Extra Quarters

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"It was a dark, snowy night when Jack Hamill, a reporter for the Morning Star, saw the old man waiting for the bus. The instant he spotted this man, glimpses of his past ran through him: third grade, a saved picture, his crying mother. Why did he look so familiar? Jack thought. Oh well, give it up. It's been along day, you need rest."

Cover Page Footnote
Appeared in the issue: Spring 1999.

This prose is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1999/iss4/22
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The bus came and Jack dug his change out, got in line behind the man who was digging for his change. He emptied his pockets, bringing out pens, pocket lint and some coins, but not enough change for the bus. Jack quickly jumped at the chance to help this familiar stranger out.

"Sir, I have some extra quarters." The man looked up. His face went white and he dropped his wallet. His panicked breathing turned into gasps and he collapsed on the sidewalk. Jack couldn't move. There was commotion all around him, but his mind was preoccupied reliving past memories. In the third grade, he had gotten off at the bus stop but couldn't find his mom. She always waits for me here; I don't want to walk home alone. Seeing no other choice, he started down the block. When he walked into his front door, he saw his mother just standing there holding the phone with a red, tear-streaked face. She never noticed Jack as he made his way to the kitchen. She just continued to mumble. But the war was over; he was on his way home, how could he have been killed. How? Who was it that just called? How did they know?

Jack's thoughts came back to the present and he glanced around. The paramedics were putting the stretcher into the ambulance. Disoriented, he began to walk away. But something caught his eye. The man's wallet, no one had retrieved the wallet. Jack ran over and picked it up. Opening it, he caught his breath. That picture, I know that picture. Jack quickly took out his wallet and opened it up. In the first flap, he got out a familiar picture he had kept since third grade. He sat down and put the two side by side. Then he realized it. They were identical.

--Lisa Middendorf