

Pirate

by John Riley

When I got out I didn't buy a new suit of clothes, step into a bar, or bargain for an hour with a whore. I walked from McGee Street over to Russell and wondered if Bus 16 still went out of its way to loop around the traffic knot at the shopping mall. It'd drop you there if you had need for double knit slacks or a fake leather coat with snaps that hid a wide zipper.

I called the old mom to say I'd be around. She told me my troubles were over and there was nowhere to go but home. Please hurry, she said. She wanted to hold my face in her hands.

I turned the corner onto her street. Tiny houses walked up as I walked down. I traveled on and remembered how when I was a boy I'd grow tired of reading stories about pirates and drop my book and run outside to roll down the portside of Olive Street Hill, climb back up and try the starboard side, dreaming the whole time treasures were coins clinking in your hand, joy was buying the next round.

