

## In the Dream of My Father at the Bar on Tatooine

It was my father's favorite Star Wars scene, so I'm not surprised to find him here, drinking and tapping his glass to the cantina band of Bith aliens, dubbed over with clarinet, saxophone, and even a Fender Rhodes piano. (My son says the Bith species has evolved past the need for sleep, and here I am, asleep and listening.) I think, Mos Eisley's not unlike the dives my father played, underage, out in the desert by Pasco, Washington: the red-eyed wolf-men, G.I.s on their Harleys, a bounty hunter now and then, a one-eyed sheriff, and bartenders steady as priests. Not quite that "wretched hive of scum and villainy" Old Ben Kenobi pronounces Mos Eisley, but still an alcoholic's paradise.

Looking down on us, Luke has just said,  
*I'm ready for anything.*  
I see him come in.  
I see him tug  
on the bartender's sleeve.

But I am across the table from my father, in this dream of the movie renamed "A New Hope," a man who died before the prequels, speeding in his red car, drunk and unbuckled. No doubt, he is my father, and he is already dead. (Let me help him lift off his mask; let me hear him breathing.) I have to ask him where he was going that night his car swerved and flipped, but he's not listening, and no one else seems to see his darkness, as he nods at a Cleopatra-girl and orders me a Shirley Temple. Nearby, Luke falls into an argument. I know this part. It's right before Obi-Wan pulls out his light saber and slices off that alien's arm (Ponda Baba, says my son).

"You just watch yourself," someone said.  
*I'll be careful,* Luke answers.  
"You'll be dead."

As my father points out Chewbacca to me – *He looks a lot like my student Steve. Tall and hairy* – someone sets down my drink. With a blue Jedi flash, there's blood on the floor and windshield glass raining on our table. My father's forehead expands, his ribs crack at the music's pause. I don't expect this, the force that brought us to this place, after his life, years later, after I'm ready for bed, the galaxy's violence. I can just make out Han Solo's face: my father's Imperial entanglements, the 7-Up and maraschino cherry of my drink, foreign to everyone there, that red Ford Probe upside-down on the bar.

And I'm yelling, *I don't like you. No, I really don't like you!*  
like someone who's lost more than an arm.