Once-Twice
I pass a field.
The driving cold commands this
Once roofless land
Now full of ice crystals.
As the life-giving ice seeps below,
The green dwells within the bent brown.
Not long though
Unless time stops now.
M. ENRIGHT, '65

ALEMBIC

SPRING 1963
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In his essay “On Going a Journey” William Hazlitt writes: “The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind.”

Hazlitt believes that a journey should be an adventure, the discarding of the old self and the assuming of the new. And this is exactly what a journey means to me. In fact, I leave my old self behind to such an extent that I assume a completely new role in life. This pulling up anchor and moving into unfamiliar waters invites my imagination to create for me a novel fictional existence, a life so entirely different from what I have been leading that it borders on the insane. The remainder of my story will illustrate.

Last year at the outset of a journey from Boston to Shannon, I travelled in the character of the well known jockey Willie Makershoe. This strange role began for me almost immediately after my arrival at Logan airport, when the public address system requested that all those for Flight 123 to Shannon go to the appropriate starting gate. The words “starting gate” was, of course, the match that lit the fuse to my imagination. My new life was conceived. To those about me I was just an ordinary traveller, but to myself I was the celebrated jockey Willie Makershoe about
to participate in the most hotly contested race of the year, the Celestial Handicap.

Hurriedly I weighed in and was surprised to find I was three pounds overweight. Nevertheless, it was too late now to do anything about it. My carelessness cost me fifteen dollars. Most people feel that having to carry extra weight is handicap enough without being fined, but I didn't mind for the attendant in charge assured me that part of the money thus collected goes toward repairing faulty weighing machines.

At this point, I must mention that for three weeks before this event my name was familiar to every racegoer due to the speculation of the racing scribes as to whether or not I would pilot Pegasus in this particular race. Rumor had it that I had a row with Mr. Perseus, the owner of Pegasus, owing to my finishing a bad third to Sputnik in a race at Cloudland, and despite my denial that this feud ever took place these writers refused to let up. “Mr. Perseus doesn’t trust him,” they harped, and their readers believed them. Actually, the reading public were so concerned that they turned to the sports page, if it wasn’t on the front page, in preference to reading anything else.

But the writers, as often happens, were wrong. The day of the race had now arrived and here I was about to mount. As I pushed my way through the crowd, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Perseus, all the discussion was dissipated. The throng, eager to see these two men about whom so much had been written, pressed forward. Like all celebrities, I delighted in overhearing their comments. I heard one fellow say, “They seem to be friendly enough now.” Another said, “I wish I had his job.” A women whispered to a fat man by her side, “Isn’t he small? So much talk about such a little guy.” And a middle aged man in
a peaked cap, who apparently had backed one of my losers, murmured, "Doesn't he look a real swindler?" Others were more complimentary, while some didn't say anything but just looked at me intently, hoping, no doubt, that I would give some sign in whatever surreptitious manner, to indicate that I had a chance of winning.

Race goers look for such signs, you know. One jockey, supposedly signifies his chances by removing and replacing his cap, another by biting his lower lip, while still another is certain to win if he repeatedly blows his nose. I once knew a punter who wagered every cent he possessed just because he noticed a jockey continually rubbing the back of his neck. It happened that this same jockey was admitted to hospital the following day for the removal of a carbuncle. Then, of course, we have the racegoer who relies on coincidences. An example of this type is the fellow who dreamt about a race in which there were four horses and woke up at exactly four o'clock.

"What a coincidence," he whispered to himself. "Today is the fourth of April and my house is No. 4."

Getting up early he went downstairs to discover that the family cat had given birth to four kittens. Later the mailman brought four letters. By this time, naturally, he was convinced he had a winner and, to make up a party of four, he insisted that his wife and two children accompany him to the track. On the way he drove steadily at forty-four miles per hour, got four punctures, and bought four gallons of gas. Arriving at the racetrack at precisely four o'clock, he ordered four hot dogs and four coffees, waited patiently for the fourth race, strode confidently up to window four and bet four dollars to win on Forebode, which, believe it or not, was drawn number four. Sure
enough, and after a close race. Forebode didn't let him down. He finished fourth.

We have now walked to where Pegasus is standing. He is a big, steel-grey horse, unusually high, with a peculiar tail that always appears well-trimmed, and which he holds in a cocky fashion. During the past three years he has had many riders but Mr. Perseus assures me he has no favorite, preferring instead to give them all a comfortable ride. He was bred, incidentally, out of Medusa by Jet Pilot. The latter, as you may recall, won the '57 Kentucky Derby in record time, although he had a headwind all the way.

I have now mounted Pegasus. As I sit here looking through the windows (of my goggles) it seems a long way to the ground. Mr. Perseus approaches to give me last minute riding instructions. "Willie", says he, "you can't afford to lose this one so don't try anything smart. Stay with the others until Pegasus warms up, and then move to the front by going down the middle. After that it should be plain sailing."

Mrs. Perseus wishes me luck and, although fully aware that Pegasus is carrying four horseshoes, crams an oversized rabbit's foot into the small pocket of my jockey jacket. "Who is't can read a woman?"

Looking about, I notice that I have got a very unfavorable draw. I am bunched in between two other riders who, as far as I can determine, are also carrying extra weight. The rider on the inside definitely has the advantage inasmuch as he will be able to hold that position when we make the turn at the end of the straight. The rider on my left is young and nervous. This could be his first time up.

Underneath me, I can now feel the vibrant heart of Pegasus pumping more vigorously. His nose begins to stir.
He snorts. Hot, white breath pours from his nostrils. His tail moves, in a slow flapping movement. He is obviously eager to get going.

There goes the red light. We are under the starter’s orders. As is customary, the starter exhorts us to fasten all girths securely; and, just to make certain we have complied, two assistants to the starter, wearing blue uniforms, walk down the line checking each girth. Riders appreciate such solicitude. Some even enjoy it.

Only seconds now before the “off”. Tension increases. Two riders look at each other apprehensively. “They’re off”, shouts the crowd, and with jet-like force we bolt down the straight. The track narrows as we dash for the turn. The rider on my right is still sticking with me as is the one on my left. This is going to be a close race. No one is able to take the lead, nor is anyone giving an inch. The houses along the track go flying past, and the individual trees merge into one long line of green. I glance over my shoulder at the oncoming riders. What a sight! Open-mouthed and completely overcome by this early speed of Pegasus, they have thrown back their heads in resignation. This means I have only two riders to watch—the one on my left and the one on my right. Out of the corner of my eye I look at the rider on my left. Incredible! No, he can’t be. I look at the rider on my right. Impossible! Not him too? They couldn’t be. This is fantastic. In plain language it is preposterous.

They are riding with their eyes closed. This can only end in a catastrophe. Here I am hemmed in between two fly-by-night riders who have absolutely no regard for their own or my safety. Why, anyone with a flyspeck of horse sense wouldn’t attempt it, and certainly such reck-
less behavior warrants horsing or a flying mare. It must not go unpunished.

Drawing my whip, I lash out savagely at the rider on my left. Swish! Swish! Crack! Now I turn to the one on my right, but before I can inflict any appreciable chastisement I am overpowered by the other riders, dragged from Pegasus and left to walk back to the starting gate. What a sad termination to a fancy flight that got off to a flying start; yet it has one consolation: I am ending my journey as Hazlitt would have wished—"with the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet".
DEATH

JOHN A. THOMPSON, ’66

Strong arm now frail.

Time waits not, but moves
    in unsuspected laps.

About the track of life.

The old ones wail.

Yet time has taken his lead
    and presses forward still

Toward these who mourn
    and wait.

They struggle not, understanding

The coming struggle to be fought
    which can not be won.

Time never loses
    to life.

We who do not mourn and do not wait

Have no fear of time;
    he shall be stilled

And made to wait in vain
    for us.
sentimental
slowly stretching to a point
pitifully empty and devoid
a sated dream which finds no key
to wakeful pleasures.

a seething dragon drags a tale
of fickle reverie
and yet there is no release.

chained, leashed like dogs who
dare to bite
suspended from pitted hooks which
snarl the skin and
deeper drain this infernal,
bubbling flesh.

what peace can stilted
abstractions offer this naked,
errant plume,
what rest—no rest
save One and
He
the final breath.

L'ESPRÉRANCE
James P. Farrelly, '63
Our street is newly paved.
Heavy asphalt hides the worn and white cement.
The street that years of children's feet
Have blindly made look lived on.
No longer are there hop-scotch schemes,
Nor second base, nor broken curbs
Down which I rode my bike.
No longer is it comfortable
To use our street for merely standing,
Talking of the needed rain,
The crab grass, or a broken window pane.
No longer can the muffling trees
Absorb the street-sounds into peace.
(The omnipresent asphalt pebbles
Clatter underneath the cars
Like marbles thrown down metal stairs.)
No longer is it comfortable
To call our street our street.
It wears the mourning mantle now
Of necessary change.
Frank Knight was 38 years old. He had worked as an accountant for 12 years, before which time he had been in the Quartermaster Corps for 4 years. He had made sergeant in the middle of his third year, but had been plagued by doubts about his merit and ability. He was slightly reassured by V-letters from his mother, assuring him that her son had as much right to be sergeant as any other mother’s son in the United States Army. When he was released he took a correspondence course in accounting, while working in a market, and then got a job as chief accountant (“Well, if you’re the only one, then you must be the chief accountant,” his mother had argued.) for a small trucking firm. The pay was low, but Frank was satisfied because he didn’t think he was a very good accountant. He was doggedly meticulous about his books and his life. He prided himself on the fact that he had never let a mistake go uncorrected.

In the thirty-ninth year of his life, balding and with an ulcer, Frank Knight was in love, purely and passionately in love. The object of his adoration was Stella Glass, a 36-year-old blond stenographer he had met at the “Young Men’s and Women’s Friendship Club” weekly dance. After their first date, Frank decided that he was in love. After the fifth date, he kissed her goodnight.

March was storming into spring when Frank decided, after much doubt and mathematics, that he wanted to marry Stella. He planned the proposal elaborately. He concentrated on what he would say if she refused his offering. He decided, after much soul-searching, that he would say “Well, I just thought I’d like to ask,” say goodnight, and
leave. But how could she refuse someone with such a love, and a secure future?

On the appointed night, Frank took Stella to a Cary Grant movie (an integral part of his plan) and then to a bar where, in a booth, he asked her if she mightn’t like some wine. Frank ordered the usual two beers after Stella asked him if he was nuts or something. When the beers arrived, Stella took a long gulp, sighed a long aaaaah, and then said, “What a man, that Cary Grant! Real love’em and leave’em.” “Yeah,” said Frank, “but anybody can do that. I bet he never did an honest day’s work in his life.” “Maybe,” Stella conceded, “but what a man.” Frank let it drop.

They went to Stella’s walk-up for their ritual coffee. Frank sat on a gaudy lavender mock leather sofa while Stella prepared the coffee. He panicked when he found that he had forgotten the preface to his proposal. But he remembered it as Stella brought in the two cups in on a tray and set them down on the real bargain coffee table. He was about to proceed when, instead of sitting down next to him, Stella walked over to the radio and began to fiddle with it. Beginning to perspire, Frank said “Why don’t you come over here and sit next to me, dearest?” “Soon as I find something good on here,” she replied, stoop-
ing and squinting to watch the station indicator flow along its path. The something good she found turned out to be a rock and roll group screaming about the unattainability of "Laura," "that beautiful creature, love every feature." When she finally sat next to him, he said, "Hey Stella," (he winced at the involuntary "hey") "I mean, Stella, I'd like to ask you something. You know, we been going together now for about eight months" (seven months, thirteen days, he had computed the night before). The song ended with a scream and was followed by an ad for mouthwash. At this, Frank involuntarily sucked in air through his wincing mouth. "And I think, I mean, I know, that I love you. So," (he began to race) would you do me the honor of, I mean, would you marry me. You don't have to if you don't want to." (What a ridiculous thing to say, he thought immediately).

"Well Frank, I'm certainly flattered. You know, nobody ever asked me to marry them before. But I don't think I'm ready to marry you, at least not just yet. You're real cute and nice an' all" (he winced), "but, well, I don't love you. O. K.? No hard feelins?"

"No, no, of course not. I understand. But, well, at least now you know how I feel." As he got up, the saucer and cup resting on his knee crashed to the floor, splattering coffee. He had a fleeting desire to suffer an immediate fatal heart attack. Being frustrated, he bent down and started to pick up the broken pieces when Stella told him it was all right and that he'd better be going because they both had work the next day, and it was late. He said, "Yeah, I guess you're right," and left.

As he walked down the concrete steps to the sidewalk, he glanced distractedly at the moon. Suddenly the word "bitch" shot through his mind and ricocheted into
his conscience. Stunned, he said alone, "No. no." He turned, ran up the stone steps, through the doorway, up the two flights of stairs to Stella's floor, down the corridor, and knocked on her door. Stella opened the door, broken, china-filled dustpan in hand, and stared at the panting Frank. He blurted "O Stella, I'm sorry," wheeled around without waiting for a reaction, and ran down the stairs. Stella watched him flee, feeling only bewilderment, understanding nothing.
IMITATION

ROBERT HARTWIG

One of the ideas to which Aristotle returns with a noteworthy frequency in the Poetics is art as an imitation. Of all those notions which he has proposed in this work, this is the one which has probably been most influential in later theories of art; it has been both stoutly defended and severely criticized. Often it has been misunderstood and misapplied with tragic consequences for the history not only of poetry but of art in general. While the commentaries and explications which have been written concerning Aristotle's theory of imitation would probably fill many libraries, the fact that it is still energetically discussed and disputed in our own day seems to indicate that the last word is far from having been pronounced. Thus, while little perhaps can be added to the great deal which has already been said, the challenge of trying is too tempting to be ignored.

We might commence our inquiry by determining what Aristotle did not mean by the dictum that art imitates nature. Despite much opinion to the contrary, it is evident that he had nothing like photographic copying in mind. This becomes clear through his discussion of the various mediums of imitation. Among the various possible means by which art imitates nature are color and form, voice, rhythm, language and harmony, flute playing, lyre playing and the dance. Now it is quite clear that no one is going to photographically imitate anything by means of playing a flute or dancing. Yet Aristotle accepts both of these as valid art forms because by their rhythms and attitudes he believes that one may represent men's characters, as well as their actions and sufferings.

Another and more convincing argument against photographic copying is to be found in Aristotle's discussion of tolerable and intolerable errors in the poet's art. Here he states that it would be more easily excusable for the poet not to know that the hind has no horns than to produce an unrecognizable picture of one. He then goes on to state the truism that the only intolerable error in the artist is to portray a thing inartistically.

Also, if Aristotle had anything like a photographic copying in mind, the poet would be obliged to portray men as they are rather than as being worse or better than they actually are in reality. Yet comedy portrays men as worse than they are and tragedy depicts more as they ought to be. Still Aristotle
accepts both of these as legitimate art forms though he gives greater dignity to the tragedy.

But to return now to the various mediums of imitation, it is observed that the one which belongs particularly to the poet is words, which are secondarily versified. While not by any means insignificant, the versification is secondary to the poet’s art because the poet is such by virtue of his imitation of human actions and passions rather than because he writes in verse:

Homer and Empedocles, however, have really nothing in common apart from their meter; so that if the one is to be called a poet, the other should be termed a physicist rather than a poet. (Poetics: 1)

But if a poet is to be a poet by virtue of his imitations, it is important that we know exactly how and what he is supposed to imitate. As was stated earlier, the poet imitates by means of words. In doing this he has to attempt to duplicate nature within his own particular medium. In some way the poet has to use words as the painter or sculptor would use color and form.

But the poet, if he is to be a good one, must go beyond the imitation of mere particular instances; he must be concerned with the universal rather than the singular, with the probable rather than with the possible.

Hence poetry is something more philosophical and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. (Poetics: 9)

Yet if the poet has an advantage over the historian in dealing with universals, he also has an advantage over the philosopher in that he can give his universal abstractions a concreteness which the statements of the philosopher lack. The art of the poet apparently involves a twofold procedure. He abstracts from a number of singular instances so that his characters will be universal types and will have to act more or less as such or such sort of man would have to act in such or such set of circumstances. On the other hand, he affixes a proper name to his characters which gives them the particularity that makes them appealing to the public in a way in which the abstractions of the philosopher could never be.

Furthermore, the poet uses meter and decorative language in order to better convey his imitations. According to Aristotle, loftiness or mean ness, humor or tragedy, are each best conveyed by a certain meter which nature herself will lead us to, thus the very meter in itself is an imitation. It is easy to see how this notion led to an overly formalistic concept of “appropriate” meters in the neoclassical period,
but this in no way negates the fact that certain meters are in reality best suited to convey a certain mood or type of action. But the greatest accomplishment of the poet in his use of language, says Aristotle, is to have mastered the metaphor, since a good metaphor implies the ability to see similarity in dissimilars by means of an intuitive perception. Thus meter and metaphor are in themselves imitations which are conducive to the poet's principle imitation.

Enough has been said concerning how the poet imitates, and now we must discuss the somewhat more delicate problem of what the poet imitates. It would indeed be convenient to escape by simply answering, "Nature," but that in itself raises the problem of what Aristotle means by this somewhat unspecific term, and also whether or not all of nature is the poet's field, or just a part of it, more particularly, human nature.

It seems fairly clear from the corpus of Aristotle's work that nature embraces the whole of reality, but his use of the term is not always univocal, for in the Physics it designates the intrinsic principle of rest and motion which resides in all things. Yet it seems that in the Poetics his use of the term is more restricted than either of these. He also uses nature to designate all those qualities in which the members of a species share, are proper to the members of a species, and determine them to be what they are; for example, it is the nature of man to be rational. This seems to be closer to his use of the word in the Poetics.

Realizing the danger which lies in such an assertion, I suggest that we can only gather from the text of the Poetics that it is the place of the poet to imitate human nature as it is manifested in its actions and passions, and particularly as these actions and passions arouse pity and fear in the audience or reader. It is impossible to gather from the fragmentary text of the Poetics whether or not a wider scope is allotted to the other arts, but this need not concern us at the moment.

In his discussion of tragedy Aristotle affirms:

Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery. All human happiness or misery takes the form of action. (Poetics: 6)

and again,

We maintain that tragedy is primarily an imitation of action, and it is mainly for the sake of the action that it imitates the personal agents. (Poetics: 6)

It is clear from the text that the epic's imitation consists in essentially the same elements as that of tragedy, the difference between
them being not primarily in the object of their imitation, but in the manner of their presentation. It is true that the epic, not being concerned with the demands of exterior spectacle, may also deal with "interior" or psychological action, but the same rules will still apply.

Now I am well aware of the problems which this position presents. Is a landscape painting art? Is a poem about daffodils a poem? Aristotle said very little about either painting or sculpture, and I feel that an all inclusive aesthetic theory based solely on the Poetics can be no more than Aristotelian in its spirit; it cannot be Aristotelian in its principles. As for poems about daffodils, I rather doubt that Aristotle was familiar with any, and if he was, he certainly does not mention them. Yet I fail to see how his principles would include such a thing within the realm of poetry unless it were in some way also concerned with a human experience. Of course, it goes without saying that such poems can, and in fact, usually do, fall into this category.

In summation, the most important points which I have attempted to present are three in number: art does imitate nature, but it does not have to be a photographic copying; the poet imitates universals rather than particulars; finally, the poet's imitation must in some way be intimately bound up with human actions and passions.
DISENCHANTED
Robert Villareale, '65

Long to linger in this muddied world
I see in man, a chambered nautilus
That, like love's liquid fire,
Dies hallowed.

Shells, curled in a sea's speckled light
Swallowed up are they, and spit upon the beach
Against sandy spheres, those myriads of rustic brown
Living a half-death, buried and undead.
IN THE GARDENS OF DEATH

"And in those days men shall seek
dearth and shall not find it; and
they shall desire to die and death
shall flee from them." APOCALYPSE 9:6.

In the mountain of God bullrocks shatter
Dribbling warm milk, blessing on the fires
Of us dead. Sprouting stars and ruptured meteors
Flame in the womb and oil-like we slide
From this tomb of our first death
Onto dry trickling sand
In a garden of impotent tombstones;
Shackled to Time's blazing Wheel,
Battered from womb to Womb,
Groping with wounded eyes
Smoldering smoke like emeralds,
Gaping into the yawn by crosslight,
Blue flesh crinkling, crumbling
Like dried sacramental crusts
Under the heel of Antichrist;
Womb-passage lulled into slumber,
Mellifluous dirge—Day of Wrath
Dreadful day when you are born
To a second death; taste
The fruit of these tombflowers,
Taste and see how sweet
Is their fruit—the Sibyl sings,
Sings with her serpent-tongue
In harsh and wintry notes,
Tempting with our own desires;
And from her leaden teat
Drip Ashen milk and blood!
Tombflowers, dry with dust,
Waiting for spring rains, clutter
The misted gardens of death.
Hot-tongued the Tiger-Sun
Licks from our shivering sparse flesh
The womb’s glistening anointment
While with flaming sword
By my Mother’s secret bed
The Dark Angel hovers immune
To the blood of the naked Lamb
Who is our Wombmate with us born.
Sever the cord, bind the flesh,
Bare us hands and feet,
Bare us to the bludgeon blows
Of Time to Whom is dominion
In this all-holy NOW.
Slipping from violet darkness
Into a vaster infinite dark,
The silence of the spheres!
For comfort we turned to our Wombmate
And for comfort he turned to us;
Together, hammered by Time
In this savage garden of stoneblooms,
We wept fierce tears and cursed
The womb of our imprisonment.
The salt of our tears mingled
And we parted, from that moment,
Shamed by our common fear,
   And did not meet again
Until on one dark night
In a lingering spring. It was dark,
   I recall a dry darkness,
When I stumbled into his Wound
And It whispered to me like the rain,
   Bursting the fisted tomb-buds
In the exquisite gardens of death.
   Yes I said Yes I will Yes!
In thunder the Wound spoke again:
   And they shall rise as eagles to the Sun,
   As Flame from the ashes of death!
   In their darkness they shall see light
   Which shall be the light of God.
   Though the sea shall swallow them up
   They shall rise, and death be no more!
   THIS IS YOUR SECOND DEATH,
   THERE SHALL BE NO OTHER!
I listened, I knew! I wept red tears,
   And I leapt for joy in the Womb
Of Death, my Mother!

the stillness, rose and fell,
murmuring
quietly;
echoing in the dark recesses,
and filling the void
with the deafening fullness
of death's somber tread.

THOMAS ECK, '64
OUR COLLEGE READER
BRIAN DELPAPE, '64

Look! Look! See Joe read,
"God knows all, but the will is free."
Joe can say "three parts theology",
And knows such names as Oesterle.

Oh, oh, see Joe write,
"Virtue and reason are always right."
My, Joe can talk of ends and means,
And even knows what's a "golden mean".

Well, well, Joe has passed;
He can read, write and talk quite fast.
Yet I don't ever see Joe do,
Oh, but he says, "that's just up to you".

O, BOOK SO THICK
DAVID I. McINTYRE, '65

O, book so thick,
you make me sick;
your pages dreary
make me weary.

There's never been a frigate
like a book,
and do you know the reason why?
A boat could never, ever be
So abominably dry!

A DANDELION SPEAKS
DAVID I. McINTYRE, '65

I am an ugly dandelion—
over there's a pretty red rose.
I wish I were a rose like that,
but that's the way it goes.
we shall meet
in a place where there is no darkness
where the night is not night
but a reflection of the day.
the light is forever and
is not only without
but within one;
and it passes from me
to you
and from you
beyond . . .
we shall meet
in a place where there is no darkness
where the twilight never was
and the swallows fly at noon
and sing
forever in the flash.
we shall meet
in a place where there is no darkness
where the nights mark the time
and the time
does not exist—
only the light;
there shall we meet,
forever . . .
The room was red. Red covers hung on the chairs. A rug woven of rich, red fibers covered the floor. The walls were rose-colored and on each wall, two paintings hung, paintings of sleazy women in doorways, of village churches and of children playing in the streets. Next to the only window in the room, a wizened old woman, dressed entirely in black, slouched in a wooden wheel chair. A heavy wool shawl covered her shoulders and black glasses hid her eyes.

Outside the window the snow-covered streets of Montmartre twisted their way up to the basilica of Sacre-Coeur which rested like a huge white ball on the top of the hill.

The sharp clangor of a doorbell startled the blind woman and with a jerking motion she wheeled herself across the room to the door. Before she reached the door, it opened and the pudgy face of a middle-aged man peered into the room.

“Good evening, Mme. Berard,” the face said in a ridiculous falsetto voice. “It’s me, Albert.”

“Oh come in, Albert, come in. It’s so good of you to come.” The woman’s voice was throaty and dignified. “Come, sit over here.” Mme Berard rolled her chair across the floor to her usual position by the window, with Albert dutifully trotting along behind her. “Well, Albert,” the
woman said as she settled into position, “It’s been a long time, a very long time. Have you been well?”

“Oh, I’ve been all right,” he squeaked. “The business has been going along well. How have you been? I mean, you look fine.”

“We can stop this nonsense right now.” The woman interrupted in a sharp tone. “I called you up here for a reason and we might as well get right down to it. When my maid was reading me the paper this morning, she said that a painting signed by my husband and dated 1951 was on display at the Duhamel gallery. Do you know anything about that?”

“Why yes, I do,” he answered. His face displayed a great deal of confusion. “It’s part of a private collection. It’s on a six-month loan to Duhamel. As a matter of fact, there are four canvases dated 1951 and two from 1952. I thought you must have known.”

“But that’s impossible! That’s completely impossible!” the woman screamed. “You know that yourself. Every painting my husband did in the last two years of his life is right here in this room.”

“Well don’t yell at me,” he howled. “I had nothing to do with it. I thought you must have sold some of your’s. You never even showed me your paintings, even after all the help I gave your husband. Everyone makes fun of the poor art dealer, but where would the artists be without him? Can you answer me that?”

“But they’re forgeries, they’re forgeries, those paintings Duhamel has,” she moaned. “Someone is stealing my husband’s name.”

“Are you sure these paintings here are the only ones your husband did the two years before he died?” Albert
asked, becoming calm. “I mean, Duhamel has never been known to show a fake.”

“Am I sure?” she said in a low and wistful voice. “Yes, I’m very sure. You know I’ve never seen any of the paintings on these walls. I lost my eyes before any of them were painted. But I know what each one looks like. When the doctor told Paul he only had two years to live, he wanted to stop painting. But I begged him to go on and he said he’d paint, but only for me. Every day we sat together by this window. He told me every brush stroke he was making, every color he was using. We sat together for two years and then he died. The paintings here are the only ones he painted. Now someone is trying to steal that from me.”

“Yes, I see,” said Albert uneasily. “But what are you going to do?”

“I want those forgeries destroyed. I’ll do anything to stop this fraud. You talk to Duhamel. Tell him I’m willing to pay any price. But I want those forgeries destroyed.”

“All right,” Albert said. “I’ll talk to Duhamel. I’ll call you tonight and tell you what he says.” He got up and walked across the room to the door.


Four hours later, Mme. Berard was seated in the same place next to the window. A small lamp had been turned on and the dim light cast an eerie glow over the red walls of the room. The paintings were hidden in the shadows. When the phone rang, Mme. Berard’s maid, dressed in a greying white frock, scurried into the room to answer it. “It’s M. Roche for you, Madame,” she said, as she handed the old woman the phone.
“Hello, Mme. Berard. It’s me Albert,” the staccato voice on the phone said.

“Well, Albert,” she said slowly. “What did you find out?”

“Duhamel’s convinced they’re authentic. There’s no chance of getting them for less than full price.”

“But they’re forgeries. How can he be such a fool?”

“I don’t know, but that’s what he says. He said he wouldn’t sell them for less than twenty-five thousand. Have you got that much money?”

“No I don’t. I only have a few thousand—and the paintings.”

“But you wouldn’t sell the paintings!”

“Yes, I would. I’d do anything to get rid of those forgeries.”

“I advise against it, Mme. Berard. Let the fakes stay where they are. Keep your own paintings.”

“No! I must destroy those forgeries. You’ll sell my paintings for me and buy the forgeries. I have to destroy the lie.”

“I’ll do whatever you say, but I think you’re being a fool.”

Five days later, Albert Roche opened the door to Mme. Berard’s flat. In his right hand he was carrying a case containing six paintings. Next to the window, the old woman was sitting in her wheel chair. Over her head was a painting of three children rolling a hoop down a hill. Around the walls of the room were seven rectangles of bright red where the dust had not dimmed the walls.

“Is that you, Albert?” the old woman shouted.
“Yes,” he said. “It’s me.”

“You’ve brought the forgeries, I hope,” she said. I’ve been looking forward to this for days. Give them to me.”

“I haven’t had a chance to study them,” he said, laying the case in her lap. “But they seem to be pretty good imitations. Of course, they’re not in the style he was using during his last two years. In fact, it’s more like the way he was painting thirty years before he died. But then I haven’t really . . .”

He noticed that she was not listening to him. She had rolled her chair up to the window, opened it and rolled onto a small balcony overlooking the street.

“You, all of you in the street;” her voice was shrill and violent. “This is what happens to forgeries.” She took a small silver knife from her pocket and slashed the paintings. The knife squeaked as it tore the canvas. A few children dressed in rags and a man with a wine-soaked beard looked up at her and turned away. “You can’t steal a man’s art.” She shouted. “This is what happens to forgeries.” She repeated it over and over while she slashed the face of each canvas.

Albert saw her collapse and brought her inside quickly. He went out to the balcony again, picked up the fragments of canvas, brought them inside and dropped them into the small gas-fed fire. An oily smoke filled the room.

The smoke brought Mme. Berard to her senses quickly. Albert looked up at her quizzical face and said quietly, “I’ve burned the canvases.”

“Good,” she said in a calm voice. “It’s over at last. All his paintings are gone but one. Would you take it down and give it to me?” He handed her the painting. She ran her fingers over it carefully. “Oh yes,” she said. “The three
children and the hoop. I'm glad we kept this. It was his favorite.

"I guess that's all you've got to remember him by," Albert said.

"Yes," she said softly. "This and the letter."

"What letter?"

"A letter Paul wrote the day before he died. He said it was something for me to have after he was dead. No one has ever read it to me but I've carried it with me every day since he died. I've been saving it until a time when I can really appreciate it. Oh yes, here it is." She held up a faded envelope. "Why don't you read it to me. I think I deserve to hear what he had to say after what I did for him today, don't you?"

Albert took the letter she offered. "Are you sure you want me to read this?" he said. "I mean, isn't this something you'd rather keep private."

"Of course not," she said laughingly. "How will I ever know what it says unless someone reads it to me?"

Albert opened the letter and read it to himself. His face turned white suddenly. "I'd rather not read this letter," he said quickly.

"Now you go right ahead and read it," she said. "You're not going to back down are you?"

"All right," he said. "I'll read you the letter." His voice cracked as he read.

"My dearest Marie,

I love you, I loved you and I will always love you. Because of that this letter is almost impossible to write. My soul is dry now and is cracking with age. I know that I will
die soon and you will have of me only your memories. I should not shatter your memories, particularly those of these last two years. I thought I could let it remain a secret but I know now that I love you too much to keep the lie alive.

"The world would pardon an old man his frailties and I hope you will pardon me mine. My weakness was young and slighty and beautiful. The knowledge of approaching death maddens a man. My madness was love, but it was love for you. You as you were when we were young. It was amazing how much she looked like you. Fair and strong, with blue eyes with sapphire luster.

"But if you love an old man you want something in return. I painted for her, paintings that should have been yours. For you I painted memories; for her I painted life, our life, yours and mine, as it was when we were young. But if you could see the paintings, you would forgive me. Oh the paintings, Marie, the paintings. They are alive, better than anything I've done in years. Six of them, six paintings that live.

But she grew bored. She sold the paintings, I don't know where. And she sold me with them. I don't ask for forgiveness, only understanding. I would never . . ." The letter stopped. It was left unsigned.

Albert looked up from the letter with tears in his eyes. Mme. Berard was clutching the painting to her. The three children and the hoop lay on her breast.

The oily smoke still hung over the room.
HALTING BY TREES ON A FROSTY NIGHT

DAVID I. McINTYRE, '65

I note ahead a clump of trees, owned by a pair of absentees; I think it would be orthodox if I would stop a while and freeze.

It must seem odd to my big ox to halt the cart without our smocks the coldest night in many a day between the trees and icy rocks.

My ox asserts a little bray to signify his grave dismay. The only other tone's the caw of some benumbed and starving jay.

The trees hold me in solemn awe, but I must go and see my paw, and weeks to come before I thaw, and weeks to come before I thaw.
From the lobby of the little resort hotel on Fire Island, New York, a man in blue swimming trunks walked out onto the big veranda. Under one arm he carried a large, cylindrical metal tank wrapped in a tangle of canvas webbing and rubber tubes; dangling from his fingers by their straps was a pair of green frog-like flippers. In his other hand, held by the heavy cord which bound it, was a bundle of rubber, a small deflated one-man raft, wrapped around a short paddle. Strapped to his strong hairless wrist, like a watch, was a pressure gauge. For a moment he stood at the head of the brief flight of stairs leading down to the sand, looking out over the wide beach at the green-white Atlantic ahead; then he glanced up at the sun, narrowing his eyes. It was nearly noon, the sun almost overhead in a clear sky, and he welcomed the warmth of it on his untanned, white skin.

He was a short man in vigorous middle age, his straight black hair thick and ungrayed. His body was thin and paunchless; his feet, on the sand-gritted wood floor of the porch, were very flat.

“Nice day for it, Mr. Lauffnauer.” Behind him the hotel clerk had appeared in the doorway, and as Frank Lauffnauer turned, the clerk nodded at the diving equipment under his arms.

“Yes, very good visibility.” Lauffnauer eyed him narrowly. He didn’t trust the clerk’s sham friendliness, nor did he ever trust anyone. It was his secret, his dream. He would not take a chance now, not after almost forty years of careful planning and this his ninth day searching. His face seemed stern, yet he smiled at the clerk. His cheeks were hollowed to flatness, his nose large and beaked, with two deep, absolutely straight lines running down past the corners of his thin mouth. Unlike his pale body, his face and neck were tanned, the skin rough and masculine. A forbidding man, people usually thought — until he smiled.

He smiled again, his long white teeth flashing; then he walked down the steps, and began to plod through the fine, ankle-deep sand toward the beach ahead. It was a magnificent beach, extending for miles in either direction, and very wide; here where the sand was dry it was nearly white; ahead, where the receding tide had flattened and dampened the sand, it was a dark rich brown. The beach was almost deserted; several hundred yards to Lauffnauer’s right, a young woman
in a yellow bathing suit sat reading, a small child in a sun suit digging in the sand beside her. Far to the left, well back of high-tide line, an old man wearing a tan suit, a necktie, and a black felt hat sat on a blanket. There was no one else in sight; this was a Monday early in June; all weekend guests had gone late yesterday or early this morning.

Reaching the water’s edge now, he turned to look back, studying the shore through several long seconds. Then he walked on beside the water, to the north, moving briskly on the firm, packed sand. From time to time he searched the shoreline again; once he walked backward for a dozen yards, watching the gabled roof of the hotel slowly recede. Back of the sparsely weeded dunes into which the beach rose stood an irregular line of summer cottages, all more or less alike, and typical of Fire Island in their drab, gray-shingled, weathered exteriors. He was counting these as he passed them, all of them, that is, which seemed old. The newer ones, however—and it wasn’t always easy to tell which were comparatively new, they were so much alike—he omitted from his count.

When he had counted twenty-six houses to the north of the hotel he stopped at the water’s edge, more than a mile from the hotel, and lowered his equipment to the sand. For a few moments he stood looking out at the ocean, flexing his arms and fingers, riddling them of strain from the weight they had carried. The water was very placid today, waveless and undisturbed except for a slow gentle swell which broke in less than foot-high waves into a thin froth running up to his feet. He had expected calm today; he was a weatherwise man, always aware of it even in the heart of the city, Manhattan Island, in which he lived.

Kneeling in the sand, he inflated the little raft from a tube of compressed gas which had been wrapped in it. It quickly popped into shape—a sausage-sided, flat-bottomed, wedge-nosed little raft just big enough for one man. In addition to the short paddle and the gas bottle, there had been wrapped in the raft a weight belt, two coils of rope, one of them attached to a ten-pound concrete anchor, and a square red flag on a thin wood standard. The flag he fitted into a socket at the nose of the raft; then he loaded in his other gear, dragged the raft out into the surf, and began walking through the water, pushing it ahead of him.

The bottom slanted very shallowly here, and he walked out into the ocean for a considerable distance; several hundred yards out he was only waist deep. From time
to time he glanced over his shoulder at the shore behind him; sometimes, then, he moved to the left or right, keeping the twenty-sixth house directly behind him. Finally when the water was chest high, he climbed carefully into the little raft and began to paddle, again glancing regularly back at the shore to the house which was his landmark. It was hard work; the tiny keelless raft tended to revolve, and he had to switch paddle sides often. But he kept at it, stopping only once to rest. Then, finally, a mile out from shore, he lowered the concrete weight and began sounding the bottom.

He sounded, the first time, at just over seventy feet—the line was knotted at ten-foot intervals—then snubbed the line to a ring at the prow, and paddled ahead. He sounded again at over eighty feet, and the third time at ninety. Once again he glanced back over his shoulder, then shrugged and tied his line, tightly this time, with a double square knot. Anchored in just ninety feet of water, he began to put on his diving equipment, kneeling in the raft and working carefully, adjusting the straps to a nicety. He knew it would be cold in the water. Even though it was early June, not far below the sunwarmed surface the ocean would retain its winter chill. He would have liked to have a rubber suit, but he had rented this equipment, and the expense together with the cost of his room at the hotel was all he could afford.

As always, he was afraid of what he was about to do. He was an experienced diver, but he was going under in a hundred feet of water or more, in the ocean, and alone. His equipment on, the lead-weighted canvas belt around his waist, he lowered his mask over his eyes and gripped the rubber mouthpiece of the breathing apparatus in his teeth. Then he stood, his back to the water, and allowed himself to fall backward, the tank on his back splashing and cushioning the fall. Face down in the water, holding onto the anchor rope, the other coil of rope in his hand, he lay just under the surface and tested his aqua-lung. For half a dozen slow breaths the chains of bubbles purred smoothly from the valve at the back of his neck, bursting to the surface a few inches above.

He raised his masked head for a last look at the far-off shore, orienting himself, then began to descend down the anchor rope through the sunlit green water toward the blackness below, his hands moving slowly and regularly down the thin white line. Eight or ten feet below the surface, the water suddenly lost its warmth, and as the chill enveloped him, he was afraid again.
Always, not far below him, was blackness, but he never reached it. As he descended, his arms moving regularly like slow-moving pistons, the light seemed to move with him. It had changed in color to a hazed deeper green, and now he swallowed to clear his ears of pressure. Presently—he had counted the knots and was eighty feet down—the water’s color changed to a yellow-green; and then he saw the bottom, of clean, yellow sand, six or seven feet below the rubber-encased glass plate strapped to his face, and he grinned. He could see, he estimated, for eighty or a hundred feet in a circle around him, and now he tied the end of the rope coil in his hand to the anchor line. Then, paying out the rope as he moved, he swam just over the bottom until the rope was taut in his hand. Now, guided and oriented by the rope, he began to swim in a great circle around the anchor line of his little raft, searching with his eyes as far as he could see, glancing from time to time at his depth gauge. He saw, at first, only sand and occasional waterlogged wood fragments lying on the shimmering bottom. He was afraid, but ignored the fear and even took pleasure in the effortless nature of his motion and the strange, exhilarating absence of weight. A cluster of smooth-worn rocks slid beneath him; snug against them lay a heavy beam studded with rust-eaten spikes, and in the bar of shade alongside it, fins barely moving, he saw the speckled black body of a large fish. These things moved under and then behind him, and he stroked with one hand to curve like a seal around a tall sea-growing plant, its black-green fronds undulating in the gentle watery breeze of his passing. This was the closest to flying, he felt, to riding the wind like a hawk, that a man could achieve, and now his fear was forgotten.

For ten minutes he swam, soaring dreamlike and effortlessly over the undersea landscape, the lifelong weight of his body gone. He had seen, so far, fish of many sizes and kinds, crabs, shells, rotting logs, squat black kelplike plants or tall green ones, rusting cans, a crimson bathing cap, and he knew that presently he must ascend, taking minutes to do so, through the slowly decreasing pressures above him.

But now, on the opposite side of his circle, he moved into deeper water. The sun was strong and nearly vertically overhead, the ocean’s surface almost completely calm, the light came down clearly. The circle of his vision had contracted with the greater depths into which he had moved, its edges a dead black curtain. But still it was large, and the sand bottom under his glass mask was still bright with green sun. He paused, swallowing
to break the pressure from his eardrums, his hands and feet moving only enough to maintain his position. Then once again he thrust out with his flippered feet, eyes never shifting from the far boundary of his vision, and almost instantly he stopped, braking himself hard with his arms. For this time, finally, a portion of the blackness ahead had failed to retreat with the rest.

Hanging motionless just over the bottom, he stared at it, a narrow swatch of blackness protruding into the yellow-green circle of light of which he was the center. Through four or five slow breaths, the little chains of bubbles climbing over his head, he watched; it did not move nor did he. With a slow thrust of his feet, he edged closer; and the section of blackness did not retreat. As always, the remainder of the formless darkness moved ahead as he did; but the narrow black strip remained behind, increasingly solid, beginning to take shape, and protruding well into the cone of shimmering, green-yellow light. And now he was certain; he was staring at a sunken ship, and his breathing deepened and became more rapid, the silvery bubbles purring furiously from their vent.

Suddenly, recklessly, he thrust himself powerfully forward, dropping his rope. As fast as he could move, he flashed over the sand toward the sunken ship, then had to reach out quickly to fend himself off from the sharp prow that shot toward him through the sun-slash green haze. His hand closed on slimed steel, and through the circle of his mask he saw the ship’s bowed side curving off into the blackness beyond. He could not move; his emotions overwhelmed and confused him, and through several moments, the ascending bubble-chains thick and gurgling, he clung to the prow. Then he released his hold and began to swim slowly and cautiously along the ship’s side, keeping a yard or more from it, following its bulge into the darkness ahead. Greenly but clearly, in the cone of his vision, he saw the ship’s side, not rust-reddened, for no reds were visible at this depth, but evenly coated with slime and a whitish moss from which hung long tendrils swaying in the disturbed water as he moved. He swam clear around the little ship—it was no longer than a hundred feet—inspecting its sides, his excitement and certainty growing. Then, with a downward thrust of his flippered feet, he shot his body vertically upward through the green water, his masked face lifted. And now, his mask rising level with the cable-railed deck, he saw it: the tiny moss-crusted conning tower of this sunken submarine.

He knew he had to be careful; his heart pounding, his breathing
harsh, bubbles flashed from his air vent in a furious high-pitched and tinny purr. Both hands gripping the slimed deck-rail cable, his body parallel with the ocean floor, Frank Lauffnauer lay motionless in the water, staring at the ghostly conning tower before him, waiting for his heart to slow, keeping out of trouble until his excitement should subside.

Then, hands shoving at the cable, he glided over the little deck and, his arms outthrust, caught one of the welded steps on the side of the tiny conning tower. Only then did he lower his legs to stand on the pulpy deck grating. With the palm of one hand, he began sweeping the tendriled moss from the side of the little tower. His hand swinging rhythmically like the windshield wiper of a car, he cleared a yardwide space from the steel surface before him and continued downward. An edge of flaked white paint appeared under his hand, and continuing to sweep aside the furry slime, he worked on down, increasing the arc of his swing, until he could read a portion of what had once been painted there. It was a “U”, followed by a dash. Then he cleared the numbers following it and stared at the whole legend. “U-62”, it read. This ancient ship was, or had been, a German submarine; and Frank Lauffnauer closed his eyes, and stood, a hundred and ten feet under the surface of the ocean, his body encased in water, blue with cold, forgetting where he was in remembering the last time he had stood on this deck.

He pictured it, he remembered it clearly in a sense; but he could not really recapture it. He remembered it, but he could not recover the feeling of it—the dread and sick excitement. He could not even picture the face of the boy—the smooth unlined face of a fifteen-year-old Frank Lauffnauer—who had slammed this hatch cover shut over forty years before. Then he opened his eyes and smiled a little, a very odd sort of smile. He watched in memory the vague figure of a boy in a world in which Kaiser Wilhelm seemed supreme. Like a man watching an old and silent motion picture film, he saw this ancient submarine. It was night, and on this deck stood two German sailors—one of them himself, wearing a broad flat cap with long ribbons dangling from its back. They could no longer sail or fight her—there were too few of them now; he and the other man on deck—Biehler, his name was—and a waiting third man in an inflated life raft. Together they paddled a dozen yards off and watched as the sea water gushed into the tanks, the air vents roaring. He remembered the sound of it—and they sat watch-
ing the deck come quickly awash, the water creep up the sides of the tower.

The sea closed over it then, and they were paddling, so long ago now, toward the black unknown coast of “Amerika”—Lauffnauer was now thinking in German. Their submarine had touched bottom scraping the sand under the water far below them. He had pictured it then, and he pictured it now, slowly coating through the years of his life ever since, with silt, sea moss, and slime. He wondered what had happened to Biehler and Strang—Strang, Willi Strang, the third man in the raft. Whatever had happened to them? They must surely be dead by now; Biehler would be over eighty, Strang nearly ninety—it seemed impossible!

He had to leave, but he did not want to. His eyes widening behind the glass of his face mask, the past dismissed, he stood for some moments in the grip of a tremendous exultation. He had thought of the U-62 constantly through the years, wondering about her curiously. He had thought wildly of searching for her, as he had today and for more than a week past, the excitement always rising. But there had been no purpose then. He had found his old ship, and he would return to Germany in her. He stood exulting, his hand almost unconsciously stroking the slimed side of the primitive tower. For the ancient submarine seemed in good condition—as far as he could tell, but he was wary. He reminded himself cautiously and superstitiously that she had been sunk 40 years before. But this was a clean bottom, swept by currents with every tide; she should be all right if her valves had held. If they had—and they might have, they just might—her interior had not flooded, and it was at least possible, he told himself, and grinned, that the little sub could be made operable again; no one could say. But if so—there under the ocean, he clenched his fist—it was his submarine, and he thanked the innate caution that had made him keep the secret of her for forty years. No one else in the world, undoubtedly, even dreamed that the U-62 existed.

He began to climb finally, with regular, slow strokes of his flippered feet, toward the surface far above. He rose slowly through the decreasing pressures toward the growing brightness overhead, occasionally slowing the speed of his ascent. Behind his mask his eyes moved regularly from side to side, watching, making sure that his body did not rise faster than the strings of silvered bubbles which rose in short bursts over his head. Presently, his masked head broke the smooth surface of the water, and
he shoved the mask back, glancing around him, and saw the red flag of his raft. But he did not immediately swim to it. Staring at the shore, he estimated its distance, and by triangulation, using the big roof of the hotel to the south as one point, and a new aluminum roof glinting in the sun to the north as another, he fixed his position as well as he could. Then, knowing he could find the U-62 again, this time more easily and quickly, he began to swim slowly toward his raft.

On the beach he lay face down in the sand, head cradled on his forearms, resting. He was very tired, ravenously hungry, and cold to his bones, his skin waxy white. But he allowed himself only fifteen minutes of rest, the spring sun—almost hot at midday—gradually warming his body. Then he made himself stand, deflated his raft, packed his equipment, and began to walk back along the empty beach toward the hotel. There was no more time to rest, there would be no more leisure for many days. Beginning immediately—he grinned at the thought, feeling alive again for the first time in forty years—Frank Lauffnauer had a crew to enlist!
TEMPTATION OVERCOME

Heaven Fallen Angel
By what bad grace do you approach my person?
The God of Heaven cast you past the Sea of Chaos
And save my soul of your mortal sting.
Behold, still you taunt, but in vain;
Oh Adversary, King of Demons,
Useless is your attempt on my happiness,
Call on your Moloch; my battlements are strong,
And the oppressing fool will fail,
As have you. Mammon send;
Opulence have I far greater than your
Poor condemned Maecenas.
Return to your despondent allies
Entombed in a precinct of strength
Paralleled to the homes of the Memphian Kings.
Go, devil, return to Serapis
Your keeper, major domo of Pandemonium.

Love is my strength and 'tis far stronger
Than the gates of Hell, which first
By death through sin you passed
To seek these things called earth and man.
You found my first mother and
In serpent like deceit misguided her
To pain of love, and limb, and birth.
Tarry Angel of Hell, Highest to Lowest
Cast,
I have more to say. You do not remark.
You have left: 'tis well.
Welcome Heaven.

KENNETH F. JODOIN, '63
I was hitchhiking south out of Winslow, North Carolina, on a parched July afternoon. To get away from the scorching sun I had found a maple tree along the highway near the edge of town. Across the street was a shabby grocery store with nothing painted but the Coca-Cola sign. In front of the store two boys were playing in the dirt with a penknife. I could make out only a few of their words, for their voices were muffled by the thick heat. Behind the store stretched a tobacco field. Far away I could see the tiny white umbrella of a tractor plowing back and forth.

WALLY

John Eagleson, '64

After I had been kicking some pebbles around in the dust for about fifteen minutes, a beaten blue '52 Ford pulled over on the shoulder. Grabbing my satchel, I jogged up to the car and asked through the open window, “How far down are you going?”

The driver was a huge Negro dressed in dungarees and a Hawaiian sport shirt. “I’m goin’ clear down to Fayetteville,” he answered.

“Fayetteville? where’s that?”

“It’s down the road apiece,” he said.

“On 301?”

“Yeah, that’s the one.”

“OK,” I said, as I climbed aboard. “I’m going to Miami myself.”

It’s foolish to accept rides to unknown destinations, but if he was staying on 301, at least I wouldn’t be stranded. Later I discovered “Fayetteville” was “Fayetteville.”
I threw my bag in the back seat and settled back as he maneuvered the car back onto the highway. He was about thirty-five and as round and hard as a basketball. I guess he weighed 280. He wore a baseball cap turned backwards like a catcher. His pudgy face sported a little thin moustache that didn’t belong on such a big man.

“Sure is hot today, isn’t it?” I asked, trying to make conversation.

“Yeah, it sure is,” he said.

“How far have you come?”

“Started up in Newark yesterday.”

“Work up there?” I asked.

“Yeah. Do construction work. I’m a laborer.”

“Tough work, I guess,” I commented.

“It ain’t bad,” he said. “The work’s hard, but then I ain’t no midget myself. Anyhow I try to take it easy. My boss, he tries to work me, but I just tell him I got a bad heart. The way I figure it is I don’t get no double pay for havin’ double size, so I shouldn’t have to do no double work.” With this statement of his theory of work he broke into a fit of hysterical laughter. His white teeth shone and his sides shook. Only a Negro’s sense of humor could find so much to laugh at in something apparently without humor.

“You like working there?” I asked when he had composed himself.

“It ain’t so much me likin’ it. It’s that they need me there. I’m the only guy big enough to run that big jackhammer they got. Besides, I like it when I ain’t got no worries. I just do what my boss tells me—and I do it good.
If he tells me to knock a wall down, I knocks it down. If he tells me to put it back up, I puts it back up. That way I don't get into no trouble. Anybody complains, I just tell him to see my boss.”

Then the conversation died. I watched the puddles that are always up ahead disappear as we approached. The hot air shimmied over the road. The locusts following us down the hot concrete whined louder than the tires. Tonight would be steamy.

I tried to revive the conversation. “Think it’ll rain this afternoon?”

“Looks like it might from those clouds up yonder,” he answered.

“Say a prayer it doesn’t. I still got a long way to go,” I said.

“Prayer?” he said. “Ha! I ain’t done no prayin’ for a long time. Nah, you don’t need to do no prayin’. Sorta just take everyday when it comes and go along with the program. If things go bad, well, you can’t win ’em all.”

Up ahead I saw something in our lane. The sun was too bright to make out what it was. Then I saw. “Hey,” I yelled. “Watch out! There’s a big snake in the road.” He swerved and then screeched to a stop. Shifting into reverse he leaned his chubby arm over the seat, backed up to where the snake was—and ran over it! I could feel it being crushed by the tires. He drove over it, back and forth, three times.

“What did you do that for?” I asked as I looked back at the spot on the sizzling highway.

“Snakes is no good,” he said. “I always kill ’em when I get a chance. It’s just like them mices and rats and all.
They're no good either. They'd run right up your breeches if you'd give 'em a chance."

"You got friends down here in North Carolina?" I asked, as we continued toward Fayetteville.

"Yeah, I'm comin' down to see my ma," he said. "She always lived here."

"Why did you move up to Newark?" I asked.

"Can't make any money down here. I got two kids y'know. Say, do you want to see their pictures? Here, I got 'em right here in my wallet." Without waiting for an answer he dug into his dungarees, pulled out his wallet, and flashed the pictures.

"The little boy looks like you," I said, trying to find some resemblance.

"Yeah," he said. "That's what everybody says." Then he had another attack of toothy laughter.

Suddenly he became serious. "It's tough keepin' food on the table for four people. I'm thinkin' of movin' out to California myself. I hear jobs is real good out there. Ya' gotta keep movin' if ya wanna get anywheres."

"Hey, kid, we're comin' to Fetvul. I'm gonnno have to be leavin' ya now."

"Just leave me by that traffic light there. That looks like a good spot to catch a ride."

"By the way, kid," he said. "My name's Wally."

"I'm glad I met ya, Wally. I'm John."

He pulled over. I jumped out and slammed the door. "So long, Wally. Take care."

"Yeah, kid. Take care."
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