

Out the Window

Rosemarie Pruitt

IN THE office things were quieting down. Over in the sports department the nightly bridge game already had been in session a good half hour. The men on the copy desk were either reading the nine o'clock edition or just staring straight ahead, vacantly, fatigued. A few reporters were at their desks, writing letters or memos, but not pieces for the paper. You could tell that. He could tell it. After all these years there was little about the newspaper business he did not know, and one thing he knew was the look of a newspaper office at any given stage of getting out the paper. He leaned back, tilting his chair on its hind legs, gnawing at his empty pipe. Rather than appear to the guys on the copy desk the way they appeared to him, he got up and wandered over to a window and studied the state capitol, this side of which he knew so well.

For eighteen years this side of the state capitol had been his horizon. Well, that was not precisely true. He had only been sitting at a desk facing the city room, and beyond it, this side of the capitol, ten years—about ten years. There had been the times he had sat in on the night desk, when his horizon had been the mail boxes and newspaper files. You could take those times out of the eighteen years. You could also take out the four months when he had undergone a miserable self-imposed exile as managing editor of the *Beacon*. The *Beacon* being on Front Street, he hadn't even seen the capitol dome. At the *Beacon* his horizon had been Holzheimer's Storage Warehouse—Long Distance Moving. But, anyway, to all intents and purposes he was now looking at what had been his horizon for either ten or eighteen years. Either way it was no good, and eighteen was only a little worse than ten. You didn't get used to hanging if you hung long enough. With some bitterness he reflected that hoodlums could have painted obscene words on the other side of the state capitol, or a strange art commission could have painted it with pink and blue diagonal stripes, and he wouldn't have known about it. Oh, he'd have heard about, and most likely in the case of a story as important as that he would have done the rewrite job on it. But in the ordinary course of his life, he would not have seen the words or the stripes. He didn't even see the other side of the capitol on his way to or from work, or going for a drink at Paddy's or the Elks'. When he bought shirts or pajamas or underwear, he bought them at Gross's, nowhere near the other side of the capitol. When he heard the call of the wild and went to Miss Elizabeth's, he went in the opposite direction from the capitol. All during the time he had been having the affair with Jess, he had had no occasion to study the other side of the capitol, since Jess's apartment, which she shared with another girl, was just up Hill Street from the

office, a block and a half or two. It made him angry to have to face the fact that there were probably out-of-town lawyers and high-pressure guys who by actual count had seen the other side of the capitol many more times than he had, although he could have hit this side of the capitol with a silver dollar with a great deal more ease than Washington had pitched one across the Rappahannock and although he looked at the limestone pile (the side of it) five-sevenths of all the nights of his life.

Perhaps tonight, on his way home, he would go out of his way and look at it. It should be interesting to know the other side as well as he knew the side facing him now. It would be interesting, but he was tired and she would be waiting.

Edward Jones

Ann Stolzenberg

“WELL, g’bye. I gotta be goin’ home now. Nice speakin’ to ya, Jake.”
“Sure thing, Ed.”

That yellow balloon, the sun, seemingly punctured once again, was falling rapidly; it was time for Edward Jones to leave his park bench. Straightening his smaller-than-average frame, he moved toward the bus stop. Almost there, Edward rubbed his neck and queried the cause of its stiffness. He decided that it was from studying the migrating birds this afternoon before meeting Jake. Just why they had not met before today was hard to say. Both had been coming to Garfield Place Park for over two years. However, it was today that Edward changed seats in order to get more sun, and he found himself beside Jake. The new bench companions had used the day for talking. Edward told about his coin collection, his two grandchildren, and his job with the Edison Electric Company that he had held until three years ago. Jake admitted having lost all of his relatives. Just thinking of this solitary sentence for life made Edward shake his white head.

He had Joannie, Bruce, and the grandchildren, and even lived in their home. Say, what was it his daughter cautioned him against this morning? Yes, he remembered. Joan had warned, “Be sure not to lose your allowance this week.” Now for reassurance his prominently veined hand searched the left pocket of the comfortable pants. Edward felt licorice, lint, seams, and finally the five dollar bill. It was still safe. Growing suddenly conscious of a billboard, Edward absorbed the slogan “Vote Democratic—the party with a heart.” Hmmm, he chuckled to himself, Jake would certainly take issue with that. In fact, he disagreed with almost everything having to do with politics. And Edward could not see any sense in that. Still, Jake did make discussions lively, that is for certain.