault of steel solitude.  
The sweaty handshake of home.