

➡Every town◀

Every town seemed to have its own feel. Don't you believe in consciousness of place? I can tell you, there are places I've entered where I've felt a shudder down my spine and knew I had to get out of there fast. Avoidance City. I can't tell you why, but I got the heebie-jeebies there. And Purple Place, a year before the Settler's Compound disaster. We'd stopped in for a cup of coffee, and I overheard the local constabulary talked at the table behind me. I don't remember exactly what they said, but they scared the shit out of me, and when she came out of the bathroom, I said, <<Let's get that to go. We can't stay.>> And Fort Hellhole, I think that's what it was called. When we pulled in there, on our way to Cheechako, the freakin' tent zipper broke, it started pouring rain, and all of 10,000 hummingbird-sized mosquitoes decided to seek shelter inside the open tent. I was so distraught that I wept. You know what she did, though? She sat out in the rain over a fire she'd gotten started miraculously and was boiling water for artichokes! The absurdity of that gesture was perhaps the most endearing moment of our time together. It was beautiful, and I laughed at fate for the rest of the evening. Then we slept in the car with the radio and the a/c, splurging on gasoline so we'd feel better. I'd wake up every couple of hours to make sure we had enough gas, and I'd turn the car off for an hour or so, but then it'd get so clammy, I'd have to turn it on again. Still, I didn't mind that. The artichokes had been perfect.

The entrance to the city is ahead. I think we passed through the towns in the correct order. Otherwise, the gate won't open.

Well, on the way, we might have time for a story.

<<Great. Go ahead.>>

No. I mean for you. Tell us one.

<<Oh, man, don't put me on the spot like that.>>

Okay, never mind for now. But I'm coming back to it.

<<Okay. I'll try to be ready.>>

So tell us one.

<<Not right away. Give me a while. Fifteen minutes, at least.>>

And you'll be a tinker just like Einstein. Okay, I guess I'm supposed to stall for time. <<Shake it to the left, shake it to the right, do the hip hip milk shake with all your height. Shimmy, shimmy. Do the swim. Jump up. Jump back. Do the Sharona. The Rock Lobster. Going down, down, down.>>

<<Okay. There was once—>>

Where was? ► There ◀ is a pronoun referring to place. You have not established a place. Each pronoun needs an antecedent. If you are constructing a delayed-subject construction, sometimes referred to as an ► expletive construction ◀, then you are making a mistake in logic. Pronouns do not take postcedents. State the subject before the verb. If you are not constructing a DSC, as I call them, then where is ► there ◀?

<<Twentieth-century Lilliput.>>

That, of course, means Liverpool, back on Earth. Beyond the Merseybeat and the Premier League, what the heck do you know about Liverpool?

<<No, not Liverpool. Lilliput. But I guess you are saying that Liverpool is what Swift had in mind when he wrote about Lilliput.>>

But of course.

<<Okay, I'll start over. A young man lived in a run-down apartment in the Edgewater section of Chicago in the 1980s. He had just finished spraying his shower with mild and moldew spray when he—>>

You mean ► mold and mildew ◀, right?

<<Look, are you telling this or am I?>>

Go ahead, go ahead. I won't interrupt. Oh, what kind of feeling does Chicago have?

<<What?>>

This is about consciousness of place, right? What kind of feeling does Chicago have?

<<Chicago is too big to have a single feeling. It's a complex city—fast, quick to anger, yet forgiving of almost everything but laziness. The biggest problem it has, I think, is that it considers artists to be lazy, and thus it tends to revile them unless they have enormous incomes. Income level is equated with how hard one works.>>

Everywhere in Chicago?

<<Most everywhere. Ask any artist. Ask her or him, <When you introduce your self as an artist to people in Chicago, what's usually their first response?> and I'll bet you that she or he will reply, <Do you make much money doing that?>>>

At least enough to afford expensive mold and mildew sprays.

<<I never said he was an artist.>>

He'd have to be. You don't know anything about regular working people.

After I said that, he decked me. I gueß I'd poked him in his sore a little too hard. What kind of a stupid story would begin with mold and mildew spray anyway.