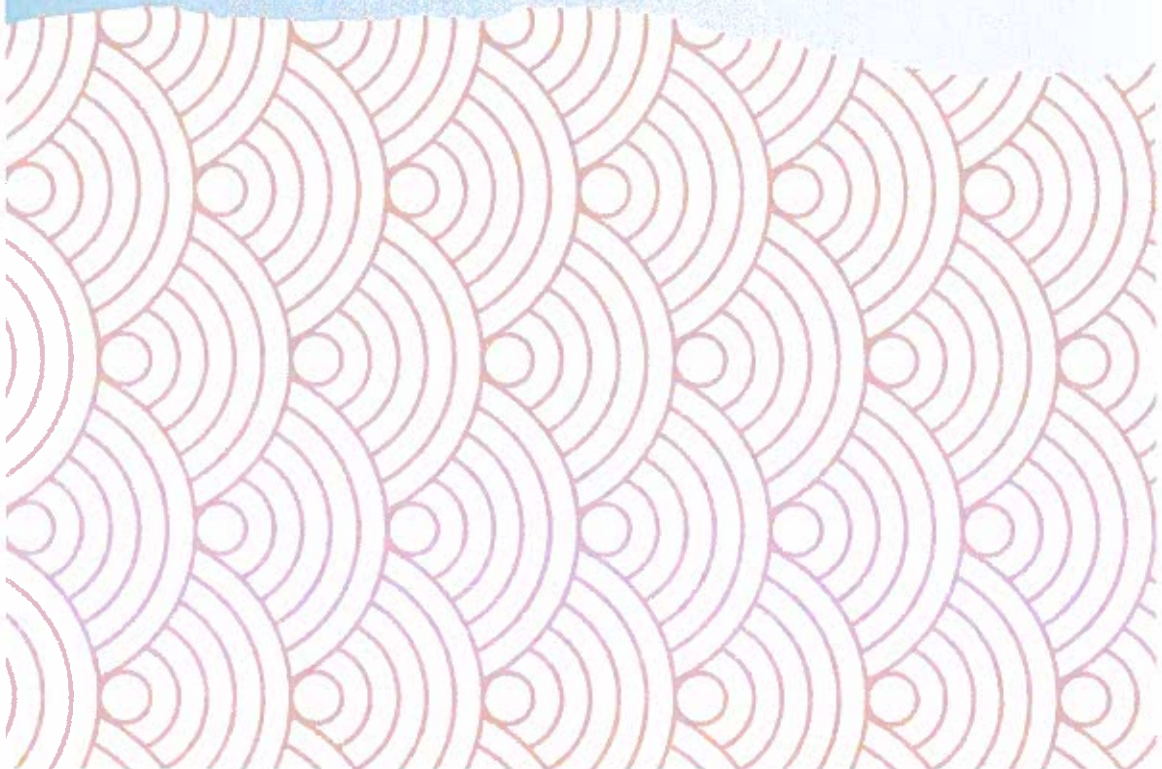




Reconstruction



Reconstruction

The War of Secession was over. It was the era of rebuilding. Rebuilding individual lives. Rebuilding an entire country. In Manhattan you could see bankers and financiers, poets and lunatics, stylish ladies and seductive women; if you avoided the fast-moving carriages racing to and fro, the pickpockets on the street corners, or the thugs in the alleyways. The sheer energy of those days was electrifying, the daily newspapers were filled with word of discoveries and inventions, schemes and adventures, idealism and corruption.

In from those bustling streets this August morning of 1866, strode Aloysius Rembrandt III, dusty and dry in the throat. Aristocratic, though not landed; his bearing made all in the sawdust-covered, wooden-floor tavern look up and take notice. Even the seasoned, bearded, salt-and-pepper haired gentleman from Brooklyn—recently returned from Washington—set down his book and pencil to eye the newcomer, from his manure-stained boots to the rakish hat atop his jet-black, curly hair.

“What might you be looking at, sir?” was the newcomer’s inquiry. “You wouldn’t be Thomas McGlynn now would you be? Because that’s whom I’m to be meetin’ here today.” He feigned an Irish mode of speech in his last words and smiled to show it was his idea of a joke.

“No. My name’s Whitman. And I’m of Dutch descent, not Irish.”

“Whitman. Whitman? Damn if that name ain’t familiar. And of recent, too. But I do not place it here in New York. I heard of it in Washington. Ever had a relative work down in Washington in the Attorney General’s office?”

“A very close relative, in fact. Though here for some personal business these few summer weeks, when everyone with horse sense flees from the oven and the bugs of the nation’s Capital; I am the Whitman who works in the AG’s office.”

“A government man then, are you? I have heard of your work issuing pardons to former southern gentlemen fortunate enough to still possess their family’s holdings worth twenty thousand dollars or more. My favorite commander from Tennessee, a man named Jeremiah Coffey, spoke of you just several months ago while we were discussing railroad business with some members of Congress.”

The white-and-black-fleck-haired, older man pushed himself a little away from his table to signal his attention was on the newcomer with the stylish hat and not on the papers before him on the table. “Sorry I can’t remember him by name. So many have come forward from all over. What brings you to New York?”

“More railroad business. I hope to get a personal introduction to Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt while I am here. I keep reading the society news in the *Times* and in Mr. Greeley’s *Tribune* to see where I best stand the chance to meet him. You wouldn’t happen to know him, Whitman, would you?”

“Which one, Greeley or Vanderbilt?”

“Why ... *either* ... I suppose.” The southerner tried not to appear over-eager to the civil servant, lest he be perceived to be in the latter’s debt.

“At this time, I’d say I don’t know either.” Whitman smiled a little apologetically, but mostly cynically at the man’s readiness to use Whitman’s connections without even knowing him.

"Then why'd ya ask of me which one?" Rembrandt mimicked what he thought a New Yorker would sound like. He felt chagrined this government man sought to make a fool of him and moved to re-set his keel by cutting Whitman down a bit. "I actually did not think you would. Being that you are here rather than at Delmonico or over at Fraunces." He smiled back and started to walk away. He thought the better of it. Turning back, he asked, "You have not run into a fellow with a bad leg here today, have you? Name is Thomas McGlynn. From Ohio?"

Whitman was shocked this rebel learned so slowly. "Can't say as I have. Place fills up a little more toward the midday mealtime, but there's just those six or seven men been here as long as I have. And we haven't been introduced." Whitman said this ironically, hoping to express his lack of ease at this railroader's own gumption of familiarity. A man—to the poet's practiced ear—filled with chameleon dialects, who irked Whitman by not even disclosing his name in customary civility. And he, allegedly, from the part of the fractured country that prided itself, once, upon its hospitality.

The dapper gent reeled around and called out for all to hear, "My name is Aloysius Rembrandt, the third, and I am here looking for a man from Ohio known as Thomas McGlynn. Would any of you be him?"

Whitman and some of the others marveled at this southerner's hat, set to a hard tilt to the side, and his flamboyant silk bow tie, flounced out and around his white floppy collar. His vest and jacket were striped, dark green and pale white, setting off his gold fob chain and pocket watch. Whitman saw the image of his own dashing clothing as a rough some twenty years earlier when he was editing the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. He looked down now at his dress and took in his favorite "Washington" suit he wore today to meet his editor. It was a plain suit, a dark wine color, single-breasted coat with two, high front pockets he liked so much. He had on matching dark pants and a vest.

There were no takers to the southerner's call. Before Whitman realized what was happening, Rembrandt was back at his table, passing off a calling card with his free hand and his opened timepiece in the other. "Please tell Mr. McGlynn I will be back in thirty minutes. His tardiness now will make me late for an appointment later on and I must go and rectify that first. Not only trains have to run on time, Whitman; those of us who mean to run those trains must do so as well. But you know all about that as a Washington man." With that, and a snapping shut of his watch case, Rembrandt spun around and was quickly gone, through the smoke of the patrons' cigars and the dust motes that swirled in the open, sunlit doorway.

ii

Twenty minutes later, and closer to midday, a short man, about five foot four inches, made his way into the establishment. He eyed the square wooden tables, bare and without cloth covers. He noticed the brass rail at the base of the long, scuffed bar was dented in many places. So too were the spittoons, dull finished, lacking any original luster. The sparse crowd ate off thick white plates and their beverages were in metal service pitchers, steins, and mugs. The sawdust on the wide floorboards absorbed their spilled drinks, the grease from dropped food, and the chewing tobacco that simply missed the spittoons. It was still

an hour away from being a busy, ever-changing, smoke-filled haunt of lower Manhattan, which represented the best that most of the clientele could afford—and a prime place to conduct the unseemly business of those who could afford much better at Delmonico or Fraunces, just a few streets away. These men were the citizens of the republic that Whitman cared most to observe and celebrate in his poems and essays.

As he stood taking in the scene, Thomas McGlynn was yet to discover his mind about which reason made a man with such a grand name as Aloysius Rembrandt, the third, pick this type of spot to establish a relationship and strike a business deal.

McGlynn hobbled a bit on his way to the bar, holding his dusty hat on one hand and his muddied travel satchel in the other. The bartender said nothing to his inquiry about Rembrandt being there. He simply flipped the wet, dingy towel he was using to wipe the bar onto his shoulder and nodded with his wax mustachioed head in the direction of the corner table.

Between the nod and the corner were two patrons standing at the bar engaged in the enjoyment of their whiskies and cigars. McGlynn caught bits of their talk, as he walked through the haze to get to the corner table: “Mr. Lyons” ... “the one in Brooklyn?” ... “one and the same” ... “Myrtle Avenue, between Kent and Franklin.” Across the floor and above the copse of tables and chairs in the center of the tavern, there hovered a swirling, shimmering, fragile gossamer of cigar and pipe smoke, refracting the midday reach of the dusty outdoor sunlight he had just escaped.

At the table beyond there sat a man, business dressed, but relaxed with his collar opened and tie loosened. Before him was a notebook and pencil. He wore a short beard, layered and softly textured. It shadowed his jaw and chin line, but left his open-shirted convex trachea and the top of his concave sunburned lower throat exposed to cooling breezes or chilly winds. His hair was brushed back from his face and fell to middle length—grey, still flecked with some of its original black strands.

Tom walked through the diaphanous air that wafted away from his passing. Extending his hand politely, he simply said, “My name is Thomas McGlynn. I am looking for man called Rembrandt, a railroad man, not the artist. And to whom have I been directed, I think, but to an artist, the man whose *Leaves of Grass* have filled many a lonely Ohio evening. You are Mr. Whitman, the poet, sir, are you not? You bear a striking resemblance to the pictograph on the cover page of my 1860 edition copy.” He set his bag on the floor as Whitman leapt from his chair.

Whitman stood, excited to be recognized. He firmly clasped McGlynn’s hand and set his left upon the Ohioan’s shoulder, ushering him toward one of the three empty chairs at his corner table. “I sit here some days, tired out from my walks to and from the ferry or up to ride the omnibus along Broadway, just to see the tide of humanity in this city. To be recognized amid it all by a man upon whom I’ve never set eyes is a thrill. It’s electrifying.” He caught the bartender’s eye, since the latter was watching out of simple curiosity to see what type of reception McGlynn would get. Whitman mouthed the words, “soup and bread, please.” When brought, McGlynn relished them both, having not stopped in his travels lest he be made late for his appointment. “Here I am to meet a railroad man and a lame horse on a public carriage makes me late for my hotel and my assignation.”

“You’ve not missed him. He said he would return.”

“As what sort of man did he strike you?” McGlynn stopped eating and pulled himself closer to the table as he asked. “Why did he ask you to speak for him? Do you know him,

perhaps? Oh, wait 'til my friends in Ohio hear tell I've met you." McGlynn was elated. His thoughts while running down the cobblestones of Broadway were filled with disaster that he had missed his chance for starting over. Now, he was amazed at the success of the inauguration of his new life.

"I do not know the man at all. And he does not know me, either. He only knows what I do. He knows I work in the Attorney General's office in Washington processing amnesty requests for rich southerners who sided with the Confederacy. He's not read *Leaves of Grass* nor I dare say anything other than a train schedule or a business contract in several years."

McGlynn finished the bread by using it to sop up the last of the soup from the bowl. His enjoyment of the food warmed Whitman's soul as much as the soup nourished McGlynn's body. Whitman couldn't help but be contemplative about the spontaneity of the human spirit when generosity abounded as it did between him and McGlynn. How much was missed by people such as Rembrandt, he mused to himself, just as the object of the ruminations reappeared and crossed the room to McGlynn's side of the table.

"Might you be Thomas McGlynn?" At Thomas' nod, Rembrandt withdrew his watch from his vest pocket and, turning to Whitman said, "Thanks for keeping him for me. I will look you up when I return to Washington next year." He took McGlynn's arm to lead him to another table, dismissing Whitman in the same gesture.

iii

McGlynn sat where Rembrandt directed, putting a couple of now-occupied tables between themselves and the government man, whom the railroader felt didn't need to hear their talk. Rembrandt sat across from McGlynn, with his back to Whitman's corner. Every few moments McGlynn would look over Rembrandt's shoulder to see what Whitman was doing. The poet did nothing but watch them, it being too far away to hear. How had the writer put it a bit earlier—to see the tide of humanity in this city. When Whitman arose to leave he passed their table and said, "Good day, gentlemen. You're welcome to be my guests at supper when I return this evening around six." He kept on without really stopping.

"What?" the railroad man asked his table mate, having lost his train of thought at Whitman's invitation. "Oh, yes. Well, you know these government types." McGlynn thought the comment strange, but kept quiet, lest he disturb Rembrandt a second time.

"So, you see that is why I want to get you linked up in this, McGlynn. Your mapmaking skills will be enormously helpful to planning out the railroads. You would simply not believe how eager the various state governments and Washington are about financing railroads. They are literally giving away land rights. It seems Northern Republicans are more willing to give land to the railroads than they are to let Free Blacks get it for farming."

"Does that seem fair to you? I wouldn't want to ..."

"It's truly not a question of fairness. The Free Blacks will get the land eventually. Be assured McGl ... may I call you, 'Thomas'?" He paused only long enough to let his distracted, silenced partner to respond with a nod. "Good. Be assured, Thomas, you will certainly be blazing the way into the land fairly given to Free Blacks when I lay ties and rails along your map lines.

"You know, I met two Yankees from Maine. They had an expression. They used to say, 'you can't get there from here.' Of course, they pronounced it differently. They said, 'ya cain't get thar from hair.' And that reminded me to keep thinking of that. And I surely will tell you the same. You keep thinking that. Because the whole idea of the railroad—every railroad—is that you *can* get there from here. And the heres and the theres that you can go will be the centers of commerce of this country.

"There will be a business opportunity for one and for all. Whatever you want to call them. You can call them by names of respect. Or you can call them by names of hate and fear. But no matter how you call it, the fact of the matter is that these men and these women and their children are now on the move. Or they will be soon. They do not have the means or the wherewithal to get to where the opportunities are. They do not have a wagon. They do not have a horse, nor team of oxen, nor even a broken-down mule. They have what they wear and carry on their backs. Those what serve their getting to it, to that opportunity, they are truly the ones who will surely take advantage of this. And that is what this is about, taking advantage of making opportunities, while you are making ready for business. There is no reason not to profit off it.

"That is my creed. And my vehicle is the railroad, because whether Lincoln had intended these people to be free or was just punishing the Southern States, he used these men only as leverage. It simply does not matter now; it is a done deal. What we had before is gone. And what we had before is never going to return. There surely will be some of my brothers and sisters in what you call 'The South' who are going to stay and try to make it be that again. God knows, they may be doing it for a hundred years. They are already calling the war by quaint names. Why, in the Low Country I heard someone call it the 'late unpleasantness,' when I was there last.

"It is most certainly amazing. We are a resilient people, we Southerners. We posed a war we really did not want to have, just held it out as leverage, at first. We waged a battle that became a war that military strategists would say we had no business fighting. And we almost won. By God in heaven, we almost were victorious. But, at what a cost. What a cost. Our land is laid waste. Our work force is gone. Our homes are burned. Our cities are decimated. Our soil is wore out.

"Most our rails were stolen, hauled away, re-laid for a march to the sea. Are now savagely uprooted, unrecognizably twisted and scattered; their ties in ashes.

"Cotton trade. Cotton trade will never be the same. 'And why?' you might ask. Because it was not just a product. That is what people in the South could never really convince you of before Fort Sumter. Cotton was not just a product. Cotton was not simply a fiber product. Cotton was a fiber of the time, of a culture. That's what you Northerners just couldn't seem to see. That's why there was a war. But there are many of us who are ready to step out of that war. And it won't be in the North and it won't be in the South. It can not be. It simply can not be. It is too emotionally charged." And he emphasized the *ar*—drawing it out in a drawl.

"How could I want to build a railroad to increase the North's coal trade—as some want to replace the Morris Canal with a rail line? Just as much as you surely would not take what is here in New York City and use it to rebuild Atlanta or Charleston or Columbia.

"But you know what, Thomas McGlynn? We did not fight in Salt Lake City. We did not stand toe to toe and bayonet each other up in the Rockies. We did not send cannonade and set up picket lines in the trees and canyons of the Dakota Territory.

“Oh, there are still some out there spoiling for a fight. That is just their way—like Quantrill and Anderson were before them. That is just their way. Always was, always will be. But there are still people in their way and there always will be for this warrior class. After the fighting is over, the building is not going to be done by warriors. They will surely never stand still. The warriors take land just so they can have safe passage to the next land they are going to fight for, and to have ready for retreat back into, if need be. That goes for them that will win that next battle. Oh yes, the warriors that lose—well—what little bit of land they will need, hell, they will not be in the railroad’s way.”

Rembrandt stopped talking for the first time in what McGlynn thought was the longest he had ever heard a man speak without a pulpit or a tree stump. Now the railroad man drank deeply of the whiskey he had asked for from the bar man who had walking by, tray in hand balanced overhead, during Rembrandt’s holding forth. The barman had come in a little after Whitman left and he would work that afternoon and evening. McGlynn hardly noticed, his attention was so rapt by Rembrandt’s vision.

“Now what about that brother of yours, the surveyor? If you could bring him along, that would be even better.” He hardly noticed that McGlynn’s face went cold, and he kept on talking about his dreams. “You see, the main lines are planned. The Central Pacific and the Union Pacific have them. In less than five years this country will be joined—east-to-west, not north-to-south, mind you—by one long connected rail system from Atlantic to Pacific coasts. What I and my backers want is men from the North who know the land. Not the cities, mind you, but the land. What we most truly want to anticipate is where there is lumber, where there is coal, where there is water, where there are no cities now—but where ones can be literally manufactured as points of trade. And when we see those on your maps, we want to draw as straight a hatched line as possible between them. Then we will look at your map, Thomas McGlynn, and say, ‘there is where we will build a railroad.’ And that is what we want you to be a part of. What do you say?”

“It sounds very good, Mr. Rembrandt. But my brother won’t be ...”

“Do not worry about details. We can talk about those later. Look, I absolutely have got to go.” He fingered the silver cover off his watch face and then clicked it shut with his finely clipped thumbnail. “You both think about it. I have got to be uptown in a quarter of an hour. I will meet you back here for supper. Might as well eat off the government while we can.” He was up and gone in a flash. McGlynn sat somewhat numb. He didn’t trust his feelings. Was he dizzy with the wonder and the excitement of it all? Or was he slipping back into grieving for his deceased brother? He couldn’t be sure. And he was too confused to be upset about how dense Rembrandt was on the topic of his brother, Harold.

Thomas decided to do what he would do at home. To go for an afternoon walk. Home, he would breathe in the fresh air of the Ohio countryside. To be glad to be alive. True, here in New York, he wouldn’t be able to go past the orphanage, nor visit his brother’s grave; but still, an afternoon walk in the most boisterous city in the nation should provide the exhilarating tonic he thought he needed. And he knew just where to head. The Fulton Ferry landing.

It was as Thomas had read and re-read so many times by candlelight in his comfortable chair at home or by firelight in his earth-lain bed roll in the woods or open fields under the stars. He felt blessed to see it with his own eyes—what he had pictured over the years, provoked by his new acquaintance’s free verse. Whitman’s words on a page were as panorama-creating as Thomas’ lines and dots were on map scrolls. Each man sparked the imaginations of the men and women who beheld their visions of reality, transformed for sharing across the miles and the ages; just as “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” proclaimed, challenged, celebrated, and invited, in Thomas’ 1860 *Leaves of Grass*.

Here along the Manhattan waterfront facing Brooklyn, Thomas took a few steps, stood, and looked around; then walked some more to change the perspective, stood, and took it all in again. Indeed. The masts of ships were numberless. The pipes of steamboats were thick, as the ships left their white wake behind. And the birds above. How exact he was in writing that the birds’ wings were of themselves motionless, and yet by oscillating their bodies the gulls floated up and up in slow-wheeling circles.

The gulls’ cries morphed into a name in Thomas’s ears. “Walt. Hello. Over here!” As if an echo, Whitman’s distinctive voice greeted the man whose hand he was now firmly clasping. After the two patted each on the shoulder and then went their separate ways, Thomas turned to address the poet.

“I hoped I might find you here, sir. I thought I may be fortunate enough to have you show me some of your New York before supper, your offer of which Mr. Rembrandt and I both will gratefully accept.”

“Splendid. But please do not call me ‘sir.’ I’d much prefer you use my nighest name, ‘Walt.’ I ask everyone to do so. Well, almost everyone. I haven’t decided about our friend Mr. Rembrandt, quite yet.” The older man smiled and welcomed McGlynn, laying his arm across the young man’s shoulders, towering over the Ohioan by a good half foot. They fell into step together and out onto the summer streets of New York. After some time, Walt pointed to a bench in the shade of a large elm. “I get tired after a while, so I’m not sure how much farther we should go. I rode the ferry across and walked to see some people about a fourth edition of *Leaves* and back to the ferry since we parted company. I came up from Washington for a bit of time just for this, which should stop the unauthorized Worthington copies being sold. I think I came in contact with malaria in the wartime hospitals. For these last two years, it hits me, especially in hot weather. And last year, in a Washington army hospital, I was cut by a scalpel that had been used to amputate the bulging foot of a red-haired boy from Boston. Even after the war was over, gangrene was still claiming limbs, you know. But let us take in what we can, after a little rest.”

For his own part, benched and shaded, McGlynn was relaxed enough in the poet’s company to volunteer, “A fine pair we make for this then. My leg’s never been right since my accident. It kept me out of active combat. My brother and I were orphans. We stayed together in orphanages until we were old enough to leave. But we kept all our friends by living as young men in the same town as the orphanage where we lived our last years as children. We were established together in land services. He did the surveying and I did the mapmaking. In fact, we were celebrating with friends and neighbors, with sunny picnics and moonlit fireworks, the day before we were to march off to join Buell’s Army of the Ohio

to challenge Beauregard's Army of the Mississippi. Even though the armies were named after the border rivers, there was significant railroad work for us to do, after what are now recalled as the rout at Corinth and in advance of the battles for Chattanooga. War stories abounded, mixed in with song and drink. We were overconfident, not yet experienced, nor knowing about Braxton Bragg.

"We had the tales of Shiloh still ringing in our ears when there was a huge explosion. The fireworks blew up and shot through the air every which way. At first, it seemed tremendous fun. But then the horror took hold. The wall of the orphanage had been lit aflame by the fireworks. All us boys about to go off to war rushed into the building, gathering the sleeping children in our arms to get them out alive. Fortunately, most of the oldest were already outside on the wide porch watching the fireworks. In and out we went for the younger ones. I heard some cries up in the attic. By the time I'd found the child, the stairs had burned away and the floor was ablaze. We crawled out a ceiling hatch and on to the roof. Then it, too, caught fire rapidly. The flames just shot through from the attic below without warning. First, here. We edged away from it. Then, there. We were terrified, afraid it would burst through the roofing right under our very feet. There were no ladders tall enough to reach us. There was not enough water. And the trees were too far away from the roof to leap into. So, I gathered the young one up in my arms and jumped. I couldn't ease my fall with my hands and arms for fear of dropping her. I had to protect that child. We landed hard. I heard it happen even before I could feel it. A long bone in my lower leg broke badly, with an end poked through my skin. I rolled over on the ground in pain like I'd never known in my life. It began in my leg, somewhere, exactly where I couldn't tell. Most of the pain was rocketing right up my spine—searingly burning, like the fireworks we'd sent into the sky. I thought my head was going to break open and spout out the pain in a fierce plume of power and steam, like Mr. Melville's great demon whale. Behind my eyes was a sheer wall of whitening blindness. I struggled to stay conscious, fading in and out.

"It was an ugly wound. There were no skilled surgeons to tend to the ragged bone and all the fragments pressing up against the inner flesh of my leg. All the doctors were away mending boys whose legs were war-torn, not fire-jumped. It was days before the break was tended to by a decent medic, passing through with an outfit also with orders to join Buell. My leg's still not truly right. Probably never will be.

"Anyway, I forced myself to stay awake that night. The only doctor left in town knew only of severing limbs too gangrenous to save, from stories he was reading in the weekly newspapers. He eyed me several times that night with what I can only say seemed as severe, profound disappointment, knowing he wouldn't get to practice his amputating techniques. I swear to you, Mr. ... Walt, the way he kept touching my side, he would have taken my leg off at the hip had I dozed. All the glory he'd missed by not being in the Sanitary Commission was zinging around in his head like so many mini-balls zipping through a hillside of saplings below a picket line."

"Well, I'm here to tell you, Thomas, they're not much better in the Sanitary Commission, some of them. I've seen them, with my own eyes I'm afraid to say, butcher beautiful young boys, rather than take the time to talk to them and get their spirits back first. I give you my word, I've seen it work. A boy with his spirits up first heals from within better once it's over, even the amputees." Whitman saw figures in his mind's eye of long rows of hospital beds in the Armory Square. "But enough of me. I'm sorry. What happened next?"

McGlynn felt at peace for the first time discussing his pain-filled past. And Whitman's outburst was not, to Thomas' mind, an interruption, nor arrogant—like Rembrandt's. No. He decided it was spontaneous and showed how deeply each of them had become involved in McGlynn's recounting of his tale. It was genuine. Immediate. Nothing like that had ever happened to him before. This Whitman was magnetic, charged, electric.

"My brother, Harold, and all the others went off to war the next morning as planned, heading first to Kentucky, with central Tennessee their intended forward command and operational center, to split that state in two, east and west.

But I stayed home in Ohio. I hobbled enough so friends knew I was truly hurt in the fire. Strangers thought I might have already been to war and had been wounded too badly to return. In essence, people ignored and forgot about me. I kept in touch with my brother until he stopped writing. When his letters ceased, I went off to look for him. Always unattached to the military. Always alone. I carried a letter from a powerful patron attesting to my task as a cartographer, drawing maps for railroads. This letter of free and safe passage was unique and genuine. It was from a man we knew from the orphanage. One of its truly great benefactors. He was, in reality, a conductor for the Underground Railroad. He kept his deeply abolitionist views a secret and had convinced key people in the Union and Confederate commands out West that he was supporting their side and would sponsor supply lines by rail. For fear of discovery, he demanded his true identity be kept unknown. He was simply referred to—by both sides, unknowingly—as R.R. He was a delightful man with an amazing sense of valor, integrity and, as you can tell, ironic wit.

"He contracted pneumonia that last winter of the war, leading some of his last 'passengers' through a ferocious rain and snowstorm. On his deathbed, after the hostilities ceased, he weakly smiled as we talked over his activities in that regard. 'At least, I know this much, Thomas,' he told me, 'I can meet God and at my judgment I can attest before the Almighty to the fact that I didn't lie.' His duplicity extended to my safety. I did not have to know who was interrogating me for my letter of transit was mysteriously signed R.R. and it was always accepted. None of my maps bore military identification. My marks of suitability for rail construction were code for where I had been and not found my brother, without any identifiable intelligence value favoring either belligerent army."

"You wouldn't be pulling my leg now would you, sir?" asked Whitman with a gleam in his eye and his head slightly tilted as if it would help to see through a ruse better.

"It's the wonderfulest and most delightfully truthful war story you could ever sink your teeth into. I swear," answered the man from Ohio firmly and with a chuckle.

"Which reminds me. We should be getting on to supper," said the evening's host.

v

Whitman and McGlynn saw Aloysius Rembrandt, III in the chair by the corner table, using his handkerchief, a monstrous blue and green tartan checked affair, to blow his nose. He did not rise to greet them. He started talking as soon as they sat.

"I took the liberty to ask for three glasses of port to be brought over when you fellows got here. I hope you do not mind and that the choice is fine with you both." Again, he did not wait for an answer, as they were learning was his custom. "I just spent an

outstanding afternoon talking about innovations in rolling stock, McGlynn;" turning to Whitman he said, "railroad cars."

"You know, of course, of George Pullman's palace sleeping cars introduced last year." Aloysius began a behavior new to his dinner companions. He kept using the back of his fingers of his right hand to touch the tip of his nose. Every once in a while he used the full back of his left wrist to do the same thing. But with his wrist it seemed he pressed harder and rubbed longer. Despite his hand motions, Rembrandt kept talking. "Most people call them 'Pullman cars.' I found out today there are rumors of work on a hotel car and a dining car. Imagine." He paused to snatch his hat off his head, and his curls flailed out in each and every direction. "People with currency will pay more money to stay on the train to sleep and eat. No more having long stops at night or for meals. Faster arrivals. More trips. More passengers. More profits. And most certainly we will have all the stage coach riders to lure to the rails. The guesses now are that in less than three years the Union and Central Pacifics will meet somewhere in Utah territory. This here continent will be linked by rail, coast to coast!

"And after we get everything agreed to tomorrow, Thomas, when all the papers are signed; I have been officially authorized to offer you stocks in a new enterprise called *Crédit Mobilier*." Again, his left wrist was at his nose, rubbing.

"Excuse me, Aloysius." When Whitman heard the spoken word, it was the first time he could recall McGlynn using Rembrandt's given name. "What 'papers' do you mean have to be signed? Where I come from, in Ohio, a man's word is his bond, and his handshake seals his business deals."

"That might have been the case at one time." He said this in a sarcastic tone, but then Rembrandt switched when he saw Whitman's face disapprove of the sarcasm. "Certainly, a considerable parcel of business was carried on between Southern gentlemen also on the strength of a handshake. But the main holder in the partnership concern I represent can not shake anymore, having lost his right forearm to a Union picket line in the Tennessee woods." And here he rubbed his nose so hard with his right hand, he had to pause in talking. Then again the hardness returned to his voice and his eyes as he lifted them and locked on eye-to-eye with the fleck-haired man. He continued talking to McGlynn, while looking at Whitman. "And moreso, there is such a magnitude of carpetbaggers in the South now to arrange so many deals, that it is hard to let a gentleman's word hold the same weight it once did in the land of Jeff Davis," and with a nervous little laugh and a sip of his port, he hurriedly added, "no insult intended." He looked at both McGlynn and Whitman before continuing back on even keel, with one small delay for the back of his fingers at the end of his nose. "In short, by having a written and signed agreement for mapmaking services in hand, my partnership interests can convince the financial backers that this won't be a bait and switch operation."

Whitman sensed it in an instant. Thomas McGlynn went rigid. It was momentary, perhaps even fleeting. But it was there. He had a physical reaction to something. Perhaps because Whitman, too, had suffered spells from time to time in hospital wards, the nurse/poet picked up the Ohioan's reaction. Rembrandt had missed it entirely. All the color drained out of Thomas' face. His eyes glassed over. Slowly, he reached for the port. He had avoided the glass until now. He drew a good long draught, emptying nearly half the glass. Thomas set it down easily. His color returned, but not to normal. He was now just a little pale, rather than ashen grey as a moment before.

"Is this 'bait and switch' and expression you learned also from the boys from Maine—like 'you can't get there from here?'" Though he feigned being casual, McGlynn's voice was a little shaky.

Rembrandt now spoke like a man with "the third" after his name. "No. The 'bait and switch' is something I know from my days in a butterscotch and grey uniform. And I am truly not surprised that you did not know this, since you missed the action in the theater of operations that found the blues and the greys battling it out in the mountains and river valleys of Tennessee." He seemed almost pleased to rub it into this Northerner who had not fought in the war.

"The federals had some great scouts. Men with frozen Minnesota lake water in their veins and brass from Connecticut's armories for genitals. They would go out alone or maybe in a squad of two or three, right into the dark and thick of it. They hunted lightly equipped and ferreted us out, while we were under full armament, even if we were bedded down for the night with sentries posted. They were uncanny. We took to night flight after long days, trying to avoid their pursuit. Because we knew that after the scouts found us the sharpshooters would not be more than a night or two behind. Until we started the bait and switch, that is; something the bayou boys taught us.

"And our captain raised it to an art form. He was a great leader. He still inspires me today. Good old Jeremiah. Even with only one hand, he still gets the work of two men done each day. He embodies reconstruction at its best."

Here he stopped talking and used the oversized handkerchief again. "I apologize gentlemen. But in the western campaign I suffered powder burns in my nostrils and in the evening my nose tends to itch hideously from the inside. And, Mr. Whitman, your city's dustiness most certainly doesn't help. There is so much going on here, it is without doubt the place to be. But, God knows, I look forward to the fresh air of the countryside when my nose starts to pester me in this way. Thank God I am a man and not an elephant." Only he laughed at his joke, the other two being too polite to laugh at his expense, though he distressed them terribly by shaking his head and laughing as if he were thinking about something else—something far away. He spoke and they knew he had, indeed, drifted away for a time.

"He always likened himself to an elephant." Looking up finally, Rembrandt saw he had confused his supper company. "Oh. I am sorry. I am actually talking about my old captain. You see, he had a great memory. Used to say he never forgot a face or a name, a battle plan, or a maneuver. He liked elephants—or at least the idea of them. Said they had good power of memory. But even more, he liked them because they reminded him of a great African general who almost defeated the vaunted Roman Empire, name of Hannibal. Said, too, in the closing weeks of the war, that a fellow from Hannibal, Missouri, was writing stories about railroad men and miners out West for the newspapers in Nevada in the Utah territory. He wrote to me, some months back, that this storyteller was voyaging with whaling captains to Hawaii this year.

"He never misses a trick, my captain Jeremiah. Says he believes the damnedest coincidences do not ever seem accidental to him. Says he thinks there is a movement beneath everything we do, but most people just can't see it, like trout in a pond. Most people can see the fish, but could not reach in and pick it up because they truly do not understand things work a little differently 'down there' under the water.

“So, get this ...” and again his hand went to his nose. “What does he do, old Jeremiah? He up and moves to Hannibal Missouri after the war’s over. Says all those elephants and Mark Twain stories, and an African almost overthrowing an empire by coming over the mountains rather than across the sea to attack, all goes together for him. And know what? Turns out Hannibal is actually going to be an excellent stock yard for a railroad with water and overland connections. Now is that not just the darnedest thing you’ve ever heard? Jeremiah Coffey is looking for great things to come from Hannibal.”

Whitman was conscious of being an outsider to the discussion. So, he said nothing. But he noticed McGlynn’s glass was empty, his agitated hand was pressing against the top of his upper thigh. He barely managed to say, “That certainly is the most damning thing I’ve ever heard. You’re right.”

He collected himself a bit, looked with less than his full attention at his prospective business partner and intoned, “I will have to think about signing those papers, though. We have an expression back home about ‘sleeping on it’—which I’ll do—and which I’m sure is a familiar expression to you.”

“Then I will excuse myself and my sore nose for the night.” Aloysius Rembrandt III arose, shook both of their hands, and walked out into the night; very pleased with himself and his day’s accomplishments.

vi

“Would you mind terribly if I had another wine? Or, perhaps, a brandy might do even better, Walter?” Whitman ordered two brandies and waited. Without having to speak the invitation, Whitman found McGlynn confiding in him. He did not mind the Ohioan’s formality of address, as it seemed to be the most comfortable for the unbosoming McGlynn.

“The morning my brother, Harold, was captured started out in the wee hours. The battle engagement the day before had been fairly fierce. Sometime past midnight, he and two scouts were dispatched to find the enemy positions and get word back to their commanding officer before daybreak. Harold was sent because the rising and falling terrain and southern Appalachian mountainsides were unfamiliar to his advancing, forward regiment. The army needed his skill at reading the land to plan a pursuit and attack upon the enemy forces. That rebel force had scattered and fallen back. Harold and the scouts split up to increase their chances of finding some element of that force before they all could regroup with their regiment and counterattack at dawn. The scouts got back to the regiment, but my brother never returned. The southern soldiers were never heard from again for a week. By then my brother was long gone, force-marched further south to a prisoner of war camp. Harold thought probably to East Point. He slogged with other northern troops caught in the hills and woods behind enemy lines during the fighting during the week before he disappeared.”

“My brother, George, was a prisoner, too; but later in ’65. Fifty-first New York volunteers. Whitman told him. “In Salisbury, Richmond, and then in Danville. I was more fortunate than you. I had an influential friend named John Swinton, who persuaded General Grant to arrange an exchange.”

"No hard feelings, sir. But not all of us have the head editorial writer of the prestigious *New York Times* as an associate. Thomas McGlynn arose from his chair, somewhat agitated still, but more to exercise his leg. It stiffened when he sat too long in the same position. When he stood, he turned a wistful look to Whitman.

"I'll tell you later *how* I know, but on that fated morning, once my brother and the scouts went their separate ways, Harold had moved up the side of a rise. He lay for a time in a Fraser fir grove, in and amongst some Catawba. He knew this flora put him upland in the Smokies, and heading south away from Tennessee, and his regiment. He had stopped to rest. But mostly to stay still and listen as the sky lightened in the hour before dawn. First came the mist—what some say gives the Smokies their name—rising from the night's dew and from being near the river. A stand of spruce some distance away sentineled the deeper forest before him. It appeared to hover. That was his word—hover—because the ground mist was so thick to a height of six feet that he could hardly see. But his ears were not as easily deceived, nor was his nose.

"He smelled the lather from the horses. He heard their muffled nickering. But the fog muted and echoed the sound to bear false witness to the location of its source. Occasionally, a hoof tramped in the bed of fallen needles. Which force they belonged to Harold could not tell and he dared not call out. He could only wait for the veil to rise and hope he was not discovered if they were southern cavalry.

"Three quarters of an hour later the mist lifted. The horsemen were gone. But there was still a soft moaning and the scent of the steeds cloyed to the damp trees and wafted in the growing warmth of the sun. He crawled on his belly to the rim of a clearing. A union soldier lay hidden behind a huge fallen tree branch, wide enough to provide cover. It looked as if some wayward mountain-howitzer fire from the day before had blasted it off an old growth chestnut tree of significant girth and height. The soldier was stunned but otherwise apparently uninjured. Harold hoisted him to his feet, supported him around the waist, and began to lead him back toward friendly territory. The man stiffened. His eyes opened wider than a spooked owl's. He pointed off in the other direction. Twice more Harold led them. Twice more after two steps his new comrade protested by dragging his feet more and simply going limp the second time. He looked beseechingly into Harold's face with eyes of fear and urgently pointed off in the other direction. But he still did not speak. Thinking his charge to be shell-shocked and that perhaps he had seen the horse soldiers that Harold had not, my brother capitulated and headed off, against his better instincts.

"After an hour of making their way further up and over the hill and away from the river and then descending along the rough terrain through the thinning forest, Harold felt the man get lighter. To his surprise, the man stood on his own feet, fully carrying his own weight. Harold released his grip around the man's waist and asked him if he felt better, not really expecting an answer. To Harold's amazement, the man spoke, 'Yes, sir. I feel quite better. Better enough to ask you to surrender to my captain over yonder.' Harold looked up and across the chasm in front of them off away.

"Before his feet was a deep ravine, easily a hundred feet to descend on his side and a steeper hundred and twenty to scale on the facing side. From end to end it ran a quarter of a mile. A sinuous foot path ran along each scarp the full quarter mile run, gradually inclined on the gradient to make up for the difference in the terrain on each side, with a switchback at the east end to cover the width of the natural trench. From below, the last wisps of the

post-dawn sheen swirled up and shimmered on the morning's fading thermals, reaching tendrils to the air, trying to reconstruct themselves and disappearing skyward in the effort.

"He called it 'diaphanous'—his word. Then he tightened his lips and chin and told me it was 'the perfect killing field. A grave in the earth's wooded clefts sacrilegiously to be filled with bodies of young men, some dead, some wounded, and topped off with the stones of hate and the soil of genocide.'

"Though not readily visible to him right at the outset, looking more closely my brother gradually made out a line of Confederate pickets kneeling behind a line of fallen trees on the higher rim of the crest of that deep scar in nature. A two-deep row of horsemen in the spruces stood battle-ready behind them. And set as the crown jewel of the mounted troop was their leader. He sat tall on a fine steed. The muscles in its shoulders were quivering under a finely groomed coat, poised and ready to spring into action. She was a fine mare. A brown and white pinto, perfect for forest camouflage. Her nostrils flared, dripping, and her morning breath puffed steamily in the secret-hiding air.

"Harold asked the man whom he walked-dragged through the wooded hills, 'What is the meaning of this sir? What do you think this is?'"

At this point in his tale, Thomas McGlynn sat down across the table from the poet from Brooklyn, by way of Washington. He resumed his nervous habit of crossing his legs, one atop the other, and interchangeably rubbing his palm along the top of his superior thigh. He looked Whitman square in the eye and spoke, "Harold said the man looked at him with the satisfied smile of someone who just broke a wild horse enough to saddle and ride, and declared, 'This here's a bait and switch.' And as he loosened the northern tunic and took it off, the decoy revealed his own grey rebel shirt underneath and went on, 'And you, sir, have been caught. Caught by my commanding officer, Captain Jeremiah Coffey, That's him on the brown-and-white. The man with one arm. You are now the guest of the Confederate States for the duration.'"

Whitman sat, simply stunned.

vii

For both men the tension was so great each relieved it the way people usually do in such social situations. Each took a few moments to observe what was going on around them, to ease the intensity of their one-on-one involvement. They each noticed the same things, though did so unilaterally without making eye contact. Fewer tables had dinner plates set out. Some parties had left after their meal and not been replaced by a second seating. Some hangers-on of certain dinner parties stayed in smaller groups of conversation, after some of their party had apparently retired for the evening. A new group of patrons came in to use the bar, which had been the site of pre-prandials just an hour or two before. The newer drinkers were harder pressed to their task. Especially those who were by themselves. These had more than one glass in front of them at a time. These had hard liquor, whisky mostly, and not just the ales or wines their predecessors had enjoyed preparing for dinner. And while some were knotted in conversation, even those who were accompanied by friends appeared more sullen and less wordy, more nodding and shaking their heads than adding to their compatriot's views with their own.

Suddenly, looking at his empty glass rolled in between his palms, McGlynn spoke again, not looking at Whitman. "I found these things out from my brother in his last hours." It was a quiet admission. Almost confessional in tone.

Whitman barely managed a whisper, "You actually found him, then?"

McGlynn picked up his glance, but not much of his head. "It's the only thing that redeems our sad fate of separation, loss, and death. I found," now he sat up straighter and saw he again was eye to eye with his dinner host, "as you must have," and shifted a bit in his chair as he went on, "that prisoners were moved from place to place and that exchanges of prisoners came to a grinding halt through '64. Harold was in Andersonville, of all places. In the first week of December, Harold appeared not to awake one morning. He was carried out in one of the burial wagons and set on the cold, sodden earth. As the morning wore on, more bodies were piled next to and on top of his, alongside the excavated trench that had been muddy, but flat and level, ground as the sun rose that dawn. The day's burial time was insufficient; far too many had succumbed the cold, drenching night before. Some bodies were left for the next day's detail, abandoned in place adjacent to the trench as night fell, including Harold's. That night, warmed by his corpse-covering and rested after twenty hours of near-death sleep, Harold stirred his way quietly from under two bodies, one completely naked. From several stiffened soldiers adjacent to him, Harold took some of their clothing too tattered to have been picked clean from the poor souls while they were still inside the stockade that morning. So dressed, rested, but ferociously hungry, he made his way into the woods north and east of the deadline, toward Macon. This area was roughly known to him from reports of railroad surveys made a few years earlier. He figured he could work his way to the Flint River and follow its banks gradually north and west. It would bring him past Macon and almost to Atlanta. From its headwaters south and west of Atlanta, he knew he could work his way north to Chattanooga. He felt confident he could regain a Union force back up again in the Smokey Mountains. At the time he had no intelligence about Sherman and the massive force he had assembled and moved out from Atlanta only three weeks previously, heading toward Savannah.

"Earlier in that same summer, I'd had word of his transfer to Andersonville. Already there were terrible stories coming out of that place. I learned about the conditions in Andersonville on All Saints' Eve firsthand from some men who had escaped in mid-September. I was working my way down toward Atlanta, having skirted Forrest and Hood in Tennessee and north Georgia by the beginning of December and was in Macon the week before Christmas, just as Sherman's forces were poised a few miles west of Savannah. It was a desperate thing for me to do, because my letter of transit was well beyond its influence for safe passage. I was much too far to the east and south. But he was my brother, Walter."

At this he reached out and grasped Whitman's sleeve just above his wrist, and shook it to gain affirmation, to let himself know he was with another person now and not alone in the countryside of middle Georgia, so real had the retelling been that it transported his spirit back to find his brother again. Thomas looked into those tender eyes that had seen so much, too much, of this war's suffering. Only now did he notice that the poet's right eye was somewhat more lidded than his left—but both were clear, compassionate. He continued, "I had to try. You could know what I mean. You did the same for your brother with the means you had. I had to find a way into that camp to buy his freedom. Somehow. I was exhausted

from my hiding out in the day and traveling on foot by night. I had been hard at it three months. If I was to present a case, I needed to get clean and rested.

"As it happened, a woman approached me on the street when I dared to step out into public in Macon for the first time in daylight, my second morning there. 'Are you looking for the man from Ohio?' she inquired, with no little fear in her eyes. I thought I was under the power of fatigue and hunger so badly that I couldn't trust my senses. How could she be asking me such a thing?" He looked around the bar at nothing, almost as if he were really back on that dusty street, searching still. "I stuck my courage to the spot and said I was and how did she know. She said another Black she knew had heard me talking in my sleep at the boarding house as she cleaned the slop buckets and chamber pots next door to my room the day before. I was too excited to ask what her friend precisely heard me saying; but that day before I spent the afternoon in a fitful sleep, my first in a bed in a month. When I had awakened, I was drenched in sweat, and it had not been a hot day. I knew I'd dreamt badly, but could not remember what about.

"Here then a day later, this Black woman told me to follow her, but not to appear as if I was doing so. She said she would use the road out to the country, but that I should stay along the parallel path in the woods along the road. She said I would meet people who would bring me to the Ohioan. At that, a group of men came out of a building and so as we would not appear to be together, she hurried away. I did as she said, letting a little space pass between us, she out in front and me lingering behind, but still close enough to see her. She spoke to a boy who then ran off ahead of her down the dirt road. In a quarter of an hour, I was fatigued, for I had still not eaten yet. Suddenly from out behind a tree, the biggest man—Black or White—I had ever seen to that day, or even since, stepped into my path. I felt myself start to go faint, from fear and exhaustion. I tensed. As I began to slip into a light headedness he reached over and kept me on my feet. He held the finger of his other hand—for he was so big he needed only one hand to steady me—up to his lips to tell me to be silent. He gently urged me to come along after him, and then let me walk on my own as he led the way, motioning with his now free hand to follow him. I did.

"In less than a hundred feet, we stepped onto a two-rutted lane, well-worn by wagon traffic. It was the Black man's lane from the town of Macon to the outlying farms, separate from the road and the path used by Whites and businessmen and troops. We came to a clearing and a once-grand, brick-faced building. Before us spread the desolation of what war had wrought upon what once must have been a fruitful plantation. Off to the west were slave shacks. We headed for those.

"In a dimly lit room we had to duck our heads to enter, I saw the woman from the town. She smiled and handed me a steaming bowl of porridge and a wooden spoon. Then she pointed to a smaller room off to the side. By candlelight I saw what looked to be a cot with a blanket on it. Only by looking more closely could I see the blanket was not completely flat." He paused and stared so deeply into Whitman's eyes that it was as if he was looking into the back of them instead of just their fronts. "Walter, there was a man underneath it. His head lay on a grain sack that had been stuffed with chicken feathers. 'It be time fo 'im t'eat sum p'ridge,' the woman said and her voice woke the man from his slumber. Two of the rheumiest eyes that ever looked me in the face did so that day. I'm here to tell you. Why, even the owner of those eyes didn't trust what they saw. 'Have I died and gone to heaven, or is that my flesh and blood brother sitting on my deathbed?' were the first words I'd heard Harold speak since the day he marched off to war and I sat in a

hospital bed looking out on that line of young boys trodding off into horror, history, and who knew what.”

McGlynn hid the tears of memory, but Whitman let his own glisten, caught in his eyes. He reached to touch McGlynn’s shoulder in compassion but the stiffness in Thomas’ leg led him to rise and stretch it before the poet’s hand reached him. He sat again, a little farther out from the table enough to cross his legs and began to punctuate his recital with the same pressure from the heel of his open hand run down the top of his leg. He smiled at Whitman embarrassedly saying, “Got to keep the blood flowing or the whole damn leg gets the feel of pins and needles and goes useless, like it went to sleep or had a paralysis, or something.”

“I’m accustomed to my own maladies. I empathize. Every once in a while I get such a tremendous ache in my side and a huge pressure here below my ribs.” Whitman nursed his brandy. With his eyes he asked Thomas if he wanted another. McGlynn shook his head and began again.

“On the morning of December 22 Harold awoke, strengthened by the porridge and my company. It’s like you said this afternoon, a man’s health rallies when he’s comforted and among family and friends, even if the latter are new-found and practically strangers.” Whitman nodded his avid assent. “He spoke in a soft and broken voice for the rest of the day. Not straight through, of course. He was too weak for that. He’d speak some, while I sat by his bedside and held his hand. I’d been without him for so long. I held on for dear life, ‘cause I surely didn’t want to lose him again. He’d fall off to sleep and doze awhile. Then he’d open his eyes and they’d seem a little refreshed and stronger and he’d tell me some more. Then he fell off again. It went like that all day. Mostly he talked about his capture, his transfers from one camp to another prison, and about his escape. He still had his surveyor’s instincts and eye for detail. His story unfolded so neat and clear I could have traced his steps out in the wilderness if I needed to do so. That’s the talent the railroad wants him for. Well, they’ll not have him.” He sipped at his glass, though the last of the brandy was already gone, and he looked his new acquaintance directly into that perceptive right eye. “Nor will they have me ...” he paused, “... the way they want.”

He resumed his tale, “Toward late dayfall Harold—well, he grew weary. He stopped talking of a sudden. He looked over to me and our eyes locked, knowingly. ‘I’m glad you found me, Tom.’ He turned and gazed at the sunset, for they’d drawn the rags-for-curtains back away from the square opening in the wall that used to be a window. Then he picked up my hand and put it to his lips. He kissed the back of my hand. He set it down again and looking at me he simply said, ‘Tom. Take me home.’ He closed his eyes and breathed his peaceful last.”

Thomas took some moments. He looked around the room. Then began again. “He never told me anything, nor ever complained, about Andersonville nor anywhere else he’d been imprisoned. He only talked of the land and described the countryside he’d seen getting from one to the other. Harold never said how he came upon the dear people who gave two orphan brothers a fated chance to be together again for the last time. Kept Harold from being an orphan out there in the universe. Brought him back to family. And family brought him home to the countryside and soil he loved to walk upon and measure and get ready for mapping together. Brought us both a peace I thought would last forever. Guess not, though.”

Whitman tried to lighten McGlynn's grief and remove some of the foreboding in his voice. It was the manner he'd well practiced at many a veteran's bedside. "Did you find out how he came upon such friendly folk?"

"I did. The next day. They got a wagon and a horse from Macon with money I provided and a letter to show it was for a White man anyone would be sorry to cheat. Nobody was selling Black freed men wagons and horses back late in '64. Hard enough to come by such conveyance even today. And to that degree, to that degree only, mind you, I'd have to agree with Aloysius Rembrandt, *the third*." He emphasized 'the third' in a mocking tone that made each man laugh. It broke the tension and McGlynn was able to finish narrating his brother's legacy to the cotton-and-coal-haired New Yorker, who himself had found the fruits of the War of Secession stretched out before him in field hospitals and soldiers' homes from Maryland to Washington.

"As we sat eating the breakfast from supplies I had the big man buy me when he got the wagon, the woman spoke up. 'Fam'ly shid no wha fam'ly dun wid they lives. Yor brudda, God res he's soul, dun gone and savt my life. Week go I see'd sum soldja man ona horse ina lane. I tried go 'roun the woods, hid like. But no good. He'd a seen me. He ties he's horse ta tha tree and walks ta me. Slaps the basket fro my hands and strikes me 'crost my face so hard I fell ta tha groun. T'aint none otha man around. He fixes ta loosn he's belt. Me, I tell myself, 'this man's gonna strap me wid tha belt 'til I die.' Could jus see he's meanness in he's eyes. But 'stead, he lowers them breeches and I see in horra tha he fixin' ta make me be wid chile. I prays ta the Almighty not ta let tha be. And the Almighty, he ansas my plea. He puts his strength in ta yor brudda's legs. He lifts yor brudda up outa tha woods wher he been hidin' and shrivrin' ina cold; lifts 'im right up on eagle's wings. That soldja's horse done start whinnyin' as yor brudda slides the man's revolve pistol from he's saddle. The big brute sees yor brudda cain't hardly stan' up. He's gun's most too heavy fa him, needin' bof hans to hole it steady like. He runs screamin' lika line a troops chargin' a picket. Most trips on he's breeches, but steps right outta them he's runnin' sa fas. Then I hears a shot and yor bruda falls backwards ta tha ground. That soldja stops in he's tracks.'

"At that point in her story, the huge Black fella laughs and says, 'Yessir. Ya culd say he stopped *daid*'—and he stretched out that 'ai' sound for a full five seconds, while he rolled his smiling head back and forth—'in he's tracks. Cos tha's wha he was.' The woman slapped him playfully on the arm saying, 'Don be no disrespek.'

"She turned to me and continued, 'Ya see, Mista, yor brudda dun shot tha soldja man strait center a he's forhaid. Maid hem looky like the Cyclops monsta in tha pitcha book at the Rev'rends. Was only tha repeat of the gun knockin' ya good, God-deliverin-justis brudda to tha groun. From then be two days we nurse'im 'til you and me both comes ta this here brudda yours.'

"I traveled night and day, as far to the west as I could manage to avoid the shattered armies of Franklin and Nashville, and the wandering guerillas and marauders they spawned filling the vacuum, while still scheming true to the north. I slept only a few hours at a time and bought and sold horses that just got too tired to keep on. Fifteen days later, I was back home in Ohio. I set Harold to rest in the land he loved shortly after. Catching up on the news the following day in mid-January, I found I wanted to put 1864 behind me forever and make a fresh start in a New Year. I learned Sherman marched into Savannah the same day my brother died. Last spring, I learned one day that a whole group of Federals wound up trained right back to Andersonville after thinking Old Man Wirz had them

transferred to other prisons just weeks before. I have tried to forget it all. To put it all behind me. Until tonight, I had succeeded. But it looks as if I've failed.

"I prepared myself for reconstruction. Of myself, not just the country. Walter, I have loved reading your *Leaves* in the evenings and the afternoons since I buried my brother. But, it looks like I cannot 'sing only of myself' as you can. A part of Harold remains unburied, alive and hot in my breast. When they hanged Wirz last November, I didn't feel I needed that to avenge what Andersonville did to my brother. For all I know one of Collins' raiders is outside, back on the streets of New York, and might have laid a hurt on Harold that started his decline. Or, as I have known others have convinced themselves about, Grant's hard refusal to swap prisoners might have had a hand in my only relative's demise. I thought of all this and thought it was gone beyond my reach.

"But now, not quite two years later, a pompous ass from somewhere below the Mason-Dixon line blurts out my brother's captor's name. And I might have left that go, too. But there was no honor in what he did. He tricked my brother into captivity. He purposefully deceived Harold into helping a man who was pretending to be wounded. And for me it is not uncertain. It is not anonymous. I know his name. I know what he looks like. I know where he lives. And I mean to leave tonight to find him. And not to take the job he wants to offer me—and Harold."

Whitman asked, "And what will you do, then, Thomas? What will you do when you meet him face-to-face in Hannibal, Missouri; or somewhere else?"

"Only God knows, Walter. Perhaps the answer will appear to me on the journey." He stood, shook the poet's hand solemnly, tightened his lips and nodded his head. Whitman watched as McGlynn, with a slight limp, crossed the wooden floor, put on his hat, and went behind the bar to pick up his travel satchel the bar tender had been minding for him since that morning. He gave a coin to the barman and tipped his hat to him in thanks. Without looking back at Whitman directly, Thomas McGlynn threw him a glance by way of the dirt-smudged mirror behind the bar. He simply shrugged his shoulders, pursed his lips even tighter, and made his way steadily into the dark New York night.

viii

Come the next morning, Aloysius Rembrandt III strode into the establishment he himself had come to regard as common and contemptible, but functionally acceptable for building the railroad empire for which he hoped to sell shares to Congressmen, buy rolling stock from George Pullman, and with which to eventually challenge Cornelius Vanderbilt for rail supremacy of the American West. Teamed together with this cartographer and his brother, the surveyor, he felt secure the last pieces would fall into place. But he reminded himself that he must make sure he never tipped his hand to the importance of their contributions, nor open his wallet to yield their fair share of the profits.

Whitman sat alone at the same corner table, over a cup of what looked like coffee. There was another cup turned upside down on a saucer and a metal pot on a wooden trivet. Rembrandt checked his vest pocket watch but saw no sign of Thomas McGlynn. It was exactly the time of day they had agreed to meet. Not a man to turn down a free breakfast

from a government worker looking to be on the take, Aloysius sauntered over and sat down without asking, as if it were the expected thing for him to do.

"Quite the city here, Whitman. I truly have never seen so much water available for public use, never seen so many people rushing to and fro, the port is bristling with so many ships it certainly is a wonder their masts and sails do not tangle in each other's lines. Just incredible." He watched Whitman pour him a cup of coffee, as if both expected that was the way it should be; or at least, would be.

"My brother, Jeff, worked on the Brooklyn Water Works across the river and on the Croton Water System here on Manhattan. Have you been up to see the reservoir? It's massive, functional, and is unbelievably enough of a thirst quencher and body washer for near onto almost a million people."

"It's simply not as promising to me as a place like St. Louis. Now there surely is a city I hope to be part of building with the railroad. New York's taken for a young blood like me. Show me an open place like Missouri. That is what I say." He sipped at the strong coffee.

"In fact, my brother Jeff feels the same way. Just last week he was talking about an offer that had been made to him to go out to St. Louis in a year or so to help design a public water system out there. You should really go up and see the reservoir while you're here in Manhattan, if you haven't yet, before you leave. Most out-of-town empire builders like yourself seem to consider it quite an engineering marvel."

Rembrandt eyed the government man and could not decide if Whitman was making sport at his expense. He decided not and itched his nose with the back of his hand. He was growing bored and tired of this bureaucrat, and he wasn't about to let himself in for hearing about another family member all too ready to be where there was money to be made under the table. "Jeff? You say your brother's name is Jeff?" He extracted his pocket watch, impatiently. "I most assuredly will look him up when I get to St. Louis."

"Our father named my brothers after US Presidents he admired. This brother's full name is Thomas Jefferson Whitman. But he's 'Jeff' to us in the family."

Rembrandt all about ignored the formal introduction—which seemed to be his ingrained custom. "What do you suppose is delaying McGlynn? I must tell you he is not impressing me with his sense of being prompt. With any luck he is rounding up that brother of his, the surveyor, to get signed on with me and my backers."

Whitman sat back in his chair. "You could say that, in a way. But certainly not in the way *you* mean."

Whitman had worn out any welcome with this last comment and the last of the free coffee he had to offer. Rembrandt's affected speech crumbled under the weight. "How's that? You know the brother from your government work, too?"

"No. I've never met Thomas' brother. Never will either. He's dead going on two years now."

"How do you know that? I thought you never met in Washington."

"Didn't. Just met McGlynn yesterday. But I took a liking to Thomas, and he turned that into a confidence last night after you left."

"What do you mean when you said he was rounding up his brother in some other way? You're speaking in riddles and I'm beginning to take offense, like you're tying a can to a dog's tail." Rembrandt couldn't communicate indignation well enough. So, he came across somewhat like a spoiled child rather than a gentleman.

"It's a long story, but here's the short of it. Final thing you told McGlynn last night was having to do with the prowess in battle you attributed to your venture associate now ensconced in financial bliss in Hannibal, Missouri. Turns out that errant surveyor you're so hot to bring into your kitchen was already in your friend's bait-and-switch stew, served up to Henry Wirz at Andersonville of late—though he managed a scarecrow's escape in time to die in his brother's arms; and that on the very day Willie Sherman took his Christmas supper in Savannah. If you get my meaning."

ix

After a brief moment to hide the deep shock that rocked him to his shallow core, the railroad man spoke out. "It's too bad that I had to deal with that boy. Guess he just couldn't let it go. Hannibal, Missouri he said? He's gonna go to Hannibal? I know why he's going to Hannibal, and it ain't got nothing to do with the railroad. You know. I almost had 'im right here. Almost had 'im. Well, Whitman, you go back to the halls of power in the Capitol. I'm gonna make myself a railroad." He pushed his chair back and began to rise, but thought the better of it; leaned back, still seated.

"I bet you I see them sumbitches some day. At last, one of the two of them. If I'm gonna see the one, I know I'll never see the other. I know that for a fact." Only then did he stand up from the chair he was sitting on at Whitman's table. "I know that for a fact." He pointed his finger back at Whitman, shaking it like a schoolmaster, and beginning to nod his head, in self-reassurance, he turned toward the door. "As plain as day, that fact," he claimed again to himself, to the heavens, and to anyone who wanted to listen as he walked away, reaching his arm up over his shoulder, bending it backwards toward Whitman, still pointing that wagging finger.

x

Whitman reached down inside his jacket's deep front pocket and withdrew a piece of paper and a pencil. He unfolded the sheet and laid it out, pressing the creases flat, on the table before him. He thoughtfully licked the lead point at the end of the pencil and wrote:

The real war will not get into the books ...

He paused and then added a fragment:

... the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors.