

Turn Out The Lights

by Chris Okum

Roger Staubach leaned back in his chair, put his feet up on his desk and his hands behind his head. Don Meredith wiped tears from his eyes. "There's a crowd in my head," said Meredith. "And they aren't never not there." Meredith explained to his successor as Dallas Cowboys quarterback that over the years he had given each member of that crowd a name and address and filled in the blanks as to who they were as individual people. Staubach asked Meredith how many members of the crowd shared characteristics with Meredith himself. "See, Rog, that's the thing," said Meredith. "I see mostly just myself in every one of them." Staubach commented on his own paucity of character, and how, if he had to do what Meredith did, there would probably only be around a dozen people making up his own less than crowded headspace. Meredith grinned. His eyes welled up again. "I had no idea of the multitudes I contained," said Meredith. "Gee whiz, Rog, it's almost like I'm infinite." Staubach fingered his earhole and grimaced. He told Meredith that there was a good chance that the self Meredith was perceiving wasn't really a unified whole made up of ten thousand individual shards coming directly from Meredith and Meredith's experience-as-Meredith, but instead, what Meredith perceived to be as pieces of himself were really stolen pieces of others, maybe everyone he had ever met, including Staubach. Meredith's eyes grew wide. He started to speak, then stopped. He seemed to be searching for something just out of reach. "It's funny you should say that," said Meredith. "Because there is a man in Section D, Row 32, who, now that I think about it, reminds me of you. And dagnabbit, I really like that guy. I like him a lot." Meredith could not hold back the tears forming and they began to run down his cheeks. Staubach asked Meredith why he was so sad. "Because I thought that was me," said Meredith. "I thought that it was me I liked so much." Staubach got up and walked over to Meredith. He put his hand on the shoulder pad of Meredith's mustard yellow blazer. He called him Dandy Don. Meredith gently

removed Staubach hand's from his shoulder, got up, and exited the room. Staubach waited a moment and then followed Meredith out, but could not find him anywhere.

