

## Hemingway Helps Me Write a Poem

I stepped through the pale door  
of Hemingway's room  
and he sat nude  
behind a dark mahogany desk  
with a very nude woman  
perched on his lap.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know you were busy,"  
I said with my hand over my eyes.

"It's fine. She's going to leave me anyways.  
They always do when they realize  
I'm not all *there*."

With that, the very nude lady  
shook her head,  
got up,  
and walked out the door.  
Her naked breast,  
softer than the back  
of a puppy's ear,  
brushed my arm on her way out.

"What can I do for you?"

"I need help writing a poem."

"Hmm," he said,  
while he thought of the hole  
in the back of Francis Macomber's head  
left by a 6.5 Mannlicher rifle  
fired by Mrs. Macomber  
in a hunting accident.

"We *all* need help,"  
he said.

"Is that a yes?"

"Of course," he said,  
"You drink whiskey?"

Three whiskies later we both sat  
nude on a deer skin rug, dressed only  
by the hairs on our chests.

Hemingway laughed  
deep from his hairy gut.  
Tears ran down the sides of his face.

“People think  
‘Hills Like White Elephants’  
is about an abortion?”

“Yeah, Ernie,” I said.

“People read too much into things,” he said.  
He wiped his wet cheeks with  
the back of his hand.

“I’m really sorry,” I said.  
I took a sip from my whiskey,  
“I find your nipples awkward.”

He rested his chin between his collar bones  
and looked down very sadly.

“Shit, I’m sorry,” I said,  
“It’s my fault, I shouldn’t stare.”

He shook his head.  
“It’s not that.”

I reached over,  
my palm pat his shoulder,  
and having forgot my nakedness asked,  
“What’s wrong, Hem?”

He looked at me  
with the glassy eyes  
of a sick boy  
and let it all out.

He told me everything.  
His words rose  
the way the sun  
also rises.

And I wrote it all down.  
I wrote down the sadness,  
I wrote out his injuries,

and not having a sheet or napkin,  
I wrote these naked words  
on my bare thigh as he swallowed  
whiskey and spoke—  
his nipples no longer apparent.

When I awoke,  
I noticed my thigh  
covered in illegible writing,  
and all I could make out  
was the phrase:

“Bros before hoes  
--except after 7 p.m.”