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First Presbyterian Church of Allegan, MI

Manufacturers Specifications

by Karen Fitz La Barge (Inspired by *Gone from My Sight* by Henry Van Dyke) Written for the Memorial Service of Joe Enders. October, 2010. All Rights Reserved.

We are all standing by the side of a road, and in front of us revs a beautiful corvette. It is a 1976 Root Beer Brown Coupe masterpiece, the last year made with a Stingray emblem. The powerful 350 engine is eager to fly and to unleash its pent up 210 horsepower. With a whoop of joy it is popped into gear and gravel and dust flees behind it as it launches into first gear. Its tires grab and grip the pavement eagerly and it smoothly and quickly upshifts, gathering speed as it tears away from us.

It is a scene to remember forever. The blue sky is balanced above the green grass; the trees are wearing their autumn jackets and the road curves like a concrete river flowing out to the horizon. We stand and watch together, as the rumbles of the powerful engine echo back to us, bouncing sound waves off the dry pavement. The brown of the car grows smaller and it diminishes in our sight until it is a simple dusky speck on the edge of the russet trees where the road finally turns past our seeing.

Then someone, one of us, says sadly, "There he goes. He's gone now."

Gone where? Gone from our sight is all. The car is still as whole and as real as it came off the assembly line. The engine is still humming, the wheels are still turning; the sun is still glinting hot on the chrome of the drivers side mirror. Inside its driver grins as he turns up the radio, and then grabs a handful of sunflower seeds. The diminished size of the Corvette is only in our sight, it hasn't changed from the manufacturer's specifications at all.

But just at the moment when the voice says, "He's gone". There are other voices, far away at the last destination. Those voices take up the shout and begin to wave and dance. "Here he comes!" "He's coming!" And they crowd around waiting for the Corvette to come closer and larger, and they eagerly await the moment when he will gloriously pull the Vette around it's final curve and drive it full speed under the checkered flag.

For then the celebrations begin for real as the son is welcomed home, his race finished, and victorious at last.