Decision

Oliver A. Nelson*
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Abstract

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LITTLE Joe Thornton looked at me and asked, "How about you? Are you with us?"

If anyone had asked me two days ago if I were with them, I would have replied unhesitatingly that anything these men did was good enough for me. They were my friends. We had worked together for a long time, laying pavement until it seemed that the earth itself should be covered with the concrete we had poured. Our lives had been on a level—sweating together in the sun, cursing the raucous alarm clock, blessing the stopping whistle. Our joys and bitterness had been one.

Now they were asking me if I was with them, and I didn't know. They were planning a strike, an abortive, poorly-timed strike that I knew had no chance of succeeding. It would only cost us our jobs. There were other men eager to work.

"Well," Joe said again, "are you with us?"

I could feel their eyes on me. They stood in a little circle, leaning on their tools, watching expectantly. I shifted my weight, swallowed, and dropped my hammer to the ground.

"Sure," I said, "I'm with you."

—Oliver A. Nelson, Sci. So.