

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

EPISODE



TWELVE

ED ECCO VERSO NOI VENIR PER NAVE UN VECCHIO,
BIANCO PER ANTICO PELO, GRIDANDO: "GUAI A VOI,
ANIME PRAVE! NON ISPERATE MAI VEDER LO CIELO: I'
VEGNO PER MENARVI A L'ALTRA RIVA NE LE TENEBRE
ETTERNE, IN CALDO E 'N GELO. E TU CHE SE' COSTÌ, ANIMA
VIVA, PÀRTITI DA COTESTI CHE SON MORTI". MA POI CHE
VIDE CH'IO NON MI PARTIVA, DISSE: "PER ALTRA VIA, PER
ALTRI PORTI VERRAI A PIAGGIA, NON QUI, PER PASSARE:
PIÙ LIEVE LEGNO CONVIEN CHE TI PORTI". E 'L DUCA LUI:
"CARON, NON TI CRUCCIARE: VUOLSI COSÌ COLÀ DOVE
SI PUOTE CIÒ CHE SI VUOLE, E PIÙ NON DIMANDARE".
QUINCI FUOR QUETE LE LANOSE GOTE AL NOCCHIER
DE LA LIVIDA PALUDE, CHE 'NTORNO A LI OCCHI AVEA
DI FIAMME ROTE. MA QUELL' ANIME, CH'ERAN LASSE E
NUDE, 100 CANGIAR COLORE E DIBATTERO I DENTI,
RATTO CHE 'NTESER LE PAROLE CRUDE.



OSCILLATE WILDLY

by T.M. Camp

As the lights go down, the music begins.

*Low humming and small noises in the darkness,
suggesting a car in motion.*

The lights rise. Night.

Walter, behind the wheel.

Next to him, the fellow known only to us as Charlie.

*Light from the dashboard, fluorescent greens and blues,
spill grotesque shadows across their faces.*

*It would not be unusual, from time to time, for the
headlights of an approaching car to wash across their
faces. However these moments are rare, for the road is
a desolate one, and few are those who return along the
way.*

Car radio — playing softly to itself.

Silence.

WALTER: Uh...

CHARLIE: ...yes?

WALTER: Nothing.

CHARLIE: You were saying?

WALTER: I, it's nothing.

CHARLIE: Mm.

WALTER: I'm sorry, I don't really remember your name.

CHARLIE: My name?

WALTER: Yes. I'm sorry. My mind's a blank.

CHARLIE: My name is...

WALTER: ...Char...

CHARLIE: ...Charlie.

WALTER: Charlie.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Ah. Yes.

CHARLIE: Charlie.

WALTER: Right. Sorry. I've been, I've been driving for a while now.

CHARLIE: How long?

WALTER: I'm sorry? How..?

CHARLIE: ...how long have you been driving, Walter?

WALTER: I'm sorry? Oh, it's been a number of, a number of hours now.

CHARLIE: "A number of hours. "

WALTER: Yes. You see, I'm on a trip. Going to, I'm going to see a friend. I'm driving at night so that the heat...

CHARLIE: "...the heat..."

WALTER: ...the heat won't get me, get to me. It's warm.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Yes. So, I'm driving at night.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: The night is cool.

CHARLIE: Yes. It is. At night.

WALTER: Yes. You're Charlie and I'm...

CHARLIE: ...you're Walter...

WALTER: ...right. Walter. Charlie. You're Charlie and I'm Walter.

CHARLIE: Right.

WALTER: Yes. I'm sorry, I, could you..?

CHARLIE: ...yes?

WALTER: Where are you headed?

CHARLIE: Where? Just down the road.

WALTER: Ah. Uh, just down the..?

CHARLIE: ...that's right. Just down the road. With you. Walter.

WALTER: Oh.

CHARLIE: It's complicated.

WALTER: I'm going to see a friend.

CHARLIE: That right, Walter?

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: Drive much, Walter?

WALTER: What? Oh. Yes. From time to time...

CHARLIE: ...from here to there...

WALTER: ...yes. I do drive, a bit, time to time, yes. Thank you.

CHARLIE: "From time to time. "

WALTER: Yes. I enjoy it.

CHARLIE: You do?

WALTER: Why, I, yes. Yes I do. Absolutely. Yes. I find a real sense of freedom in the open road and the...

CHARLIE: ...yes.

He hums along with the radio for a moment or two.

WALTER: What is the name of, sorry, what is the name of that song there?

CHARLIE: Just a tune. Pass the time.

WALTER: I see.

CHARLIE: Tired.

WALTER: Well, that's something I sure don't need to think about. What, with all the driving we've, I've got ahead of me. Sleep is the last thing I want to be reminded of.

CHARLIE: Sorry.

WALTER: I wouldn't want to doze off at the wheel.

CHARLIE: No.

WALTER: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Falling asleep, an accident, at night, on a trip. Sounds like a good way to...

...silence.

CHARLIE: "A good way to..?"

WALTER: ...people, people die, people die from that.

CHARLIE: Yes. At night.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: Are you tired?

WALTER: No, not at all.

CHARLIE: Don't worry.

WALTER: Oh, I don't.

They drive on for a moment in silence.

WALTER: How do you, how do you know my name's Walter?

CHARLIE: What?

WALTER: How do you know my name's Walter?

CHARLIE: It's your name.

WALTER: I know that. How do you, I never tol...

CHARLIE: ...you told me...

WALTER: ...told you. I, no, did I?

CHARLIE: Yes.

Silence.

WALTER: Ah. I'm sorry. My mind keeps, keeps, uh...

CHARLIE: ...blanking...

WALTER: ...blanking, Yes. Blanking on me. Strange.

Silence.

WALTER: So! Charlie. What is it that you do?

CHARLIE: Me?

WALTER: Well, I don't see anyone else in the car, do you?

Charlie starts, looks about — relaxes.

CHARLIE: No.

WALTER: So..?

CHARLIE: ...I'm a . . . guide.

WALTER: How interesting. A tour guide?

CHARLIE: Sure.

WALTER: How interesting.

CHARLIE: Not really.

WALTER: Where?

CHARLIE: What?

WALTER: Where?

CHARLIE: Where what?

WALTER: Where are you, where do you..?

...silence.

CHARLIE: What?

WALTER: Where do you, uh, work?

CHARLIE: “Where” is the question.

WALTER: That’s what I’m asking you, where?

CHARLIE: Here and there.

WALTER: Ah.

CHARLIE: It’s complicated.

WALTER: Well. Just let me know when you need to get dropped off.

CHARLIE: Not bothering you am I, Walter?

WALTER: What? Oh no no no. Just wouldn’t want to miss it.

CHARLIE: You won’t. Don’t worry.

WALTER: Oh, I don’t. But...

CHARLIE: ...yes?

WALTER: Of course, you haven’t really told me where we’re, where you’re going, not really. So I wouldn’t really know, right?

CHARLIE: Walter...

WALTER: ...of course, if you were to tell me, I mean for reals, not just something like “just down the road...”

CHARLIE: ...Walter...

WALTER: ...not something, something elusive but some place, well, that’d be different.

CHARLIE: Walter.

WALTER: What?

CHARLIE: Would you like for me to tell you where I'm going?

WALTER: No no no. Of course not. Absolutely not. I was just...

CHARLIE: ...Walter...

WALTER: ...just wondering. Yes?

CHARLIE: It's complicated.

WALTER: Oh, I see.

CHARLIE: So. What is it that you do, Walter?

WALTER: Me?

CHARLIE: Well, I don't see anyone else in the car, do you?

WALTER: Ah aha. Oh. I'm nothing special...

CHARLIE: "...nobody special..."

WALTER: ...I'm just, I'm, uh, I'm . . . now that's strange.

CHARLIE: What?

WALTER: My mind's gone blank. Just . . . fff! Absolutely blank.

CHARLIE: "Strange."

WALTER: Yes. It is.

CHARLIE: Yes. Something'll come to you.

WALTER: Yes. Yes. It's just...

CHARLIE: ...don't worry.

WALTER: Oh, I don't.

They drive on for a moment in silence.

Quite suddenly, there is a passing shadow.

Sound of tires on pavement.

WALTER: What was that?

CHARLIE: What was what?

WALTER: That!

CHARLIE: What that?

WALTER: That, that, that, that, that, that thing?

CHARLIE: What?

WALTER: I swear I, I could have sworn I saw something out there. Huge wings, must have had a wingspan as big as the car. I absolutely thought it was coming right through the windshield. Some giant . . . thing. I could have sworn...

CHARLIE: ...I didn't see anything.

WALTER: Something was out there.

CHARLIE: What did you see?

WALTER: Some kind of, or it was a giant, a huge, uh . . . something with wings.

CHARLIE: "Something with wings..."

WALTER: ...you must have seen it.

CHARLIE: There's nothing there now.

WALTER: Strange. How absolutely strange.

CHARLIE: These things happen all the time.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: At night.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: Don't worry.

WALTER: Oh, I don't.

They start again.

WALTER: Yes. I've heard that. I've, you know, for the past little while I've been, I've, I keep, I think I see things standing, waiting at the side of the road.

CHARLIE: At night.

WALTER: I know it's strange, but I keep seeing, I have this impression of, an impression of things at the side of the road.

CHARLIE: Things.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: Animals?

WALTER: No.

CHARLIE: People.

WALTER: No, I . . . not really, I, I don't know. Maybe. I keep thinking they're going to run out in front of me. As I pass, there's this, a movement, and then . . . I don't know.

CHARLIE: I haven't seen anything.

WALTER: No. Me neither. I mean, not really, just these strange, these impressions.

CHARLIE: There's nothing...

WALTER: ...I mean, I know there's absolutely nothing out there.

CHARLIE: No.

WALTER: I just think there is.

CHARLIE: I see.

WALTER: You do?

CHARLIE: I understand.

WALTER: Uh huh.

CHARLIE: This sort of thing happens all the time...

WALTER: ...oh, absolu...

CHARLIE: ...more than you would think...

WALTER: ...absolutely...

CHARLIE: ...at night.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: Don't worry.

WALTER: Oh, I don't. Of course, I'm probably just tired from all the traveling I've been doing. I'm on a, I'm on a trip. Going to, to see a friend. I'm not really tired, per se...

CHARLIE: ...yes...

WALTER: ...not at all. Just a little, uh, tired. My mind keeps, keeps, uh . . . blanking. Perhaps it's all the travelling.

CHARLIE: At night.

WALTER: I'm certain that's it. Absolutely. The traveling. It makes you, my eyes are tired, my mind is exhausted. That's why I'm so dead, so tired. My mind keeps blanking. Traveling does that to you...

CHARLIE: ...yes...

WALTER: ...doesn't it?

CHARLIE: At night.

WALTER: Absolutely. I suppose that's it then. The traveling. The night. The lateness, of the hour. The monotony. The road. It all starts to flow together...

CHARLIE: ...yes...

WALTER: ...yes. I find myself losing a grip on my thoughts...

CHARLIE: ...yes.

WALTER: Absolutely. Sometimes it's as if I haven't even moved. I mean, it feels as if the road is just sliding away beneath me, moving behind, flowing, carrying me away. Do you feel like that sometimes? I do. The

rocking, the flow, the movement, the hum, the rush.
It's soothing, in a way. It's, it feels like a, I don't know.
Oh, it's like a . . . oh. Oh. Doesn't it sometimes feel just
like a boat? Does it remind you of that? It does me.
Like a boat on a lonely river. Do you feel that?

CHARLIE: All the time.

WALTER: I absolutely feel that way. I mean, the night is so dark.
No stars...

CHARLIE: ...no...

WALTER: ...no one else on the road. No cars, no drivers,
absolutely no one else at all, nothing in front of us but
one big shadow...

CHARLIE: ...yes...

WALTER: ...and if you let it, if you get carried away, sometimes
your mind, sometimes I imagine things.

CHARLIE: Things?

WALTER: Oh like the river, like that whole thing just now.
Sometimes, even the little things at the side of the r
oad, those wings, and I, I don't know, sometimes I...

CHARLIE: ...what?

WALTER: This might sound absolutely strange, but sometimes I
find myself imagining, daydreaming really...

CHARLIE: ...at night...

WALTER: ...imagining about, I know, I know it's strange, but
a little while ago I was thinking, I was thinking about
a, I was thinking about an accident.

CHARLIE: That right, Walter?

WALTER: I mean, imagining one. A daydream, I suppose...

CHARLIE: ...at night...

WALTER: ...but so absolutely vivid. The light and the noise. The
heat, the fear, the pain. Death.

Charlie clears his throat.

WALTER: My mind is wandering, I suppose..

CHARLIE: Happens to the best of us.

WALTER: Well, I'm glad you're here. Absolutely. It's nice to have someone to talk to when you're traveling. A friend. Someone to keep you awake. I'm certainly glad.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Oh, it's that song again.

He hums along with the radio for a moment.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Must be popular.

CHARLIE: I've heard it before.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: At night.

Long silence.

Quite suddenly, there is a passing shadow.

Sound of tires on pavement.

Silence.

WALTER: Sorry.

CHARLIE: Yes.

They start again. Charlie rolls down the window and puts his hand out, letting it rise and fall with the wind — speaking softly.

CHARLIE: If you listen carefully you can hear the river sliding away beneath you, behind you. Tiny waves lap against the sides. The boat rocks a bit . . . back-forth back-forth back-forth . . . and it's something like a cradle. Rocking you gently, gently . . . but there's no fatigue, no tiring, no worry. Just the river taking you along,

moving away, floating. From here to there. Only the sound of the river, the wood under your back, and the soft singing of the ferryman. Be at peace. Rest in peace. Forget the light and the noise and the heat and the fear and the pain. The river is quiet and cool. Soft mists come to you from across the waters. Rest. Listen to the river sliding away. Listen to the water spinning off behind you. No hurry. No time. Just the river, the boat, and the ferryman. Rest. Rest. After a time and a distance, the ferryman points a long bony finger across the waters . . . and then, through the mist, you can see the shore.

They drive on for a moment in silence, then...

WALTER: ...look. See that line? The red, the, the, the glow? That's the, it must be the sunrise...

CHARLIE: ...tempus fugits...

WALTER: ...it must be the sun. Oh. After such a long trip, so long in the shadow. It will be good to see the sun. It's been so long.

CHARLIE: You'll be there soon.

WALTER: It's strange isn't it? I mean, it does feel like a river. Doesn't it?

CHARLIE: Yes. All the time.

WALTER: Well. After such a long trip it will be, it will be good to stop...

CHARLIE: ...yes...

WALTER: ...won't it? I suppose it will.

He hums for a bit.

WALTER: I suppose it will.

CHARLIE: I suppose.

Faint red glow, rising against their faces.

WALTER: How absolutely beautiful.

CHARLIE: I suppose.

WALTER: Just a tiny thread of scarlet stretched out across the horizon.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: It looks warm.

CHARLIE: It is.

WALTER: It's been a long trip.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: It will be good to stop.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Going to see a friend.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Someone is there.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: Someone is waiting for me.

CHARLIE: Yes. They are.

WALTER: This would have been hard to do alone.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: I'm glad you...

CHARLIE: ...yes.

WALTER: I'm glad you were here.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: I'm, I'm . . . I'm frightened, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Yes.

WALTER: I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm . . . Charlie?

CHARLIE: It's almost over. A trip is hard. Alone. At night.

WALTER: Yes.

CHARLIE: You'll be there soon.

They drive on for a moment in silence.

The lights fade as the music rises.

FIN ✱

This is a work of fiction. All situations, events, and characters are nothing more or less than products of the author's imagination — at least, that's what he tells us. But, really, there's no way to be sure. You might want to be careful, just in case. Keep to the main roads and try to get to a safe haven before nightfall. If you must travel at night, it's probably a good idea not to pick up any hitchhikers.

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NEXT UP...

THE SMARTEST CAR I EVER SAW



LOVE YOUR FRIENDS LIKE YOUR OWN SOUL,
PROTECT THEM LIKE THE PUPIL OF YOUR EYE.