

The Joke
by Eoin O'Shea

"Isn't that rag a little dirty?"

"It wouldn't be a rag if it wasn't." The barkeep continued to rub the cup.

"Fair enough, two beers, clean glasses." The father and son sat down.

"If the rag was clean, then the glass would be too, then how'd I keep busy?" The barkeep slid two sweating pints towards the two men.

"Pray for more customers to dirty your glasses?" The father looked surprised at his son taking a triumphant swig.

"Kid's alright."

"He's not bad." The father patted his son on the shoulder. "Tell him the joke."

"He doesn't want to hear it." The son tried to hide his embarrassment behind a pint raised to his lips.

"Come on,"

"Alright, two guys walk into a bar.."

"I've already heard it." The barkeep poured himself a beer. "Here's a joke, two guys walk into an empty bar with only a grinning bartender inside." The barkeep took a healthy gulp. "The guys sit down smiling too, they say their gonna have a drinking contest. Shots until one guy falls down. The barkeep keeps on grinning and starts pouring drinks. The men are drinking faster than the liquor can work. They make it to twelve shots before feeling the first. But once they start feeling it they really do, you know slurred hands and clumsy words. Sixteen and one stumbles, twenty and he falls. The barkeep congratulates the man still standing. The guy pays both tabs and carries his friend home. Who won?"

"That's not a joke, that's a riddle."

"And that's not an answer, old man."

"The loser won. He got drunk for free."

"No son, the winner won. It doesn't matter the cost as long as you win."

"See, there's always a lesson."

"There is, but your father 's teaching you the wrong one. They're both losers."

"Then who won?"

The barkeep finished his beer and picked up the dirty rag again. "The bartender."