

Crumbling Stone

By Stanley Kelman Jr.

To the Stone Pony

— where the music lingers.

I saw you there, under the haze of Asbury lights,
streets washed in the faint glow of a city trying to forget itself,
where promises drift on salt air, tangled with cigarette smoke,
where laughter hangs loose, caught between fights and dreams.

The moment I saw you, I wanted you—
you made it feel so easy, like something pulled from the shoreline,
a tide that comes in warm and leaves only cold sand.

And I wonder now,
was it the city or the night,
or something in me needing the comfort of rough edges—
of knowing you'd be gone by morning, like the fog.

But tonight my soul's on fire.
Every streetlight reminds me
of words we threw, sharp as broken glass,
of bruised lips and fingers locked tight
beneath motel sheets that smelled of salt and old regrets.

The things I used to shake off stick now,
clinging like salt to skin,
like the distant roar of waves that never truly leave.

I told you to go, but I miss you still.
You needed someone steady, something sure—
and I was never that.
Just a shadow drifting on Asbury's edge,
watching ships anchor down before they face the storm.

In this city, there's history in every crack and crumbling stone,
every step we took on weathered boardwalks and empty beaches,
tracing ghosts of dreams we once dared speak aloud.

Asbury was dark, frayed at the edges,
a place wrung dry of hope—
but still, we came back.
Because something in the ruin felt like home.

I hope he treats you better,
gives you steadiness,
gives you a name for your hopes
instead of promises pulled out with the tide.

But tonight, beneath this fractured moon, it hurts.
I remember us, side by side on Sandy Hook,
the wind pressing us together as if it knew
we'd break apart like driftwood come dawn.

Sandy Hook, where sand stretches thin,
a final reach of land before the sea swallows it whole.
Where Gunnison's waves crash wild,
and I tried to hold you like a landmark against the tide.

I walk again past the lighthouse's quiet gaze,
where broken walls and wind-whipped windows
still whisper our names.

For a moment, we stood there—
two flames against the city's dark silhouette,
bright, brief, and burning.
Maybe that's all we were meant to be.

The city lives on,
a thousand untold stories wrapped in neon,
in beach fires and empty bottles,
in footprints erased by morning.

And I, drifting through the boardwalk's distant hum,
know I'll return one day—
like the tide, like the ships,
drawn to the place where love burned fast,
where water meets land,
and memory fades to mist.