Art

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THE WINTER sky in the west was shot with purple. The red, steady sun, already set, had left behind a half-circle that glowed on the horizon with the icy radiance of pink quartz. But gray December clouds hung low over Belleville, so the glow did not touch the town.

Tom Culley shuffled slowly along the cold, dry pavement that went across the little bridge and toward main street, still wearing the dark suit and black oxfords that he had worn in the afternoon just past. He was almost home, but turned and headed back along the streets he had just walked. His mind kept going back to the white gloves he had seen on the past two nights, and again that afternoon.

"God, why Rog?" He asked the question half aloud. "Why should it have been him?" The white gloves were the first thing Tom had noticed two nights ago, when he went to Hoffmueller's Funeral Parlor, and they were the last thing he had seen that afternoon at the church. He had noticed them before he saw the red, white and blue flag hanging stiff and smooth, before he saw the thick glass seal across the gray metal casket, even before he saw the gray-blue face, with the strangely twisted lip, that he used to know as Roger Alexander.