

“A couple of hours ago.”

“Oh. And, uh, how long will you be in town?”

“Only for the day. I was just on the way out.”

“Oh. Uh-huh.”

I smiled big and genuine. “Uncle Dennis, how have you been? I haven’t seen you in such a long time.”

“Oh, I been fine.”

“It’s really good to see you, do you know that?”

Dinny’s expression remained unchanged, his face and eyes still showing blank as he asked, “Uh, how’s the family?”

“Fine,” I said. “Everybody’s fine.”

“Good.” Dinny gave the newspaper a push into his armpit. “That’s good.”

I was somewhat curious as to where Uncle Dennis was living these days and what he was doing with himself. I wanted to tell him to relax, for Christ’s sake, that I didn’t have any plans to go out anywhere with him, to have drinks or dinner, or to stay at his house or anything like that. No. I just wanted to let him know that the only reason I chased him was because he was my uncle. “You’re my uncle, Uncle Dennis,” that’s all I wanted to say to him. And to tell him that I chased him in order to say “We’re family.”

I said nothing.

Buses and cars fumed by, Hollywood types pushed past the newsstand. The news vendor, who had a hard gritty face and wore a dirty cap and a dirty string apron, handed pennies in change to a bent-over man who was schlepping grocery bags, and slapped a paper beneath the man’s arm.

After a long silent pause I said, “Well, I’ve got to be going now.”

Dinny’s mouth dropped open in fake disappointment. He said, “Oh. Uh-huh.”

“It’s really nice to see you.”

“Yes. Give my regards to the family.”

Our eyes met. Dinny’s came up from the pavement, and across his face spread the look of family once more. We were blood, Dennis and I, we were connected, from back there, no matter—or in spite of—what was happening today, here, now. We were family no matter how you looked at it, Dennis and I, just family, that’s all. And now it was time to go.

We smiled thinly and backed off from one another.

As I recrossed the street I felt an urge to look behind to see if Dennis was still lingering by the newsstand and

perhaps following me with his eyes, or whether he was walking away, his back turned. I wondered if Dennis could possibly be feeling the urgency that I was feeling to look back, and if Dennis was being tempted, too, to stop for a moment, turn to see if I had stopped and turned and was looking to see him.

I didn’t look back; I don’t know whether Dennis did or not. Soon I was lost in the crowd, and it wasn’t long before Hollywood Boulevard and the Walk of Fame went back to where it had been before Dennis or I ever came on the scene.

**Robert Kerwin’s** celebrity profiles, essays, short stories, and travel and op-ed pieces have appeared in *Playboy*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Ellipsis*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, and *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, among others. Born in Chicago, he received a BS in Journalism from the University of Illinois, and he later attended University College Dublin, Ireland, as a graduate student reading English Literature. He now lives in northern California and most recently has been working on a memoir, *All to Myself Alone*.

## MARC TRUJILLO

*6351 Sepulveda Boulevard, 2012*

Oil on polyester, 38 x 47 in



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