

## *Subeck*

When Tim was young he suffered from depression. It wasn't a good time or place to be a depressed kid (but then, is it ever?) Tim was an army brat, so his world was military bases and frequent moves, new schools and schoolmates every few years. People in that world spoke with mindless, total seriousness of things like Courage and Honor, Family and God and Country. That sunny flag-flying world didn't have a clue about depression. "Depression" was a delusion of frustrated housewives and neurotic society women.

So Tim bore his desolation completely alone. He bore it as he walked the streets of base housing, streets that felt like they wanted to run straight as the grids on a war map but curved in unwilling imitation of civilian suburbs, past brick Fifties ranch houses even duller than their civilian models, on buzz-cut lawns, beneath the blistering sun of a Texas or Alabama or Carolina summer. He bore it as his family went happily unconcerned to military dances, ball games and picnics, to Sunday service at the base churches and movies at the base cinema and shopping at the base stores. He felt like an alien, exiled and lost.

He drew a lot in his notebooks: old Gothic buildings, decrepit and sooty. He drew them facing on empty winding streets, and on an esplanade, lined with drooping trees, alongside a bleak harbor. He drew in pencil, black and white and gray shadings. He felt he was seeing the kind of place where he and his sadness would not feel alien. He imagined endless grey skies and chill damp winds; abandoned shipyards, derelict factories; air-raid damage from the War decades past left unrepaired. A European city, old and forgotten on a cold northern sea, in a country left behind by the modern world. He gave it a name. He carried a map of it in his head. Sometimes at night he dreamed of it.

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One year in the middle of life – that risky time when Dante strayed in the dark wood; when a man realizes in his soul that all roads lead to the grave, and ponders with doubt and regret the road he has travelled thus far – Tim's depression came back. His lover had been transferred to another city. Tim followed him there, and found a job in his

own profession. Then, just a few weeks later, his lover ended the relationship, and the job was downsized.