

EX NIHILO

ORIGINAL PROSE AND POETRY

MISSING DEPARTURE

John Dominic Bouck, O.P.

Where *is* he? Circling the airport for what seemed like the hundredth time, Connor Gould was losing his patience. As he passed by the arrivals gate once again, he wasn't sure whether he should be angry or worried. "Why can't anything be simple with him?" Still not seeing his brother Arnold, he decided to enter the parking ramp and go inside to take a look for himself.

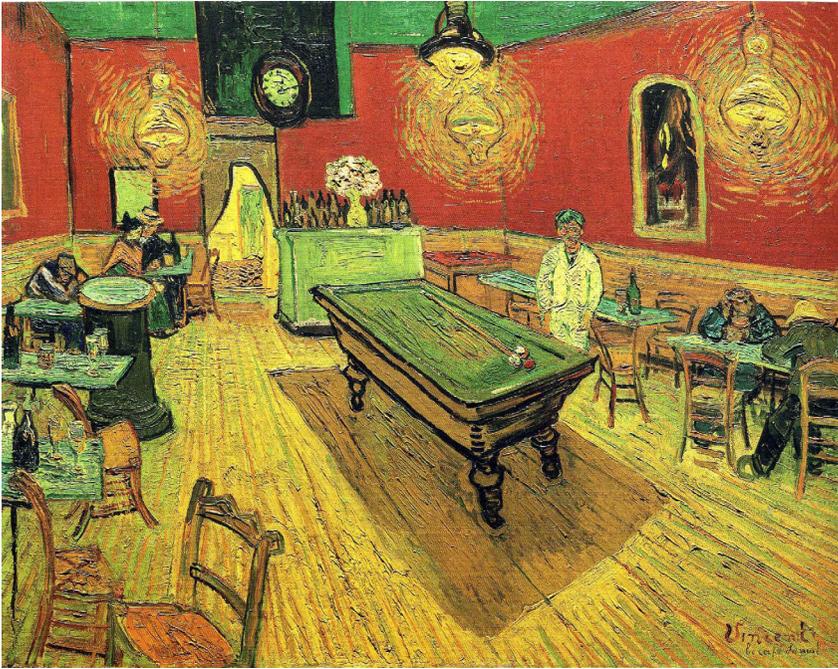
"Chicago... Delta 1632... On Time... 4:13pm... it's been on the ground for over an hour, where is he?" Connor made his way to the desk attendant.

"How may I help you?" she recited.

"Could you please tell me if Arnold Gould was on that last flight from Chicago?"

"Umm... the passenger log says that he had a reservation and checked in, but never boarded... Sorry."

Connor pulled out his cell phone and called his brother. "*Beep... Hey this is Arnold, sorry I can't speak to you right now because it just got a lot harder to get a hold of me. Please don't be angry with me. I wish things could have gone differently. See you later.*" Connor pulled the phone away from his face and looked at it with disbelief. "That's not his normal message. What's going on?"



VINCENT VAN GOGH - THE NIGHT CAFE

As Connor headed towards the door, he noticed a lone black briefcase on the now-stationary baggage carousel. It looked like a briefcase that he had bought for Arnold a few years ago for Christmas. He went over and picked it up and saw a tag on the handle with the name “Arnold Gould” on it. “I hope that he’s all right,” Connor thought. He nervously took it and opened it on a bench nearby. The only item in the briefcase was a single sheet of poorly torn-out notebook paper.

Dear Connor,

Relax man, I’m ok. This probably seems really weird for you right now, but I am not coming to L.A. to visit you. I know I should have called you but I got nervous, and writing’s easier than talking. I really appreciate that you bought me this ticket, but to tell you

the truth, I was going to visit you in L.A. to have a good time, and then ask you if I could stay with you longer and look for a job, but by that I mean use your money (you have plenty you know) and then live my usual life of using and being used. I know that sounds harsh, but it's not because I want to use you; it's just that I have some problems in me. Anyway, I came up with this crazy plan to give you a note. I met this guy last night at the bar. I'm usually not much for just talking to random middle-aged men at bars, but we made some small talk, and something happened inside of me, it's hard to explain, and I basically told him my life story and then cried. I don't think I've cried since junior high. It was horribly embarrassing, but I felt so free. I know it sounds weird, but you just have to believe me that a good thing happened inside me. It turns out that this guy I met is pretty rich and he arranged for me to get into a rehab center. It was strange. I don't like people feeling sorry for me, or just giving me handouts, but he seemed to actually feel what I was feeling. I think he may even have been crying a little bit (I know it seems weird). I will let you know when I get out. I hope you are doing well and I'll see you someday, I hope soon.

Peace,
Arnie

Connor set the page down in disbelief and sat down on the bench, exhausted by this recent turn of events, muttering under his breath in confusion. "Where is he? Who is this guy? He's my brother and I've told him a hundred times to go to rehab, and he never listened to me. I've never taken a handout in my life... I just don't get it..."

John Dominic Bouck entered the Order of Preachers in 2012.