

Rose Mary Boehm

For her granddaughter who asked

A war so far away we didn't even know
where our troops were fighting.

After Rob signed up I got into the habit
of spending hours after midnight
in the neighborhood hangout
sitting there alone in the bad overhead lighting
under the eyes of Phil, owner, cook and barkeep.
It made me feel like shit.

Those enormous windows didn't hide
a lone woman. One day John
showed up. Plonked himself next to me.
Hi, red. What are you having? Bad
breath. Why wasn't he in the war?
Not much I could do. In those days
women felt obliged to be nice to guys.
Phil kept an eye out.

John had a factory not far away.
Tires for the military. He made money
while my Rob was being shot at.
But he did buy me drinks. It's when he wanted
to walk me home I told him about Rob.
Still, he turned up from time to time.
More fool he.

One night, the other guy showed up
and sat down across from John and me.
He wanted ice in his Buchanan's.
Never talked to us, just looked over
from time to time. Expected him to look at me,
but he focused on John.
Four lonely people, strangers, meeting up
most nights on the wrong side of midnight
until it was only me again.

Rose Mary Boehm is a German-born British national living and writing in Lima, Peru. Her poetry has been published widely in mostly US poetry reviews (online and print). She was twice nominated for a Pushcart. Her fourth poetry collection, *The Rain Girl*, was published in 2020. Her sixth, *Do Oceans Have Underwater Borders*, has just been snapped up by Kelsay Books for publication May/June 2022. Her website: <https://www.rose-mary-boehm-poet.com/>