

Where's Here?

by [Donald Ian Delver](#) (November 2023)



Man Seated on Bed, Edward Hopper, 1905-06

I woke up in our bedroom, unsure of what time it was. I could see my wife had gotten up ahead of me. She was probably bustling around in the kitchen, getting breakfast ready. I had just started to roll out of bed when Doris came in.

“Don’t forget, Charlie, the doctor’s appointment is today at 9:00 AM. You’ll have to hurry. You just need to dress. You showered and shaved last night, remember?”

“Of course, I remember,” I said, with more confidence in my voice than was justified. I had forgotten both the appointment and the shower. Doris is worried because I’m becoming so forgetful. I’m afraid I may lose everything.

The doctor was very nice. She asked me a lot of questions, mostly about whether I knew where I was and what month and year it was, and who was president. I wasn’t sure about that last one, so I guessed. She asked me to remember a few words that she told me, and then she had me repeat. At one point, she asked me to count backwards from a hundred by sevens. I had some trouble doing that. At the end, I could only recall one of the words she had asked me to remember.

On the way home, Doris tried to comfort me.

“We’ll get through this together.”

I slumped in my seat like something heavy was pressing down on my shoulders. I cried a little.

I woke up in our bedroom and saw that that my wife was still sleeping. She seems more and more tired lately, so I tried not to disturb her as I got myself dressed. It was early, so decided to go for a walk before breakfast. The sun was just

coming up, but the weather was pleasant. I left our home on Plover Drive and strolled around our neighborhood for a bit, admiring the massive oak trees shading Rivercrest Way and then turning onto Webster Avenue with its elementary school, the playground fence running a full block along the north side of the street. After that, I can't remember which street I chose. I must have been daydreaming for a bit because when I looked around, I didn't recognize any of the houses. I started walking back the way I had come, but nothing looked familiar. I felt concerned, but I figured if I kept walking that way, I would recognize something.

After walking a minute or two more, still not recognizing anything, I began to feel panicky. I turned around several times, trying to make up my mind which way to go, but I just felt more confused. I could feel my heart beating more quickly. I began sweating and my field of vision started to contract. I felt light-headed, so I sat down on someone's lawn for a moment to clear my head. After a couple of minutes, two women I didn't know walked by, and one of them asked me if I was OK.

"I'm lost." My voice shook.

"Where do you live?"

"3322 Plover Drive" It came out in a rush. I had to repeat it.

"Oh, that's not far. Come with us, sir. We'll get you home safe."

I woke up in my room, unsure what time it was. I could see the blinds covering my two windows were each outlined brightly, indicating the sun was up.

That was some gig we played last night, I thought to myself. I don't even remember what time I got in. Roger's fingers were

flying over those keys, 5/4 time and all, bringing Brubeck to life for our audience. If I do say so myself, Betty Lou and I did Paul Desmond proud as well, floating that alto sax melody above the piano, drum, and bass lines. Peter is no Eugene Wright, but he can wring soulful notes out of his bass, and Don, well no one comes close to Joe Morello on drums when the time signatures get squirrely, but Don does his best. I'll give Roger a call and see if there's anything on for tonight.

I climbed out of bed, went into the bathroom, did my business, washed, brushed, and combed my hair as best I could. There seemed to be less and less of it each time I looked in the mirror. And gray! None of the other guys in the band had gray hair. I went to the closet, pulled off my pajamas and hung them up, then chose some comfortable-looking gray slacks and a charcoal pullover. Black socks from the nearby dresser and a black belt finished the ensemble. I stepped into the brown slippers near the bed and walked out into the hall and picked up the phone. I dialed Roger's number but got a recording telling me the number I had dialed had been disconnected. That had to be a mistake. I spoke with Roger yesterday morning to set up last night's gig. I redialed, more carefully this time, but got the same message. Thoroughly puzzled, I hung up and walked down the hall toward the kitchen.

The woman was there, frying some eggs. She must have heard me rummaging around for my clothes. The table was set for two, plates, knives, forks, spoons, even napkins were set out. A glass of tomato juice sat by each plate and there was a third plate holding a few slices of toast, with a small dish for jam and one for butter nearby. I smelled something else, apart from the eggs. She had put a few slices of bacon in with the eggs, something she must have known I liked. My mouth began to water.

I sat down and sipped some of the juice and reached for a piece of toast as the woman picked up my plate, carried it to the skillet and put a fried egg and two pieces of bacon on it.

She brought it back just as I had finished buttering my toast. She smiled as she set the plate down, but she looked very tired; her eyes were a little puffy, as though she had not slept much. The egg was done over easy. She must have known just how I like my eggs. I put the toast on the plate, picked up my fork and used its tines to break the yoke and then its edge to cut a small piece of bacon. I picked up the bacon on my fork, dipped it into the runny egg yolk, and brought the fork to my mouth. That first taste brought back clear memories of snowy days when school was cancelled and a few of us would sneak under the fence at the country club and race down its slopes on our sleds.

"You know," I said to the woman, "a funny thing happened when I tried to call Roger this morning. His phone's been disconnected. I wanted to see if we had a gig tonight, but I can't get through."

"Charlie," came her soft response, "Roger's dead. He died 6 years ago."

"Ridiculous!" I said, somewhat louder than I meant to. "I spoke to him just yesterday. We played a gig together last night at Gooch's Web."

The woman sighed, and slowly pushed her chair back, got up, and walked down the hall to another room. I heard a drawer being opened and then, a few seconds later, being closed again. She walked back down the hall carrying a white box, about the size and shape of a shoebox. She sat back down, opened the lid on the box and after searching for a few seconds, drew out what looked like a newspaper clipping. This she handed to me.

It took a few moments for the words on the page to swim into focus, but when they did, I read that my friend Roger had been laid to rest in the Chestnut Street Cemetery after services at Weil Funeral Home. The woman pointed to the date on the

obituary and said,

“That was six years ago, darling. You and I were there. You gave the eulogy.”

I started to protest, but there was something about her voice. Something familiar. Something I trusted. We finished eating in silence. The woman began to tidy up and I decided to walk back to my room and try to sort out my thoughts. I brushed my teeth and lay down on the bed to think. I’ve had a pretty successful life, overall. I’ve got my health, a great career, and a real zest for life. My one regret is that I never married.

I woke up on the floor, unsure how I’d gotten here, wherever here was. A woman was bending over me, crying.

“Charlie, what happened?”

Hell if I knew.

“Are you hurt?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know how I got here. “

“Let me help you up.”

With her help, I got to my feet, but I felt dizzy. She helped me down the hall and into a room with a bed. She had me lie down, then covered me with a blanket.

I woke up in a room, unsure where I was. A woman in a blue Hawaiian shirt came in with a big smile on her face and said,

“Good morning, Mr. Adams. I’m Certified Nursing Assistant Tiffany Johnson and I am here to take your vitals.”

“Where’s here?”

“You’re in the Veterans Home in Cincinnati, Mr. Adams. You were admitted last week. Your wife was just in to visit with you yesterday.”

“I’m not married.”

“OK. Let’s just check your temperature real quick. Then, I’ll get your blood pressure.

Just slip this over your index finger and we will be done in just a few moments.”

Obituary Notice in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*

“Funeral services for Mr. Charles Adams were held yesterday at the Weil Funeral Home. Charlie, as he was known to his friends, was a jazz musician and music educator who retired after directing the music program at Withrow High School for 30 years. Charlie played saxophone with the famed Withrow Minstrels for four years until his graduation in 1960. He was a graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and was a part of a jazz quartet that played in nightclubs in throughout Greater Cincinnati for many years. Charlie was laid to rest in Spring Grove Cemetery. He was 80 years old. Charlie is survived by his wife, Doris, and his sister, Mrs. Martha Keppler.

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Don Delver hails from Cincinnati and has lived and worked in Germany, California, Kentucky, and Oregon, where he now resides. His non-fiction articles appeared frequently in *The Commonwealth Journal of Somerset, Kentucky* under his byline “Delving In.” His short stories have appeared in

Metamorphosis, a Collection of Stories, published by Propertius Press, in *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and his nonfiction story will appear in the anthology *Military Life*, to be published in the fourth quarter of 2023 by Miltown Press.

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