

## shyness can stop you

this little silver instamatic camera shoots panoramas.

fits in your pocket, if there's no chewing gum or keys in there. it's no picturesque paul simon kodachrome.

more like a drugstore analog fix, but in-disposable.

she's reliable—she's well-traveled—she's seen the empire state, all over the east coast.

she's had redondo to san pedro in her sights, too.

no, she's not fancy, she doesn't have flash, yet she lets me see the world through 5 x 6 matte, *avec* sloppy borders.

she's visited thousands of unique daffodil faces.

some in-focus, others blurry, caught in a distorted blizzard dream.

one face i wish she got a better look at:

a nameless piano player near the sunnyside playground. he was magnificent: his own skyscraper, his own ocean: an eighth wonder. no frills, no tourist traps, pure & free.

a spotlight shone on him and him only, casting every pair of untrained eyes and ears into blackness.

i hoped for some discreet profile of his sweaty, barechested, maestro frame, jerry lee lewis-ing, leon russell-ing his way into my celluloid memories.

so humble yet so good—fingers and sensibility unencumbered. i wanted to go up and ask him if he could be my sierra nevada, if he could be my superstar.

instead, i took a hazy, distant *snapclick* from the steadfast streetcorner.

shy, introverted, bashful cole just didn't have it in him.

though, i know *she* did.

there was a sentry blocking those palace gates.

a detached receiver in that telephone booth.

then: the most intimate question.

now: my devastation, my missed shot.

he might've even been flattered, chuffed, pleased at the proposition.

instant regret filled my fluttering, *i didn't catch the 10:05 bus*, conflicted, crushed, anxious thundercloud torso, now squeezed tight in the station between my toes and my socks.

a falling, stillborn feeling.

a stomach dropping out of its highwire act.

above all, the real misfortune was felt by my pint-sized *photographe*. her blank, idle 35mm film only gets old, languishes, and expires.

**Bio:**

Nicholas Barnes earned a Bachelor of Arts in English at Southern Oregon University. He is currently working as an editor in Portland, OR and enjoys music, museums, movie theaters, and rain. His least favorite season is summer. His favorite soda is RC Cola.