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## An Unexpected Development

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There was a man who got in his car one day and drove. He drove up Byron's Way, the main road of our new development, looped around the Deer Path cul-de-sac, onto Cherry Tree Drive, crossed over Byron's Way again, then looped through the Garden Hill cul-de-sac, back onto Byron's Way. He traced that figure eight about fifty times before anyone noticed. Then the word spread like wildfire—"The man from #33 has lost his mind!" "He's going to have an accident...or hit a child!" The man from #33 was named Walter Lipton, but we didn't find that out until later. He had just been fired from his job and his wife had left him, taking the children, but we didn't know that until later either. So I sat on our living room couch, staring out our front window. Every seven minutes the Cadillac, a '65 model that was still an unpainted primer gray, would swoop in front of our house, sticking dangerously close to the curb, and follow the curve of the cul-de-sac back onto Cherry Tree. At about the 78<sup>th</sup> lap, the car nipped off the bill of our duck-shaped mailbox and sent it flying into a rosebush. Dad stood outside for four loops, cursing in seven-minute intervals to the total disregard of the man from #33. He was new to the neighborhood, but so was everyone, and this was no way to get to know the neighbors. Our development had only been finished a year ago and there were still lots on the outskirts that hadn't been sold. It was fall, but there were no leaves on the ground; the newly-planted saplings still needed supportive posts to keep them upright, and had little time to devote to leaf generation. The sky was a nondescript gray that matched the vinyl siding of every third house on the street. The Cadillac swung around in front of me again, but was slowly fading away into the graying night.

I lay in bed that night and listened to the tires screeching every seven minutes at the turn. The headlights chased shadows around my room that terrified yet captivated me. I was spooked by the thought of the human being at the other end of the light beams, whose every mechanical, maniacal move was determined by the twin triangles of light that radiated from his weapon of choice. I did not sleep that night, but tried desperately to forget the leering shapes of my furniture that were illuminated every seven minutes. At seven the next morning, something was different. The gray Cadillac came into the cul-de-sac after only 4 minutes, and it was careening out of control. I rose out of bed and peeked out my window, horrified yet honored to see those haunting headlights pointing directly at me. The man from #33 Cherry Tree loosened his grip on the steering wheel as the car slammed into our front porch, littering debris all the way to the unsold lots.