

## Martin Avery / TWO PROSE PIECES

### GREEN IDEAS

All week, he had been trying to buy a box of prophylactics. It was no longer the summer of '42. It was 1977, and he was not a boy anymore. You did not even have to ask for them at the counter. They were just sitting in a bin out in the open. They might have been typing erasers. Not only that; they were on sale. Usually, they cost \$3.50. They were on sale for just \$3.19. He was going to get the lubricated ones. They had *a special dry lubrication, were contoured for a better fit, made of a thin latex for even greater sensitivity, had a reservoir tip for even greater comfort*, and in a box of twelve there were half a dozen different colours.

That was not all. He was trying to make up his mind about buying a dog. He thought he wanted a dog, but he was not yet committed to the idea of having a dog around all the time. Instead he was *pretending* he had a dog. That way, he could get used to the idea of having one around all the time without the responsibility and discomfort a real dog might bring.

"Here, Skipper," he would call as he walked around his apartment. "C'mon boy: Come to Poppa!"

Then he would shake his leg as though there was a very small dog attached to his pants' cuff by its teeth.

"Down Skipper," he commanded.

He liked the sound of his voice when he gave the imaginary dog orders. He said it again.

"Down Skipper."

The whole charade was not helping him in any way to buy the box of prophylactics. Monday he had gone into the drug store for them and he had come out with a flea collar. Tuesday he bought Skipper a water dish. Soon, he would either have to buy the dog or else get rid of a whole lot of puppy paraphernalia. If anyone came over to the apartment and saw the dog dish, the flea collar, the biscuits, and the leash, he did not know what he was going to say to them. He did not know what he was going to say to his Roman Catholic girlfriend, either, if he showed up Saturday night without the prophylactics.

She was already pretty upset over this business with the dog.

Friday morning in the drug store, he had the prophylactics in his hand and he was walking towards the check-out counter. There was no-one in the store but him, the druggist, and the girl behind the counter. The druggist was busy in the back of the store, making up prescriptions for all the sick people who did business with him. It was now or never.

He had the prophylactics in hand, and he was walking to the check-out counter. The girl behind the counter already had one hand on the cash register. She was waiting for him. He stopped halfway up the aisle and looked at some typing erasers. Below the erasers, he noticed a display advertising a new product which got rid of dogs' worms. He did not know that dogs got worms.

Prophylactics in hand, walking to the check-out counter. He set the prophylactics box on the counter and reached into his back pocket for his wallet. The girl rang up \$3.50 on the cash register. He was too embarrassed to tell her they were on sale. Instead, he shook his leg as though there was a very small dog attached to his pants' cuff by its teeth.

"Down Skipper," he whispered.

And then he made a very amateurish attempt at ventriloquism. Out of the corner of his mouth, he made some foolish dog noises.

"Whorf, whorf," he ventriloquized.

"Whorf, whorf, whorf."

"What have you got there?" the girl behind the counter asked. "A little doggie?"

"Oh no," he said. "It's not a real dog. I'm just thinking about getting a real one, so all I have right now is this imaginary one."

"I see," the girl behind the counter replied. "That's very interesting."

Green ideas sleep furiously.

## FOUR KINDS OF FANTASY

There are only four kinds of fantasy. That is something I have learned. It came as a surprise after two decades of dreaming all kinds of dreams, listening to all kinds of stories, and reading all kinds of books. But this is real knowledge, handed down to me through a great Canadian poet from a blind librarian down in South America.

The poet could not remember all four kinds of fantasy right away. At first, he could only remember three out of four kinds of fantasy:

1. A journey through time.
2. A journey through space.
3. The doppelganger myth.
4. He forgot.

The only movie I have seen more than six times is *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It is a journey through time, a journey through space, and it involves the doppelganger myth. The doppelganger myth is about doubles, or doppels. Everyone has been told there is someone else who looks *just* like him. If you ever see that person, you will go crazy.

One summer in Alberta, I saw Paul Newman. I almost went crazy. Later that same year, I went to a Bob Dylan concert. Gordon Lightfoot was there. I almost went crazy twice.

So much for the doppelganger myth.

The poet always remembered three out of four kinds of fantasy and now I can't remember the last one, either. It will come to me. It always does. It always came to him, too. Sometimes he would remember the two journeys and the one I forget, but he would not remember the doppelganger myth. Sometimes he would forget one of the journeys but remember the other three kinds of fantasy. The same thing happens to me, and now it will happen to you like a story continually unfolding within a story.