

Hollow Point by Stephen Williams

There must have been ten thousand wretches celebrating some hollow victory in the rain that day. With the busy noise of the herd in front of the liquor store, Danny Sunday considered shoving his pocket pistol down Old Man Marley's throat. With no witnesses and no reason not to, nothing could stop him and no one would care.

Who'd hear the splatter of his guts when the fat ass hit the slab floor?

"That's a dollar and eighty-six cents Danny," Damned Old Marley said.

Danny didn't move. He didn't pull his unloaded pistol from his jacket pocket and didn't make any motion to pay for the box of mints he'd just ordered. What was worse, he couldn't turn his impervious gaze away from Marley's timeless grin.

What the hell did this pudgy bastard have to smile about?

"Anything else for you Danny?" Marley raised one eyebrow to spread a thin coating of inquisitive charm on this godforsaken day.

"Life Savers," Danny spoke softly after an awkward pause.

"So, how's your dad?" Marley said, with a rising tone of voice on the last word of his question. He generated a smile and turned to get the candy for Danny. Then he slowly figured a new total on his ancient mechanical

cash register. The whole time, he leaned on the counter to keep weight off his bad hip. With his free arm he moved his wooden stool, keeping it close enough to use like a walking stick. Danny didn't notice the slight wince Marley made when he stretched to reach the front of the candy display. Likewise, he didn't spot Marley's donut shaped cushion, frayed at the edges but held in place with faded grey duct tape.

Danny paid for the candy and left the liquor store without answering Marley's question. He glanced back and saw Old Man Marley perched on his big shot throne. Danny walked around to the back alley where a rare customer might park and where the older boys smoked. Old Man Marley's fancy Ford Fusion sat alone in the tiny lot.

Somebody in the parade out front must have done something special because the crowd cheered. Their uproar failed to waxen the intensity of Danny's focus. His hand brushed a shaft of his Irish red hair. He hacked up a wad of spit for Marley's windshield and, after letting it fly, turned heavenward to face a growing drizzle and to curse his maker with a whisper. Then he scraped his latch key across the passenger door and threw a hand full of Life Savers at the hood of the car.

"I'll get hollow points," Danny said to the empty driver's seat.

"Next time"

Stephen Williams' work has appeared in issues of *Kestrel*, *Leading Edge*, *The Ottawa Arts Review*, *Foliage Oak*, *Jelly Bucket*, *Windmills*, *Plainsongs*, *The Nashwaak Review*, *Poetry Northeast*, *Picayune Literary*

*Magazine, Owen Wister Review, The G. W. Review,
Potomac Review, Pear Noir, Wisconsin Review,
Convergence, Prime Number, riverbabble, fiction fix,
The Midwest Literary Review and The Redlands Review.*