It is 1997, Karaoke bar, Des Moines

Matt Mason

Tonight’s the night you choose to fistfight Tom Jones. You write his name on the piece of paper, above
“It’s Not Unusual,” hand it
to the DJ, KJ, whatever the word is;
and you sit,
you deal with the “Whip It” of it,
you deal with the sight of Rick Astley
delivered in unironic flaunt,
you deal with “You Give Love A Bad Name” partially crooned,
partially screeched
like some Bon Jovi centaur has crashed through the room,

before they announce your name
(which you have not aliased
(which could be a mistake,
you hope-filled son or daughter of hope-filled parents
(you were somebody’s dream)).

You give new truth
to lines like:
*It’s not unusual*
to see me cry.
*I want*
to die.

And it is glorious.
Even better than your “How Deep Is Your Love”
(Spoiler alert: not very)
that you gave as a gift
to a different karaoke bar last week.

Someone
takes an obligatory ride in Little Red Corvette,
someone human centipedes a different Bon Jovi beast together,
someone disregards human decency and sings “We Built This City on Rock and Roll,”

then,
one of the regulars

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