

# Paper Boy

(Nighttime observations)

Michelle Spinelli

The night's gloomy coat's been laid down over the city as I leave the House. The air is still and cold, only the dim shimmer of the streetlamps shines me the way. I unlock my bike and fill its trailer with the papers. As I shove them in the small container I skim over the headlines. "Thousands die in senseless war" classic! "Majority poor as dirt" somethings never change, I guess. "Local sports team still shit" I close the lid and start pedaling. I fly down the empty road past closed shops and parked cars. I look up at the lit up window on the third floor of number 7. Everybody is asleep except for whoever lives there. Maybe they just forget to put the lights out or maybe they, like me, have to be up at this godforsaken hour when everybody escapes their dreadful lives and takes residence in the land of dreams. Far away from the responsibilities that await them should they open their eyes again this morning. It's a peaceful time of day that only a few unlucky ones bear witness to. Only me, scoundrels and a few rascals run the streets after all have fell asleep and we disappear again before the normal folks start wandering. A secret society of nocturnal beings to whom they who've chosen sleep are oblivious about. We wouldn't want

them here anyway. I hit the brakes. My first destination, Belgrave terrace number 27. Here the street is lined with trees and the house itself feels dark and mysterious, somewhat European even. I walk up the little stairs and start pushing the papers through the letter flap. The Wall Street Journal and The Atlantic seem to be their read of choice. Old money papers, whose news are only relevant to you if you have money to spare and fucks to give. I would bet they sit out by the balcony overlooking the street, robe on and a fancy imported coffee in hand while they skip through the pages. What do they care about the war in far off land as long as their portfolio is secure and the champagne tastes good. I walk back and off i am again. Riding down the road I pass Maple Park, a small patch of grass with a couple trees lining its edge surrounded by fancy family homes. On one of its benches there is someone sleeping. Maybe a fellow who has recently come upon hard times and hasn't figured out the more comfortable sleeping spots downtown or just one of the locals who didn't make it all the way home after a night of heavy boozing. Should he still be here tomorrow I might wake him up, give him some spare change and send him down south where he can mingle with his kind. A few more minutes and I'll be in Pine Hollow, a nice neighborhood for those with a little cushion. Small houses next to each other, porches in front, decent cars in the driveway and no sorrow in sight. The place we'd all like to be once it's said and done but only a few will see. I don't resent the folks here. Some might have started with privilege but most worked for what they have

and have become reasonable people. I stop the bike and open the box. Just like their houses, their papers are all the same. They can order through the HOA and most do. Thirty something editions of the Inquirer is what they get. Everybody has their Mailbox out in the yard which makes my job very easy. I just drive by and be done within a couple minutes. Sometimes if there's no car in the driveway I assume that they are on some kind of trip or vacation and I take the freedom of smoking on one the porches. I sit down in the rocking chair and pretend to live there. Pretend that I've got a loving wife and children sleeping tightly and I've got an important job in a bank somewhere where I'll go to in the morning. I sit there letting the smoke linger and when I'm done I leave the bud sitting on the railing to get the teenage son in trouble when his dad wakes up and sees the evidence of a presumed violation of their peaceful suburban life. I reveal in the thought of bringing a little spice into this bland mode of living. But what do I know? Maybe the Father smokes himself or there isn't even a son to begin with. In this case I've just enjoyed my nighttime solace with the flavour of being contempt for once. I leave the clean streets of Pine Hollow and start paddling further south. My route takes me through Main Street where there is still life at this time of day. People walking out of bars and clubs, standing on the street, yelling, dancing, drinking. As I go around the corner at Fox Bar I hear screams and commotion. I see two young men shoving and throwing profanities at each other. Each a girl by their side, crying and trying their best to separate

the two cocks determined on getting in a fight. One is a chunky fella, the other scrawny and a little shorter. I've seen this movie a thousand times and I can tell you the guy starting shit is most likely the one getting slept. The big one rips himself from the grip of his girl and starts charging the other. I remember what I myself was taught at a young age. Should you get in a fight: strike first and strike hard! As I fly past them I see that the small guy was taught alike. As the big fella gets close to him he uncorks a right hand and hits him coming in. The heavy body goes limp and slams into the concrete. His girls cries out and I hear her wail as I drive off. Once again the fragile ego of a young man has ruined the night for everybody let alone his own health. One wrong bounce of his head and a night out drinking can turn into a forever stay in the hospital and maybe a short one at that. Past office and apartment buildings I make my way further into the city. They become higher and newer and go from rundown to fancy till I arrive at my final destination for the night: Pineview towers. Project housing in the heart of the city and a thorn in the eye of every real estate investor. Red brick walls filled with graffiti and uncleaned streets welcome me beside the young men standing outside of them. They like me. Everyday they wait for me and give me a little hash before I leave. They are working at this time of the day. All day actually. Their customers don't care about opening hours, they want the product when they want it and they Boys oblige. For the last time today I open my trailer and take the papers out. USA today and El Diario is what they read. The Mexicans are beloved

here and I used to always get their food around these parts when I lived close by. I walk towards the entrance of Tower I and the young guys welcome me warmly. "How ya doing man?" one yells "Come in brother it's cold outside! I don't want you catching no cold, man. Who's gonna deliver the papers then?" I give him a fist bump and he opens the door for me. The entrance is just a small room and the wall is filled up floor to ceiling with mailboxes, a hundred or so. I pass the big stack of papers to some of the guys chilling there and receive a lit joint in return. They know who gets what paper and they are much faster in finding the right boxes for each paper than I am. We talk a little, I tell them about the fight I just witnessed on Main Street and we agree how useless those type of fights are. The one who passed me the reefer tells me a story about how he broke up a fight on Main Street and got promptly arrested by the police who watched. I ramble about how much I hate the police in this town and then I have to leave again. They wish me well and so do I. I walk the little pavement back to my bike. Light has appeared in some of the windows and I can feel the sun coming up in a short while. Time to get back home! I get back on my bike and start pedaling.

Ende

