

A Little Resurrection and a  
Little Redemption

by

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## A Little Resurrection

Sometimes on a late Saturday afternoon I'll get a glass filled with ice and pour some vodka over it and watch the dark come onto the city. The view is spectacular, with a look at both the lake and the long string of tall apartments along the Drive. I'm no boozier; it's just a good way to pull things together until an idea strikes where I might go to get some dinner.

On a bookshelf in my living room there is an old Morse code key. It's the only thing that still remains of what my father left behind. Of course there were dozens of objects that my sisters and I split up as they came to us. We'd meet and do this at family gatherings over the years. The possessions of his that I took have somehow disappeared. They were left behind in one move or another or they have been taken and lost or traded away by my own kids. The code-sending key is the only thing left to me. It's an odd looking gadget, a horizontal toggle switch that he rattled between his thumb and index finger. It sits bolted to a heavy brass stand. It was adjusted to hair trigger sensitivity and with it he sent dots and dashes into space at a speed and accuracy that got him some recognition among local ham radio organizations. He had certificates attesting to his

skills and accomplishments. He had plaques. But, even in his own lifetime the use of the code had long gone past fashion. It just wasn't practical most of the time. However, it was the fundamental form and even though his equipment, in the later years, gave him the capacity to exchange spoken pleasantries with Rhodesia and New Guiana, he still would, now and then, work the code into words and phrases. Answers came to him through headphones. He listened, making occasional notes, decoding in his mind what seemed to me to be the warbling of birds. He did it he said to keep his hand at it, but I suspect it was as much a matter of respect. The Morse Code key is a ridiculously outdated instrument in the context of micro circuitry and computer chips. I keep it now inside a brick of Lucite to hold up a row from Book of the Month.

My father had a young and engaging face with a smile that was warm but not wholly honest, like a boy who had been caught at some minor mischief wearing a grin that seemed to be saying, "Isn't that just like me." His blond hair and blue eyes added to the innocence, but at the same time those particular features must have made him even more menacing when someone who was not from the old neighborhood heard him talk about "dagos" or "kikes". Now, I'll ask you not to judge him harshly, for he was only expressing what was acceptable and even necessary in the old neighborhood. After all, fact is nothing without a context

He was a draftsman for the Pullman Company. He

copied designs for the little parts of train cars that no one saw, working bent over a drafting table for weeks at a time on coupler systems or brake hydraulics that even in his own day were quickly becoming a thing of the past. Who took the train anymore? - people too poor or too fearful or people without a modern outlook. In our neighborhood his job put us in the upper half in terms of the things that could be seen to matter - the house, the lawn the age of the car. I learned to divide things in halves in such a way as to make sure that what was mine fell into the category above.

Somewhere along the course of his working life he elevated his title a bit. He no longer wanted to be called a draftsman. Instead he began referring to himself as a *Design Engineer*. But he never went to college. There was no conference of a degree. He could not honestly stake a claim to the title *engineer* in the sense he was intending it. But he was a good draftsman and at various times in the booms and busts of the Pullman Company he had as many as fifteen people reporting to him and as few as none. Mornings, I would sit outside his bedroom door and listen to him dress for work. There was the sound of silk being knotted and pushed up under his collar. His leather belt squeaked as he bent over to lace his shoes. He walked through the door and gave me a friendly thump on the head as he passed. His white shirt poked into his trousers billowed in the back like a sail full of wind as he went by, puffing a little from the exertion. Our neighbors were tradesmen and laborers. Although we had a garage he always parked in front of the house. Each morning he walked outside with a sense of his outfit knowing that now and then there might be a neighbor looking through their window. His preparation was

unvarying and deliberate. His hair was combed slick with water. The water still hung in beads among the thin strands as he filled his pants pockets with the loose change, the cigarettes, the lighter and keys. All were slid off the dresser and loaded into his pants. The wallet, stuffed with licenses and cards, notes to himself, and folding money, bulged in his back pocket.

There was a night, I was not more than seven or eight, he took me to see a film of *Rumplestiltskin* that was being shown at my school. The seats in the assembly hall were banked down toward the stage where the screen had been set up. It was a special evening exclusively for the fathers and their kids. Rules that would normally forbid candy and gum were lifted. Clark bars and M&M's were sold from twenty-four count boxes. The wooden seats in the auditorium were slippery with furniture wax and even my corduroy pants did not hold. Each time I slipped I grabbed my father's sleeve and with just the slightest move of his arm I was hoisted back into position. On the screen the trapped princess spun straw into gold and tried to know the identity of her jailer, guessing at a thousand different names. My dad had come directly from work and hadn't changed out of his suit and white shirt. The other fathers, the fathers of my school friends, wore work shirts with rolled sleeves that showed tattoos and open collars showing undershirts and, in one case, the stains from dinner. In their jobs these fathers answered to whistles and time clocks. When the movie ended and the lights came up we walked to the door. My father stopped to wet his white handkerchief at the drinking fountain and he cleaned a

chocolate smear from my chin. I pointed out my classmates, John Lasky and Ronnie Schwartz. I wanted them to see him. He nodded to each of their fathers and smiled to them as we passed. In the car I talked about how Rumpelstiltskin had been tricked into giving up his secret and Dad said quietly, “So, I see you’ve got yourself a couple of sheeney friends.”

It was not the job that got him onto his feet each morning. After the ritual of dressing and filling the pockets he sat at his radio before leaving for work. When he used the code key I could hear him pounding out messages into the air. He had the receiver turned up and the beeps of code could be heard throughout the house. He sat at the radio taking notes, sometimes smiling to himself at what he was hearing, a cup of coffee beside him and a new cigarette cradled in the ashtray sending streams of smoke into the air. It seemed to me he had a broader experience of the world than any of the neighbors because before he went off to make his drawings he talked to other men in Germany or in Mozambique. They would send post cards confirming. The whole wall of our dining room was pasted with colorful cards from everywhere. He talked to London. Coming back through the static the accented voice said, “You’re twenty-over-nine, Yank. You’ve got a powerful signal.” My father’s small talk would include the names of my sisters and me and I’d plump at the thought of my name being heard in London. But he never got on a plane in all his life. He never saw London. – but me -- I’m in London all the time.

I visited the grave only once, two weeks after the services. There were new flowers so my mother must have been there. The earth was still fresh around the marker. It was soft and still healing. The sun was bright that day but it had turned suddenly colder. A lone gravedigger on a backhoe, wearing a heavy parka and a cap with earflaps that tied under his chin, worked a hundred yards away. He operated the levers, making the motor growl. The earth, scooped out of the hole, was heaped in the basket and steamed in the cold air. It began to snow and now the flakes were sticking to the headstone and beginning to lay a white blanket on top of the letters and dates. It occurred to me that day there was not a lot of reason to return to the cemetery; not from the feeling I got standing there. The benefits of visits to the grave seem hardly worth the upkeep. Besides, he had already taught me about the proper way to be among the dead. There were Italians and Poles in our old neighborhood. They threw themselves on the caskets of their dead and wailed and carried on and had to be dragged away three and four times. “Those Wops have no dignity,” he said. There are no lessons, it seems to me, to be learned at graveside unless you want to go into the cemetery business. What I learned from my father were all above ground experiences, and they come in two types – those that came before and those that came after that nasty little moment.

From up here in my apartment I can see the Saturday traffic is picking up now on the Drive. Even before the sun

is down cars are scurrying north and south. The roads and the walkways are full of city people. Some of them making ready for the next stage. Men and women of marriageable age, full of anticipation, head toward their homes to get ready, to meet someone they might spend their lives with. Seeing it all from up here it's so much clearer, looking out of this wall of glass -- floor to ceiling, Mies Van der Roe, one man full time just to clean the windows. From up here you can see that the cars in traffic order themselves much more neatly and predictably than you think it is when you're sitting behind the windshield. The sudden stops and frustrations and anger of tangles all come from simple causes. No one is really at fault. It's all just a misunderstanding.

A man named Berman still comes to mind. He was part of that nasty little moment I mentioned. Thirty seconds kept for forty years. One summer night my father said to me after supper, "I can put you to work helping me at the office. But, this is real, not play. It's man's work. You have to stick with it. I can't be bringing you home if you don't want to stay the day." The company had decided to move the R and D group to another location, away from the old plant to a more modern spot in a suburban complex a few miles away. He was left behind to sew up the details, to destroy unneeded drawings and to decide what was to be kept and what was not. He worked alone. It seemed to me to be a job of great trust and responsibility. I immediately and excitedly accepted his offer. I'd work with him at the



office to help with the drawings. That night I laid out my things on my dresser, selected a white shirt and a tie. In the morning I buried my face in wet hands and scrubbed, washing up even before he did. I soaked and combed my hair and slid a house key and a few nickels into my pockets, and a wallet packed with fake currency, one's fives and tens, bought from Woolworth's. We drove to his office next to the tall abandoned old factory of black brick. The windows in the rotting factory were small squares of darkness, dozens of them, those that remained were caked with dust. The heavy machinery that was left behind was being re-taken by nature. The birds built fresh nests and spiders had spun new webs among the twisted rigging of the spokes of the wheels of the trolleys of cranes that would never again hoist another load. The buildings would crumble and rust and become a home to the beasts.

Inside the R&D building my father used his keys at several places. We ended in a cinderblock room with walls painted a very light green where row after row of drafting tables were laid out like a schoolroom. The big tables were unused and the chairs and stools had been tipped upside down on the desks. There were notebooks and stacks of file folders and piles of blueprints, drawings on single pages of paper that were bigger than I ever imagined paper was made. The drawings were nothing I could recognize. I'd expected to see color pictures of streamliners with people reclining and eating meals and playing cards and meeting friendly strangers as the miles passed outside their windows. What I looked at were drawings of levers and hoses, pulleys and stops, no part of which you could relate

to a train car. There were endless notes written in boxes within the drawing, all done in neat block printed letters. My job was to separate the huge drawings, cutting them into halves. Each of the pages contained a drawing on one side that was mirrored on the other. The left was a reflection of the right, the over view a reflection of the under view. He showed me how to work with the big scissors, holding open the blade and sliding it along the line. With a little practice the two sides fell neatly away from one another.

He had brought our kitchen radio from home and put it on the windowsill. It looked odd in the office and it seemed to me he might be doing something wrong, breaking some rule, by bringing a radio to the place where he worked. In the afternoon he turned on the baseball game so we could listen as we worked. The radio mixed with the sound of scissors and the snipping and shuffling of paper echoed off the walls. We worked at our separate jobs, each engrossed in what was expected of him. Each could hear the working sounds of the other: my shuffling and cutting, his jotting of pencil notes, and the metal wheels of the file cabinet drawers that he opened and closed. Behind it all was the sound of the ball game's lone announcer droning, with long lapses, and in the background the hollow sound of vendors and popping paper cups and the unexcited murmur of a weekday crowd. We worked together, but separately -- alone together.

As the cutting became routine and required less attention, I thought about the Morse code. A few weeks

before, he'd made up a list of letters in a long column and beside each had printed the dots and dashes of the code. He made copies from a mimeograph stencil and mounted them to cardboard so I could have copies in several places. "*Dit, dit, dit, dit, ... dit, dit ... da-dit, dit-da, da-dit,*" I said to him. Without looking up he rattled back a long answer in code just a little faster than he knew I was capable of handling.

We worked with a large table between us and during that talking in dots and dashes I thought I heard doors open and close several rooms away. A minute later when I looked up there was a man in our doorway. He was tall: his head almost touched the top of the opening. He was wearing a white shirt that seemed to glisten in the light of the office - gold cuff links and a heavy gold watch. He seemed to shine from everywhere. "What's going on," he said and came into the room. He didn't say it in an angry way but neither was he being friendly like he'd just come upon some pals. My dad looked surprised to see him. The man looked at me.

"That's my son, Mr. Berman."

The man walked toward my dad to see what he was working on and my dad pointed to things he was writing and at the same time reached to the radio to turn off the ball game. The man's clothing was much better than my father's, cleaner and more sharply pressed. My father had to look up to talk to him and he said his name, "Mr. Berman," a couple more times. He seemed to be answering

more questions than the big man was asking. Mr. Berman had gray and black wavy hair that was cut and combed like someone on television. He had golden skin. He looked like he'd been on a vacation. He wore shoes made from a black alligator and a belt that matched exactly. "What's the boy doing here," he said.

"He's helping me with the separating."

"He can't be here," Mr. Berman said. I was waiting for my father to tell him it was all right, that I was there because he had told me to come there.

"He's not insured. If something happens were not covered. The company is not covered."

Well, I thought, what would happen? All he had to do was tell Mr. Berman that nothing was going to happen. But now my father said something that I couldn't believe. He said, "Well, he'll just finish out the afternoon."

"He's got to go now," Mr. Berman said and he walked over to me to see the cutting I'd done. I tried to slide some papers over the box of candy cigarettes that was lying on the table. I looked at my father and he seemed glued to the spot he was standing on. Mr. Berman left just as quickly as he had come. We were alone again. There was no talking for a minute. I was sure my dad was going to turn up the ball game and say forget it. That it was all right. That there would be no problem. That I should just get back to work.

“You’d better get your things together,” he said.

I walked quickly the five blocks to our house, putting my feet down hard, moving as fast as I could. I wanted to run but held myself back. Tears were coming, there was nothing to be done about that, but I did swat some flowers that were in my reach as I sped along the sidewalk. The blossoms spun circles in the air and fell beheaded onto the grass.

Separating is a lot easier thing these days. You know, with the right understandings there doesn’t have to be a lot of trauma and it might almost be considered agreeable. People fly more easily away from one another now. Change your assumptions about people and you change your life. If you get a divorce and you’ve got the bucks take a couple weeks in the Caribbean -- forget it -- move on. Look at Joan and me. The house and things are still in tact. We both still use the Club and she even calls here to see how it’s going for me. Very commendable. Done with dignity. Still, I look down at the street and wonder why these people drive so quickly to make their meetings. So eager to make the coupling. So eager to connect. I guess you never get the long view until afterward.

I’m not saying my father was a straw man, but he wasn’t what he made himself out to be. But who is after all? On the day after the burial I went back to clean up the bills at the hospital. The detail was long, three pages of charges despite that he was there less than six hours. The list, the

carbon copy of the specifics, was hard to read, the words were smudged and indistinct. There were the technical names of the drugs sent into him with needles -- the anesthesia, the oxygen, all the particulars costing forty dollars each and fifty dollars each. There was the ambulance, three hundred dollars -- a very important item. A physician whose signature I couldn't decipher, a name I could only guess at, signed the certification of his death. On the sheet containing patient information, information which my mother must have provided the hospital, were his birth date, name and address, and in the list of contacts my name appeared. It was striking seeing my name there. It referred to me, standing there, at that moment. Then in the box marked occupation was the word, poorly lettered, "Draftsman."

The ice has begun to melt in my drink. It slides and falls more into the bottom of the glass and makes a tinkling sound for a moment. The vodka is gone. I considered making another but decided against it. From next door, from inside my neighbor's apartment, there's a sound of tapping -- a tapping on our common wall. It's only then that I realize it has grown so late. As I've watched the night start and as the lights have come on in the buildings below me, it has become dark in my own room. The tapping on the wall comes in an irregular rhythm -- random, without meaning. Saturday night seems a strange time to be hanging a picture.

## A Little Redemption

Roy Campanella is in the posture of the anguished Christ. One arm holds the mask away from his body, his head hung back, as he looked into the air for the foul ball. He squints into the sun, his mouth opened in concentration, the other arm stretched, his gloved hand hesitating, poking out at the air, waiting for the ball to begin its fall. Hubbard, a little boy then, knew this catcher, Campanella, to be twice damned – he was not only a nigger he was also a dago. His face was light skinned and with white people features, but he was black -- unmistakably black and with that puzzling Italian name. The boy hesitated, deciding in which stack to put the picture card. He sat in short pants in the sunny ground of his backyard. The warm grass tickled his legs as he sorted the cards into stacks of Negro players and made a different pile for the Cubans and the Venezuelans and kept the remaining white players in a separate stack. Then he sorted each stack into right-handed throwers and divided those between American and National League players and then finally into teams. Hubbard's mother took him to his first baseball game that year and as a coincidence it was the Brooklyn Dodgers and he saw Roy Campanella that day catch a foul ball stretching and gaping upward just as in his picture on the card and for the first time Hubbard had a sense of the timeless circle.

Later, after baseball had lost for Hubbard some of its hold, he heard that Campanella had been in a car accident and was in a wheel chair. Today the fifty-year-old Hubbard, grey and patch bald, waiting to be called for the shampoo, reads that Campanella has died, finally, after 30 year of paralysis. It was an Esquire article that Hubbard found among a wobbly stack of gossip and beauty magazines in the waiting room of his hair salon. There was an article about the old Dodgers and in a sidebar a recent group shot of what players were left, a reunion, they were all in suits, probably at a banquet. Hubbard tried to identify the faces without using the caption. He easily picked out Duke Snider with that blue jaw and the flashy teeth. There was Reese and Hodges and in the wheelchair, of course, Roy Campanella. He had become a small skinny man, withered, in a chair, no longer stocky with the big powerful butt and haunches. His fingers lay on the stick control that made him mobile. Hubbard thought how he'd seen paraplegics lift themselves off the chair from time to time to stretch like caged parakeets on a perch. How could such a man live such a life? Maybe Campanella had been a little prepared for his paralysis by the years squatting behind the plate. Sitting. Always lower than everyone else. Looking at the world always from a chair's height.

Hubbard had left his architectural offices early to get his hair cut for the awards dinner tonight. As he thumbed through the magazine he remembered the baseball card pose and also the Campanella who he saw live chasing a foul ball that was hit high above the roofline above the



upper deck. When Hubbard's time came the shampooer walked over to greet him. Hubbard put the Esquire down, knowing there would be too much chatter to be able to read. The wash boy in the black tee shirt had soft white hands and un-muscled arms. He made small circular motions on the scalp, working the suds into Hubbard who gave himself up to the pleasure, forgetting that it was a man doing this to him. He closed his eyes and the feeling was indistinguishable from the loving sudsings he'd received in his days from a series of lovers, and from Lola, and even from a whore he'd bought for a weekend in Thailand a decade ago.

Hubbard's mother took his small hand as they left the bus and crossed the traffic at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and climbed the stairs to the elevated train. He stared at the paper transfer with that date in 1953 stamped, and the time of passage punched onto a clock face. He was pulled along faster by his mother who looked warily as they walked past two men who were talking outside the liquor store. One of them, tall and skinny, gesticulated with his whole body, smiling and sipping from a bag said something that Hubbard thought was complementary about his mother. The steel steps up to the train tracks were worn shiny at the edges and were slippery. Looking up, the boy saw that the underside was an amazing complex of girders and angled irons with pigeons roosting in the beam crotches that were filled with bits of cloth and twigs, the rivets stained with white shit. The beams held the tracks and the passing trains like a kind of Atlas above the street. Hubbard's mother paid with a

dollar for them both and her change came in the steel cup under the bars. The woman inside looked tired and hot in the blue sweater worn through at the elbow and also at the spot where the badge had been pinned and re-pinned. Hubbard was not frightened although, thinking back, he should have been. He had been so young then and so small that even a wispy, shy little mother was protection enough from the world. This small woman still remained. As his own stature and power had grown Hubbard had watched her scale diminish over the years with the subtle bending of osteoporosis that was a little worse each year as he imported her for the holidays. Florida had made her skin leathery and her tastes garish. He bought her golf outfits and colorful light sweaters to wear in the tropical nights as she walked to play Canasta. Her body was shrunken now to a hard-to-fit peanut shape. But then he thought too about the changes that come to a man and how they can hit him suddenly as in the case of Campanella, or they might work slowly and bring some metamorphosis set in motion by some seemingly insignificant moment.

The ballpark was an assault of color as he came through the tunnel to the seats. The shades of black and white he'd seen many times on the TV, the mid tones and shadows were, he now realized, a shocking insufficiency. For now the grass had a painted quality as it exploded against the combed golden dirt of the infield. The uniforms of ushers and ballplayers and policemen and the bright paints of the scoreboard touched a new spot in him. What happened in all of baseball was accounted on a scoreboard with richly painted numbers on squares that were removed

and replaced from the inside by phantom hands -- the vendors' call, the sharp cheers, and that foul ball hit early in the game came with a crack of the bat so loud it made Hubbard wince. He bent his neck up until it could go no more, gazing up to where the ball continued to rise above the seats on over the line of the roof. The squatty Campanella looking up, circling, arms wide open, waiting for that instant when it stops its movement before it begins to fall.

The hair salon always reminded Hubbard of a fun house, packed with mirrors set at all angles and steel and sinks and plumbing and unmanly males, clowning, flouncing. The women were punky or butch. What caused these people to want to be so profoundly bizarre? Or was this just an act, a get-up they put on for work, like Hubbard put on his Armani suits. The combs and hand mirrors, clips and curlers they brandished were tools no more unnatural than the small ruler that Hubbard himself carried in his pocket and was with him everywhere. The tool that shrunk all the world to quarter inches or eighth inches -- whatever was manageable on a piece of paper. Scale was everything to Hubbard. A quarter inch was a foot in his house drawings; the same quarter inch ten feet in commercial spaces. All of it, his offices and factories, schools, high rises, shopping centers, their variety of size and purpose all shrunk to a standard that to fit into a portfolio that swung by his side. Time also had a scale it seemed. In the right frame of mind ten minutes equaled fifty years. Hubbard walked from the salon with his silver hair blown and sprayed, looking good. The tip he left discreetly in the little

envelope that would have bought a dozen box seats in Campanella's day was now just a slightly over-generous appreciation.

That summer afternoon when Hubbard the boy sat sorting baseball cards in the grass of his backyard, he played alone. He squatted on his haunches, imitating the famous catcher. He'd found a small life vest on a hook in the garage and he pretended it was a chest protector and a dozen times he flipped off the backwards cap pretending it to be a mask, spread his arms, flung his neck back until it ached and stared into the sun. His father would be angry to know he was imitating a colored ballplayer. After awhile, tired of looking up, he looked down and his attention was taken by a colony of ants moving in and out of their small mounds on the sides of the walkway. He watched as one ant transported a morsel and a moment later a different ant strained to haul it back to where it had been. Their actions seemed to make no sense and though he could see no pattern he knew that the community worked in a kind of concert. He watched them struggling, hauling their burdens from one level to another, over one clod and then another. To help them he laid a few long stems of grass across the clumps and in few moments, after halting and false starts, the ants began using his bridge. He felt the power and beneficence of his act. Then his imagination gave out. Watching their work became suddenly boring. Or it might have been just their similarity, their relentless anonymity that made him decide that some of them could be burned. Hubbard used the death ray. The sun had come from behind a cloud and it floated in an open patch of blue. He took a

plastic disk from his pants pocket. It grabbed the sun and fired a pin dot of light onto the ground. He moved the light with exceptional skill. Laying it on the black ant, the creature, seeming to sense it had been singled out made a sudden serpentine move to escape the death ray. With a flick of a finger Hubbard refocused the light and froze the ant. The boy steadied with both hands on the handle and pulled back to sharpen the spot. The first black ant curled into a ball, legs folded up, sizzled and even smoked a bit at the end. A dozen or so were executed in this way. It was enough to pass the time until he was called for dinner. It was also enough to be remembered seven years later in a long night when a teenage Hubbard was inexplicably awakened and tortured by the memory of everything he had ever killed. Immolated ants curling and smoking in the dirt, pan fish he had disemboweled on the planks of a boat bottom to retrieve a swallowed hook, caterpillars and lightning bugs crushed simply for their gore, and the air pistol murders of ground squirrels and rabbits all revisited the boy of fourteen who lay sleepless staring up at the ceiling.

That night at the banquet Hubbard and his wife Lola, sat at a round table of ten. He had to tip his head almost into her lap from time to time to look around the elaborate centerpiece to talk to the people opposite. It was the prime table in the Hilton ballroom and that was something to which Hubbard was not unaccustomed. At this gathering tonight he and Lola were among no more than a dozen

white faces in this huge ballroom. This too was something Hubbard was used to. In recent years the city had at last developed to where minorities could take their rightful role in its leadership. And he, Hubbard, was gratified to have been recognized many times for by black leaders for his service to their community.

He was the guest of honor and the personal guest of Mr. Darius Webster who was the Commissioner Public Housing. Webster had well studied manners and he knew how to hold attention. He poised the knife and fork like knitting needles above his plate as he entertained his guests with stories about the mayor. Hubbard watched amused by how the waiters carried the string beans steam shovel-like between two serving spoons and laid them in a neat pile on his plate like a load of I beams or a stack of plywood. He was made to feel warm and welcome tonight, and Lola was too, as she talked like a neighbor to the other ladies about fashion and home furnishing and the problems of children at different ages. The men talked in an open and friendly way with Hubbard about football and golf, but he did notice that when a conversation came his way it came with a changed face. The laughing faces became a shade more earnest, serious when they turned to Hubbard. He still felt his difference in this room and at this table. He knew he was one of a type. Someone understood only generally. A varietal. Anonymous.

Hubbard had never gotten used to the idea of being an honored man. In school his reward was the thrill of discovery and the acquisition of knowledge, to simply

understand. He worked at building a deep knowledge of the periods of architecture – the causes, the influences, how what was built and what remained was driven by church or state or a madman's devotion. Artists and builders, religious men, saw their work as redemptive. Churches towered beside dirt roads, open sewage and poor shacks where people starved and died of easy disease. Churches filled with paintings and stained glass, their coves statuary, images of the saints. Frescos and sculpture were commissioned by kings and clergy to honor God's greatness along with their own. And beside them, low citizens, prayed, convinced that faith would placate a wrathful God or protect them from His striking them down, or at least help them to endure what He sent their way. When Hubbard first visited the Sistine chapel as a student he hung his head back to study the fingers of God and man and could not decide whether God was reaching out or had just let go.

Public housing is of necessity a fortress. And it is a protection for which the city will pay well to insure the needy and innocent will survive. Hubbard's latest contribution, for which he was being honored tonight, was a twelve-ply laminated glass block that was indestructible. His gift was simple: light. Hubbard's blocks allowed the steel door in public housing residences to be framed with glass instead of the usual iron or brick. Previously dark interiors were now brightened with light and maybe a little joy. Hubbard's blocks couldn't be shattered even with bullets. He had ordered ballistics tests. He'd had the blocks beaten and shot at every angle with every conceivable street weapon. He had specified a minority contractor who made them in huge quantities on three shifts for a year. Overtures of tangible thanks were made to Hubbard, which he politely refused.

The lights in the banquet room were dimmed and a spot lit the stage as Darius Webster stepped to the podium. Webster kept his papers inside his tuxedo and reached for them after a minute of extemporized banter. Hubbard admired his friend's skill and his confidence in winging it. Webster gestured with his pink palms that moved in front of him as he described Hubbard's project, making his hands grow out of the ground and then moving them above his head like blowing trees. His hands made slow lazy circles in the air. He held one of Hubbard's blocks – a rectangle, the perfect relation, the Golden Proportion, in the same aspect as the cross. Held it over his head like it was a fabled jewel or the heavyweight title belt. Webster strung wonderfully fluid thoughts about Hubbard which Lola jotted on a notepad from her purse, for she knew from experience he'd want to hear these praises again, afterward in bed, craving recollection like a late night snack. When he was finally called to the stage. Hubbard climbed the riser and as he moved toward Webster's wide open arms he was reminded for the second time that day, of the old Dodger catcher whose identity had confused him forty years before. As Hubbard crossed the stage the spotlight picked him up, focused and tracked him. Then the audience broke into what he judged to be an endearing laugh when, sensing the light had singled him out, Hubbard, playfully, made a sudden serpentine move -- to escape the death ray.