

Night spoons

by [Siobhan Drummond](#) in the [June 19, 2019](#) issue

*In memoriam, Dean Peerman,
senior editor at the Christian Century*

A Tiki hut sleeps
on the beach at a shabby resort—
unpainted weathered wood
propping up the grass roof over
a small sea of chairs and tables.

The bar inside glints
with varnished mahogany,
backlit mirror
reflecting rows of bottles,
every possible kind of liquor,
glasses lined up or hanging by their stems,
steel sinks, bins of ice,
swizzle sticks, tiny straws,
stacks of skimpy napkins,
paper umbrellas to decorate sticky drinks.

We're staff, we do what?
Whale-watching cruises?
Teaching tourists how to surf?
Organizing the karaoke?
Whatever, there's camaraderie
in this late afternoon dreamscape,
the flurry and bustle of getting ready
for the raucous night ahead.
Thirsty sunburned guests
will be coming soon
to plop down and begin
drinking and laughing in earnest.

The bartender is an old fart.
He's chopping limes and piling up cherries
as I make a beeline past the empty stools.
He waves me over,
pushes a glass of spoons across the bar.
It's a Manhattan glass, slightly grubby with fingerprints.
The spoons are plastic, thick and white
with stubby handles.
The glass is only half full.

"They're for Dean"
(keeper of the style sheet,
hunched with old age,
and marvelous antique sensibilities
about the rules of grammar
and the vagaries of punctuation).

Dean hasn't shown up lately.

The barkeeper says, "They're night spoons.
Dean's the only one who still asks for them."

Later, I duck behind the bar:
Can I have one of those night spoons?
He smiles an old man smile,
he's so happy I've asked—
he understands why this is important—
and he fishes one out of the glass.
His hand shakes a little.
I take it, say thanks, leave quickly.
When I look down at it,
I see the spoon is stained with old coffee,
and there's a little piece broken off
the side of the handle.