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## Gone Gentle

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# Gone Gentle

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*Mike Vanden Bosch*

Bert feels born to fight; from boy to man,  
though his Father tempts him daily to mercy,  
he fights all comers. At eighteen, two beers

fog his windows, twist his fists into weapons.  
Cops coax in parrot voices, preachers preach  
peace, but Bert swats sermons off like flies.

The army calls, but bayonets bore him, so he goes  
airborne, floating like a crow behind enemy lines  
to find new foes. His fists now grip rifles, but thrills

elude him until a spirited recruiter enlists him.  
Retraining lasts until Time's a fist in Bert's face.  
Like a sturgeon on a gaff, he wriggles to be free

until love uncurls his teeth-scarred knuckles.  
His feet look for narrow roads, his hands hunger  
to heal, his arms arc to hug. He visits pilgrims

clutching to life's rim, puts knuckles around his  
harmonica, and until he dies, plays "Old Black  
Joe" into the fog in which gray children gaze.