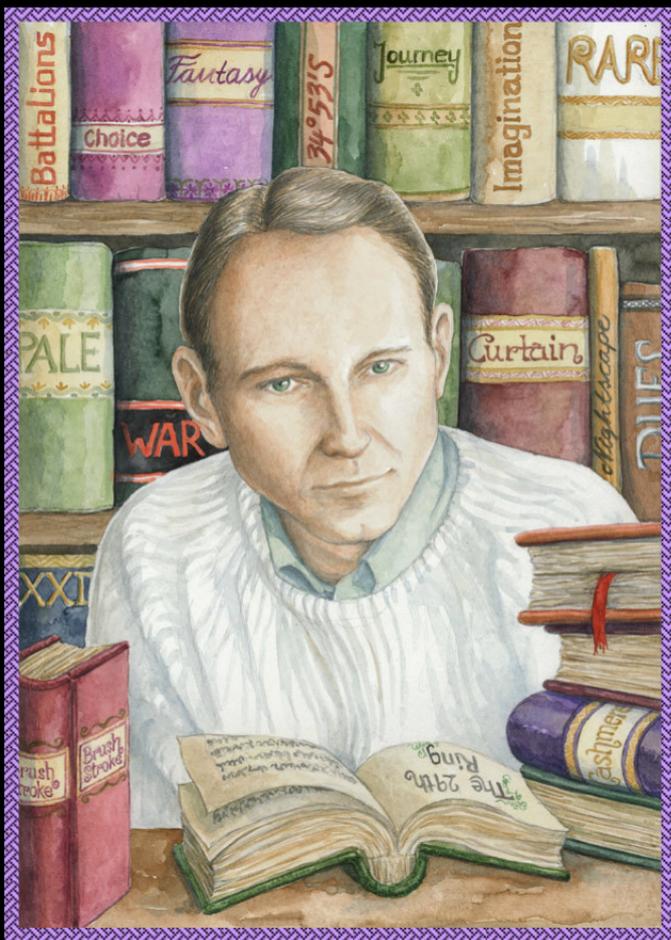


A NIGHT'S JOURNEY—NOCTURNE by D.H. DALE—
A MINIATURESTORY™ from STORIESWEARETELLING™ for the MINIATURELIBRARY™ of the SHORTSTORYAFICIONADO™

The SHORT STORY AFICIONADO™ PRESENTS



THE MINIATURE LIBRARY THE SHORT STORY AFICIONADO™

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Out of the Imagination and Mind's Eye of the Short Story Aficionado™

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A Night's Journey™

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A Night's Journey™

Having Evolved into the Quintessential
MINIATURE STORY™
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is Dedicated to

My FAMILY
Then, Now and Always

My DARLING and DEVOTED WIFE
You of Starlit Nights Come and Gone

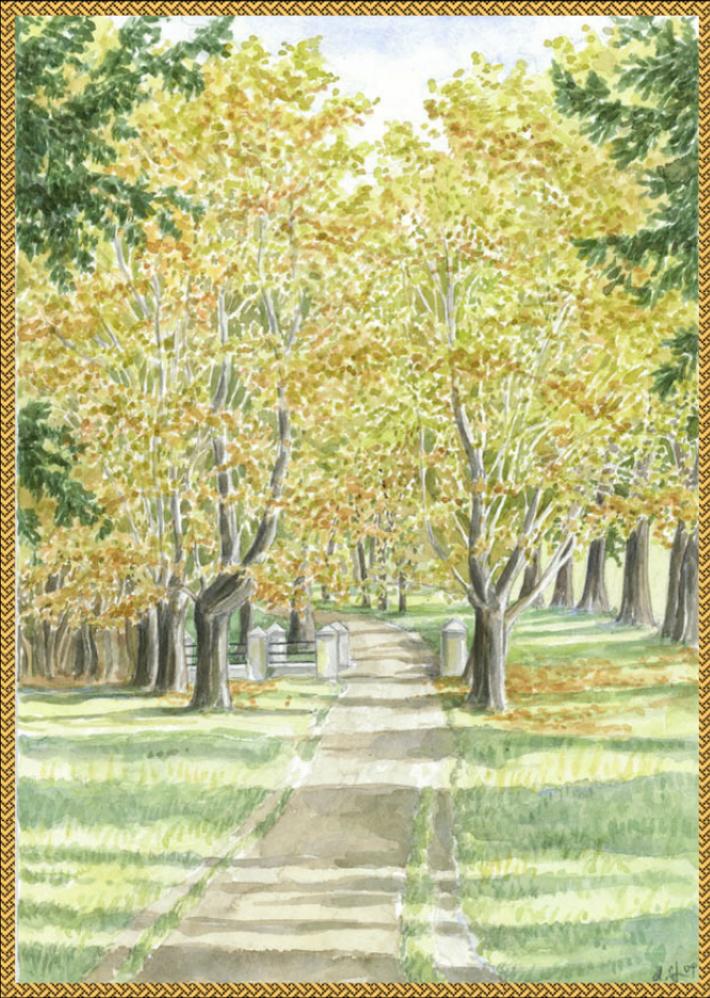
My LOVING and FAITHFUL DAUGHTER
You're the Best!

My BELOVED WIFE and ALLY
You in the Autumn Blush of All the Afternoons Yet to Come
having been the First to Cross Over the Threshold into the
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A Night's Journey

Join me now for *A Story I'm Beginning*—and savor *aBitof Mystery and Adventure*™. This, as you step in from the dark chill of the night, and then back out again for *A Night's Journey*—*Nocturne*™ of the deepest indigo blue.

Nocturne

DHD G T T G S S A™

HURRIEDLY LEAVING THE DARKNESS behind me, I pushed my way through the revolving door, and then with all the casualness I could muster—stepped from the dark chill of the night into the warm but dimly lit vestibule. So squeaky-clean as to be barely visible—the brass-framed glass gave way to the force and weight of my left arm and shoulder.

"Smooth—nicely done," I thought to myself smiling—as I followed the rotation in a counterclockwise direction. In essence, these were my silent accolades for both the door technology—and the way I handled it. After all, it's the small things in life that count. Right?

For the moment, I was bidding farewell to the cold city sidewalk—a path of hard, gray concrete all at once forbidding and yet strangely inviting. By the latter, I mean at the same time intriguingly hospitable and curiously de-

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sirable—in either case, something that one might not consider to be within the range of ordinary human experience.

Within this context, that long ribbon of coarsely smooth pavement was already tugging at my coattail—a silent reminder of just exactly why I would sooner than later turn right around and retrace my steps. After all, this would turn out to be just a short-lived port of call on *A Night's Journey*. In essence, this random stopover was much like a marginal notation that one might unexpectedly stumble across in a footnote. In particular, I mean those brief annotations found in the small print at the bottom of any random itinerary.

Outside, the monolithic curb and walkway of portland cement paralleled a blemished although otherwise well maintained side street. Over the decades, this quiet byway simply could not steer itself clear of being stained by machine age by-products from overheated and more often than not, simply exhausted mechanical horses. These emotionless equines provided the under-the-hood power for in-line internal combustion engines—the gaskets and seals of which, had yet to reach any kind of leakproof sophistication and technological spit and polish.

Only the rare and intermittent set of headlights bore witness to the asphalt, concrete and brick landscape that at this late hour catered almost entirely to nocturnal shapes and shadows—as well as to nighttime wandering and exploration such as I found myself engaged in.

Absentmindedly brushing off the soles of my shoes on the threadbare but nonetheless efficient floor mat—I walked straight ahead into the bright, pleasant lobby.



Behind me, I could hear the door continuing to spin on its well-oiled center shaft—and then lethargically run out of steam and come to a muted halt. In those two or three short seconds, I could just make out a soft hush—the beginning of a silent wait for yet one more ordinary anyone to just happen by.

Well! The shadows and mist were behind me for the moment anyway—so, better to leave any reveries outside to await my expected return.

"How strikingly old-fashioned!" was my first impression. As with the theater earlier in the evening, I felt as if I had somehow wandered into the past—into some by-gone era. That is, everything during a typical morning and afternoon seemed perfectly normal. However, when evening and nighttime rolled around, I felt as if I was time traveling. In due course, I decided that I would sleep during the day, so as to save my energy for night—particularly the hours after midnight, when mystery, romance and adventure tended to be more pronounced.

Perhaps it was the charm of the lobby's mood and character that made it so pleasing to my inner as well as outer eye. I suspected that it was that thing called atmosphere—or what more sophisticated patrons might prefer to call ambiance!

At least, that was my private sense of the moment—this, regardless of how quickly I seem to have separated my surroundings into their component parts, reassembled them and then arrived at what I felt were pretty good conclusions.



There was nothing pretentious about the place, that's for sure! First of all, there was the obvious—no door-man.

Neither did I see a bellhop, nor a concierge.

Both real and apparent, the foregoing were my first impressions of the place—at the same time of course, my night eyes going through the natural process of rapidly adjusting themselves to some potent visual and mental imagery.

Said another way, the invariably blunt transition from darks and grays to lights and colors tended to interrupt my eyes' natural adjustment process—the abrupt change not unlike a potent cocktail of sorts.

By the same token, the mild assault on my visual senses was to some degree cushioned by the relatively dim illumination present in the vestibule. Be that as it may though, the experience was still an interruption—perhaps even disruption—of the thoughts that I was preoccupied with when I first turned to enter.

As a matter of fact, experiencing the aforementioned visual and mental cocktail was like observing and then tasting an alcoholic combination served up by an appealing and attention getting barista—she, specializing in mixing *vodka blends* such as *three-olive martinis* and *screw-drivers* or a *Bloody Mary* and *Black Russian* or two.

First, there is the glare one perceives from all around the fifth of *colorless liquor*. Then comes the subsequent blast of colors created by said bartender—those *olive greens*, *orange-juice oranges*, *tomato-juice reds* and *café noir blacks* that even the supposed teetotaler knows so well.



Said another way, one can suddenly become giddy or dizzy—either one leading to a unexpected and unqualified desire to sit down and perhaps even hold on to something.

Happily, and perhaps even fortuitously from my frame of reference—the physical makeup of my personal constitution enabled me to quickly overcome the tendency to fall down.

It was a good thing too!

I preferred to remain standing, if for no other reason than to exercise a commanding view of what was laid out before me like a great gift of sorts.

After all, it was as if I was being introduced to something like a multicourse—if not multicultural—buffet of formal and informal imagery.

Offered up before me was a complicated, chess-like assortment of similes, images, metaphorical analogies and more—whether moving or stationary.

In short, it was a colorful and descriptive visual banquet for someone as observant of others as I happened to be!

TIMING is EVERYTHING, THEY SAY

AS I STOOD THERE, I paused to loosen my outer clothing and scarf—while also spying a vintage wall clock hanging above the reception desk on the far side of the room. It had a more or less oval face, its numbers not being the usual black but rather cobalt blue.

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And as if that wasn't curiously picture-perfect enough, farther back in the shadows stood a tall, pendulum longcase clock—its two hands apparently synchronized with the hour and minute exhibited on the face of the smaller timepiece. Its face was absolutely round, and its numbers gold and ebony black.

At that point, I half expected to see a third and even more accurate chronometer—an ancient Chinese water clock perhaps, to fill the bill and balance things out perhaps! If that had been the case though, I felt sure that its bright Asian colors would have been out of place and at odds with the existing décor.

For a place where time seemed to have stood still, keeping accurate track of *anything* was something the nature of which, it seemed to me, would be strictly nonessential.



Here in this particular overnight inn's lobby, it seemed, after all, compulsory only to keep track of the slowly turning decades—and even then, in merely an odd sort of way.

Anyway, "That was my take on it," I thought to myself—of all things, actually seeing those very words scrolling across my mind's eye.

It was getting fairly close to midnight—the ringing in of which would be my cue to continue my largely curious walkabout. That being the case, I had to get on with my brief analysis of just about everything around me—at least anything of any real significance.

The furnishings of the small lounge consisted of a handful of overstuffed armchairs. As a matter of fact, their



stubby wooden legs caused the seat cushions to practically hug the floor.

The creamy-white carpet was thick and plush. In keeping with the singular cleanliness of the revolving-door glass—the floor covering was not only unsoiled, but fresh smelling as well. Indented just a few feet from the surrounding wall was a perimeter accent some twelve inches or so in width, and Mediterranean green in color—like that of a pimento stuffed olive gracing a clear martini.

Alongside that, there was a more sophisticated design running all along the baseboards, to include an outline of the base of the dark oak reception desk. As a matter of fact, that's where it mainly stood out—that is, where it was the most apparent to even the nonobservant eye.

The intricate design consisted of two solid lines of burnt orange running parallel to and enclosing a broken line of squares that were teal in color—these, at first glance bringing to mind ancient Mayan glyphs.

Save but a particular one, there were no magazine tables—which I thought a bit odd. But then again, perhaps this was not *so* unusual, considering the compactness of the room and overall scarcity of space.

SHADOWY is the CORNER of WOOD, WORDS and NUMBERS

○ CCUPYING all of the far, right corner of the diminutive lobby was an enclosed, wood framed booth—its twin folding glass doors (both quite spot-

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less) standing open in seeming invitation to some casual conversationalist.

The enclosure must have been at least seven feet tall!

Inside the booth was a coin-operated public telephone—along with a wooden seat and shelf that were attached to the interior walls opposite one another. The shelf was under the bottom of the phone.

There was a thick directory of local numbers hanging on a metal chain next to the shelf. That in itself revealed the innocence of the time and place—because also listed was each number's name and street address! I couldn't actually see this, but felt certain of it nonetheless.

The pay phone's black shell clung steadfastly to the shadowy wall of the booth's unlit interior. I could just make out the black, white and chrome dial, as well as the recessed coin slots waiting for another meal of nickels, dimes and quarters—mostly five cent pieces—yes, had to be! This was just another clear indicator of just how far back in the past this phone was manufactured.

Naturally—and being the romantic that I am—I was thinking of the silver Pan American Airways Clipper flying boat. So, I was by that time all the way back to that faraway yesterday when a mere five cents could buy anywhere from what six bits' to a dollar's worth would get me today.

How many hundreds of conversations must have traveled out over that line over the years! This thought gave me pause to ponder the past for just a few moments.

Most of the callers probably dialed up to chat for routine reasons. Still, I somehow wanted to think that

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there were a few discussions far more purposeful and exciting than that.

Perhaps there had been passionate moments between two lovers!

"Did a small-time hoodlum or two drop in to transact some unsavory business of one sort or another?" I mused. Probably so!

There may even have been worrisome or distressing calls between family members—husbands and wives, youngsters and parents.

Perhaps that very phone had actually saved a life or two—or at the very least straightened one out and kept it on the right path at some critical and stressful juncture!

"That would certainly have made Mr. Bell's otherwise lonely existence on that back wall all worthwhile," I thought again—"Of course, that would depend on what the person did with the life that was handed back."

Naturally, I was tempted to walk over and try my own luck with a old souvenir nickel that I carried in my pocket for luck. Time, however, was growing short.

I thought to myself though, "If it works, I'll know for sure that I've traveled through time this evening."

COMINGS and GOINGS— QUESTIONS in NEED of ANSWERS

A LONG THE ROOM'S LEFT WALL stood three beige chairs, each spaced about a foot or so

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apart.

They had identical upholstery—the stitched covering being just this side of shabby, and therefore inappropriate and out of place when compared to the plush, clean carpeting.

I invested an additional moment or two to take it all in—that is, the dated motif and an ambience of long ago.

This caused me to reflect on what the past might have been like.

How many travelers had used these chairs over the years?

Who were these sojourners?

Where had they come from? Where were they going?

How had they arrived and departed—by bus, by train, by taxi, by private car?

Why had they come here, and perhaps even more importantly—what was it that sent them on their way, and why?

So many questions flashed through my mind, however few were the answers that followed—this, not to mention the little time I had to sort things out.

NEXT STOP, KATMANDU?

DIRECTLY BEHIND the three more or less tattered chairs was a rich, polished wainscot of fine brown

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oak. Above this, and stretching up to the high ceiling, was an expanse of pale green wallpaper. The ceiling was a similar shade of pastel green, with large white beams passing above and across the entire length of the room.

Centered on the wall above the chairs was an oil landscape by some unknown and forgotten artist. Its creator had originated and created an imposing scene. There was a rushing white-water river, together with dark green and shadowy Douglas firs, snowcapped gray mountains and a powder blue sky. The painting had a carved antique gold frame surrounding it, and had probably been hanging right in that very spot for years—probably since before the last great war.

Who was this once aspiring young artisan? Did he or she ever realize their dreams?

I pondered yet once again.

At about the middle of the lobby was an ornate divider—a wall. It separated the lounge from the reception area beyond. The construction was entirely of heavy brown oak, and there were two classical Ionic Greek columns at either end. The bases of each pair rested on the top of a waist high partition. At the top of each column's ancient design was a capital consisting of a spiral scroll-shaped ornament. Upon these capitals rested the ends of an archway, which reached up to the green plastered ceiling.

Through this arched opening, one could easily see the reception desk at the back of the lobby.

A bespectacled clerk was standing partially in the shadows, his face illuminated by the orange glow of a small desk lamp. He was looking down and examining an



entry or two in the hotel register. "Was he conducting business or just curious," I wondered.

I began to speculate about where his life took him when he was off-duty. Was he a bachelor bookworm who lived in a dingy loft somewhere? On the other hand, he might have a wife and several hungry mouths to feed.

Or—as my imagination began to outdo itself—perhaps he is a Sherpa with a canvas bag of pitons lying at his feet. He may be about to snatch them up, and catch the Pacific Clipper to Nepal for his next assault on Mount Everest!

Next stop, *Katmandu*?

To the left of the dividing wall was the oak-framed doorway to a back dining room. The room's lights were dimmed for the evening, but there was a tied-back portiere of dark-green velour hanging in folds on both sides of the entrance. The two-part drapery rose from near the floor to form a pointed arch at the top of the doorway. Each curtain reversed its curvature as it neared the apex. The style and design of the drapery reminded me of those I saw at the theater earlier that evening.

A tiny amount of light spilled from the lounge, back into the dining room, revealing several round tables spread in white linen. At the center of each, was a water decanter of tinted, green glass.

To the right of the dining entrance, my inquiring gaze found an elevator safety door. Hinged to open and close like an accordion, its black steel framework most likely led to the upper sleeping chambers. Maybe there was a basement too. I couldn't tell for sure.



The WOMAN in BLUE

IT WAS THEN THAT I NOTICED *her* sitting there! She was gracefully occupying the far end of an unusual looking low-slung couch on the near side of the lobby's oak dividing-wall.

Why she didn't catch my eye right away was beyond me!

But then my observations were always a bit random in nature—thereby causing me to frequently see right through or past one thing in favor of another. This randomness—to which my observations often and involuntarily found themselves frustratingly attached—rendered my choice of subject neutral as to person or object, as to action or inaction.

The blue lady's sitting accommodations were a peculiar mixture of interwoven bluish and butterscotch brown threads—the upholstery being newer and less worn than the three similar chairs that sat facing her just a few feet away.

Oddly, she was wearing an unseasonable short-sleeved summer dress entirely of blue—and accented with an overabundance of shimmering gold marcatos, to the point of almost twinkling.

There was an intriguing look about this woman that made her, it seemed to me, instantly out of the ordinary!

There also was something familiar about this woman in blue—something that suddenly roused my in-

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terest or my curiosity—which one I could not be sure at that exact instant.

I knew absolutely nothing about this blue lady. Yet, I felt that I somehow recognized her from somewhere, and recently too.

So, I began to search my memory.

Had I seen her at the theater? Perhaps it was on the train or on the nearby station platform.

It could have been one or maybe the other. I just couldn't be sure, especially in my now rushed framed of mind.

This woman in blue—this blue lady—was indeed captivating. There was no absolutely no doubt in my mind about that!

Casually sitting alone, she was intently perusing the open pages of an old book that rested firmly in the middle of her lap—but tilted slightly upward, so as to be synchronized with her line of sight. The combination of a perhaps antiquated manuscript's worn, brown Moroccan leather binding and its cracked, yellowing pages seemed somehow out of character for her.

Perhaps that was because she appeared to be a young woman. About thirty-five or so, I would guess—maybe a little older, maybe younger. It's hard to tell these days.

Crossed right over left, her comely and shapely legs stretched themselves out comfortably across the thick pile of creamy carpet as if they belonged there!

The hem of her blue dress rested just above both knees. Strangely—considering the weather outside—she

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wore no stockings, her feet balancing themselves precariously although precisely one atop the other atop the pinnacle of one stiletto heel. Only one foot was fully visible.

As with her dress, the blue lady's butterscotch-brown shoes were of an oddly summer style with vamps of separated, breathable leather strapping. Each shoe sported a pair of straps crossing over the bare tops of her two seemingly perfect feet. A single strap directed itself to the bottom of each shoe's instep, while the other wrapped itself nicely around the blue lady's extreme lower calf just above heelpieces nestled comfortably in the leather uppers.

This young woman's softly attractive face was tilted slightly forward and down in the direction of the book. My guess was that her eyelids were lowered for reading, rather than for modesty's sake. In any case, from where I happened to be standing, I could not discern the color of her eyes. 

Even so, I was sure in my mind that they must be rich and dark, like the surrounding oak—and perhaps like deep, brown chocolate.

As a matter of fact, the blue lady had a porcelain-white cup of steaming cocoa right there beside her on the only magazine table there was in the place—the tantalizing, wafting aroma of it being unmistakable.

¡Castaño, cacao caliente! Heiße schokolade!

All of the blue lady's surroundings contributed to the distinctly mysterious air that pervaded the entire hotel lobby.

She had strawberry blonde hair which was neatly parted on the left. She had brushed her tresses gently back to shoulder length that ended in round curls that touched

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the top of the back of the blue chair. She had a gold handbag next to her, but wore no jewelry or wristwatch. Apparently time was not important to her at that particular moment—or like other women that I had observed in the past, she had removed her watch and placed it next to her on the table by her steaming cup.

"Strawberry blonde!" "That must certainly be a clue," I uttered under my breath, thereby barely keeping the thought to myself.

But no!

My memory was still playing catch up ball with me—thereby yielding no more than a thin gap, like that of a heavy, steel, bank vault door barely open to me.

Beyond that point, everything that might provide even an inkling about this woman was hidden in shadows and mist.



Was it the gold and silver brocade of the lamé handbag then? While I was wracking my brain about that, a fresh thought slipped its way into my head for a brief moment—but I had to forego it for the time being though.

Why? Because my attention at that point was diverted across the room to my left.

Sitting there in the overstuffed chair nearest the dining room door and the back of the lobby was a matronly dowager—painted and bejeweled. She was clothed in a crimson dress to perhaps three inches below her knees, and wore a dark fur coat over that. This woman apparently had just come in from the evening chill, or perhaps was just about to go out.

But at this hour?

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Perched atop the woman's head was a strange looking and antiquated plumed hat. The curved crimson feather arched upward and to the hat's rear, in the direction of the back of the chair.

Below the matron's rouged cheeks and bare but modestly high neckline was fastened a diamond and carnelian brooch—the dark red semiprecious stone attached to the bottom of the pin. In her earlobes were diamond earrings of the pierced type.

The woman's face was turned to the left, and tilted upward like her feather. From where I was standing, her one visible left eye appeared to be pale blue. Including short white hair that was brushed back from beneath her hat, her description was more or less complete.

The dowager held both her knees tightly together, keeping her feet flat on the carpet in front of her. Thin and unshapely legs reached down to feet that were fit snugly in low, step-in shoes with flat soles. They were similar to penny loafers but of a more extravagant style.

I could not see the woman's right hand, and of her left hand I could see only the thumb and first two fingers. So, I could not tell if she was wearing a ring. Neither could I see any bracelets.

Standing to the matron's left oblique was a tall, hatless and well-dressed gentleman, darkly clothed in a suit and vest, with a light brown tie and a shirt with a hint of tan. Draped over his right arm was a camel-brown overcoat.

In the fellow's right hand was the hat missing from his head, one of those soft, dark fedoras out of the late



1930's, whose crown was creased lengthwise from front to rear.

With silver white hair not parted and combed straight back, and with a gray mustache, the man presented a distinguished appearance. I guessed that he was probably in his sixties.

As a matter of fact, he reminded me of a fellow whom I once knew, a company president with little in the way of fair play to mark his station in life. Naturally, that's a story for another place and another time.

However, it is interesting to note that the fellow standing there in the hotel lobby could have been Chester's half brother at least—but twenty-five years hence.

The elderly duo appeared immersed in a guarded conversation. From time to time, they glanced surreptitiously in the direction of the young woman—seeming to pay particular attention to the old text that she held ever more tightly in both hands.

And when the blue lady felt that she might be under the especially curious and stern gaze of the old gentleman—she gripped the cover of the hardbacked volume so tightly that her knuckles actually turned white!

One of her hands appeared to have been injured, and encumbered by a small adhesive bandage. The taped gauze bound the third knuckles of the forefinger and middle finger of the blue lady's right hand together.

Opposing the binding was a gold ring around the forefinger. It was obvious that until the bandage could be removed, the young woman would not be able to take off her ring.



It was also quite obvious that as she increased her grip on the book, the bandage exhibited a bright red stain!

The blue lady paid the elderly duo no attention whatsoever—not once looking up from her reading. Oddly, she never turned a page either. In fact, she did not seem to move at all!

Her breathing was imperceptible.

Was she napping perhaps? I smiled to myself. I could not say that I blamed her, considering how late the hour was.

Or had she fainted—*that* seeming to be the more plausible explanation!

The lobby clocks began to chime the witching hour of midnight. Extremely pressed for time, I turned to depart—*A Night's Journey* now **ab**out to resume in earnest!

As I prepared to retrace my steps back toward the front entrance, I took one final glance over my left shoulder at the woman in blue.

In so doing, I noticed something that wasn't previously within the limits of my frame of reference. In fact, it was in stark contrast to the creamy carpet beneath her feet.

Perhaps it was merely the lateness of the hour or my lack of attention to every single detail.

However, it seemed to me that there was an unintended tiny spot of bright red on the front of the blue lady's neck, just to the left of her delicate chin!

Regardless of the situation though, I simply had to keep moving!



I figured that if I saw this woman earlier in the evening, that I might just see her again in the wee hours as I continued on my way—assuming that no harm had come to her, of course!

STEEL and CONCRETE CITYSCAPE— SOUNDS, SHAPES and SOLILOQUIES

MAKING MY WAY BACK OUTSIDE, I reached up with both hands—and in my own unique way—pulled the wool scarf crossways and tight about my neck to protect against a night air that was still quite chill. As long as my neck was warm, I would not succumb to shivering.

I then glanced across the street, looking in both directions from left to right. The darkness of the byway led me to believe that it was totally deserted.

Still thinking about the blue lady, her antiquated book and that bright red stain upon her neck—I turned to walk toward the downtown, slowly at first.

What, if anything, was drawing me in that direction, I simply did not know—and certainly couldn't explain.

But I was cognizant of one thing. I was certain that somewhere down that empty street lay mystery, adventure and perhaps even romance as well.

One or all of those adjectives would very well end up describing my fate—on this, *A Night's Journey*.

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For some reason, I was becoming more and more confident that would be the case! Therefore, I assumed a more hurried pace—at this point, the nature of my gait becoming one of anticipation!

The sound of my own footfalls echoed back to me, and then seemed to be everywhere around me—pushing me along, exhorting me to go farther and faster!

It was as if my alternating heels and soles were mimicking the staccato accompaniment of a symphony orchestra's solo percussionist—imitating the repetitive rim shots of an ensemble snare drum, the resulting sounds floating on the cold night air amidst an already haunting, yet barely audible refrain.

My footsteps spoke to me like a lonely, resonating soliloquy—one that can be heard above an otherwise quiet nocturnal chorus. Said chorus was that which one might typically discover drifting up from the dry streambed of a rural desert ravine—said whispering interlude finding itself suddenly and mysteriously transported to this distant urban setting.

Having completed its journey, the lingering refrain's susurrant murmuring adapted itself to its new home—thereafter meandering along the well ordered footprint of an irregular skyline.

The underpinning for this jaggedly smooth silhouette was the cityscape's skyscrapers of steel and concrete—they, draped from roof to street level in dark burgundy cloaks of fired brickwork veneer, their rooftop collars trimmed in quarried blue-gray limestone and granite.

Together, the sum of these manmade peaks rose toward the starlit heavens in perpendicular fashion—as if

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to somehow mimic deep purple moonlit desert walls rising skyward to blue-gray cliffs tracing themselves along the ridges of a natural canyon.¹

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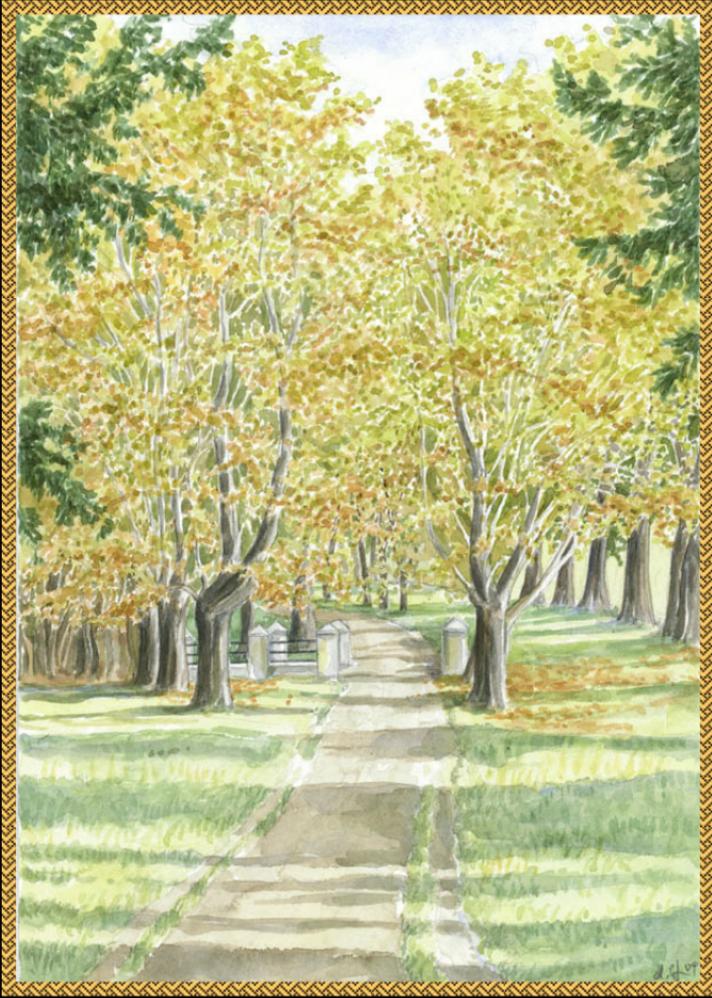
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¹The freewheeling imagination and evocative storytelling of D.H. Dale™ crown otherwise commonplace themes with *aBit of Mystery, Romance and Adventure™*—a bejeweled and magical coronet not shackled by convention. Herein lies the work of a self-styled painter of the written word—the full kaleidoscope of hues, blushes, shades, tones and tints flowing from the storyteller's inkwell to parchment. It is upon these leaves of paper so unselfishly bestowed by some mighty tree—that the teller has penned this *Miniature Story™* entitled *A Night's Journey™*—*Nocturne* and *A Night's Journey™*—*Café Noire*.

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FAR BEYOND the THRESHOLD of IMAGINATION
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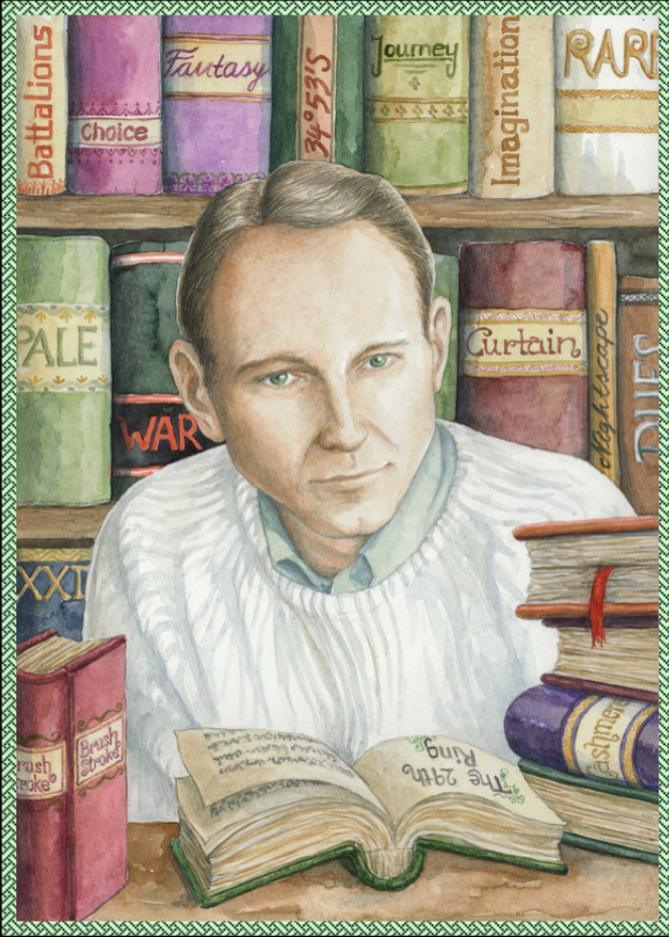
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