

# Alcoholic MANIPULATIONS

By Chris Ellis



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Did I smell  
a slight whiff of foetor hepaticus?  
There's a small burn mark on his jacket.

We have a gentleman's agreement,  
not to talk about his drinking.  
Or have we?  
Have I been conned again?  
He's such a nice man.  
I haven't wanted to offend him.

I do make enquiries  
in subtle and oblique ways.  
He brushes them aside with  
the ease of a batsman  
glancing them down the leg side.

That I should even suggest it  
hurts him terribly.  
As though I have dropped in his estimation.  
How could I think such a thing  
after all our silent agreements.

He's laid the foundation  
of how the game is to be played.  
My moves are anticipated and diverted.  
I must have acquiesced on the days  
when I was tired.

He really should come in to hospital.  
He's dehydrated.  
He just wants something for the vomiting.  
I acquiesce again.