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# Beer and Pool and the Gravel Voice

by Michael Catherwood

Pink and I sat in Walt's New Frontier Tavern  
drinking pitchers of beer after the Florence  
Days Parade wound down. The bikers  
were doing burnouts on the floor  
of the bar, and the fumes from the tire  
smoke stung our eyes. The matchstick  
bartender threatened to call the police,  
so the bikers roared and backfired  
out the open front door. Fezzes lined  
the bar as Shriners drank martinis  
from the their stools while a one-armed guy  
in a Vietnam Vet cap ran the pool table.

Pink thought he'd challenge him and put  
his quarters up. "Are you next?" the one-armed  
man asked, coming back from the bar;  
his voice scratched with gravel and cigarettes.  
"Yeah," Pink said. "For beers?" "Sure," the pool player  
said. Pink racked the balls while I drank the beer.  
Then I noticed bugs swimming in our pitcher.  
I motioned for Pink to come over. "Jesus,  
what are those?" "Ticks, I think."  
Then the one-armed pool player walked  
over. "Ticks alright. Look up. They drop down  
from the ceiling. He keeps the dog in here  
at night." He laughed, "No charge for meat."  
The tire smoke hovered behind the fezzes.