

An Old Record

The faint stench of cleaner and dirt between the tiles
reflects the monotone palette of the ice cream parlor.

The humming of the freezer is a soundtrack
for the cold cupped between my hands.

While I'm waiting,
waiting

to pay for my cup,
knobby, dirty fingers tap a melody beside me.

The counter recoils at his touch— the roughness of his fingerprints,
But the tune embraces his bones like ancient skin.

Knuckle to the grimy, gray counter: the Creation of Adam—
made modern in the bright, white, lights and stained industrial tabletops.

An old man waiting,
waiting

to pay for his carton.

Tall but slightly bent over,
for a coat lined with baggage is weighing down his frame.

This contemporary yet classical portrait,
framed by the tune emanating from his sun-spotted hands.

He reminds me of my own grandfather—

The way the old man speaks of work and prayer and “Thurs-dee”.

A voice deep and fast as the underside of an ocean wave,
mumbling muffled by water.

Regret tugs at his face— eye bags sagging deep;
a canal carved by a farmer's toil,
yet with eyes as vintage and vibrant as an old record.

Like the records my grandfather gave me.