

Sketch

Volume 31, Number 1

1964

Article 17

The Hearse Driver

Neil Howard*

*Iowa State College

Copyright ©1964 by the authors. *Sketch* is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch>

The Hearse Driver

Neil Howard

Abstract

Old man, bent and odorous, Shuffle a weary walk Down the corridors of age. Try to remember names Of faces, add faces to names, Then accept the gift of senility...

He walked down a long corridor. His footsteps echoed regularly ahead and behind him. He passed doors with small glass panels in them through which he could see classes in session, where rapt student gazes were fixed on brilliant presentations by learned, kindly, teachers. It wasn't right! He had worked hard; he should be in there with the rest. Somebody had made a mistake. He had his card; it was the ultimate authority for University attendance. Didn't it register you for a room And pay for books? And meals? The short man had misplaced or lost Harold's card.

The people in room 1 would know what to do about this. They probably would just make a phone call. Then he would be all right. His footsteps echoed louder now and closer together. It all would turn out to be some kind of mistake and somebody would be in a lot of trouble for it. Now his sweater was damp under the arms and his books were hard to hold, more slippery than they should be in their plastic covers. It was a good distance to room 1. It would probably be better if he got there quickly. That would be proof of his blamelessness. Now it was of terrible importance to Harold to get to room 1. The short man might get there before. . . .

He began to run.

The Hearse Driver

by Neil Howard

Old man, bent and odorous,
Shuffle a weary walk
Down the corridors of age.
Try to remember names
Of faces, add faces to names,
Then accept the gift of senility.
You who never had youth but
Only dreams and forgotten
Nightmares—wait here
With hands clasped in rigid
Anticipation of release.
I will return for you,
Soon.