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Your commentary should be focused on *interrogative clauses*.

After greeting the bum cordially and giving him another coin, Black hesitates a moment, as though debating whether to take the plunge, and then says:

Has anyone ever told you that you look just like Walt Whitman?

5 Walt who? answers Blue, remembering to play his part.

Walt Whitman. A famous poet.

No, says Blue. I can't say I know him.

You wouldn't know him, says Black. He's not alive anymore. But the resemblance is remarkable.

10 Well, you know what they say, says Blue. Every man has his double somewhere. I don't see why mine can't be a dead man.

The funny thing, continues Black, is that Walt Whitman used to work on this Street. He printed his first book right here, not far from where we're standing.

15 You don't say, says Blue, shaking his head pensively. It makes you stop and think, doesn't it?

There are some odd stories about Whitman, Black says, gesturing to Blue to sit down on the stoop of the building behind them, which he does, and then Black does the same, and suddenly it's just the two of them out there in the summer light together, chatting away like two old friends about this and that.

20 Yes, says Black, settling in comfortably to the languor of the moment, a number of very curious stories. The one about Whitman's brain, for example. All his life Whitman believed in the science of phrenology – you know, reading the bumps on the skull. It was very popular at the time.

25 Can't say I've ever heard of it, replies Blue.

Well, that doesn't matter, says Black. The main thing is that Whitman was interested in brains and skulls – thought they could tell you everything about a man's character. Anyway, when Whitman lay dying over there in New Jersey about fifty or sixty years ago, he agreed to let them perform an autopsy on him after he was dead.

30 How could he agree to it after he was dead?

Ah, good point. I didn't say it right. He was still alive when he agreed. He just wanted them to know that he didn't mind if they opened him up later.

35 What you might call his dying wish.

Famous last words.

That's right. A lot of people thought he was a genius, you see, and they wanted to take a look at his brain to find out if there was anything special about it. So, the day after he died, a doctor removed Whitman's brain – cut it right out of his head – and had it sent to the American Anthropometric Society to be measured and weighed.

40 Like a giant cauliflower, interjects Blue.

Exactly. Like a big grey vegetable. But this is where the story gets interesting. The brain arrives at the laboratory, and just as they're about to work on it, one of the assistants drops it on the floor.

Did it break?

50 Of course it broke. A brain isn't very tough, you know. It splattered all over the place, and that was that. The brain of America's greatest poet got swept up and thrown out with the garbage.

Blue, remembering to respond in character, emits several wheezing laughs – a good imitation of an old codger's mirth. Black laughs, too, and by now the atmosphere has thawed to such an extent that no one could ever know they were not lifelong chums.

It's sad to think of poor Walt lying in his grave, though, says Black. All alone and without any brains.

55 Just like that scarecrow, says Blue.

Sure enough, says Black. Just like the scarecrow in the land of Oz.

After another good laugh, Black says: And then there's the story of the time Thoreau came to visit Whitman. That's a good one, too.

60 Was he another poet?

Not exactly. But a great writer just the same. He's the one who lived alone in the woods.

Oh yes, says Blue, not wanting to carry his ignorance too far. Someone once told me about him. Very fond of nature he was. Is that the man you mean?

65 Precisely, answers Black. Henry David Thoreau. He came down from Massachusetts for a little while and paid a call on Whitman in Brooklyn. But the day before that he came right here to Orange Street.

Any particular reason?

70 Plymouth Church. He wanted to hear Henry Ward Beecher's sermon.