

Junior Division, Prose

Dylan Whitten, St. John's

Finding Peter P. (an excerpt)

Daniel strolled into the Dahlia Tavern. As he guided Mrs. Caddel inside, with his arm wrapped around her elbow, the scent of fresh liquor wafted past him. The building itself was tired and worn, the walls painted with dents and muddy splash marks. Behind the bartender on the right side of the room, there was a notably large dent. On the opposing left, several aged men sat around a circular wooden table. There were eight of them, but Daniel only knew of the oldest man, Otto Alexis. The other men seemed to treat him with an elevated level of respect. They all paused when he spoke and cheered after every sentence. The bartender caught sight of Mrs. Caddel and began to prepare her usual scotch. He poured it into a glass with special uncarved ice blocks. Daniel noticed a sign behind the bartender, contrasting with the large dent, that read 'NO TIP, NO SERVICE'.

Daniel laid Mrs. Caddel's drink upon the oak table from which her arms rested.

"Thank you, Danny." she said.

Daniel smiled. "Of course, Mrs. Caddel. But if you don't mind, try not to overdo it tonight. I still have to walk you home when you're done." he said with a laugh.

"Hmph," she smirked. "Well, I'll try. And just call me Eleanor, please."

Daniel had been to bars before but never enjoyed it, even when surrounded by friends. He didn't see the point in drinking, and he'd always found the inebriated to be a burden. But as a volunteer of the Black Dahlia Elder Support Program, he was obligated to take one day out of each week to care for an elder.