

## Steve Deutsch

### Bouncers

Did you know that New York  
surrenders the energy  
of its frenetic days  
slowly.

You can hear it,  
like the faint sigh  
of a bicycle tire  
with a leaky valve.

At 3 AM it's done  
and the city streets  
are unburdened by the buzz  
of millions of tethered lives.

Tony told me that  
soon after we'd reconnected.

He was easy enough  
to track down,  
and we would meet  
for coffee on occasion  
at the Pink Pony  
on Ludlow Street.

Old and Army-thin,  
Tony loved to talk  
about Brownsville,  
the Canarsie Bouncers,  
and my brother—  
the Warlord.

They were a greased-up gang  
of Jewish and Italian kids  
in combat boots and garrison belts  
that headquartered  
in his mom's apartment  
over the greengrocer's.  
They hoped for girls and glory  
and spent the nights  
looking for fights  
with the Hispanic and Black gangs  
that shared the neighborhood.  
My mom said their claim  
to fame was that  
they never changed their clothes.

Tony raced his chopper  
up and down Hopkinson Avenue  
all hours of the day and night.  
One day his Uncle Frank  
grabbed him by an ear  
and took him to an Army recruiter.  
Army life suited him.  
Tony told me he'd fought  
in Vietnam and every backwater  
battle that never made the NY Times.

Tony rode his bike  
well into his eighties.  
He'd take to the streets at 3  
and ride 'til dawn.  
He boarded a Greyhound last week  
for one last visit with his aging  
Army buddies scattered across the country.  
He hopes to see  
two old Bouncers,  
Sal and Artie  
in San Diego.

He gave me his bike to tend.  
Ride it,  
he ordered.  
At 3 every morning,  
I hump the bike  
down four flights of stairs  
and ride for an hour or so  
in the eerie dark  
of early morning  
absorbing all that freed-up energy  
with every breath I take.