

HOW TO FILL A CUP 63

How to Fill a Cup. The cup itself is not of note; it's more function than form. To eyes other than my own, it's trash—just an old jam jar. Maybe I see myself in just a cup. A cup that is filled every evening: cravings satisfied with dark liquor named Jim or Jack, poured without measure over a single ice cube and those expensive cherries, syrup pooling in the crevices. The logic, of course, is that a drink made with even a modicum of care couldn't possibly be a problem. How quickly we rationalize, stacking the jury of our own brains. But even with the most careful of justifications, my cup runs over.

How to Fill a Cup. It is the same, but different. Days have been counted, boundaries renegotiated. Sometimes I ache to feel the fire growing in my chest, a flame fanned with every sip. But the cup is no longer coconspirator. It's merely a container, packed to the brim with fizzy brightness, the kind of earnest hope from which I spent a lifetime running. It turns out goodness comes in many flavors. My favorites begrudgingly have names like "synergy" or "happiness" because sometimes sobriety has a sense of humor.

And it turns out that carbonated probiotics not only quench my thirst, but fill my cup in a way that allows me to pay it forward, to make considerations beyond my own body. Sometimes the lies we tell ourselves aren't malicious. Instead, they're necessary fibs for our own salvation. And in that, my cup is always brimming.

How to Fill a Cup. For what is time
but our attempt to mirror,
to anchor biological
function? We find
calmness in order.
Every routine
is an illusion
of command,
one step closer
to power over
our own destiny,
which is why even
in yielding control to
something beyond myself, I cling
to the cup. With each filling, the distance
between past and present grows simultane-
ously more vast and more deeply intertwined. The cup
is a vestige of who I was and who I'll always be. Both ritual
and temptation, a nightly test with looming stakes. A metaphor,
but also just an object. Because deep at its core, survival often
boils down to a simple quotidian decision: how I choose to fill my cup.