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**Extract from *The Bullet Trick***

Not so long ago in the days when Glasgow was shipbuilding capital of the world, particular pubs opened before dawn to kill the drouth of the nightshift. While rich men slept and children rested safe in bed, while mothers readied themselves for the day and posties sorted through their sacks, the nightshift looked at the clock and licked their lips. And not far from the factory gates pub landlords polished glasses, checked the levels in their optics and made certain that the floor was swept, tables wiped, the cash register drawer running smooth on its rollers. Then they looked at the clock, unlocked the door and waited, for men who had toiled through the watch hours with the vision of a pint shining golden before their eyes.

The armies of men, who once filled whole streets at shifts' end, are long disbanded. But the early morning pubs are still there, if you know where to look.

There's a licensing law demands these bars serve breakfasts to mop up the drink. And so they're always steeped in the smell of discount bacon, black pudding the colour of blood soaked shit and gangrenous battery farmed eggs. Everything fried in ancient lard, set grey since yesterday and melted each morning until it is hot enough to fry any cockroaches that might have burrowed in for a midnight feast.

I pushed open the door and stepped back into the night, though I knew it was a little past 7am. The bar was busy. A couple of student types sat in a corner using the beer to ease the come down from whatever had kept them up. A businessman sunk a predawn brandy. A guy in a brown leather jacket that went out of fashion sometime around 1983 studied the racing form putting little crosses next to the horses he fancied, taking quick sips of a beer I'd seen him top up with vodka. No one looked like a shift worker. No one was eating the breakfast. No one talked because no one was here to be sociable. The jukebox pounded out some ancient hit even though no one was here for the music.