He relaxed as the woman came back into view. She

hadn’t moved, other than to offer a forced smile at him.

He didn’t mean to stare, invading the woman’s privacy,

but he couldn’t look away. Her eyes, beseeching and

beautiful, yet without any spark. Her vulnerability

beyond raw, verging on potent.

The words grief and sorrow flashed at him like

flipped over cue cards from childhood. He reminded

himself of the circumstances. It was a wake after all.

Not everyone got plastered and told ill-humored jokes

to mask emotions. But this was a different kind of grief.

It went beyond that which had emanated from the

employees of Big C’s and others who knew Elroy. The

woman’s sorrow so intense, so forceful, he felt her

profound loneliness. There wasn’t a name or a way to

describe what he witnessed in those big brown eyes of

hers, but it existed in the same way the moon existed

during the day. Her grief radiating from a place no

armor could protect, from deep within, bursting directly

from her soul.

He too experienced this level of pain, not only

today but every day since Elroy left this world. Plenty

of people missed the old mechanic, but until now, he

hadn’t thought anyone ached like he did. Elroy’s life

meant something extraordinary to this woman.

Something which brought her here. To a hole in the

wall bar, in a town so small, businesses shut down for

funerals.