HEALING ARTS
*Materia Medica***The Diner Off Route 105***Ryan Childers, M.D.*

Department of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, MD, USA.

You can get your slice of Americana
By ordering the hamburger classic
With a cold Pabst and a side of whatever it takes
To quell the quiet anger you have towards
Your job, your boss, this economy.

Or maybe you should hold the Pabst;
Yes, I remember you now as the fellow
With the deep yellowish tinge to your eyes and skin;
Came in here, alone, last June; I was working a double.
I have known so many men like you,
Erasing memories and yesterday's pain with each gulp.

Now you are back.
Sitting on the same cracked plastic stool,
Leaning over the same old linoleum countertop,
Worn in places where my hands have set down so many hot dishes.
Your eyes, now white, but still sad, scan these walls:
The old tin Coca-Cola sign,
The framed newspaper clippings,
The 'World Champions' poster,
The faded photographs of simpler times.

Funny how nostalgia can sneak up on you,
How we transform dusty throw-aways from another time
Into memorabilia too important to cast away.
Seems you have a timekeeper,
Who steered you back into my diner, alive, heart beating.
Life's lost opportunities, like those days of youth and wild chance,
We will cherish and miss,
But you are not lost yet.

Corresponding Author: Ryan Childers, M.D., Department of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, 5200 Eastern Avenue Mason F. Lord Building, Center Tower, 3rd Floor, Room 339, Baltimore, MD 21224, USA (e-mail: childers@jhmi.edu).