

Dispatches From The Fringes:

An Anthology of Wandering

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1. Philadelphia 1961

Philadelphia, south-east of the downtown center, the weary inner city, torpid with melancholy, conservative, long blocks of charming old residences, a gallery of historic facades masking the panoply of sordid misery. Sad, yet beautiful, not without its aureole of grandeur.

Notice that small silver-headed crumpled shape, shabby coat and battered hat, standing in a doorway along 10th Street. And the couples immobilized on the doorsteps along Spruce waiting out the stifling summer evenings. Strange physiognomies will sometimes emerge from alleyways thick with overgrowth. These, too, should not be taken for granted. Nor the frightful ship-wrecks, mutilated by time, mottled with skin diseases, their odd disfigurements, their crazy eyes. Mirages of squalor and decay, sorrowful venues nestling terrible secrets and stern vengeance. Our attention will be focused upon a narrow quadrangle, between 8th Street to the east and 12th Street to the west, South Street as southern border, Lombard and Pine in the middle, and Spruce to the north. A garden plot of about 1/5th of a square mile. A world unexpurgated.

The Afro-American ghetto of the downtown area fills up the length of South Street: sacrificial altar to the religion of progress, a desert, a

howling waste, an abyss of hunger, humiliation and defeat. A remove of two blocks to the north allows one to withdraw temporarily from its unrelieved cry of despair. Between 13th and 9th streets one may stroll along Pine, to lose one's heart within the dusty labyrinths of the antique shops, emporia of jewelry, old china and cutlery, of lamp stands, stained Victorian opaque glass lampshades, costumed dolls and outsized surreal mannequins, of trivets, poker, bellows and brooms, sofas, hassocks, of shuddering ghosts and farmstead furniture. But those with tougher stomachs will want to continue on yet another block north to Spruce Street.

It is primarily in this section of the garden plot, between 12th and 8th, that one can coax familiarity with the hypertrophied tumor in the heart of American hubris, one of the more pitiful chapters of the human comedy. The area is residential with a sprinkling of shops and stores, though far from being a neighborhood. Spruce has no private homes. There are restored colonial streets, Quince, Jessup and Camac running into it from the north and south, where one finds miniature houses, all very charming, with the tiny windows, narrow staircases and open hearths of the 18th century, their small gardens clinging at the margin of their eroded doorsteps. These are occupied by young professionals,

couples, students. Once established, the doctors, lawyers, actuaries and architects who give the city its drab complexion do not stay in this neighborhood. Society Hill, (not that far away), beckons.

Spruce Street is the principal thoroughfare. Here stand the stately rows of rooming houses. Most of them, substandard by any standard, would be condemned after any honest inspection; but people have to live somewhere, don't they? Including those substandard by any standard? All the sidewalks are covered with slicks of refuse and garbage, while bugs, including some abnormally large ones, migrate through the sewers and stairwells.

Behind their picturesque exteriors these buildings overflow with derelicts of every species. Through the open doors of the bars one sees the worn prostitutes, some old, some mad, the regiments of alcoholics, the drug addicts, the panhandlers. I once gave some money to a lively unkempt kid on the step of a house across the street from my building. Within half an hour no less than 40 hungry children, slovenly, sickly, had emerged from the surrounding houses to demand their share. A small gift had turned me into the neighborhood Midas! Their disappointment was acute, but brief; mine long-lasting. An important

lesson, not easily forgotten. But in the garden plot one also finds students in pursuit of professional education.

They come from the Museum School of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Medical and Nursing Schools of Jefferson, Hahnemann, Philadelphia General, St. Luke's and Pennsylvania Hospitals, some business and preparatory schools, even, (at 10th and Lombard), the Henry George School of Economics! Between the bars, the filthy diners, the slum housing, tenements and crumbling firetraps, like the gold teeth in a mouth of rotting cavities, one finds a few medical student residences and fraternities.

At the time these observations were collated, the Gladstone Hotel on 11th Street between Pine and Spruce, (a municipal disgrace since demolished), still stood at the mouth of crypto-suburban Clinton Street, two prim blocks garlanded with blossoming trees, blessed with asphalt unlittered, neat rows of empty trash cans, fresh painted brightly shining doors, shutters and casements, fine cars and other evidences of respectable society, a hygienic oasis all too quickly amputated against the seeping ivy and lichen-covered brick walls surrounding the well trimmed hedges and lawns of Rush and Franklin's Pennsylvania Hospital.

Mike Steiner, curator of urban blight, owned and managed several buildings in the neighborhood. The shingle indicating his business office hung perpendicular to the door of the house adjacent to my residence on the north side of Spruce between 11th and 12th. I lived there through the winter of 1961, from October to March. It was really one building with two doorways, connecting on the ground floor. He did not look like a slumlord. Unlike the melodrama caricatures of a bygone age, the humped misers and shriveled hags, Steiner belonged to a new breed of aggressive young businessmen out for quick profits. The exemplum of the 20th century man, shallow rather than villainous. His manner was brisk, as if he tolerated no nonsense; but the set smile never vanished. The calculated neglect that was virtually a trademark of his properties was nowhere in evidence on his sleek, cautiously dressed and groomed person. He treated me with deference because of my education, meaning that he actually listened to my complaints. Sometimes he did something about them.

It was a day in mid-December. Choking I arose at dawn. My moderately large room was thickly invested with fumes and gases from an undamped flue, the source being the coal - burning byproducts from furnaces in the basement. It was not the first, only the most severe, of

such attacks. I went to throw open the window at the far corner of the room. Within minutes the temperature had dropped below freezing. After some consideration, I dismissed the expedient of lighting all the burners on the gas range; neither a fire nor an explosion were entirely ruled out. Thereupon I closed the window and went back to sleep. Within minutes I was off the bed, scrambling for my clothing, vomiting from the stink. I hurried out of the house down the street, to the Spruce restaurant two blocks away. Nick let me wash up in his apartment. Talking over breakfast with art students from the Museum School, I hung out at the Spruce until 8 A.M.

Before returning to my room I stopped by Steiner's office.

"Hello, Mr. Lisker; is everything all right?" Steiner's secretary might perhaps have been better designated his Secretary of State.

"No. Don't you know about the coal fumes? I almost died in there."

"We're aware of the problem, Mr. Lisker. The janitor forgot to close the flue."

"What's being done about it? How soon can I return to my room?"

Her brows contracted: a signal to me that I should understand that she recognized that this was no joking matter:

"We're working on it, Mr. Lisker."

I went up, discovered the room habitable, and organized my day.

Steiner's buildings reeked with squalor, filth, neglect and some more tenebrous attribute that might best be labeled contempt. The mounds of trash filling up the vestibules extended into dark corridors illuminated, if at all, by weak bulbs standing in the wall-sockets. No sunlight penetrated. The rooms themselves were bright enough owing to their large windows from the previous century, when this neighborhood reverberated with bourgeois elegance. Stained, greasy wallpaper peeled from the walls, paint chips covering the floors. Where the plaster had fallen down or been punched through, wooden slats and planks lay exposed. Everything exuded a lamentable aroma of mold, the environment, (that did not lack indigenous charm), retaining in fact only one good feature: that one didn't have to feel responsible for it, that without regrets one could gladly leave on a moment's notice.

Mr. Hoffman lived in the room adjacent to mine on the second floor. Poor Hoffman, sick, old and alcoholic, would get up every night at 3 A.M. to empty the bucket under his sink into the bathroom toilet. I used to hear his tubercular cough as he dragged the bucket from his room and splashed its contents into the toilet bowl.

It was around Christmas when the pipes of his sink exploded. My floor and the downstairs apartments were flooded. I stood by while Bob, the former janitor, forced the door to Hoffman's room. Whatever we could see was being made visible through the illumination coming in from the hallway; the light switch didn't work and there was no lamp. We discovered a broken-down sink, its drain stuffed with a roll of filthy rags, the overflowing bucket underneath. Never had I seen a habitation so dismal. Apart from a photograph of Eisenhower clipped from an old Sunday newspaper, the walls were completely bare. On the bed lay a threadbare moth-eaten Army blanket and one disgustingly dirty sheet. Nothing, not a single personal possession, not one item of clothing, suggested occupancy. On the wash-stand, a razor and a bar of soap. A pair of torn boots under the bed completed the inventory.

By now the entire building was in an uproar. The water was falling into the pots on the stove of the woman in the apartment directly below, a single mother of two daughters, one of them laid up with rheumatic fever. She stood in the hallway next to her opened door, yelling: "When's the old man coming back?" An elderly invalid living on the first floor asked me to go across the street to the bar and call the police from a pay phone. He stood on the steps wrapped in his bathrobe and waited for

them to come. Bob prevailed upon me to stay, but I had a tutoring job at the time, (at an eccentric neighborhood preparatory school), and couldn't disappoint my students.

It was not that Bob was adverse to talking to the cops; he was glad for the opportunity to get a great many things off his chest. They came. made an inspection and wrote up a detailed report, which was sent along to the Department of Health. A week later Bob told me that the front office had called him down to rebuke him for talking to the police. Then they raised his weekly rent to \$16. Steiner had wanted him out for some time, and chose to use this incident as a convenient pretext.

Just above Steiner's office on the second floor there lived a frail old prostitute named Grace. She was about five foot tall, her gray hair shot through with white streaks, with very dry flaking skin that gleamed with a sickly gray pallor. She only had partial vision in one eye; a glass eye was fitted into the socket of the other. We had several good conversations.

She always began them by announcing, in a quavering and barely audible voice, that she was a 'soldier of life'. According to her she had worked for many years as a clairvoyant - not to be confused, she warned, with medium or fortune-teller - at the Russian Inn, a fashionable White

Russian restaurant on Broad Street frequented by musicians. She explained the difference: she knew how to read the future in a person's face, she didn't need to examine palms or tea-leaves. I didn't doubt her story, although there was no way that she could hide the fact that even if forecasting the future had been her vocation, prostitution was her way of life.

Grace instantly aroused pity: she had the air of a desperately lost child in need of help. She maintained that her son was living in Austin, Texas, and that he had just recently written her a letter announcing that he was coming to Philadelphia to fetch her and take care of her in her old age. I very much wanted to believe that son, letter and offer, or at least some combination of these, were more than fantasy.

The evening after the incident of the bursting pipes I slid a \$10 bill under Hoffman's door, along with a note asking that he please accept it because of the Christmas season. On the way down the staircase I ran into Grace, carrying around an oversized bottle of stale beer. Some bills were tucked into her brassiere, visible against her flattened and wrinkled chest above the threadbare blue sweater she had thrown over her shoulders. She had tried knocking at Bob's door but he wasn't in. Now she wanted to give me the bottle of beer, which I didn't want, but

she kept forcing it on me until I accepted it. It sat in my refrigerator, untouched, until I moved out in March.

Grace went to Bob's apartment almost every day; these visits often turned into quarrels. One could hear their shouts and screams around the building. They always ended the same way, with Bob pushing her out the door yelling something along the lines of:

"Get outta here! And don't come back again!"

"You think ye're quite a man! Well, ye're shit!! I've known lot'sa men better'n you, and you ain't nothin'!" Few things are so pathetic as my recollection of that cracked voice, heavy with sobs.

"Get the hell away from me, you damned slut!!!"

The stream of insults might bring the new janitor running out of his room on the first floor:

"What the hell's goin' on around here? Shut up and leave me in peace!" With his intervention the fighting usually came to an end.

Bob's room was down the hall from mine, at the head of the staircase on the second floor. His face was pale and flabby, ruddy in patches from alcoholism. Now he was a sedentary invalid; he must have

been energetic at one time. Some mornings he would suddenly emerge from his room, moving quickly with his lumbering gait, his sunken, defeated features trembling with fear. More than once he scared me half to death by shouting at me as I started down the staircase. The cause turned out to be innocuous: he wanted me to get something for him at the store, usually a pack of cigarettes. Returning from the errand, my knock on his door always produced a sharp, hostile cry: "Who's there?"

On the day Steiner raised the rent, Bob walked into his office to announce that he was refusing to pay it. Of course this was sheer bravado; he realized that he would soon have to move. By his own reckoning he had been janitor and handyman in this building for 15 years, until a heart attack forced him to retire. Before that, so he claimed, he had been a bartender on New York City's Bowery. The one thing I was certain of, that Bob didn't want to admit, was that he was collecting welfare. I learned about it when he gave me a letter to mail addressed to Social Services. Living on welfare was something he acutely felt to be shameful.

A young man named Steve invited me once up to his apartment for a party. He had recently been released from a mental hospital; now he worked nights as an orderly at the Jefferson Hospital. He had told me

some stories about delivering babies in elevators, but I did not put much stock in them. Steve's apartment consisted of two barren refuse-strewn rooms fitted up incongruously with bits of furniture, a table, a few chairs and a ripped-up blue satin sofa. Like a theatre set, the entire scene was illuminated by the ghastly light of a single bulb in a broken chandelier dangling from the high ceiling. Grace was among the guests; Steve sat down next to her on the sofa and tried to seduce her. She was drinking from a bottle of beer and wasn't interested. The others included a senile couple and a thick-veined arm-waving ranter, his head misshapen like a squeezed gourd, dressed in ragged old clothing. Shirley, a shy, stocky waitress from the Spruce restaurant with creamy skin, stood in the front room in the company of a violent drunk named Charley. He made it very clear to the rest of us that Shirley was his property. Swearing, he shouted in a loud voice that he hated Jews.

Charley went about the two rooms actively setting up confrontations. When he accosted me I informed him that I didn't hate Jews, my courage not extending to letting him know that I was one of 'those'. Then he tried to force me and others to sing with him. As Shirley was a person I knew, I began a conversation with her. This resulted in a surprise attack from Charley, a blow to the side of my face that knocked

my glasses across the room. He roared at me to get out; I told him to apologize. Whereupon he socked me again, then began chasing me through the rooms. The ranter, rather than helping me, accused me of having done something to antagonize Charley, even if nobody knew what it was.

It was by far the most exciting event of the evening; fully awake and exhilarated I shouted to them to keep Charley at bay while I made my escape out the door. As I ran down the staircase, Shirley came out into the hall and watched me leave. She was deeply embarrassed.

Several days later Steve told me that Charley had broken into the house the next morning and began attacking people again. The police were called in and arrested him. At the trial he was sentenced to four months in jail. I saw him once again after his release; he recognized me. As I passed by, he looked the other way.

Like an infected blister, Bob's 15-year accumulation grievances against the Steiner family burst open and spilled its venom over everyone and everything. As the date for moving drew nigh, his audacity mounted. It seemed that he himself was unable to control his bitterness. He inveighed against everyone: the Steiners, his secretaries, the accountants, the other tenants, me as well. In the final days before his

departure he refused to speak with anyone. Walking out the front door he pushed me aside with contempt. He did not want to acknowledge anyone's pity. There was some consolation to be found in being thoroughly alone.

Soon after Christmas I knocked on the door of Grace's apartment to see if she needed anything. The woman living the neighboring apartment, a heavy-set brunette placed here after 5 years at Byberry, Philadelphia's public mental hospital, stepped into the hall. She told me Grace was gone; all to the good as far as she was concerned. They didn't want her kind living among them. As she put it, Grace was 'a whore and a bum.'

THE SPRUCE RESTAURANT

Nick Pandapas, 38, with a degree in photography from the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, had inherited the restaurant; both father and son had earned reputations as characters. Nick was touch and muscular, with a hint of the slouch of a spoiled kid. He wore dark sunglasses and sported a dense black beard like an Orthodox priest's, although religion was not one of his hobbies. He did not take seriously

the business of running the restaurant. It served at best as a means to an end, let's say several ends, all uncomplicated:

(a)Picking up and seducing as many teenage girls as possible.

(b)Hosting 2 or more parties a week in his pad above the Spruce. You could tell as far away as the Pennsylvania Hospital from the sound of the music that there was a party at Nick's.

(c)Photography, for which the clientele of the Spruce provided an inexhaustible supply of fresh material.

(d)Driving motorcycles.

(e)Discussions on art and life with a circle of friends drawn primarily from students at the Museum School.

He also enjoyed: throwing employees out on their ear; making sure that the restaurant didn't fill up with too much 'garbage' (a term as unambiguous as it was pitiless); and playing the buffoon when surrounded by a table filled with admirers. Both hard- and soft- hearted; that's how Nick was. His friends learned that they could get away with almost anything but a free meal. Not so much as a cup of coffee. If they wanted to eat at his expense, they could wait until he invited them to one of his parties, where they could stuff themselves like pigs.

The case of Jerry was typical. Jerry had worked off and on for Nick as a dishwasher while he was still studying photography at the Museum School. Then for a time he helped audit the restaurant's books. The shoes he wore might be a cast-off pair of Nick's. Incredible as it may sound, Nick had once put him up for a week. Jerry was 26, tall without being big, alert, excitable, impulsive. He could become quite agitated over small matters. At times when he seemed to come close to losing control, he could be rude and abusive. His friends understood him, and after awhile I did too. He couldn't be considered dangerous, and his character was essentially kind.

The last time I saw him sitting in the Spruce was in June of 1962. He had been destitute for a month or so, defining his friends by the number of meals and nights on their couches they were willing to give him. This was not long after he had known real money. Immediately upon graduation from the Museum School he landed a good job in New York, editing a TV series at the incredible salary, (then or now), of \$1000 a week. The job ended and his savings evaporated. Then he went on unemployment compensation. Now he had hit bottom again, generally a happier state for those so used to it that anything else feels alien and uncomfortable.

Jerry always teased Nick mercilessly about his nothing-on-the-house policy: "Look, Nick: why don't you cut the wise old grandfather crap and give us a decent meal, okay? Why not start a new chapter in your life with the sirloin steak special, that fantastic mushroom soup you make here...did you know that, Nick? Your mushroom soup is great! ... two vegetables, ice cream and coffee? I know you're not really stingy, you're just pretending, aren't you? Hey, Nick: starving artists need your help!"

Nick ignored his sarcasm, hurtful to him because of his requirement that "everybody" (those who counted) should like him. Others could afford to be generous with his Meal Ticket. He knew all too well the consequences of opening the tiniest crack in the door.

THE WAITRESSES

The waitresses at the Spruce came from a great variety of backgrounds: restaurant professionals, American college or European exchange students, neighborhood single mothers, Hispanic immigrants. Most of them left after 3 or 4 months; Nick also fired them on a whim. I saw pleasant and competent waitresses sacked over nothing, while there was one very caustic, squeally woman who waited on tables for 5 months, then graduated to the cash register where, in high pitched tones

of scorn, she accused customers of trying to cheat the establishment. A few had been there for years. Mary, in her 50's, had been working at the Spruce for 15 years. Tom the cook, who had worked for Nick's father, was fired then rehired every six months or so. Normally he was fired because he came in drunk. Nick liked to drag the old man publicly, through the restaurant, by the scruff of the neck and pitch him out the door onto the street. Tom always got his job back after he sobered up.

THE MEDICAL STUDENTS

Unlike most of the people in the various social groups that made up the neighborhood, the medical students did not tend towards dissipation. Few had the time to go to parties or even on dates. Medical school is very hard work. Others, because they were lonely, married before graduating. Groups of them sometimes came into the Spruce. Among them were acquaintances I had known as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania. From time to time I joined their gatherings.

There were a few medical students living in the antediluvian Gladstone Hotel. Emergencies involving cuts, broken bones or cracked ribs frequently arose there, as might happen when a drunk fell down the elevator shaft. Then the desk clerk would put out a call for the available

med students. They would apply splints and get the patient ready for the ambulance. An intern told us about a woman in her mid-20's who came into the Emergency Clinic at St. Luke's Hospital suffering from stomach cramps. Anticipating a common case of gonorrhea the intern inspected her, as is required by law, in the presence of a female nurse. The patient was emitting putrid discharges that filled the room with an insupportable stench, as the intern removed endless quantities of pus and other necrotic wastes. At last his hands encountered a large, thick object: a leather glove. A few weeks earlier she had had sex with her boyfriend in his car. Lacking contraceptives they used the glove. Then she forgot it was there.

It had been a regular occurrence in the maternity wards at St. Luke's, that within a day of the delivery of a baby the boyfriend would show up, rarely the father, crawl under the bedding and force the mother to have sex with him. This damaged the already bruised uterine tissues. A staff doctor had invented a way of sewing up the vagina with a fine steel wire that could be removed just before the mother was discharged.

Another intern told us about a 90-year man at the same clinic who had come in complaining of pains in his groin. Upon examination it was disclosed that the man, having enjoyed a rare erection a few days before,

had encased his penis in plaster of Paris to keep it that way. Gangrene had already set in and it had to be amputated. The story went the rounds of the restaurant. One of the art students drew a sketch: It showed a naked old man grimacing with agony while his exaggerated penis, surrounded by some kind of cast, was being hacked off by a butcher's cleaver held in the upraised hand of a gleeful, fat and bearded surgeon. Everybody liked the drawing. So did Nick: he hung it up over the lunch counter where it remained for a month.

THE PROSTITUTES

Certain specialty prostitutes used the Spruce for their appointments. Included among the more exotic types was a twosome, two women dressed up to resemble each other, bleaching their hair the same shade of blond, wearing the same lipstick and thick rouge, baggy and garish dresses, black crinkly coats, jewelry and so forth. Both wore horn-rimmed glasses and used flashy, long and slender cigarette holders. Their eyes were dark and frightening, blackened with mascara, and it seemed that nothing could ever bring the color back into them. They offered a combination trick for a very high price, about \$200. They also performed a stage act at a night club on Locust Street. Their mannerisms had been rehearsed to the point of being carbon-copies of each another.

Their conversation, trite and abounding with silly sexual innuendoes, was a perfect mimicry. One of their standard routines was an endless story about "what the boss was doing with his secretaries". They even spoke in the same high-pitched falsetto voices.

They said that they had been a team for almost two decades, since 'life lost all meaning for them in the war'. They would come into the Spruce and take a seat in a booth near the front. Even in the restaurant they were always on stage. Beneath their superficial warmth they were cold, insulated, callous. All the same they attracted certain kinds of men like honey draws flies, possessed of a strange power to lure others to their destruction.

One night a man came into the Spruce when I was sitting, sketching in a back booth. He wore a winter overcoat several sizes too large for him. His manner was harried and there were deep furrows in his pallid, empty face. He asked me not to draw his picture; he had less than a week to live, he informed me. Then he moved into the booth where the duo were sitting and began talking to them. One of them waved for me to come over; I had sketched them together a few times before. Their prospective client didn't like this of course, but they ignored him. I sketched the one near the window on the right. She kept

repeating to me that she resembled Greta Garbo. She actually had a beautiful face: tired, worn, vivacious in its own way, hard but not unkind. Underneath I sensed an intrinsic pride which held her depraved milieu in contempt. When the sketch was completed the man hastened to assure me that it was lousy, which was true. I knew nothing of drawing, I was just having fun. My model also agreed that it didn't look like her, but said that I had painted her soul.

2. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964

A. Depravity

Dolly Baker-Callahan's ugliness was of that species which proclaims itself in a loud voice, with the militancy of the true believer. One might even call this description conventional in a way that her appearance was not: it fulfilled all the conventions through breaking them. Body and personality led to the same place. The rolls of fat that embroidered her frame with lumps of solid grease stopped short of rendering her obese, although a new pregnancy, now in its second month would soon justify the term. Beneath a mat of black hair stiff as the roof of a straw hut, her large face was molded by a network of contracted muscles which, through the lines cut into her pallid complexion, endowed her features with a masculine toughness. The muscles around the mouth were particularly hard and bitter; starting eyes, embedded in tight wrinkles, fixed upon one like the talons of a ravenous hawk.

Neither looks, body language nor vocal tone were feminine. Yet, if one accepts the societal assumption that links femininity with hysteria, her personality was. She could also be tender, coy, even flirtatious in her own way. Indeed, her personal charm could overcome the strong

repugnance created by her physical appearance. I found her company (though only in short doses) stimulating, even refreshing.

It was clear that she reveled in all that was most controversial in her physique. One might go further and say that she actually did all things possible to bring her worst features into prominence. Her walk, for example, was an eager waddle. Beyond the occasional drawing of a brush through her hair, she studiously avoided grooming. When demoralized she could be downright slovenly. Almost all her clothing was picked up in thrift shops, like myself and everyone I knew, but she somehow managed to make anything she threw on her back look as if it had been fished out of the dumpster. That winter she walked about Cambridge wearing a red coat sewn out of a single piece of frayed quilting.

Dolly was garrulous, charming, bellicose. Her exuberance was legendary, her friendliness always hovering at the knife-edge of bullying. If you wanted someone to brow-beat you into doing what you knew you ought to be doing, she was the person to visit. Her principal vices were gossip, tale-bearing, scandal-mongering; for these she had no rival. It appeared that she just didn't know how to stop talking. One never left her company, one tore oneself away. In the absence of a good

story about a certain person, she made up one. To her story-telling art, and it was artistry of a high character, she brought an exacerbated appetite for morbidity. The grisly crime, the gruesome detail: things that never happen to the rest of us always seemed to be happening to her or to 'someone she knew'. It was not the stories themselves but the relish with which she told them that, either with spell-bound fascination or unconcealed disgust, held her audience.

Of course she felt unloved; this explains everything and nothing. Knowing her even a short time, the temptation to tease or ridicule her became almost irresistible. Her clownish patter seemed to welcome this. It must not be forgotten that she could be and was warm-hearted and generous. Her malice rarely went beyond her tongue, yet that could be shrewish, even venomous.

1964. Late November, a time, like the full moon, or 4 A.M., of mishap, depression, sudden death. A prolonged Indian summer had finally surrendered to a winter impatient to assert its dominion: every sign indicated that it would be a severe one. I was living in Cambridge then, on the rebound from a recent college degree which, as it had been so long in coming, was as appropriate an emblem of despair as Pushkin's Queen of Spades.

The University of Pennsylvania had, with unwonted, (one of the words I learned there), dedication and thoroughness miseducated me into a state where I hadn't the least idea either of where my real talents lay, nor of my level of competence in the ones I did know something about. While convincing me that people like myself could have no future outside of an academic career, the Educational Conspiracy had also instilled in me a stubborn resistance to devoting my youthful energies to the perpetuation of a system that, with such fiendish delight, had screwed up my life.

I therefore refused to commit myself to yet 'higher' education: my soul had ingested enough poison. But because I believed that there was nowhere else to go, I hung around universities. There are lots of people like myself in college towns. They may be the future of our civilization, although to the outside world their lives often appear useless.

I'd run into Dolly that afternoon on Western Avenue, a broad tributary in Cambridge where the displaced non-student college-age community maintained their pads and flops. Just two days ago, I'd assisted in putting Peter Jancke, a mutual friend, into a mental hospital. Peter, a German immigrant had gained some prominence as an activist in

the nascent peace movement. He also floated around the drug world and was mentally unstable. For most of us his breakdown was not news, only the timing was.

Dolly's husband, Brian, was also an activist, one of the first in the Boston area to go to jail for draft resistance. She went with him to meetings and demonstrations and knew everyone in the Movement. Learning of Peter's situation she offered to accompany me out to his former residence in Roxbury later that evening and collect some of his things.

We arranged to meet at the Pamplona Cafe on Bow Street, just off Massachusetts Avenue at the southern edge of the Harvard Square area. The hydrodynamic flow of Bow Street circuits a Catholic church, creating a place vaguely suggestive of a European town; otherwise, the Pamplona was, (and still is), much as other Cambridge cafes, the coffee just as bad.

The Pamplona was a quiet place in which to get away from the Square. Most of its clientele were part of the official Harvard community, beings who either received from or gave it money. The drug/dropout/ anarchist world tended to avoid such places, congregating

primarily in the all-night cafeterias directly facing the Square: Hayes-Bickford, the Waldorf, Walton's, and others.

Dolly was only an hour and a half late, about par for the course. To be fair to her, she had told me that she might not be able to make it on time. Her 8 year old son Darryl was with her. She asked me to come with her to the Harvard Bookstore across the street, where she would leave Darryl with her husband, Brian. For the first time I learned that Brian was not his father; she told me little about this person except that he was abusive, even violent, that he had been in jail for five years, and that she dreaded the day when he would be released.

Brian was working at the Harvard Bookstore as a clerk/stockboy. It was doing the inventory this week, which was why he was still there at this late hour. The job paid miserably, even by the notorious standards of bookstores. Dolly saw this as a good opportunity to introduce us. I'd previously expressed an interest in meeting him to discuss the activities of the anti-war movement. In this respect, Peter had not of course been of much help.

Harvard Square was a lively place in those days, that tiny window of half a decade in the middle 60's, when Harvard shook out its musty robes, and the city of Cambridge resonated with the kind of creative

energy one associates with Berkeley, Madison, or other traditional campuses of student dissent. Actually this isn't very surprising: very few of these dissidents were enrolled students. It was perhaps owing to the lurid publicity given to the hi-jinks of Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert that Harvard Square became a focal point for alienated and uprooted youth, a place where poets, folk artists and musicians, runaways, stowaways, political activists, drug addicts, academics and students mixed freely, a world in which, very briefly, poetry was something more than the stale recitation of the misunderstood verses of some encrusted paradigm, in the embarrassed high-pitched voices of sophomores doing their bit in a History of English Literature course.

Of course Harvard would never be host to a student revolt such as the one that shook Berkeley during the time of the events described here. Even today one courts arrest by handing out leaflets in Harvard Yard. Protest has a way of being cowed into gentility by these august precincts. When students do demonstrate, they usually go to downtown Boston to do it.

But in the neighborhood of the Square, within the squalid tenements on Massachusetts, Putnam and Western Avenues, or a mile away on Green or Franklin Streets, one found a different universe, a

tragic, sordid, demoralized world, filled with mental illness, yet in its own way inspired: color, imagination, and adventure were also to be found here.

One can hardly accuse the Square of such unpardonable lapses of taste today. Since the 70's, there has been an undeviating commitment on the part of the town, the University and local business to pave over, evict, expel, dismiss, label and brand, weed out or suffocate the faintest *faintest* flicker of a living heart-beat within a mile's radius of the Square. In one decade Harvard Square went from a *Cours de Miracles* for beatniks, peaceniks, hippies and yippies, to a plastic gigamall. To accomplish this mighty labor of desertification the forces of commerce have sandbagged the territory with bewildering varieties of kitsch: banks, fancy restaurants, glassed in mercantile Jungle Jims, clothing stores for the Gilded Age, bookstores, gimmick emporia, pizza parlors, Internet cafes, bars and beauty salons. Every cubic centimeter of exploitable space has been gerrymandered to a single purpose: to bloat the bourgeois gut. All dreams transcendent and tawdry have been choked to death.

Brian Callahan was 24, 3 years older than Dolly. He was more than underweight, he was malnourished. Dark rings around his eyes

reinforced the impression of acute self-absorption. His scowl was a permanent facial trait; therefore there was no unfriendliness in it. His stubble of beard, due more to neglect than any intention of growing one, reinforced the sense of a shadow identity which, I guess, in some respects describes him fairly well. It would have been hard to imagine any other kind of person cohabiting with Dolly's onslaught to the psyche. Yet the marriage had defeated even someone as unobtrusive as he; already after two months it was falling apart. Seeing them together gave me the impression that Brian would do just about anything to get away from her.

Perhaps it was through serendipity that a convenient opportunity now presented itself: after having ignored the notices of induction, boycotted the physical examination and two court hearings, his arrest was expected in weeks, even days. That he was not already behind bars could only be attributed to the dependability of bureaucratic procrastination.

Brian arranged to meet with me later that week. Then Dolly and I left the Harvard Bookstore, crossed Massachusetts Avenue and walked down the street to wait outside Harvard Yard for the #1 bus to Dudley

Station. It came after only ten minutes, something of a record for this slowest and most undependable of bus routes. We hopped aboard.

The bus cantered through the icy night, past Central Square, then over the Harvard Bridge, (which is nowhere near Harvard but adjacent to M.I.T.; it should properly be called the 'Smoot bridge'), on into Boston, past the Christian Science Temple, Symphony Hall and the Back Bay station, then down to the Roxbury ghetto.

The trip took over an hour, time enough for me to narrate to Dolly the events of the day before last when, despairing of all other alternatives for dealing with Peter, and after a long, dreadful afternoon's struggle, we, (Rod Ferguson; a young runaway from Amherst named Judy Hampton; and myself), called in the Roxbury police bullies. I was in fact the one who had gone down to the station, the others being too deeply implicated in the drug scene.

Dolly knew Rod. In tones of derision and contempt she informed me that he was a 35 year-old 'burnt-out beatnik' whose sole interest in life was getting into the pants of pubescent teen-age girls. I didn't doubt the truth of this description; although the fact that she was offering it spontaneously already indicated ulterior motives. My earliest encounter with Rod had been in the Waldorf cafeteria about a month before, sitting

at a corner table in the company of Peter and one of his waifs. It was Peter who introduced us. When he told him that I was working as a computer programmer, Rod tried to touch me up for \$5,000 to finance a 'great idea for a movie'. It was always a mistake in this crowd to let on that one had a good job, or indeed any job at all.

Rod was not totally bad; no-one is. His behavior the other day had shown that he genuinely felt sorry for Peter. Not that he hadn't been overjoyed to "kick him the hell out of the pad", so that it could be re-consecrated to the joys of kiddy porn. Evictions often have this character. The neighborhood around Dudley Station, deserted apart from that saving remnant of people who seem to loiter everywhere, cold as a cryogenic laboratory and scarcely exemplary for safety, was.

At this time of the year, even the muggers would have been hard put to find a reason for being there. Beckoning across the intimidating landscape as to an underground rendezvous, a flickering light illuminated the interior of a White Tower restaurant, shaped like an igloo lonely against the Arctic night. All sights were darkened; all sites were dark. Like strayed travelers pursued by demons of menacing fear we climbed streets desolate as graveyards. Past houses abandoned and vandalized, damaged walls and fences, fields strewn with rubble,

garbage, glass; the wake of catastrophe. As if passing judgment on a captive society, the Roxbury courthouse stood prominently at the crest of the hill.

It took us 20 minutes to reach the one-story frame building. Although he had told me earlier over the telephone that he would be in that evening, Rod's pad looked deserted from the outside.

The porch proved treacherous, its floor boards rotting away or torn off. The doorway lay exposed (I don't recall there being a door). Dolly and I stepped up cautiously into a narrow corridor. A weak film-slicked light bulb sprayed a silver tarnish over dirty mouldings, garish walls and sticks of wood that must once have been attached to furniture. Blocking the door to the apartment was the rusted hull of a bathtub. Repeated knockings on the door produced no response. It turned out to be unlocked, so we opened it and stepped inside. A hostile voice fizzled like a firecracker through the darkness: "Who's there?"

" Hey, Rod! It's just me! Dave!"

" Dave? Oh, sure! Just a minute." The sound of dragging footsteps, the lights came on, and we saw that we were in the kitchen. The pale green walls were spattered with grease. Stacks of unwashed dishes lay in

the sink, with remnants of food clinging to every surface. The freakish shadows we cast against the dirty green walls gave one the feeling of having arrived in the den of the trolls.

Rod stood between the stove and the door to his bedroom. Evidently we'd gotten him out of bed, as he stared at us with ill-humored, (though not unhumored) eyes like one unwillingly roused. He faced us, penis aloft and erect, and stark naked.

In opposition, I suppose, to all the other ways of being naked. With one hand leaning on the stove, he scratched his pubic hair with the other. Although the apartment was heated, draughts coming in through the cracks in the walls and floor and from under the door put a chill into the air, raising lumps of goose-flesh all over his body. In the garish light his skin appeared jaundiced and sickly. With something of a shock I realized what this meant: Rod had hepatitis. This wasn't all that surprising. Drug works lay scattered around the kitchen table and throughout all the rooms.

"Come on in. You'll find Pete's things in the living room, on the couch he ruined by pissing on it for a week. I see you've met Dolly, like everyone else: she hangs out in the Square collecting people. Hey, Dolly! How's your creepy husband, Brian, making out?"

It would have taken a lot more than the sight of a male's naked body to upset Dolly, but it was only to be expected that she would be indignant for form's sake. Most of us, most of the time, feel what we're expected to feel.

"Quite well, thank you, without your help. I should think you'd have the decency to dress before a lady! "

"I do." His terse reply was followed by a pause ending the subject: "You can tell Brian he's another nut, just like Pete. That peacenik bullshit really turns me off. I guess Dave told you what we did to Pete."

"I'm well aware of what's been going on, you asshole. You don't think I came here to fuck, did you?"

Rod's shrewd, unfriendly eyes gleamed with malice: " Really? You're not putting me on, are you? Oh - now I understand - your twerp's made a decent woman out of you. Want to bet on how long that's going to last!"

"Don't start getting any funny ideas, you hunched over mother-fucker!" Rod's posture in the nude did not flatter him. " You could take advantage of me when I was just a teeny- bopper; I'd just run away from home and turned to you because I thought you would help me. You're

not a man, Rodney Ferguson, you're a pig! I don't know a grown woman who wouldn't spit on your dick. "

Rod's laughter substituted for sarcasm. He wasn't in the mood for fighting. "Speaking for the record, Dolly", he began -

"Who's there?" A girlish voice, surly and heavy with sleep, emerged from behind him in the bedroom: "Rod? Rod?"

" Just some visitors. Stay in bed; I'm coming right back."

As he spoke he scratched his tangled mop of black hair. A strong body odor exuded from his raised armpits

" I'm sick of the old crowd; I guess you are, too. I've been thinking of getting married."

Dolly sneered, "You don't say! "

"Don't laugh! She's a darling young thing, just off the boat from Ireland. American girls never did appreciate me."

"Rod? Rod?! Who is it?" The accent was decidedly Bostonian and very flat, not at all Irish. Rod ignored her

" I'm still amazed at that wimp you landed. He must be very easy to cheat. That's why you married him, I bet. Good luck to you."

Dolly clenched both her fists, a red flush covering her face; her taut muscles quivered with anger. She leaned forward on the toes of her feet as all of her splendid pugnacity came to the fore: " Now you listen to me, you lecherous cunt! I happen to love Brian very much and I won't put up with any more remarks coming from your low ass! " Dolly's hard eyes contracted in anguished points, " You better shut up or I'll hit you!! I promise, I really will!!" Her nose bulged "I'm pree...ety tough", she snorted, "when I want to be!!"

"Okay, okay! ", Rod's hard laugh mingled nervous ridicule and fear, "Can't you take a joke? Look, go in the living-room and take anything you want. I'm going back to bed. Jesus Christ, you can't even break a fucken hymen in peace anymore these days! "

Rod turned his back on us. Before disappearing back into the bedroom, he relieved himself melodramatically of a delayed fart he'd been saving up for the occasion. I switched on a lamp in the living-room. In his stay of a month, Peter Jancke had turned the room upside down. Now covered with boxes of Peter's books and records, the couch reeked with body wastes. Next to it stood the cabinets and shelves he'd filled with mysterious icons, creating a sort of chapel to a private impenetrable mysticism: spools of thread, pebbles, bottles and bits of glass, stamps,

bus transfers, matchbooks, bits of electrical wiring and other fetishes had been arranged in rigid geometrical formations whose meaning only he understood. Elaborate color-coding had been fundamental to this world system: even the matchbooks had had their covers ripped away to expose the red match tips beneath.

For 3 days and nights in which he raved continuously, Peter had neither eaten nor slept. Somewhere in the middle of the second night he'd piled a great mound of these fetish objects onto the coffee table in the living-room, including wine bottles and plates of food, squeezed oranges and other fruits over it, then smashed it to pieces with a hammer, sending fragments of wood, glass and metal flying about the room.

Rod and his girls had cleaned up most of the mess. I filled a laundry bag with items of clothing to take out to Mattapan when I would be visiting Peter in a few days. His books were either in German or political, and easily separated from Rod's books on cinematography. I also picked up a letter in German containing his mother's address in Stuttgart.

The sound effects coming from the bedroom were becoming oppressive; we threw items into the suitcase hurriedly at random until it

was full, then headed out the front door. Rod's voice rang through the darkness:

"Hey, guys! Come back soon for the rest of his junk! Whatever you don't take gets thrown out!"

We stepped back into the corridor. Only the sound of a police siren in the distance disturbed the quiet. As we exited onto the porch, we heard the thud of rapid footsteps behind us. Rod was teaching us how to close a door: the slam followed us all the way back to Dudley Station.

We rode back to Cambridge in silence, getting off on Central Square to go to the Western Union office. The text of the telegram involved some discussion. Dolly didn't know how to say anything in less than 5 paragraphs; however, I was paying for the telegram and it came out as:

YOUR SON PETER

NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

IN MATTAPAN STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL

I gave my address and phone number. It was already early morning in Germany and would be sent within the hour. The clerk was

annoyed; no doubt he wanted to go home and we were keeping him up. But I paid for it and we left the office. Rather than saying good-bye right away we walked for another mile in the cold to Harvard Square, to rest up for an hour in the Waldorf cafeteria before going to our respective homes. It was just short of 1 A.M.

B. Noon, Incident and Aftermath

In almost all respects, Cambridge and Roxbury are on opposite sides of the moon. Peter's apartment was in Roxbury; his work and social life remained in Cambridge. He worked at a computer assembly plant located in Kendall Square, the burgeoning cybertech park to the northeast of M.I. T. Peter had acquired a reputation among the university community, the anti-war and civil rights movements, and the drug scenes, those worlds that converged and intersected around Harvard Square, as a personality or, depending on one's point of view, as a character.

His strategy for drawing attention to himself demonstrated a strong native cleverness. While on a globe-trotting peace march that passed through Australia a few years before, he'd bought himself a bush-ranger version of the 10-gallon hat. It was velvet-black, constructed from shiny felt. A tassel of gold braid crawled, worm-like, around the base of its volcanic peak. The left side of its wide brim was bent vertical and fastened to this bulge with an outsized golden safety pin. Every square centimeter of its surface, peak, rim, and up-ended flap, was concealed, as a blizzard will cover a roof, beneath a layer of Movement buttons: anti-

war, anti- arms-race, anti-nuclear, for civil rights, for the environment, for the legalization of marijuana....

As he walked around Harvard Square in the company of groups of rootless druggies, Peter was invariably the only one who stood out. Students, Cambridge residents, tourists felt free to approach him and ask him about his trophy collection. For his part, he was always prepared to give an impromptu speech on the need for a pacific, non-violent world. There was indeed something of the old-fashioned evangelical minister in him. Though rarely coherent, his sermons were dependably eloquent. The air of unbalanced agitation that accompanied these impromptu expatiations did not diminish their charm. To the contrary, it bestowed upon him a prophetic holiness, the aura of the visionary he truly was, verily a John the Baptist crying in the wilderness.

The real extent of his activism was hard to gauge. He could not have been as involved as he claimed to be. The evidence did indicate that he had participated in some interesting events, including a San Francisco to Moscow Peace March, had marched and demonstrated in Canada, parts of the US and Europe, in particular his homeland of Germany where, surrounded by the evils of the Nazi regime and the horrors of the Allied bombings, he was born in 1940.

Tall, thin, nervous, bristling with dark energy, somewhere between the Angel of Mercy, the indignation of the righteous, chronic desperation and the Angel of Death, his presence anywhere was immediately remarked. He went in for black: the black hat, black jeans, a black sweater. Short cropped black hair and a scraggly black beard and mustache clustered around his mouth like the wriggling spines of a porcupine. He had no trouble with his appetite yet always appeared emaciated, as if moral suffering had somehow translated itself into the forms of visceral starvation. Unforgettable were eyes under thick glasses, often black sunglasses: wild, unstable, darting, filled with thunder and lightning, its bolts thrusting out dangerously beneath storm clouds. Above them hung bushy eyebrows, heightening his manic air, the qualities of frenzy.

In wintry weather Peter wore a bright red raincoat with a broad rain-proof hood, its back covered by a large sewn CND symbol. Then the Australian hat was replaced by a knitted red stocking cap, also thickly seeded with peace buttons.

He was making good money at his job, all the more so in comparison with his milieu. It was frittered away with a kind of demonic energy on drugs, parties, movies, dates. The job itself was easy.

If one considers totally mindless tasks easy. He stood within a group of fellow workers, mostly black, women or poor immigrants, at the same spot every day in front of a horseshoe- shaped table holding frames and other gadgetry. Once a computer chassis rolled onto the frame, their job was to wire it up quickly, soldering red wires into red leads, yellow wires into yellow leads and so forth. Central to this activity, one observes, was the color code. Its eventual transposition into his fantasy mythology may have written a new chapter in the science of technogenetic disease.

Peter eventually walked away from the assembly plant. He may have been fired; it is more probable that he just didn't show up and that was the end of it. By that time he no longer went back to Roxbury. He'd gotten into spending his nights in a certain crash pad on Massachusetts Avenue, close to the present location of the M.I.T. museum on the tiny, incongruously named Main Street. This place had gained notoriety as Cambridge's principal distribution center for hard, soft, safe or dangerous, legal and illegal drugs in the Square district. Everything, except heroin which of course was strictly lower class, could be bought, sold, or used right there. These were young people who imagined themselves so well informed, that because they knew enough to shun

heroin, they considered it safe to indulge in anything else, from paregoric to amphetamines to morphine salts.

Peter's change of routine could have been predicted: the #1 bus out to Roxbury stopped running at midnight, just when the underground life of the Square was gathering momentum. Following a night of carousing from apartment to apartment, with stopovers in the all-night cafeterias, he would end up in the living room of the Mass. Ave. apartment, curled up on a couch or rolled into a sleeping bag on the floor.

(2) The Waldorf Cafeteria

At that time a concession of the Waldorf cafeteria chain stood across from Harvard Yard, on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Dunster Street. Today it has been replaced by the large Au Bon Pain cafe-terrace and the yawning falsity of Holyoke Square. The Waldorf was closed only when it was not open, that is to say rarely, usually for clean-up between 3 and 5 in the morning. There were other hang-outs around the Square in those days: Hayes Bickford's, smaller and cleaner, more gown than town, was on the next block, at the site now occupied by the Yenching Chinese restaurant.

Walton's, across the Square, down a ways from the large Harvard COOP department store building, was less frequented, shiftier, less salubrious, partaking of the aroma of a B-movie, seedy, even sinister. Cronin's, more commonplace, was located on Brattle Street, a few blocks away. You could get beer there provided you weren't under age, sometimes even if you were. It was a good place to have a cheap meal and meet friends. Bartley's Burger Palace, still in operation after many decades, has always appealed only to students: corn-ball, loud, colorful and always overcrowded, it was hardly the place to recover from a bad acid trip or catch up on lost sleep.

In the early 60's an historical invasion of troubled youth, like a storm cloud arising from nowhere, suddenly filled up the cafeterias, the Waldorf in particular, during all hours of the day and night. One can suppose that the executives who had negotiated a Waldorf concession in full view of Harvard's genteel gates had not anticipated its' takeover by this kind of riff-raff. Young people of late high school and early college age, sitting immobilized in shock from a protracted high, or amphetamine horror show, or calamitous acid trip, were always to be found there. They clung together in packs, huddled together for warmth and relief of primitive fear, coasting along on an interminable procession

of coffee cups. They were disoriented, unkempt, even dirty, foul-mouthed, (though too exhausted to be really abusive). For the most part they came from middle-class backgrounds, were moderately well-educated, nurturing ambitions in music, art or poetry; and poor, more frequently than not homeless, drug-addicted, physically and mentally sick. Above all, they appeared to be so arrogantly unrehabilitatable, so congenitally inert, that it is readily understandable that Waldorf's management had concluded that these people considered the restaurant their private dormitory, a crash-pad underwritten by the city, a night club where, provided you kept ordering drinks, you could stay as long as you liked.

Am I being too conspiratorial when I speculate that the Waldorf had singled out Peter Jancke, with his high public profile, (the hat if nothing else) , as someone to be made an example of, who symbolized for them all the frustrations of coping with this growing, uncontrollable youthful scourge? It could hardly be denied that Peter's behavior was becoming increasingly bizarre by the day. He might suddenly bang a plate down on the table; or scream out a reply; or just scream, or howl like a wolf. He was accused of making unwelcome passes to girls coming into through the doors. And he had the bad habit

of going from table to table handing out peace movement literature - something I myself consider laudable, even necessary in a society whose way of life is dominated by legions of apathetic churls, yet a form of civil disobedience not gauged to win the hearts and minds of restaurant managers.

Countermeasures had been letting Peter know since October that he wasn't welcome. He responded in kind, alternating between gentle Gandhi-like abnegation and the nasty back-biting of a curish disposition. Came the day when he was told by the woman at the cash register by the door that he'd been banned. He ignored the ban for a week, returning to eat and socialize as it pleased him. Then one night, as he was eating dinner, the manager walked into the restaurant through the kitchen doors to hand him an ultimatum: either leave at once or face the police. Peter stomped out the entrance. He refused to pay for the interrupted meal.

The stage was set for a confrontation. All that is certain about Peter's arrest is the date: early afternoon of a Friday in mid-November of 1964. I wasn't there; this account relies on the testimony of eye-witnesses. The cashier was known to harbor some personal grudge against him: it may have been his politics, or the peace buttons on the

hat, or the increasing wildness of his behavior. The moment she noticed his face boldly urging its way through the door, her dowdy left palm reached across the counter and grasped the telephone receiver.

Peter strode to the food counters against the back wall and ordered a lemonade: "yellow" was deemed benevolent for the moment. He returned to the front and, (of course), sat down at a table directly facing the cashier: it was a mutual detestation society. Harsh words passed back and forth. She did warn him that the cops were on their way; he refused to budge. There was the sound of the approaching siren. Still he didn't move. The police car parked in front of the restaurant. While one cop sat behind the wheel, the other, described as red-headed, middle-aged and stocky, stepped out onto the pavement and came into the restaurant.

Peter was pointed out and the cop went to his table to put him under arrest. Here accounts differ: one version would have it that he started crying out ('yelling' is probably the better word), a grab-bag of political slogans, invective, threats, and meaningless rant, a real Waldorf salad. Others say that he jumped up to run out the door and was felled by the policeman's club.

This is not impossible yet most unlikely. Peter's tendencies generally went in the direction of verbal bantering rather than running

away. Given his state, he could have been swept by a wave of panic and tried to bolt; I don't think so. The story I find most credible states that, as soon as he saw the cop he slid off his chair, he dropped onto the cold, dirty blue carpeting and, his hands clutching at the mid-points of his thighs, curled up in a fetal position. The celebrated hat had rolled off his head and along the floor. At least one witness claims that the cop stepped on it. Since the hat disappeared into the lockers of the city jail for 6 months, by which time I'd left Cambridge for New York, I was unable to confirm this assertion.

It is generally acknowledged that the cop, by now very angry, asked him:

"What is this? Some kind of political tactic? Are you going limp?" Peter mumbled, "Yes", or nodded his head, or in some way responded in the affirmative.

Apparently this cop hated political demonstrators with every spastic fiber of his being. He cursed and trembled; he (may have) kicked Peter in the ribs. As Peter continued to refuse to respond, he removed a set of handcuffs from his belt. They were twisters: they force their bearer to hold his arms close together; every free motion twists a wire inside their loops closing them more tightly about their victim's wrists.

The cop locked and adjusted the right handcuff onto his wrist. He grabbed hold of the chain: Peter was wrenched off the floor with vindictive cruelty. Two months later one could still examine the burn marks on his wrist. His heart-rending screams shot a wave of terror through the restaurant. All activity froze: one can be certain that people stared at him with the lurid fascination they always exhibit in such situations. He was dragged and shoved to the counter and forced to pay for the lemonade. Then he was hustled out the door jammed into the cop car and driven to the city lockup a mile away in Central Square.

(3) Saturday Morning

Bill's constitution had been ruined by drug addiction. No one meeting him for the first time would take him for his real age, 25. He was prematurely worn down. Introverted, awkward with people, he could be ingratiating or obnoxious in turn. A mantle of rejection clung to his shoulders; from what or from whom one could never be sure. His posture, the manner in which he tended to keel over, gave the impression that he was recoiling from an anticipated or imagined whip.

No discernible schedule governed his life. When in Cambridge he crashed here and there in pads around the Square, usually on one of the couches in the living room of the Mass. Ave. hangout. At no time either

fully awake or asleep, one could expect to find him sprawled over a table in the Waldorf, or along the banks of the Charles River, or on the stone benches of the 3 Cambridge subway stations.

I ran into Bill early on the morning after Peter's arrest. He was walking up Mass. Ave. , in the direction opposite to mine. Our paths crossed by the Hayes Bickford. As he passed me he whispered, the after-echo of a death-rattle at the root of his throat: " Peter Jancke's been busted. Don't tell anyone " Then he wobbled out of range.

I took my breakfast in a small deli near the Harvard Law School. Then I reversed my steps, walking back down Mass. Ave., towards the police station. On the other side of Bow Street, that is to say, just beyond the Square, I ran into Randy, the only young Afro-American associated with the Cambridge drug scene:

" Hey! That you, Dave? Whatch'a up to? Wh' you in such a hurry?"

I made some vague remark about going to visit a friend in jail. His manner turned cynical/ friendly:

" You ain't shittin' me, is you? You isn't, by any chance, headin' over there to see Pete Yankee, now, is you?"

" Why yes: how did you know?"

"Shit, man! There ain't nothin' I don't know! Bill musta' told you."

"Yes; he did. " I laughed

"Bill's been hoppin' around Cambridge like some kinda' Town Crier, sayin ' "Pete's been busted! Don't tell nobody nothing!" Look- if you gets to see Pete, tell him we gotta talk! Fuck that peace shit! Jail ain't no place for no crazy man! "

Randy turned off, laughing, onto Putnam Avenue.

When I got to the Cambridge jail I learned what I already knew, that visiting was not permitted; also that Peter was being held over the weekend and would be arraigned on Monday morning in Boston.

At the arraignment, the Waldorf deposited a shopping list charges against him, starting with the unpaid dinner of the previous week. The city added a further charge: malicious destruction of municipal property. During his stay in the Cambridge jail, Peter had scribbled the phrase "Ban the Bomb" hundreds of times over the walls of his cell.

(4) Judy Marshall

Judy Marshall was able to discourse with some authority on the wisdom of not hanging around with the wrong crowd, yet it appeared to

be the only crowd she knew. Altogether she was far too cynical for her age, which I estimated at being about 20. She was chubby and short, with a pink, rotund, puffy face and infinitely sad eyes. She always dressed in tall riding boots and a cape, which she was in the habit of throwing over her left shoulder as if bracing herself against a high wind.

Tears came readily to her eyes. She spoke in a low voice, deliberately and slowly. Her state, between shock and panic, was always depressed; yet her taste for adventure remained pronounced, her eagerness to experience life strong and undiminished.

I ran into her about a week after she'd run away from Amherst, Massachusetts, town of poets and crusty colleges. She periodically left home but always returned. She'd hitch-hiked around all of New England and acquired a specialist's first-hand knowledge of the routes whereby psychedelic drugs made their way up from New York to Massachusetts, and from there to the rest of the region.

As dealer and pothead, (by her lights "ex", but this was stated with little conviction), she was an inexhaustible source of information on the garden varieties of all the mind-bloating drugs: pot, amphetamines, LSD. She confessed that throughout all the years of her middle teens she had floated on a perpetual marijuana-induced high. She maintained close

connections both with the drug network in Western Massachusetts and with the local Amherst police. Her friendship with the town's police chief gave her an inside track on up-coming drug busts or raids. This information was passed along to the local dealers in exchange for access to unlimited supplies of weed. As evidence for which, she'd brought a 2-pound stash into the Square to cover the expenses of the road.

Her annual flights from the parental manor had taken on the character of a ritual. She always managed to arrange a 'grand scene' before leaving, storming out the door with assurances that she would never be returning. Fear, habit, poverty, the hardships of the drug world, always drove her back. She described herself to me as a 'coward', unable to do for herself what she begged of her parents: to be put out on the street, forced to fend for herself.

She was actually very fond of her parents. The lone child of their middle age, they had spoiled her without mercy. When she stayed with them she lived in a small building, a kind of barn at the back of the house which she had designed herself. Here her friends came, to deal, or get high, or pass out. She insisted to me that her parents suspected nothing of her involvement with the drug world, nor of her years of drug addiction.

She stayed in my apartment for 4 days. A sad, distant girl. During the day she wandered the banks of the Charles River, sitting for hours on the cold benches, looking into the far distance, crying. At night she would return sometime after 10 and we would sit around and talk.

I'd gotten into the habit of going to Harvard Square immediately after my work, a detested job in an entry-level position as computer consultant. The company, International Information Incorporated, located in Kendall Square, had been founded by the man whose juvenile soul had conceived the PDP-1. I much preferred the company of the derelicts and sad young people clinging to existence in the restaurants, cafeterias and pads of Cambridge, to that of my wearisome colleagues, their minds stuffed with fads, fashions, obsessive pursuits and fixed ideas. Not that I don't myself have all these things in abundance. Granted that a constant diet of the burnt-out drug scene would have been just as impalatable in the long run.

My first meeting with Judy was in Cronin's. Coming through the front door, I stepped right into the orbit of an alcove in which this tearful, terrified girl, caped and booted, with long uncombed hair and a snub nose, cushioned between a sleeping bag and a back-pack, sat, bathed in such an aura of utter misery, with so evident a need to talk to

anyone who would listen, that I soon found myself, with a minimum of preamble, joining her at her table and opening a conversation.

A waitress appeared in about 15 minutes. I ordered a pitcher of beer and two dinners: then, as now, a good computer job confers certain advantages. Judy's story was simply told:

In Amherst she'd been given the address of the famous den of iniquity on Mass. Ave. She showed up there, only to find that the community was holding a party, a celebration of Peter Jancke's release from jail. Peter was the center of everyone's attention: drunk, happy, not too mad. He took an immediate liking to her and, with his habitual impulsiveness, offered her a place to stay in the Roxbury apartment he shared with Rod and his assembly line of young girls.

On her third afternoon in the apartment, that is to say, 4 hours or so before our encounter, Peter came onto her sexually. Or so she interpreted his behavior. As she told it, she repulsed him and he went insane immediately, throwing furniture about the room, breaking dishes, babbling endlessly, making attempts at setting the building on fire - his usual catalogue. Rod wasn't there. She grabbed her things and fled. I had inherited the aftermath of the rout.

This was the earliest version. What actually happened became clarified over the next few days as more details were added. Peter had been confusing her with many of the other women he'd courted, with names like Susan, Roberta, Marian, with an ex - wife, with someone he'd met on the boat coming over from Germany, even with his mother in Ulm.

Judy's descriptions of his apartment showed that he'd been far gone long before she met him. Already he'd filled the rooms with his museum of color-coded fetishes, the texts of his inner mythology, his simulacra of cosmic harmony. While she was there, Rod and his girls put in frequent appearances and disappearances. He and Peter filled the air with acrimonious shouting, enriched by Peter's growing incoherence.

I'm fairly convinced by now that there was considerable exaggeration in her impression that his manner was to be interpreted as a sexual attack. The breakdown that she witnessed, the tirades and the violence, were components of well- established patterns, that had only been shocking to her because she'd never encountered anything like it in her limited experience.

Peter's mind had been hanging by a thread even before that fateful Friday afternoon when he walked into the Waldorf. It was far more

likely that it had been the brutal treatment he'd received from the cop, combined with the weekend in the lock-up, which had pushed him over the brink. In general, the druggies were too run-down and exhausted to have much sexual appetite, and it defies credibility to believe that she'd gotten him so excited that he literally flipped when she turned him down.

During this period I myself was renting a room in another one of the notorious drug-world crash pads. I was not particularly notorious myself, and I shunned all drugs, even marijuana, like the plague. The druggies welcomed me as a stabilized influence, while I found them a welcome relief from the pretensions of the academic world, within which I'd been given clear instructions to pass the rest of my days. At the time I met Judy, the dealer who'd organized the pad, one of the Square's kingpins, was on the lam from the cops, while the rest of the movable fix were staying away because the place was pivoted on the edge of a police raid. I put Judy up in one of the empty rooms.

After breakfast on the morning of the next day I walked with her the 3 blocks to the Mass. Ave. pad. We arrived around 9 A.M. We walked up to the second floor, where she waited on the landing and I went in. The large living-room was barren of furniture, save for two large

couches, a few chairs and a very dirty rug on a rotted plank floor. The three large bay windows were covered over with burlap bags and strips of brown paper. Enough light seeped in from the rents in the paper and the opened windows to allow one to maneuver about the room.

Parading around the living-room and ranting, Peter had gotten there before us. 3 college- age boys were curled up on the two couches, trying to sleep despite his endless harangue. By listening one could eventually disentangle the rhetoric from its diverse preoccupations. The clichés and at times impassioned rhetoric of the antiwar movement were mixed in with his obsessive fears. Interspersed were his mystical interpretations of various colors. Occasionally he brought in sentimental reflections on past and present girl-friends.

Suddenly he would turn around and start accusing the occupants of the apartment, including the ones in the living-room trying to sleep, of robbing him. There was a certain irony to this: Peter was free to treat them this way only because they had organized the fund-raising to put up the bond money to get him out of jail.

I went back out into the hallway and told Judy that it was safe for her to come in. She shambled over to the couch and sat down. Peter was very happy to see her. He stopped his monologue and walked over to

the couch. Then he sat down beside her and lay his head on her lap. Judy maintained a rigid posture, afraid to move a muscle, afraid to do anything that might signify rejection. Her right hand was on his forehead, the other lay on his shoulder and back.

She cried without restraint. As soon as he was fast asleep, she moved his head onto a cushion and disengaged herself from under him. Then she indicated to me that she wanted to leave.

3. New York City, Winter 1966

A. Smokey

In November of 1965 I, and four other activists burned our draft cards in Union Square, earning us six month prison sentences. Mine was served in 1972 at Danbury and Allenwood penitentiaries. Over that winter I occupied a bed in a dorm room managed by the Catholic Worker, the anarchist-pacifist movement founded by Dorothy Day in the 1930's. My room-mates were all draft resisters and militant pacifists. One of them, Roger LaPorte, would later immolate himself on the steps of the federal courthouse in Foley Square in protest against the war.

Between bouts of demonstrating, planning, and direct action I also helped out in the newspaper office of the Worker on the 3rd floor of the St. Joseph's House, then located at 175 Chrystie Street near the Bowery. I worked in a volunteer capacity. Beside myself the office held two regular staff persons: the painter Walter Kerrell, and Smokey. This account is about him.

Smokey was one of the legendary characters of the old Catholic Worker. He'd never been known under any other name. One might have described him as an alcoholic in semi-stable remission: from time to time

he went on binges. By virtue of his many years of service to the Worker a dispensation had been granted whereby he, and he alone, was given the money to buy himself a 6 pack of beer every Friday night. Only Dorothy Day herself had been at the Worker longer.

Smokey's life-long residence on the Bowery (New York City's Skid Row on the Lower East Side) went back four decades. With the enactment of Prohibition all the legitimate bars were closed and the derelicts were too poor to afford the speak-easies. This seems not to have affected the economic health of the Bowery, which was even more robust then than it is today. Apart from the historical fact that Prohibition never succeeded in reducing the amount of drinking, the Depression also increased the numbers of desperate people out of work.

" They sold us this shellac!" The standard confection, one to which Smokey gave his stamp of approval, was a mixture of Coca-Cola with shellac bought at a paint store. Sometimes denatured rubbing alcohol was used. One could get a bottle of shellac then for 15 cents.

" They made out like they didn't know what we was gonna' use it for! No sir! We just told'em we was paint'n th'floors! What th'hell - they didn't know the difference. So we was paint'n th'floors? They didn't care none."

When Smokey held court it was in a loud voice accompanied by arm-waving and dramatic gestures:

"We drank the stuff everywhere! In them days the 3rd Avenue Elevated was still standin' . We drunk it in the street; under the El; up on the platforms! They was the best places. If it was'a warm day, we'd be sitt'n or lie'n aroun' up there, from early in th' mornin' until it gets dark. In them days people got off at the Bowery at their own risk! It was okay, if you didn't mind stepp'n over bodies. Why, we was heaped up there higher'n a sink filled wit' dishes! If you was to ask me how I lived through it, 'till this day I can't tell you.

"But you take that Sneaky Pete stuff they're drinkin' nowadays. That's wors'n anything! Nah I would'n touch'a stuff! That Sneaky Pete drives a man crazy! And it ain't nothin' but cheap wine! That's all it is! You know that guy, crazy Mike, who's always comin'in here makin' trouble? He got that way drinkin' that Sneaky Pete stuff! I won't touch it. I wouldn't touch it if you give me all'uh money in the world! I wouldn't touch a drop of it! No sir!"

The pickled eyes in Smokey's much pleated and furrowed face glared at us over his thick horn-rimmed frames. He paused to take

another long drag on the endlessly renewable cigarette that had earned him his nickname, before continuing:

" Durin' the Depression they turned some'a th'bars intuh soup kitchens. I used t'work at the one down'on'a corner, dishin' out soup. Later they sends me to Hart's Island. That's where they used to send us. They put us to work there, diggin' holes! Big ones, to drop corpses in. Yessir: even children! Kids! One day we carries 80 corpses up there, drops'em innuh holes, and covers'em over with dirt." Walter Kerrell, who was in the office at the time, explained: "That's the Potter's Field. Dorothy wants to be buried there."

"Later they sends us back again to the Bowery, no better'n we was before. Them days you got all kinds'a people on the Bowery, young and old. Yep: lots of'em inn'er twenties! Lots of the folks you see on the Bowery got families. They comes down here to escape the disgrace. Here you drinks as much's you like, and nobody gives a damn. Nobody knows who you is! They comes down here t'escape the disgrace. They comes down here to drink themselves t'death!"

Smokey was in his 60's. The Bowery had prematurely aged him, the facial skin dry and taut on his skull like the membrane of a drum. Though short and bony and clearly in poor health, he somehow

appeared tough. Most of his teeth had fallen out; those remaining were charcoal black from accumulated nicotine. I never saw him without a lit cigarette in his mouth. Smokey had been laid up in the hospital shortly before I arrived. The first thing he said to Dorothy Day when she came to visit him was:

" Dorothy; has you got my coffin nails?"

She wouldn't have dreamed of coming without a carton. Casual visitors to the St. Joseph's House were well advised to bring a pack in case they ran into Smokey. The brand didn't seem to matter. And no one ever walked into the newspaper office without being cadged by him for 'coffin nails'. One reason for this was that he wasn't allowed much pocket money. What he earned through his office work was put aside in a fund for necessities. Even after 2 decades off the streets he was still liable to go on a drunk that ended only when he'd completely passed out. Walter Kerrell told me the following story:

Sometime in the early 50's Smokey slipped on the pavement in front of the St. Joseph's House and broke his leg. Despite whatever loyalty he may have felt for the organization that had rescued him from the streets, he sued the Worker. The judge ruled in his favor and he was

awarded something like \$10,000: a non-trivial sum even today. Although everyone knew it would go to drink, the CW had to pay up.

Over the next year Smokey did not step three times into the St. Joseph's House. Personnel and residents from the Worker would come across him lying against the buildings lining the Bowery, in the narrow alleyways and side streets, or under the tables of the local bars, out like a light. It took him a year to run through the award money. The CW picked up the pieces and eventually he was reinstated at his job in the newspaper office.

Smokey had even made the front page of the New York Times. Some years before he'd gotten a job washing dishes at an exclusive country club out on Long Island. While closing down the kitchen one weekend, someone accidentally locked him into the pantry. The following Monday morning his body was discovered, unconscious, in the liquor closet. Over this "lost weekend" he'd consumed the club's entire supply of Scotch! An ambulance took him to Bellevue Hospital. Walter couldn't recall if Smokey was rehired by the club.

To listen to him talk no one at the CW took more pride in his or her work than Smokey. Visitors to the newspaper office were given the impression that he was in charge of everything. The truth of the matter

was that Walter Kerrell had been managing the office for many years. A few years later, however, Walter retired from the Worker and went out of his way to avoid it. The organization aroused fierce loyalty and fierce antagonism, sometimes in the same person. I think Smokey had died by that time.

Smokey's job consisted of entering new subscribers into a ledger and sending them the first issue. The CW newspaper is famous for its subscription policies: 1¢ an issue if you can afford it. Once you get onto the mailing list you are there for life, sometimes even beyond. I commonly saw newspapers returned that had been sent out to persons who'd died years before.

My job was to work the stencil-maker, a typewriter that manufactured the waxed-paper stencils that imprinted the addresses of subscribers to the CW newspaper onto slips of brown paper. These were wrapped around the copies folded and sent out by the team of recovering, (and sometimes not-so-recovering), alcoholics working on the second floor. It was also part of my job to remove stencils of deceased subscribers from the files.

One morning I arrived and found that Walter had placed a sign on the stencil-maker with Do Not Use written on it. The table and

surrounding floor were buried in chunks of plaster both large and small, broken off as a mass from the ceiling not half an hour before. Had I been sitting there at the time I could have suffered a serious injury. Over the next month about 40 pounds of plaster dropped from the ceiling into the room. Whenever it rained water poured down from 3 places. City health and fire inspectors who harass and sometimes close down anarchist operations are not always motivated by political malice. Fortunately the roof was fixed before the fire inspector made his yearly visit in April.

One Friday night a number of us were sitting with Smokey on the steps of his apartment on Kenmare Street, keeping him company as he drank his weekly six-pack. Apropos of nothing, he said:

" You know that work I do in the office? Any 6-year old could do that!"

He paused, staring bitterly at the pavement, his mask down, willing to confess to persons he knew and trusted what he would admit to no one else, the deep conviction that his life had been largely wasted:

"Any 6-year old could do that work."

B. The One Mile Bar

Curiosity led me one afternoon into the One Mile Bar located at the corner of Bowery and Rivington Streets. The winter day was icy, cold and cloudless. Despite the general tawdriness of the street, objects glittered in the snow as if polished. From the outside the bar looked like many another. Some of its trappings even indicated more ambitious aspirations: a juke box, cigarette machine, fans. Upon entering I realized that nothing else bore any resemblance to the traditional neighborhood bar. The large room was dirty, dark, filled with smoke, the air evil and stale. About a dozen tables filled up all the space to the back of the main room. Over, around and on top of these were sprawled innumerable beings, sleeping, wheezing, snoring, with misery and destitution were apparent everywhere. Around this cauldron of sodden flesh staggered a sluggish sea of bodies, shorn of dignity and very drunk, stumbling, pushing each other around, breaking out here and there into spontaneous squabbling. The cast-away clothing they wore had been assembled in idiosyncratic concatenations: lumber jackets, vests, torn shirts, trousers with or without flies, caps, overcoats, frayed scarves. If some women were among them I didn't notice them.

Descending from translucent windows smoky beams of light gilded their flabby and desiccated faces. Their rags fell together to form a continuous patchwork of contours and mounds. Here and there an individual face with a bit of character might emerge as a pinpoint of light in the ocean of damnation and despair.

I walked to the counter and bought a bottle of beer. Behind the counter worked two bartenders; enormous brutes, both of them. One could have imagined them cousins (maybe they were): grotesquely obese, with big jowls and hammer fists, their shifty eyes set in heavy folds of fatty tissue and darting with fear. They worked rapidly, and in a manner brusque and humorless.

My entrance had been observed by an emaciated, timorous individual. I watched him as he made his way through the mob in my direction. He wore a blue coat several sizes too large for him, without buttons, secured around the waist by a grey raincoat belt tied as a sash. His unbuttoned work shirt revealed a hairy red chest. Atop his ears stood a floppy, beaten-down hat. Stumbling a step at a time, with outspread arms, he lurched towards me. Terrified I pushed my bottle along the counter: "Here. You can have this."

He faltered, Mustering his tardy reflexes he picked up the bottle, stared at it for a minute or two, then back again at me. Then he mumbled something in a faint whisper and took a few sips. The voice with which he addressed me was scarcely audible. His facial muscles moved, but no sound emerged. Finally I realized that he wanted me to buy him some wine. I declined.

His face was swollen, flushed with the cold. Thickly chapped lips curled up sharply to the right, like the caricature of someone who always speaks out of the same side of his mouth. Most disturbing were his eyes. The gleam that poured from their depths was broken, even crazed. Deep creases lined his battered features, although unlike many in the room, they were free of scars and cuts. The focal point of the face was the gaping hole that formed when he opened his mouth to smile. About 9 front teeth were broken down completely. The hole was filled with tartar and thin slivers of teeth, one of which, a fang tapered to the sharpness of a needle, projected upwards from the lower gum.

Our conversation was rather patchy, given that I could just barely make out what he was saying. Born in Brooklyn he'd been raised in Norway. Technically he was a Norwegian citizen. A brother and other family still lived there. For much of his life he'd been a merchant

seaman. I asked him how long he'd been back in the States. The reply was too faint to decipher.

By now the environment was really beginning to get to me. Everything projected the dreadful sensation of a world gone out of control. The room was noisy and congested. Above the groundswell of conversation one heard the whirr of fans and the dreary sound of the jukebox (even in Hell there must be a juke-box), snoring, quarreling, shuffling, sniffing of phlegm. Three men were stretched out over a table against the far wall. They appeared to be asleep. Then one of them stood up abruptly with someone's coat under his arm, and began making his way towards the door through the stew of rags and humanity.

One of the bartenders shouted:

" Hey, there! Don't take that man's coat!"

" That ain't his coat. It don't belong to nobody!" A dubious contention, given that the man was already wearing a coat, neither more nor less threadbare than the one he was stealing.

" Yes it does! Leave it there!"

The man looked wildly around the room. Caught red-handed!

" All right, damn it!" He threw the coat back on the table and resumed his seat. The man he'd tried to rob had slept through the entire incident.

A rag-pickers market operates daily along the Bowery from Houston to Delancey Streets. The trade starts early in the morning and is very brisk. It services an unscrupulous, relatively well-heeled clientele who have discovered that they can often pick up good quality, almost certainly stolen, clothing for little more than a bottle of whiskey. In this neighborhood one will also observe bartenders standing before the doors of their establishments with a bottle of wine in one hand and a glass in the other. They wait at the ready for the small change that the alcoholics can sometimes collect from cars stalled at the street intersections.

The men stand by the curbside holding rags. The instant the light turns red they rush into the road. Indifferent to the drivers' consent they wipe down the windshields of the cars and beg for tips. What money they receive is quickly carried over to the bartenders who, in the act of filling their glasses, reward them instantly for having done their part in the defense of Capitalism.

The Norwegian lifted his right hand to show me his thumb. It was set in a splint and bandaged. This was followed by an incoherent and whispered attempt to explain to me how he'd broken it.

" You talk so softly I can't always hear you." I told him.

" I know. I just talk softly. I can't help the way I talk."

Facial expressions around the room ranged from crazed silliness to drunken hatred. The constant stumbling around was menacing and naturally made me uneasy. It would have required more nerve than I possess to have induced me to mingle with the crowd at the back of the room.

" Hey! Bud! You got a cigarette?" A man had come over to the bar and was standing by my right. I gave him one and put the rest of the pack on the counter. Awkwardly, looking up at me frequently for approval, the Norwegian reached for the pack. He took two cigarettes, lighting one up for now and putting aside the other for later.

This new acquaintance stood somewhat apart from the population of aged derelicts that filled the room. He did not make a pleasant impression. His manner was rude and cynical, a man clearly out for himself. His face was sweaty, with a mustache and several days' growth

of beard. He wore blue jeans. Over a red turtleneck sweater with the message " Grant's Softball Team" he wore a light Army denim jacket. As he spoke to me he kept a tight grip on his bottle of Scotch.

He explained, " I work over at the Volunteers of America." (one of the many Christian missions in the neighborhood). " I get 50 cents a day and a place to stay. I got messed up last night because I was broke.

You see, I found this whore, you get my drift? She was ready to put out for nothin'! But, damn, we needed to rent a room! It was no go." He moved closer to me:

" You see, guy - when I got the money there ain't no girls around. Then, when there's some girls, I ain't got no money! That ain't no good, is it?" I nodded for want of a reply. Finally I asked him:

" How much did you say you make at the Volunteers of America?"

"Fifty cents a day." He probably realized I wasn't buying his hard luck story, so he turned away, indicating the conversation was over. The next minute his manner changed completely when he saw a friend walk through the door,

" Hey! Joe! Come on over here! Hey! Joe! Over here!"

Joe was elderly, frail, clean-shaven with fine, even aristocratic features. Judging from his hands and face he was not accustomed to manual labor. He must have had independent means, possibly a pension. His clothes were relatively new and made to fit. His coat was in good condition, and he wore a vest. Even his shirt was clean. Cigarettes were handed all around as soon as he got to the bar. Despite these evidences of affluence there was no doubt that he was a regular, and an alcoholic. I was in the presence of an example of the class of persons described by Smokey, those with good families who come to the Bowery to hide.

The man to my right began a new version of the tale of last night's adventure, with slight variations. As the two of them spoke together, they were joined by a third. This was a tall man on crutches. Both of his feet were in casts and heavily bandaged: frostbite. His grey, dirty face was lined with deep furrows. Spitting and cursing, he stumbled painfully, clomping his crutches as he moved. I remarked that he was clothed in an assortment of odds and ends: blue vest, soiled shirt, dumpy trousers, and, for a belt, a piece of rope. An oversized, grey coat, ripped in several places and without buttons, hung open at the front.

As with the Norwegian, it was all but impossible to make out what he was saying. His words got mixed up with the phlegm that he coughed up and swallowed at regular intervals.

The aristocratic gentleman, wobbling and intoxicated, put his hand on his shoulder: "I want to introduce...." Then he put his arms around the two of them and pulled their heads in with his. They were joking and singing.

As these boon companions tried to recall familiar melodies, the newcomer beat time with his crutch. His voice, which carried a wistful, tired resonance, lifted:

"I was in the Army. In the Pacific."

The man to my right roared: "In the Pacific? Where?"

"In the Philippines!"

"Philippines, huh? - What Division?"

Rather than answering, he repeated:

"I was in the Philippines!"

"Yea. I was stationed there too"

" That wasn't my war, boys....."

It could have been any typical night on the town. The Norwegian tugged at my sleeve:

" Will you take me with you?" I moved to the door. He followed in my traces. I walked out the door and turned around. He was standing next to me. I started to close the door on him.

" Can you let me have some money?"

I gave him my change and left.

4. Paris, 1968

A. Toy Boats

On the clock-dial on the facade of the Palais du Luxembourg, the hands tell us that it is six o'clock. Early evening. Sunday. The day has been hot. The sky is still very bright and suggests no clouds.

People sit all around the porous rim of the large pond before the palace grounds. Dirt, fruit and other garbage, stones, scraps of paper have collected at the dark green water's murky edge. Here and there the muck accumulates into a swamp: within, the paper scraps held together by strings of amorphous filth put one in mind of street gutters in an open market in the rain.

From the rim to almost two-thirds of the way to the center the waters are impenetrable, a texture of soured milk. Only in a small circular area radiating from the center does one see the green reflections of the trees and hedges, located beyond the stone balustrade, disengage from the pale clear blue of the sky. Here, in this patch surrounded by wide strips of green sewage, the waters sparkle with mirror reflections. At the very center stands a rectangular stone pedestal from which a jet of water-spray emerges under great pressure.

The architects have placed, around the base of this fountain and separated by ornamental sheaves of maize, a frieze of naked cupids in bas-relief. Their backsides face outwards below their naughty faces. The column of water rises vertically, lifting into the blue sky several feet above the trees in the background.

The waters at the crest fan out mightily into a turbid spray, fall apart, then slope back in parabolic shapes towards the earth, their width and direction being functions of the strength and direction of the wind. Those dropping down into the pond splash on the fountain's pedestal, stirring up a basin of sparkling foam that translates into ripples moving swiftly across the surface. Just before flying off a pigeon walking about the pedestal rested, for a few minutes, under the cascades.

Pearls of water carried across the length of the pond by the wind form a fine curtain of mist in which, sometimes, rainbows can be seen. Across the pond drift a variety of toy sailboats and other miniature craft. Most in evidence is the model made of wood, with two sails, the larger and taller at the back, the one in front knotted to the bowsprit. Both sails are tied to the tall mast at the center. The sail towards the stern is further divided into upper and lower sections.

These come apart at the place where the sail pulls away from the mast, promoting the outline of a truncated triangle by the lifting of its field. The upper edge of the sail, comprised of two trapezoidal edges, ultimately fastens at the far end of the boat. The two sections of the larger sail may be colored alike, or differently. One commonly finds the front sail and the upper section of the back sail colored alike, with some complementary color for the lower section.

On some of them all three units are given a different color. One- or two- digit integers are sewn onto patches on the lower section of the large sail to the back. Effects of great charm are created around the pond by these boats, a score or so of them, each moving on an independent path and adding its own bit of color. They turn out to be the property of a vendor who stands a few feet away from the pond surrounded by his merchandise.

He rents them to the children who may be seen running and screaming in the dusty path encircling the pond, waving the long bamboo poles, decorated with stripes of red and blue, that come with the rental. They push their boats away, vigorously, with these sticks, then race around the pond in anticipation of the places where, in a few minutes, they will drift back to the rim.

Once pushed into a course, they move rapidly. Primarily, this is due to the sharp steel keel affixed to the floor. Invisible at the surface, it cleaves the water's viscosity and encourages the boat to maintain an even course. The sails are quite effective at catching the wind. This model of boat moves swiftly, in an undeviating line, without the need for any supplementary internally generated power.

It is perhaps owing to the keel that one experiences such a thrill whenever a vessel, tipping strongly under the pressure of the wind to one side, so that it is almost level with the water that laps onto its deck, keeps essentially to its linear course without a break. After the sailboats, the next model most commonly present on the pond is a smaller craft powered by a uncoiling spring.

These are usually made of plastic. They look like yachts, with little steering wheels, lounge decks and compartments in the hold, and have no sails. The mechanism that drives the propeller uncoils quite slowly; once wound up, its action persists over the length of several trajectories, each lasting as much as ten minutes, across the pond.

A boat will become stranded at the center of the pond. The propulsion of the wind is canceled by the outward force of the torrent, and the boat runs the danger of being submerged under the surface of

the waters or forced against the base of the fountain, from which it can be very difficult to dislodge.

At other times, owing to a particular confluence of currents and possible defects in the rudder, one of the motorboats will become trapped within a vortex of irregular oscillations that restrict it to a fixed location. A boat which has fallen into such a regime is apt to collide with others.

Usually these collisions are not noteworthy. A motorboat and sailboat will disengage immediately, then continue on their pre-established routes with little deviation. The same behavior will be observed in collisions between two motorboats. Only in the rare instance of an encounter between two sailboats, in which their sails become entangled, is there real cause for concern: the results can be harrowing.

When this happens the complex formed from the two boats is immobilized. If they lie out of the reach of the bamboo poles they may continue to linger in the same spot until they have to be rescued. This is done by a park guard, who must wade into the pond to retrieve them.

Boats not in the first two categories combine features of each of them: some with both engines and sails, large sailboats with mechanized

propellers, and even more grandiose sailboats with accessories, portholes, hatches, guard-rails, etc.

B. Hotel Room

A radiator stands before the casement of the hotel's closed window. It is the heat from the radiator, visible in the vibrating columns of air rising from its surface, that has caused white chips of paint to flake from the casement onto the window-sill. The glare of the clouded day that enters from the street through the window glass is filtered through the sieve of loose and yellowed threads that compose the curtain.

Attached at its center to a pin which slips ultimately into a shoulder, the large circular disk of the steam-valve is separated by a faded muslin curtain from the seven blue-gray, long and slender metal flutes anchored to the floor. Assorted objects rest on the radiator's flat surface. At the left end, an upturned circular plywood cheesebox cover. A fragment of a piece of Camembert nestles within, covered by crumpled paper. This is waxed paper, translucent, marble-white and splotched with vestiges of cheese.

At least a third of the paper's surface is covered with images, printed in dark blue and red inks, of a castle in Normandy and the

manufacturer's trade name. The back of the radiator is against the window-sill, where, (its crippled shape rigidified through the mutual action of water and starch), a white linen hand-towel extends from an exposed corner of the cheesebox over to the muslin curtain at the right. Its curled extremity rests on a patch of the curtain draped over the rightmost pair of flutes. In the intersection of towel and curtain crouches a grey woolen sock.

The forward portion of the sock is folded around itself, the remnant rolling out to the front edge of the top of the radiator without quite spilling over, (though dripping slightly into the space between first and second flutes). Apprehended as a unity the sock, the white hand-towel and the muslin curtain make a composition in still-life. Over the handle drapes the upper part of the sock.

A black plastic electric cord winds out from underneath the muslin curtain. Its pair of co-joining veins slides around the grey tangle of the forward bulge of the sock, which it offsets from the radiator's edge. Further on it will connect with the sleek, black plastic handle of an appliance of some indiscernible function.

Re-stated: the sock is disposed in a "V"-shape, the greater portion (including the toe, the heel and part of the foot), being folded over itself,

making the bulge on the right, the opening at its top hanging over the plastic handle, while the region of the ankle rests within the cradle of the towel and the curtain. The handle itself extends over a full three of the seven flutes of the radiator - precisely, from the third flute in from the left to the third from the right. A stainless steel rod juts out to the right from the handle's stump, disappearing almost immediately beneath a small piece of the white towel that has managed to reach this far; but beyond this one discovers that a lever, also of stainless steel, lies exposed. The steep curve of its lower portion bends and disappears into a spring that lies coiled between the plastic handle and the steel rod, while its upper surface is flat.

A plastic thumb- depressor at the tip of the lever squats like a vengeful fly.

C. Cafe Crocodile

The bench extends from the doorway to the bar. It is covered by three green cushions, with three matching cushions propped against the wall. in front of the bench stand two high, narrow tables. Four identical chairs with reticulated backs stand In front of these, an upholstered cushion on the seat of each, onto which are stitched identical designs.

This arrangement is repeated along the entire length of the opposing wall: the bench with the three green cushions, then the three cushions propped against the wall; the narrow high wooden coffee tables, just long enough to encompass the seats of a pair identically constructed chairs, (identical not only to each other but to all the other chairs in the room), each holding a drab cushion upon which there is stitched the same rooster, disposed in exactly the same way, within a garden that does not vary from one chair to another . There are four benches installed along the length of this wall: two between the entranceway and the pillar of white brick, the other two between this pillar and the back of the long rectangular chamber. Each bench is the length of two tables, (allowing for the small space between them).

There is a final bench along the back wall and, if one adds to this the four benches along the side wall and the bench near the entrance on which the two young women, who have been there since early morning, are seated, one has six benches altogether. With two tables situated before each bench, there are twelve tables, and with two chairs in front of each table one has twenty-four chairs. The six cushions associated with each bench, three on the flat surface and three against the walls, provide seats for another 18 customers. One can therefore have forty-two

customers seated around the tables. This does not take into account the row of stools at the bar, nor the number of standing clients which fill up the café's available space every night until 2 A.M.

The open entranceway, (this had been breached when the pair of green wooden doors opened inwardly as the garçon pushed down on a horizontal iron handle measuring about 2 metres in length), is disposed in the form of a triptych, the ratio of the width of the principal entry, to the smaller ones being about 3: 2. The openings on the two sides are separated from the principal entry by rectangular wood pillars, like the doors, dingy green. The span of each pillar, (in the direction from the street into the cafe), is approximately that of the glass panes, (we will come to those in a moment), while their width can be no more than a third of this. Panels of wood with glass inlays, similar but smaller, (in the same ratio as the openings), to that of the main doorway hang from the farthestmost edges of the entrance. Each panel is composed of two sections held together by hinges. They have been constructed this way so that they can be pushed inwards from the street. Each section holds seven ranges of glass panes in pairs. The panes, however, are narrower, (again in the ratio 3: 2), than those of the doorway.

Consequently the panes of the panels are vertical, those of the doorway horizontal. Seven paired ranges of rectangular panes of handwrought glass are set into each of the two large doors: twenty-eight panes in all. The glass is roughly grained, almost translucent, peppered with deformities. Seen through them the street-world is distorted, as through a pool of glue.

Some of the panes are tinted a pale yellow. These panes appear clearer than the others. Even on overcast days one can imagine sunlight coming through them. The truth of the matter is that the view through these panes is much more indistinct: the tinted panes carry the same imperfections as the others, while the tint itself adds an additional fuzziness.

The young college student seated on the bench between the entrance and the bar wore a blue beltless dress, unbuttoned at the top. The wide, round collar was edged by a thin white line that lazily encircled the neck, its' design continuing into a cravat which flowed out of the neck and gathered together further down, on the chest, where it was fastened to the dress by a golden pin. Her hair, parted slightly down the middle, was pulled back tightly over her ears.

Sitting beside her was another young woman of about the same age. Her whole manner, as evidenced for example in her way of dressing, contrasted sharply with that of her friend. Powdery chocolate and woolen, a pullover covered ostentatious breasts. Apart from some inessential deviations, her dress closely matched her sweater in texture and design, its shortness exposing legs sheathed in chalky nylons.

Encircling her waist, a brown leather belt. A flaming orange and white foulard was tied about her neck, the ends falling onto her chest. Her right arm was supported on the table at the elbow, while cigarette smoke emerged from the hollow of her right hand. The fingernails of her long hands were manicured, spread open like the pleats of a fan and coated with red-orange polish.

Encircling the left wrist, a narrow black elastic watchband. There were rings on some of the fingers of both hands and, around her right wrist, a bracelet.

A piece of fur , of matching color, was set between front and back portions of her dark brown hair, masses of which fell across her back, obscuring the neck. Earrings soldered from many small worked metal shapes descended from the lobes of her ears.

Assorted objects rested on the table before them: a wineglass, box of paints, books, and cigarettes, a folding umbrella sheathed in its case; a few dishes, an ashtray.

D. Despair

Despite the many advantages of Jim's situation, there was really very little about it that one might characterize as enviable: neither his attractive, intelligent girl-friend, nor his secure financial position, not the strange way in which he seemed to have made peace with his soul.

One could probably fix a date on which Jim's unique talent for doing nothing had been turned from what must have begun as an agreeable hobby into a life's vocation. The evidence seemed to suggest that his last real effort had been the organization of his trip from San Francisco to France. This exploit had also more or less used up his remaining sources of energy.

He moved in with Anne-Marie less than a month after his arrival. The means of his Franco-American girl-friend, not rich but assuredly well-off, were sufficient for both of them. Anne-Marie also held a part-time secretarial job, which she needed primarily to give herself something to do during the day. She found it perfectly acceptable that,

after disposing, rather capably, of the issue of survival, Jim had settled into a permanent Yogic trance.

During the winter of 1969 in Paris I was their only regular social contact. For awhile I was visiting them 3 or 4 times each week in their Latin Quarter apartment, on the rue Monge not far from the intersection of the Boulevard St. Germain and the Boulevard St. Michel. I was always welcome. In fact I was never deliberately turned away for any reason. If at first I sometimes found a reception that was less than enthusiastic, (although the error was probably unavoidable and soon corrected) ,I had only myself to blame, .

My mistake was to show up in the afternoon, usually around 2. Jim never got out of bed until evening: this could mean any time between 4 and 8, or even 10, at night. Jim never took offense. I knocked. The door to their apartment opened; Jim would appear in the doorframe, comatose, half-naked. He knew that it was me without opening his eyes. Only 3 people ever came to this door: Anne-Marie, myself and the landlord.

"Oh...mmn...Hello." he would mutter on his way back to bed.

All attempts to rouse him were useless. Motivated by a combination

of proselytizing concern , (and, who knows , some innate sadism ?)

, I once turned up the volume of Mahler's 2nd Symphony, (the "Totenfeuer"), on the stereo and kept it there for 20 minutes. It had not the slightest effect on him. After that experiment I never showed up before 5. Anne-Marie generally returned from work between 6 and 7.

Did I come back for Anne-Marie, with whom I was a little bit in Love; or was it because Jim's state of self-contented paralysis afforded a pleasant contrast to my life of frenetic and often meaningless activity? I do not know to this day. Casting a surreal aura akin to that in Kokoscha's painting of himself in bed with Alma Maria Schindler-Mahler, their apartment after nightfall presented a domestic tableau both tranquil and terrifying.

Jim would sit on the bed, his back against the wall. Their thumbs caught halfway in the act of twiddling and paralyzed in mid-air, his hands rested idly on his lap. His facial expression was unlike anything I had, or ever hope to see again : a curious mixture of Asian mysticism, fathomless despair, the sense of the ridiculous, and, for good measure, a leaven of Anglo-Saxon guilt for

encouraging his bones to petrify.

I can bear witness to the fact that Jim's one occupation, when he did do anything , was to read the newspapers. Once each day he descended the 3 floors to street level and walked to a kiosk 4 blocks away on the Boulevard St. Michel. He bought several newspapers and magazines in both English and, (for Anne-Marie and educational purposes) in French, and, (unless he chose to step into a cafe for an hour or so, which happened infrequently) returned to the apartment immediately.

Once back inside he did not re-emerge. Whenever Jim and Anne-Marie did feel the need for a change of scene, they would tour the bars of the Latin Quarter. This carried its implicit dangers: Jim could get drunk, and, when he did, he sometimes found himself revealing to the world that in spite of his idyllic situation he really was very unhappy.

I was intrigued, no, more, fascinated by their relationship, drawn, in spite of myself, to their stable anchor in the chaos of my storm-tossed existence. Spiritual benefit was to be gleaned even from the spectacle of Jim's terrifying inertia. Persons frozen in all their responses can make good audiences, the pure passive receptors that people the dreams (as

witness the film 'Dinner with Andre') of many an artist. I could talk with Jim for hours about my life, my work, my intimate personal problems, being interrupted just once in awhile by a few friendly coaxings such as "What happened next?", or, "I know what you mean. I went through something similar back in 1962 ". Afterwards I would come away with a bittersweet sensation of rejuvenation at the source.

Nor did I ever know just how much he was absorbing of my interminable and rambling monologues. It was a drug, a form of self-deception: my need grew with its gratification. Glancing up at him from time to time I had the impression that he knew everything I had to say before my saying it, that within the profound depths of his judicious silence there lay hidden a superior wisdom, a knowing disdain for all the banal trivia that filled my days with anger, passion and anguish.

And Anne-Marie, her also I needed. I was in love with her: she was the only woman in my life. Never had I seen such an example of selfless feminine dedication to a man, such self-satisfaction, such complete contentment through being the eternal servant to another who, for all her assiduous loving care, gave never anything in return, not even a word of thanks. If anything could cure Jim, it would be those blankets of tenderness that she draped in many pleated folds around his wounded

soul. Her ambitions were reduced to a single goal: to be with Jim, every day, every hour, for the rest of her life.

She never felt right in leaving him alone: there might always arise the need to do something for him that he was unable to do for himself, or else to comfort him in his misery. To pass away the empty hours she painted flower patterns on box-lids, read, or listened to music. When I was there she conversed. This was good for Jim too, because it gave him the confidence to open up. When he did so his opinions demonstrated intelligence and careful consideration. With nothing else to occupy him, he passed at least some part of his vacant days in thinking.

It did not take me long to recognize that I had to give up all hope of weaning Anne-Marie away from Jim and into my life, room, or bed. An "Anne-Marie" is as unable to function without a "Jim", as the existence of a "Jim" necessitates an "Anne-Marie". Only someone exactly like him could persuade her to leave him. It would drive me to the asylum - any asylum will do - to live like Jim for even one day.

It was a few days after Christmas, 1969. Anne-Marie and Jim had spent the holiday evening in their usual way, that is, sitting at home. A few days later the excitement of the season having penetrated even to these remote fastnesses, they went out for a night on the town. Anne-

Marie had told me they would be out late, but invited me, if I were up to it, to come around after 2 A.M.

She opened the door for me when I showed up.

"Come on in."

She was always glad to see me, more so tonight than ever. I stepped inside and we moved to the bedroom. There was Jim, lying unconscious on the bed, fully dressed, the slipcover tangled up with his arms and legs. His opened mouth gave him an agonized look, while his left hand was sticking out awkwardly into the air like a famine victim's paralyzed limb.

"Sit down and talk to me." Her face was both embarrassed and radiant. When I was seated she went on:

"He's been drinking. I've had more than was good for me, too."

I regarded, with a sort of perplexed horror, the unconventional posture into which her invalid had worked himself, then turned back to her, anxious for more details:

"He wasn't watching himself. ", she explained, "He collapsed over the bar. The bartender helped me get him into a taxi."

We sat down and talked in whispers; that is to say, I spoke in a whisper, while she replied in her normal tone of voice which never rose above a frail rasp. The moment had come, I told myself, for delivering a sermon I'd been saving for just such an occasion. I began by dwelling on the negative psychological effects to most human beings of letting the days accumulate without having anything to show for them. As I pointed out to her:

"It's terribly demoralizing, doing nothing." She didn't agree:

"Don't we all do nothing? Aren't all our lives useless?"

What was self-evident to me did not appear so to her. Her reaction was one of bewilderment:

"I don't know what you mean...he reads .. he thinks... that's doing something, isn't it?"

I decided to drop this line of argument and start over again:

"It's my opinion", I began boldly, "that you've been neglecting the most important function of a woman with respect to her man. The Creator of all things made Woman to put tacks under Man's behind.

That's the only way anything has even been accomplished in this world."

She laughed; I went on:

" You've been letting him wallow in instinctual sloth, the natural state of the masculine animal unless women goad them out of it." Proud of this theory of the reciprocal obligations of women and men, developed on the spur of the moment, I continued the momentum:

"I want to give you a box of thumbtacks for a Christmas present. You can put them in the bed when you get up to leave in the morning."

We were startled by a groaned sound. Jim had rolled over and was lying face upwards, like the Paleolithic man frozen in Alpine snows. He was grinning from ear to ear: partly from the conversation which he could hear through the mists engulfing his consciousness, and partly from what registered on his face as some newly surfaced astonishingly silly reflection.

" If you can't find a job for him, give him some make-work. Anne-Marie, starting tomorrow, I want you to lock him out. Don't let him back until he's made a translation of the first two pages of *Le Monde*."

Klough ! Flump! Jim had rolled over and fallen off the bed. Now he lay flat on his belly, his face pressed downwards on the floor. I commented:

"He's really got it bad."

"He finished over a litre of wine by himself.", she confessed, "Then he began drinking beer."

We stood over Jim at opposite ends, observing him curiously. He was moaning quietly. Then he began throwing up. The vomit covered the floor in a thin layer. Too exhausted even to sit up, he rolled his face back and forth in the slime. Ann-Marie ran into the bathroom and came back with a piece of stiff cardboard which she shoved between his face and the floor.

I suggested that we should sit him up. There was not one active muscle in his body; it was all dead weight. Finally, by leaning his head far forward, we managed to balance him to a sitting position. Anne-Marie stood behind him, supporting his back with her legs and free left arm. With her right hand she propped the cardboard in front of his mouth, but his regurgitation had stopped for the moment. When she

stepped aside, he immediately collapsed backwards onto the floor again, laying the back of his head in the vomit.

Then his legs went out of control and, gripped by seizures, began thrashing about the floor. I had to jump quickly to the other side of the room to keep my ankles away from the cutting edges of his heels. Expressive as ever, his face was contracted under the force of some hideous speculation. Then he was weeping, uttering incredible howls, like a slave in bondage, the cries of someone heaving a crushing burden of despair up from the depths. That there were people walking around in the light of day with so much torture bottled up inside of them, without ever giving the least indication of it beyond their pathological passivity, had been foreign to all my experience.

His cries soon diminished, the tension faded from his body, and the taut lines that had temporarily twisted and deformed his face were supplanted by that benign, sapless, supercilious expression habitual to it. The crisis had passed. Jim had come back from hell and returned to being a mummy.

We let him lie there for another five minutes, then placed him back on the bed. Anne-Marie lifted him with an amazing strength that belied her frailty. We removed his shoes and loosened his belt. In a few

minutes he had crawled about into a fetal position, his feet pulled up underneath him, his hands clutching his thighs. I thought that it was perhaps time for me to leave.

"Stay", Anne-Marie cajoled, "Listen to some music."

I stayed on a little longer. It no longer seemed appropriate to give her advice. We made idle conversation for another hour, until one could sense the winter dawn coming up over the Montagne St. Geneviève.

Before I left, following the ritual that had developed between us, we exchanged kisses.

"I could drag you off now", I said.

"Well", she stalled, "I'd better stay here with Jim. He might need me."

As I walked out of the door, Anne-Marie was back on the bed, leaning over Jim, tenderly hugging him, kissing him, stroking his hair.

5. Dublin, Ireland, 1970

A. The Poets Circle

At 4:30 in the afternoon Gleason's pub, near St. Stephen's Green and off Grafton Street was all but deserted. The presence of an old, dour faced street musician should not be overlooked. He sat in his preferred nook, his battered violin case staved away in a corner and pint of Guinness in front of him. On weekdays during the lunch hour he filled the halls of Grafton Street with an infernal caterwauling. Everything about him was worn; from the folds in his face, to the lining in his gut, to the contours of his mind; for he was old, and senile and drunk. As he has little bearing on this narrative, I will say no more about him.

The two publicans were: publicans; I will say very little about them. But the group huddled in a corner of the room, to the left of the bar as one entered from the street were - POETS! One is therefore obliged to say a great deal about them. If one doesn't tell all that there is to tell concerning them, they will do it for themselves. It is just as well that one should get the drop on them.

Their reunion this November afternoon was special in one respect, though otherwise differing little from the daily gathering which began

soon after lunchtime and continued, with interruptions, until closing. On this day, in addition to scaling the heights of poetry on a scaffolding of beer barrels, this select coterie were also feting the return of Brendan Casey after a month of roving through Denmark, whither he had repaired to gratify a passion for Kierkegaard.

All of Brendan's 32 massive years were seated behind his third pint of stout. The very image of exuberant, if somewhat dissipated, health, Brendan's mood vacillated between King Lear and Henry VIII. From time to time he curled his lips like a professional actor; a dark furrow creased his brow and he became Raskolnikov, or Stavrogin, or Captain Ahab. When he gripped your hand it was with the firm grasp of the stone guest from Don Giovanni.

" But I'm sure you all want to hear about those Danish birds!" he roared in the bass register:

" Well; they've got long cunts and short arses - har, har, har!!!"

This information was not received as being in the least way exceptional. Aleister McDonnell made bold to ask him if this was why he had returned to Ireland.

" Not a chance!", he growled, encompassing his audience by turning his head from side to side. He sniffed at his glass of stout, seemed to find it acceptable, and took a draught:

" In Hibernia-land, the arse is so god-damn big, the cunt gets swallowed up inside the bloody thing- Har, har, har!" Brendan Casey was in the habit of saving you the trouble of laughing at his jokes by doing it for you.

Peggy McGuire, a chubby girl with thick spectacles and a way of making people feel as if what they were saying wasn't worth listening to, commented:

" Well; that finishes the subject of Denmark, I guess." She stood up to go to the bar for another vodka and orange juice.

" Oh; haven't you heard?" Aleister remarked, in a tone of subtle insinuation, " It appears that Riccardo DeGiorgio's exhibition isn't going too well."

If he had expected to witness Brendan bursting into flames, he was doomed for disappointment. Tapping his beer stein reflectively, Brendan merely replied:

" Oh. I didn't know he was in Dublin; I met him in England last month and he said he might be coming over here."

In addition to those of Aleister and Peggy, the muffled gasps around the table came from a young lady of rural antecedents named Siobhan Lacey; Mike Mulligan, a bearded romantic poet lost in the folds of his blue overcoat; and Padraic Parsons, poet and scholar in his 50s. Gazing into the depths of his pint of stout, Padraic appeared to be contemplating the play of sunlight on the bodies of the golden maidens of the Rhine.

Daylight was fast fading. One of the bartenders switched on the back lights. This gave little relief to the dreariness of the lifeless pub, with its large paint-covered ogive windows, its small cramped interior and mean floor covered only by a thin torn layer of black linoleum. If one were to say that Gleason's sometimes gave one the impression that the whole world had come to a dead stop, he would not be far wrong. There were moments here when time itself seemed to halt, like a jeep that has gotten its tires stuck in a mudslide. The sensation could be agreeable. One might hang out at Gleason's, chat for an hour or two, then leave carrying away a feeling that there had been neither advancement nor regression in the world's awesome dynamo.

At a distance of less than a yard the buzz of conversation at this table completely faded away. Even at the heart of the group one couldn't help feeling that, despite the overbearing seriousness of those who were saying it, that just nothing was being said.

Aleister was the first to recover:

" There's something odd about that, Brendan, you know. To hear the fellow talk, Riccardo has a very different impression of what went on between the two of you."

" HMM? WHAT..! So what...I mean, how so?" Brendan appeared genuinely surprised. Siobhan leaned forward to catch every syllable of the conversation as Aleister went on, mercilessly:

" According to Riccardo, you invited him over here. He claims that you promised him an exhibition."

Casey bobbed his head from side to side in ever widening arcs. Coming abruptly to a full stop he faced Aleister squarely. On his lips twitched a dolphin-size smile. With his right hand he grasped him firmly on the shoulder.

" Aleister, my lad! Do you believe everything people tell you? Let me assure you, old boy, the sky isn't going to fall down. Har, har, har! No

sir, that sky will be up there for a long time to come!" As if to indicate that the subject was no longer worthy of discussion he quickly turned away.

But the lean, pinch-faced, and allegedly consumptive Aleister would not be robbed of his prey:

"...Yes.. But something tells me you aren't too welcome in DeGiorgio's company."

"Well then!" Casey stormed, banging the table with his fist and shouting in an exaggerated manner: " Let him come in here! I'll be waiting for him! Look, man. I'm not afraid of some wog fairy!.. Why; are you?"

Padraic Parsons, either having lost sight of the golden maidens or merely satisfied himself for the moment that they wouldn't go running away, lifted his shaggy head and beard. Glaring incredulously over the rims of his heavy spectacles through blood-shot eyes, he addressed both of them:

" Why bring it all up again? Why not just forget about it? Why not let sleeping dogs lie!?"

Although Aleister had great respect for Padraic he had no intention of giving up:

" That's all right with me Padraic; yet Brendan claims to be unaware even of the fact of Riccardo's being in Ireland, while the rest of the world is insisting that Brendan brought him over here! I'm merely trying to get my stories straight, that's all."

" I did not bring this DeGiorgio bugger over here!

That's a lie! " This time he banged both fists on the table, and even stomped his feet.

" Yes; but - " Aleister started to return to the attack; but Padraic, who cherished peace at any cost, and who intended to show that, despite his university affiliation, he had no fear of dirty words, yelled:

" Oh, shut up, you asshole!!" Upon which Aleister withdrew, for the time being at least. Padraic Parsons returned to his contemplation of the Lorelei. In the meantime Peggy McGuire had returned from the bar. She sat quietly, idly tapping her glass of vodka. She seemed to think that all these shenanigans, perhaps life itself, were terribly dull, and said as much:

"Well, none of this is very interesting, I think."

" Hell!", Brendan blustered, " It's a frigging bore, if you want to know! Now look here: I've just come back from Denmark, laden with wild Scandinavian lore; and here we are again, in dirty old Dublin, where everybody wants to know how often his next-door neighbor brushes his teeth! If no-one can suggest a better topic of conversation, I damn well am going to leave!"

To show his displeasure, Brendan drained off half a pint of Guinness at a single gulp.

During this heated in-fighting Mike Mulligan, normally very talkative, had not said a word. Yielding to spontaneous impulse he lifted up his glass of stout and swore:

" I say we should all quaff a pint of Guinness, to honor the filthy name of Riccardo deGiorgio, that fabulous sodomite!"

Some trembling image which had hung suspended less than a foot in front of Parsons' dreamy eyes, audibly cracked. He was seriously annoyed:

" Look, you shit!" he whined, "Lay off, will you?" Taking the silence as his cue, he went on:

" You're just a mother-fucker, Mike! And a phoney! That's right! That's all you are! A mother-fucker and a phoney!"

After this powerful interjection, Padraic Parsons withdrew completely from the conversation, so much so that it was generally assumed that he had fallen asleep.

" Well, Mike!" Brendan turned on him the full force of his rude and comic mien:

" Have you, in my absence, won any new favors of the frigid bard?"

" Ay!" Mike wailed, tottering unsteadily, " But the whore of the muse, she hath a frizzly cunt! But I say to you, that we should both quaff a beaker of vintage stout, so that we may drink to the name of the greatest pre-Raphaelite of them all, Riccardo deGiorgio, the fabulous sodomite."

" SO!! Mike" Brendan replied irritably, rubbing the lapels of his jacket " I see you're just as obnoxious as you've ever been."

" That I am, that I am...", the rest being lost as Mike babbled anew in his cups.

" Well, I'll drink to him, if that will make you happy. I've nothing against the good man."

Carried away by the tremendous drama of the moment Brendan Casey lifted his weight fully erect to toast to the much maligned Riccardo deGiorgio. A tiny amount of stout still sloshing about the bottom of his glass was hoisted at the end of a pike-stiff arm as he boomed:

" To Signore Riccardo deGiorgio! An able man if there ever was one, who could, if so required, paint the amorous entanglements of Socrates with Alcibiades, and who, for all we know, has already done so on the soft epidermis of a whore's arse!"

This masterful speech received the applause it justly deserved. Brendan turned a face beaming with appreciation upon his elite audience, which now gave him its undivided attention,

" And I drink to the unholy name of Riccardo deGiorgio, the man chosen by Jesus, Joseph and Mary, to educate the backward Celtic homeland in the sins of the Holy Ghost!"

To judge from the applause this also went over quite well. Mike Mulligan stood up and started walking unsteadily towards the door.

"Where're you going, Mike?" Peggy called after him

"I'll be back in a moment; I'm only going out to bum a few quid."

Brendan took this opportunity to excuse himself and to make a trip to the bogs. The silence that descended over the collective could be heard as far away as West Meath. Peggy McGuire yawned. Her whole body seemed to have been fashioned for sitting. Were her vodka not being maintained erect through inertia, it would probably have spilled into her lap. At last, chewing each word like a poppy seed before spitting it out, she said:

"I've just finished a poem."

Siobhan McKenna nodded with appropriate solemnity. She was the youngest among them, preferred speaking Irish to English, and claimed, probably truthfully, that she was descended from a long line of Irish minstrels. Her hair was long, black and straight, her skin sallow. Her lips were therefore in contrast quite ruby red. She rarely addressed any subject directly, and when she wasn't silent she tended to hysteria. She turned to Peggy:

"Is this another poem from your 'period of remorse'?"

"No", Peggy responded in her throaty and permanently bored alto, "I'm entering a new phase. I'd read it to you but I forgot to bring it with me. It's a short poem, only 8 lines."

Aleister McDonnell was led to remark that his thousand-line epic had just reached line 778 as of the night before. On the assumption that everyone was anxious to hear it, line 778 was immediately recited with passion and excellent diction:

" Her tits awailing, the overdose killed her!!"

Which came as a shock to nobody, as all present realized that Aleister had been on a prolonged "beat-poetry" trip ever since he'd spent three months in London hanging out with the avant-garde.

"Well", Peggy droned, "I don't write that kind of poetry. I think it's rubbish."

Aleister laughed. Padraic Parsons suddenly went on the offensive:

" You've got no right to say that!", he snorted, " You write shit yourself, you know! Everything I've ever seen of yours is shit! Just shit!"

From Peggy's expression one would think the roof had caved in:

" Yes...well, I...Look, Padraic, let's discuss it.. some other time, when ... when you've had a few less drinks.. Is... is that all right?"

" Oh! I've got nothing against your poetry, Peggy! I just wanted you to see what it feels like to be told by someone you respect that your work is shit! That's all I was doing!"

" Well, I'm sorry", she went on monotonously, " but I think that poetry like that is rubbish. Aleister might be very gifted in that vein, but I don't believe there's anything in it of value for the history of poetry."

" So then!" Parsons raged, " What do you like? What do you think is valuable? The Charge of the Light Brigade? Jabberwocky? Daffodils? What's the matter with words like "shit" and "cunt"? They're perfectly good English words. They also, as it happens, perfectly express our age: The Age Of Cunt. You certainly must be aware, Peggy, of the fact that we live in the Age Of Cunt?" Parsons glowered at her with hatred.

Peggy blushed and reached nervously for her drink:

" I don't care... I don't like those words, and I don't use them. My favorite poet is Marvell, and he doesn't use words like that. So I don't see why I should have to."

" Someone can use the word, 'shit' in his poetry and be a bad poet, while someone else can refrain from using the word 'shit' and be a very good poet", Aleister explained for the benefit of all, " but I still think that my line 778, " Her tits awailing, the overdose killed her!!" is a good line, although I'm not sure of where I should place the comma."

Softly Siobhan sang the lines of an old ballad from Connemara. She had a quiet, lovely voice.

Clearly proud of what he had done there Brendan returned from the bogs, resuming his place at the table to the right of Aleister. Waving his right hand like a grandee and crooking his prehensile forefinger he bellowed: " As the guest of honor I claim the right to buy drinks all around. What'll it be? Guinness for me. "

" Guinness!"

" A paddy!"

" Guinness!"

" I think I'll have another vodka."

Brendan looked around: " Where's Mike?"

" He went out to look for some money." Peggy explained. Brendan sat down again and leaned his head against the wall:

" Well, I guess I can't buy him a drink then", he sighed, satisfied with having done his duty.

B. Peter Maloney

Mike Mulligan was indeed out in the street looking for money. In his periodic bouts of depression he sought prolonged refuge under a blanket of drunkenness. That Mike was not alcoholic by nature was clear from the great efforts he had to make to push himself into drinking, and by the enormous toll it took on him. Once initiated, these binges persisted until he had antagonized every last friend and made himself an object of universal censure.

So that on this 5:00 in the afternoon of a Dublin November, with the darkness falling rapidly and, as ever, a touch of rain in the air, the pedestrians on Grafton Street were astonished to behold an otherwise respectable and intelligent young man in his late twenties tottering down the street in a dangerous state of intoxication and demanding money from every passing stranger for the lost cause of Irish poetry. His face was covered with shaggy tufts of beard sprouting randomly like

weeds, his blue overcoat thrown open to show the world that his clothing, though rumpled and dirty, was properly middle-class.

He was well known to many of the people he touched up; or they knew his father, a lawyer much respected around Dublin. Or they recalled that Mike Mulligan, when sober, was considered, by some at any rate, to be a promising young man, with literary gifts and an aptitude for scholarship, who had done well in his first year at Trinity. His father would certainly have no trouble getting him a good position in his own firm, or with Radio Eirann, since he was so literary-minded.

Mike continued on down the street. When he tired of the cause of Irish poetry, he switched to singing scraps of Irish ballads, of which he knew many, holding his cap out into the drizzle and whining like a true beggar. People sadly shook their heads, sometimes gave him a few coins. The money mattered little, the satisfaction was in the doing of it.

Still following his luck, Mike reached the foot of Grafton Street. There he turned right into Dame Street. Suddenly he felt a tight grip on his shoulder. Turning around he confronted Peter Maloney, manager of the Open Studio, heading home after a hard day's work.

" Snap out of it, Mike! Stop acting like a baby! Come with me; I'm getting you some strong coffee."

Maloney's manner was infested with self-righteous urgency. Protesting for the sake of form Mike allowed himself to be led. To a casual on-looker it might have appeared that Mike was being dragged into the Golden Spoon by his coat collar. Inside the restaurant Peter pushed him into a seat. He sat himself down opposite him, and glared as he forced Mike to bolt down two cups of black coffee. Then he said:

" What is it this time, Mike?"

" Peter", Mike whined, "I just don't know where to begin."

" Where're you coming from?"

" I was sitting in Gleason's, and.."

" Gleason's! " Pete Maloney, the Eternal Father, gasped,
"You shouldn't go into Gleason's! That's a bad crowd...."

" Yes; well, I was in Gleason's, and Brendan Casey was there, and.."

" Brendan Casey! " Peter nearly fell out of his seat, " I didn't think he would have the nerve to show his face in Dublin after what he's done! Do you realize he's almost ruined the Open Studio?"

" Yes, Peter. Well, Brendan Casey is sitting in there; or was when I left them... And he was insulting Riccardo. And he was insulting me... I'm telling you, he was insulting me!

" Riccardo! What did he say about him?"

"... insulting me... he called me obnoxious , and..."

" Good, good. But what did he say about Riccardo?"

" Riccardo? ..oh yes... he didn't say anything, Peter... No, in fact he did say something... No, I'm wrong... he called him a 'wog fairy'.. which, between you and me, is an outrage....and..."

" Listen, Mike! Is Brendan still there? Let's go back there as soon as you've finished up."

" Sure, Peter,... And you'll buy me a drink, too, won't you?"

Peter Maloney gritted his teeth as if he'd swallowed a bad tasting ball of phlegm:

" All right... But just one! That's all I'm getting you!"

" Fair enough, Peter." In a moment they were back out onto the street. Peter looked around, affecting not to know which direction to turn to get to Gleason's. Mike grabbed him by the arm and raced with him through the crowds up Grafton Street.

When they arrived at the open doors of Gleason's, Maloney wagged a finger in Mike's face:

" Remember! Only one. I'm not buying you any more than one!" Mike's face glowed like a beacon. He slapped Peter on the back:

" You're good, Peter! Honestly, you're the greatest person I know! "

They stepped inside. Gleason's now held about 30 customers. It would soon be filled to capacity. Peter Maloney spotted Brendan Casey instantly. He was sitting in the same place where Mike had left him, surrounded by the admiring crowd of poets. Peter strode impetuously across the room. Hovering directly over him he shook his fist, a bit self-consciously, in Brendan's face:

" You bastard!" he swore, "You utter bastard!"

It was all Brendan could do to keep from falling through the floor. If there was one thing he dreaded more than anything else in the world, it was being called to account for anything he did. Life could be so nice,

so cozy... if only one wasn't being obliged to justify one's behavior to the whole world on all occasions...

But, when one came down to it, it was really very hard to make Brendan Casey lose his cool:

" Why? Why, Peter? " he laughed, "Come on, man. It's terribly rude of you to be calling me names in front of all these people!"

Maloney blushed: maybe Brendan was right.

" All right, Brendan...I'm sorry. But we've got to talk! Now! Privately."

" Look, Pete!" Brendan laughed again, nervously, "Some of my friends might get the impression that I'm your enemy. I've got nothing against you. I've got nothing against any man! If there's something you want to discuss with me alone, I've no objections." He stood up and faced his audience:

" I want everyone here to take note! Peter Maloney has just called me an utter bastard, in response to which I accede immediately to his request to talk things over in private. Why, I've never seen a better example of turning the other cheek!"

Peter was becoming increasingly impatient. He smacked his forehead with the heel of his left hand.

" Come on!.... Come on!.."

" At least, Pete", Brendan requested, " You don't mind if I take a glass with me? You'll give me that consideration, I trust?"

Brendan went to the bar, ordered another glass of ale and went with Peter to a shaded corner at the back of the pub.

Peter began scolding him even before they were fully seated: "What do you mean?", his hoarse whisper had become a rasp,

" inviting Riccardo over to Ireland without clearing it with us ? His show is ruining the Open Studio!"

" What?!...Well, now look here, Peter! Don't start throwing out wild accusations at me! No sir, indeed: I refuse to answer any more wild accusations." He smirked insolently as if he were being made fun of.

" No! You look here, Brendan! DON'T get excited!" Peter begged, at the same time waving his arms. He lowered his voice: "No one is accusing you of anything. Did you, or did you not, invite Riccardo deGiorgio to come to Dublin?"

" Why...Why; yes I did. I told him he would like it here. Is there anything wrong with that?"

" Did you promise him an exhibition at the Open Studio? Did you call him back to urge him to fly his canvases over here for that exhibition?"

"Well, Peter." Tapping his glass, Brendan stared aimlessly at the floor. It would have to come out.

" What I said to him was that, since I'm on the board of directors of the Open Studio, I could probably get him a show."

" Did you advise him to ship his paintings over before the first of the month?"

" Why... yes...I did. But I didn't imagine he would see any connection between both suggestions."

" WHAT??!"

" I'm simply telling you the truth, Peter. At the time I expected to be in Dublin through to the end of the year. He said he wanted to come over in a few weeks, and I told him if he shipped his canvases to Dublin right away, I would go to Shannon Airport to pick them up. He also said

something about framing, so I said I could arrange that, too. He seemed so terribly upset, I just kept saying "Yes" to everything. That's the best way of dealing with people who are angry and upset, don't you agree, Peter?... But right after our conversation, I was given this chance to go to Denmark, so I went. I tried to call him before I left but his phone was disconnected. Why, Peter, wouldn't you have done the same thing?"

Maloney scowled darkly:

" Well, Brendan; you've really made a mess of it this time."

" Why; what happened? I don't understand."

" Because of you, Brendan, we had to give Riccardo his damn show. Do you know what they can do to an Art Gallery in Dublin?" Peter exploded, " That bastard has plastered the walls of the Open Studio from one end to the other, with nothing but fucking! Why, on one of his bloody canvases he has the Pope screwing an animal! A bear! Maloney took out a newspaper out of his briefcase and unfolded it on the table:

" Read what the Irish Press has to say about us!"

Succumbing to the gloom which never lay far from hand, Brendan deflated like a pricked balloon. The article, which he rapidly skimmed, had this to say:

THE IRISH PRESS,

November 5, 1969:

The Irish Nation can no longer be expected to tolerate the criminal outrage to its conscience shamelessly displayed on the walls of the Open Studio. One reads in the newspapers every day of some errant lad who, contemptuous of the education given to him by the Christian Brothers, goes to London, Mother of every vice and sin, and falls into evil ways. That his elders were not strong enough to steel him from the paths of error is to their lasting shame. But The Nation as a whole must not allow England to spew its sewage of corruption over the fair Isle of the Saints.

Yet this is what the Open Studio is doing by permitting Mr. Riccardo deGiorgio, an Italian of known scandalous morals, and it appears, the social sensation of Kensington, to flaunt his filth across its walls. From the moment I walked into that gallery I could only cry "Satan! Get thee behind me!" At the Open Studio the other night your humble critic beheld such foul slime, such debased portraitures, such bestial fabrications that he refrains from shocking the decency of his readers by trying to describe it.

We, the IRISH PEOPLE, have the right to demand that our government protect the innocent minds of our children from such perverted filth "

"So, Pete ", Brendan chuckled, " You and I know that the Irish Press is some kind of sick joke."

" Brendan; you and I don't count! Look: even *I* think Riccardo's stuff is revolting, but I'm broad-minded enough to keep my opinions to myself. Do you realize that ever since this vile show of his opened last week, we've been submerged with mail calling us everything from 'filth peddlers' to", he choked,

" 'unbelieving Jews'!"

Brendan emitted a series of forced horse-laughs.

" Our windows have been broken!"

Peter rapped on the table. He was really angry,

" Yesterday somebody tried to throw a bucket of mud on the walls. We were able to get him out of the building, but our reputation!", his face was poker-hot and his body trembled, our reputation ! in Dublin isn't worth a penny! It'll take years for us to gain back what that 'pansy'

has ruined in a week. And Brendan: if you think that the Irish Press is a "sick joke", you should see what the Catholic Standard says about us!"

Brendan sudden pallor reflected the glimmering of the Celtic Twilight.

" The ...Irish Times didn't deal too kindly with us either. nor did the Independent. But you haven't heard the worst of it, yet. Some... idiot... got onto the Bishop of Cork, and from the look of it, we're to be damned from the pulpit this coming Sunday!"

" Ahhhhhh! " Brendan groaned, truly worried at last, " But look, man what do I have to do with all this? Where do I come in?"

" You? " Peter screamed at him, " Why - why - why- ...it's all you're fault! First of all, you brought him over here. Then you placed us in such a position that we were literally forced to give him a show. Why!" Peter shouted, momentarily losing control, "I could knock your teeth down your throat!"

Brendan probably felt some fear. Yet, when all was said and done, it really was very hard to make him lose his cool.

" Look, man:", his laugh could be taken for an apology,

" Suppose I said I was sorry? I'm really sorry, you know. Yes, I'm very sorry about the whole thing. Yes...yes...Uh Huh." As if to invest more authenticity into his words, he accompanied them with a vigorous bobbing of the head.

"But.... but what do you intend to do about it?" Peter growled.

" Do about it?" Brendan yelled, peering about wildly like a trapped animal, " What can I do about it? It's not my problem!!"

Peter continued to steam. However, he had not anticipated any constructive proposals coming from Brendan.

" Well... Riccardo's exhibition has got to go."

" When, Peter? Look: don't you go hurting his feelings again!"

" He's got to go, and the sooner the better... We're throwing his work out tomorrow morning."

"Well.....so...that settles it, doesn't it?"

"WHAT?"

" If he's got to go, get rid of him. That will solve all your problems, won't it?"

"But.... you brought him here!!"

"Look, look, look!! No,no!! Brendan shook his head with impatience " I'm really tired of hearing about it. I'm just not your man; all right? What do you think I can do about it anyway?"

Peter had calmed down. He had accepted the inevitable. He explained the situation to him as he would to a child:

" I want you to break the news to Bill Devlin. You're a friend of his."

" I don't understand. What's Bill got to do with deGiorgio?"

" When Riccardo came to Ireland, *at your invitation*, he didn't have anywhere to stay. Bill and Beatrice Devlin gave him a roof over his head for two weeks. Then Bill pressured us into giving Riccardo a show; he also stayed up two nights framing his canvases. How the hell could you take it upon yourself to tell Riccardo that we would frame his canvases, when no gallery...!" Peter Maloney realized he was getting angry again and stopped himself. Lowering his tone of voice he went on:

" Bill's going to be hopping mad when he learns that we've taken Riccardo's shit off the walls. I need you to smooth things over."

Brendan rocked slowly back and forth. Sweating and breathing heavily, he lowered his head into his hands. With so much cosmic anguish in evidence, even Peter Maloney had to relax his severity. In a few moments, Brendan leaned back in his chair and sighed:

"It's a deal. Bill and Beatrice are expecting me at their place tonight for a home-coming party. I'll tell him then."

"You're serious now?"

"I'll arrange everything. Don't you worry about a thing!"

"I'm depending on you, Brendan." Peter rose from the table and collected his coat, "I've got to go now. This place depresses me."

"Goodbye, Peter! Don't you worry about a thing! I'm your man! You know you can always depend on me!"

6. Paris, 1971

Transience

I.

Judy Waldmeyer was the product of a 50's childhood passed in an obscure small town located in the industrial mid-West: Slateville, Ohio. Its innocuous name suited its character, simply described if not entirely nondescript. Her family was the economic backbone of the town: the greater part of Slateville's population found employment in her father's steel plant. Today it is more than likely that most of its jobs were scattered about the Third World in the 80's and 90's, reducing it to a barren shadow of its former prosperity.

From her birth Judy inherited four generations of family stability. Neither her childhood, nor her passage through elementary school or high school provided incidents notable enough to be worth recording. A conventional girl from a conservative background, her upbringing generated no copy for the public record beyond the customary notices of graduation ceremonies, coming out parties, proms and the like, as one would expect for the daughter of the town's most prominent citizen. Her father, Cyrus B. Waldmeyer III, a millionaire many times over at a time

when a million dollars meant something, had occupied various small posts in the state government over the decades. His political aspirations never went beyond keeping Waldmeyer Steel on a sound financial basis and living well. In addition to Judy there were two older brothers and a younger sister. They do not figure in this account.

She did have exceptional talent in graphic arts. It was with the intent to further this that in the summer of 1970, between her sophomore and junior years at Wellesley College, her family acceded to a request to enroll her in an international summer arts institute in Norway. Unless one counts the whirlwind 3-day tour of Italian art galleries the family had signed onto when she was 8, Judy had had no previous experience of living outside of the country.

The institute was located on the grounds of a school along the rugged Norwegian coast, a 2-hour bus ride from Oslo. She arrived there in late June, and regretted almost immediately that she had come. There was an incident on the very first day, when she learned that she was expected to share a room with a dorm mate. By making a big enough fuss she did get her own room, but everything seemed to go downhill after that. As it turned out, this was the only battle she would win, and one of the very few that she bothered to wage. The postures which she

subsequently assumed, of unsociability and non-cooperation, were but a tribute to her refusal to engage constructively with the school in any manner.

It wasn't a matter of fitting in, or of belonging. The student body was all in roughly the same age group, everybody spoke some English; instruction was also entirely in English. She was one of a group of more than a dozen Americans enrolled there that year. The summer wasn't complicated by personal attachments, yet there were also no real friendships. A retiring, somewhat shy disposition had never hindered her from acquiring friends in the past. All social events at the school were open to her; she rarely went to them. These things were symptoms of an internal condition, some instinctive resistance to the external world that had its roots back home and came to fruition on her first trip abroad. Thereafter she became increasing introspective and withdrawn. By the end of the summer she'd turned into a veritable recluse.

Judy Waldmeyer was short, frail, and very young. Neither muscular nor strong, she took to sports and enjoyed participation in vigorous outdoor activities. On free days she disappeared from the grounds to take long solitary hikes of from 5 to 10 miles along the coastal roads. Her hair was jet black and fell about her neck in a way

that contributed an aura of recklessness to her physical appearance. Her pallor was anemic, since she didn't eat enough and then more from necessity than for enjoyment. Her general comportment was consistent with a diagnosis of depression.

That she was immature goes without saying: it did not distinguish her noticeably from the world around her. She knew how to appear cute, how to use lipstick, hair sprays, facial creams and eye-shadow. She went in for flashy, even gaudy clothing. Many of the young men did find her attractive; apparently dating had little appeal for her. A solitary soul - not exactly a contemplative, since one could detect no evidence of much inner experience in her outward conduct, hardly anything in fact one might call an inner life. What others around her received from her was the impression of a shallow mentality, almost a plastic shell. In this respect as well she scarcely differed from the norms of her social milieu.

By mid-June most of her social relations had become overshadowed by fear, resentment and rejection. A deepening lethargy slowly penetrated all activities, both inside and outside the classroom. The periods she spent alone in her room steadily increased, with much time spent in fretting over small matters such as what combination of clothes to wear, or which art supplies to bring to class. Writing a simple

letter home could take hours. Sometimes she stayed in her room simply because of the people she wanted to avoid seeing, many of them unaware of her sudden aversion to them.

It was inevitable that a sense of being mistreated, of being an object of suspicion, even of harassment or persecution, should develop over time. With little enough to justify it she concluded that her work was superior to that of her class-mates, who were therefore jealous of her.

Her talent for the graphic arts was genuine enough. There had been no competitors in Slateville to give her a realistic sense of her place as an artist, while at Wellesley she'd put away her painting to major in psychology. Now at age 20 she suddenly found herself thrust into an environment relative to which her endowments were not much above average, while the distance between herself and the truly gifted could not be bridged by any amount of effort.

A different sort of person, from a different kind of upbringing, might have reacted positively to the challenge set before her, seen it as an opportunity which, combined with the resources available to her, could have spurred her on to bring out the best in herself, which was not unimpressive. Perhaps she should have been given more time to grow

up. Perhaps, given the nature of the world in which her family moved, she never would have made a successful adjustment to an unfamiliar environment. Perhaps a combination of factors was at work. Certainly the deadly monochrome of thought and social life in Slateville hadn't prepared her for the shock of her first encounter with an artistic milieu in which originality was not only encouraged but obligatory. When she enrolled in the institute she hadn't been prepared to make any real investment in labor or time: when she realized that this would be expected of her, she rejected both its necessity and its opportunities. Unable to keep up, she also had no desire to do so.

As an adult she would probably have realized the importance of making the best of a bad bargain, cut her losses and gone home early. Yet though emotionally she was finished with the academy, returning right away to Slateville had even less appeal for her. There was still more of Europe that she wanted to experience.

Carried away by a wild impulse, and with only a few weeks left to the end of the summer program, Judy walked off the grounds of the school without informing anyone, took a bus to Oslo and hopped onto a train to Paris. She'd convinced herself that anyone who considered herself a real artist would never remain in a provincial ivory tower up

there somewhere in Norway, when with a little effort she could immerse herself in the creative life of the legendary city of the arts! Its very name evoked levels of myth enshrined by centuries of history, the Baroque, Classical, Rococo, Romanticism, Impressionism and post-Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Surrealism.... There, she just knew, she would find real appreciation, there she was bound to receive recognition of her burgeoning young talent, there lay adventure, glamour, all the promise of a potential career! Yet at the same time she intended to be a realist; she thought she understood realism. She'd it learned from her grandfather, a man who had, almost single-handedly, rescued Waldmeyer Steel from inevitable collapse during the Depression. She estimated her visit there as not lasting more than a few weeks; a month at most, for she was due back at Wellesley in mid-September to begin her junior year, and wanted to be there in time to change her major from Psychology to Fine Arts.

It was not only caprice that determined this move. The tedium of the unadventurous social life for which she'd been groomed had become unacceptable. Proper guidance at that moment - (of which little was available in her immediate environment, nor did she seek any) - would have enabled her to lay out an itinerary for Paris appropriate to a

young art student, holding names and addresses, places to visit, teachers to consult, and ways to budget her resources. As is the way with youth, she just left - she just knew what she was doing and was determined to do it her way. That was all there was to it.

She also discovered an aptitude for travel. The train trip was intelligently planned. She'd consulted the schedules and guidebooks available in the school library and allocated her funds sensibly. Her family being wealthy, Judy had been extended a liberal allowance for the summer. Had she known in advance where to find rooms and places to eat, she could have survived comfortably in Paris for a month. It has been intrinsic to the history of Paris since time immemorial that its prices be astronomically high; but relative to the exchange rate in American dollars it wasn't more expensive than Scandinavia. The bottom line, she knew, was that if she really got stuck, her family could be contacted for the return fare.

When Judy arrived at the Gare du Nord in August of 1970 she had \$500 in dollars and traveler's checks on her person. Rooms in student hotels in the Latin Quarter were to be had for as little as \$3 a night. By eating in the right restaurants, particularly in the student restaurants, (which she was entitled to do), she could eat her fill for less than \$10 a

day, including snacks, coffee breaks and the occasional visit to a cafe - bar. Transportation, movies, museums, all these things were hers for the asking through the magic of her student card, although she was slow to recognize this, and lost it before she was able to get much use out of it.

Judy had also demonstrated foresight in arranging for an acquaintance, a young man of about her age she'd encountered at the institute in the early part of the summer, to meet her at the train station and put her up for a few days in his apartment on the Left Bank.

The living arrangement collapsed almost as soon as it began. The French girl-friend he was involved with shared the apartment. Their relationship had turned sour, their conduct tempestuous and bad-tempered, nor did it occur to them to don masks of outward courtesy for a casual acquaintance who was also their contemporary. The inevitable presence of jealousy could also not be ignored. Judy may well have believed that she had no interest in her host, but persons of that age aren't always able to interpret their feelings correctly. Their own lives being in such turmoil they must be forgiven for not always recognizing the emotional impact they happen to make on others. And it must be

said that it isn't easy for anyone to know when one's welcome is exhausted, if one's hosts are being rude almost as a matter of principle.

Two days after her arrival Judy was, in a manner of speaking, shoved out the door, bags in tow. Needing a place to stay in a hurry, she took a hotel room considerably above her means. She stayed there for about two weeks before she learned of the existence of cheaper accommodations. During this period she neglected to write to her parents, being held back by a reluctance she was at a loss to analyze even within herself.

It was around then that she began to hang out in the vagabond district on the Boulevard St. Michel, between the Place St. Michel and the river Seine. Soon she would gain a reputation as a regular in the popular bars at the base of the rue St. Jacques, where she got acquainted with people like the international set of well-to-do youths at Le Petit Bar, many of them precipitously on the slope to alcoholism. At the Café Popoff on the rue de la Huchette she came to know a very different crowd, a kind of Rainbow Gathering of hippies and globe-trotters, bringing in their wake an inevitable traffic in marijuana, LSD and other psychedelic drugs. Or she might find herself spending half the day

inside the Polly Magoo, something of a hybrid of the other two, its clientele enriched by an assortment of petty crooks and rowdies.

Apart from a bit of time each day devoted to sketching and making the rounds of the museums, Judy had little else to do. She made no effort to contact the artists she'd wanted to meet. In her defense it can be said that she wouldn't have known the first thing about how to go about doing so. Had she bothered to visit the Ecole des Beaux-Arts or some of the other art academies, she could have had her fill of encounters with modern art. She knew about these places but, perhaps because intimidated by the simple fact of being a foreigner with no knowledge of the language, she never went to them.

Discussions with persons who encountered her in this period indicate that she was lonely, lacking in purpose, depressed, emotionally exhausted. One perceptive individual remarked on a pervasive sense of panic, an elemental fear that gripped her at those moments in which she realized that the world was passing her by and she was doing nothing to cope with her environment. Filled with lethargy, exhausted from rising to bedtime, she basically just drifted along through making no more than the bare minimum of exertion needed to get through the day. The money she'd brought with her to Paris evaporated in the cafes within

two weeks. Now was the moment to take a Metro to the American Embassy at the Place de la Madeleine. There she would find someone to contact her parents and make the arrangements for her to be sent home. She would probably have done so, were it not that the crowd she'd fallen into had begun instructing her in a host of survival techniques: honest, dishonest, some exemplary and others -it must be said - frankly disreputable. The details of what she did to live aren't important. The really unfortunate part was that her ability to pursue a hand-to-mouth existence reinforced the avoidance of any long term perspective that would encompass her family, her college education, or her own career aspirations.

It was not unusual that she should opt for this lifestyle in this phase of her growing-up. Still, even for someone of her age, cutting off all of her lifelines and safety nets was excessively foolish. At first she'd simply neglected to keep friends and family informed of her whereabouts. With the passage of time she became intimidated at the thought of writing to people who might be upset and angry with her because she hadn't contacted them for so long. Eventually she more or less forgot that there existed a social milieu external to her immediate reality, to which she might appeal for help.

It was a time when, owing to the recent upheavals of 1968, the youthful population of Paris was deeply divided along political lines. Judy's set, most of them college-age foreigners, but with some French also, had no political commitments. One might call them the French version of the Woodstock generation yippies and flower children back in the States. Lacking altogether the political fanaticism of the so-called anarchists, they were worlds away from the violence-prone gauchistes who dominated left-wing radical politics in France for almost a decade.

Their needs were few and easily satisfied: getting through the day; hanging out in cafes, on park benches or in one another's pads; getting high; killing time; neglecting or "mutilating the senses; and putting off all thought for the future. Occasionally they inhabited the bookstores and could be seen reading, or reciting their own poetry, at George Whitman's Shakespeare & Co. on the rue de la Boucherie just across the street. To facilitate this theory of economics they'd developed a sizable repertoire of ingenious expedients: barter, handicrafts, odd jobs, moving in on hosts, willing or unsuspecting, begging, petty theft - anything that supplied their immediate needs which, in addition to food and shelter, included cigarettes, beer and wine, hashish, weed, amphetamides, LSD and, once in awhile, dangerous experiments with hard drugs.

It was a way of life not devoid of excitement or fun, but in which, merely to survive, its adherents found themselves bound up in an endless cycle of hustling, manipulation, deprivation, degradation and fear. A day's work might begin with pan-handling; followed by a collective house-painting job or moving job someone had landed for them; then some drug-peddling combined with sales of home-made jewelry; finally, the search for a flop for the night, preferably a place where the wine flowed freely and joints were passed around until the early hours of dawn. The pressure of a crisis might encourage strategies such as heisting cameras and wallets from careless tourists or jumping the bills in restaurants. Selling dollars on the black market was profitable for those who knew how to do it; selling stolen passports was for the truly bold. Only rarely did anyone venture out into areas of major crime, such as prostitution, burglary or mugging, but it did happen.

Was Judy happier living in this manner than she'd been before? The answer might have been either yes and no. There was the exhilarating sense of freedom, of abandoning care, of belonging to a group that, for the first time, put no pressure on her to perform or excel. "Hanging out" may become a congenial way of life for a time, if there are no pressing demands to be met and everybody around you is doing the

same thing. Eventually, as the inevitable compromises become more humiliating or even dangerous, a point is reached at which one must decide whether it is time to pull out or continue on a downwards spiral. For some this may ultimately prove to be irreversible.

II.

An evening in late autumn. The fog begins to hover over the fabled city of the arts in mid-November and continues all through the winter. Super-saturated, yellow and unwholesome, like a miasmic swamp gas, it pricks the skin with its subtle whips, infesting flesh and nerves as a fungus eating away at the bark of a tree.

It had begun settling over the city in layers in the middle of the afternoon. Judy Waldmeyer shivered from the sudden cold. Her sojourn in Paris had already lasted three months. Since 3 o'clock she'd wandered through the northern part of the Latin Quarter, starting at the rue Mouffetard leading up to the summit of the Mont St. Geneviève and the Place de Contrescarpe, cradle of bohemian lifestyles for over a century; then past the Ecole Polytechnique down the rue Monge to the Mutualité and along the Boulevard St. Germain all the way to her habitual haunts at the far end of the Boulevard St. Michel and the rue St. Jacques.

On the streets south of the complex of cafes already described mentioned, notably the rue de la Harpe, the rue St Severin, the rue de la Huchette and the rue Xavier Privas, one finds a veritable spider's web of streets holding colorful restaurants of every description: French, Greek, North African, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese: even a McDonald's situated at the far corner of the Boulevards St. Michel and St. Germain! People disposed towards conventional standards of dress might have judged Judy's costuming more than a little bizarre. Her only protection against the invasive chill was a frayed hand-me-down coat, a confection of dirty white woolly curls upon a stiff fabric, picked up at the Parisian flea market, (Marche des Puces). With all of its buttons gone, it flapped open as she walked. A glossy purple blouse, covered with glitter, spilled in billows over the knotted cord securing the top of her black slacks. Half a dozen necklaces made of colorful glass and wooden beads of black, white and tan, dangled from her neck. Bangles adorned wrists and ankles.

At least her shoes were brand-new and expensive; she'd stolen them that very day. She wore neither stockings nor socks. The pale flesh of her exposed legs had dwindled with poor diet. Surprisingly, her face exuded a certain healthfulness. Its cheeks were caked with power, while

mascara and green pencil stippled the contours of her eye-sockets. It was only by looking into her eyes that one perceived the dull ravages of persistent drug use.

Held by a brooch at the crown of her scalp, and partly covered by a picturesque knitted cap she'd made herself, her black hair fell across her shoulders in a broad torrent. Completing the picture, visualize a large gunny sack, made of burlap or some similar material, with flower patterns stitched onto its surface and secured around her neck by a band descending to her waist.

Simply put, Judy was starving. In the past 48 hours she'd eaten only one Tunisian sandwich - pita bread filled with tuna fish, olives, lettuce and dressing. At 3 francs 50 (\$0.70) they were a staple of the down-and-out in this part of town. The man who'd bought it for her had offered to put her up for the night in his apartment. She'd gone up to it with him; then, seized by an apprehension that he intended to rape her, she'd panicked and fled to the cramped loft rented by friends and acquaintances on the rue St. Jacques. Normally she would have found something to eat there; but there had been a quarrel and she'd left early the next morning.

She had no money beyond a pair of Metro tickets. Her belongings were scattered over half a dozen pads, several of which she couldn't go back to. Accustomed to this tumultuous mode of existence, Judy was neither upset nor worried. The whole evening lay in front of her. If she was hungry it was not so much because she'd been unable to find food, but because indulgence in drugs had dulled her appetite to the point where she had not realized the acuteness of her need until late in the day. Perambulating the rue de la Huchette she looked about for familiar faces. None presented themselves, while many of those she did encounter seemed unsympathetic to the needs of panhandlers or bedraggled vagabond young women. A few of them caused her to turn away and run quickly down the adjacent alleyways.

There are parts of this district in which the North African restaurants, Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan, stand together in distinctive blocks. These fulfill an important role in the Parisian tourist carnival. Your standard French restaurant remains closed from the termination of lunch, generally between 2 and 3 PM, all the way to 8 PM when it opens again for dinner. Yet each day tourists are arriving in great numbers from all over the world. For many of them Parisian dinner hours are far too late in the day. To this sizable class of customers the

North African restaurants are the only option - (excepting those who find nothing objectionable about traveling all the way to Paris just to bolt down a Big Mac at McDonald's). As Judy walked past them, she felt the renewed hunger pangs from the absence of the few francs needed for their plain nourishing fare: cous-cous, doner kebab, falafel, baba ganoush ...

Yet when all is said and done, this was Paris! Even today a city unlike any other, a refuge whose hospitality to artists, bohemians, waifs, vagabonds, anarchists of every sort is justly famous. Who will allow another to go hungry when the whole city is out on the street, festive, seeking friendship, fun or adventure! Judy was well aware that with enough persistence she would find someone to rescue her.

Judy paused before the window front of a Greek restaurant, set off from the rue de la Harpe in a secluded nook. The brightly lit front room, full of the bustle of the dinner hour, gave way to a smaller room visible through a doorway. She'd eaten in this place before: the menu was limited, the prices low, a good enough place to pick up an adequate meal. Entering by the front door Judy encountered a few stares from the waiters, but was allowed to continue on to the room at the back.

At a narrow table set in one of its darkened corners, a middle-aged man sat alone. Obviously a foreigner, probably an American. A book stood propped up on a decanter of cheap wine. Periodically he picked it up to pour more of the sour liquid into his glass. No doubt he was waiting for his order to arrive.

On an impulse Judy strode over to his table and sat down opposite him.

Since he didn't notice her at first, Judy had a chance to observe him more closely. His clothes were ill-fitting, though clean and not shabby. A grey-green raincoat that he'd not bothered to remove obstructed his movements; he seemed neither to notice nor care. Balding, with thick glasses and an implacable scowl, there was little enough about him that she would consider romantic, though she suspected him to have a friendly, even kindly side to his personality, even to be quite helpless when imposed upon in the right way.

His manner of reading the book before him was exceedingly strange. He didn't just read it: he devoured it, with grimaces, gestures of exasperation, interspersed at times with sly, even warm smiles of approval, flipping the pages back and forth as if he wasn't quite sure of

what the author was saying and intended to argue the case with the book itself! It was only when the waitress, a powerfully built Balkan woman in a black dress, arrived with the hors d'oeuvres, a Greek salad drenched in olive oil in which large chunks of feta cheese were swimming about, that this individual looked up from his reading long enough to observe the sad, tired, yet not unamused, eyes of an American street urchin staring him directly in the face.

At first he didn't know quite how to take this. Like many introverted persons Gordon Solomon, (for that was his name), appeared to always be desperate for company, yet resent it when it did materialize. As most men will do when confronted in such a fashion, he glanced briefly at her sexual attributes, then quickly dismissed her as a silly teenager of no interest to him. For her part all that Judy could think of at that moment was some way of gratifying her hunger. She thought him overly serious, almost to the point of being ridiculous, and most likely a terrible bore.

As she was trying to invent a pretext for opening the conversation, he surprised her very much by initiating one himself. In English, naturally, for he'd immediately recognized in her a fellow countrywoman. They quickly discovered that there were things they

could talk about, even that they shared a certain amount of common ground. Both came from the mid-West, she from Ohio, he from Chicago. Their families were wealthy and established; both were living at the poverty level in Paris, drawn there by some vague notion of making a career in the artistic capital. Solomon eked out a barren existence as a translator of film scripts, while Judy survived by her wits.

There the similarities ended. He was older than her by a quarter century. She entertained fantasies of being an artist; he was driven by literary ambition which, inasmuch as he poured all his energy into his work, could make him somewhat dull company. As for Judy, she was content to simply drift along in the hopes that something would eventually come up. Solomon devoted many days to tracking down leads, fulfilling contracts, and turning out manuscripts of every description. Granted that his singleness of purpose had gotten him little further along in his career than juvenile idleness in hers. The difference was that he had a solid body of accomplishment behind him, while she had as of yet produced nothing of lasting value.

When the waitress returned with the main course Judy ordered, in schoolgirl French and with Gordon's help, a complete dinner for 12 francs- very reasonable at 70's prices, impossible today. As they ate they

continued their conversation. For the most part they spoke, as American expatriates do, of the peculiarities of the French and the unreasonable difficulties of Parisian life. Finally he finished his meal and stood up to leave. It was then that Judy Waldmeyer announced, with disarming naiveté, that she had not a centime with which to pay the bill.

A flash of anger blazed on his face, then passed away just as quickly. Gordon made an exaggerated gesture of exasperation and sat back down again.

"Same old story, huh?", he barked, "I should have recognized your type by now. Why didn't you tell me this before the waitress took your order?"

In complete sincerity she explained that she'd been afraid he'd refuse. She'd sized him up as somebody who probably made a good living - the information elicited a burst of forced laughter - and who wouldn't call the cops on her. Then she began buttering him up, telling him that she'd always admired writers, how he must be really talented although she hadn't read any of his books, adding that she just knew from his kind sympathetic face that he wouldn't refuse to help her in her hour of need. Finally she broke down crying and confessed that she'd had nothing to eat for the last two days.

Solomon called for both bills and paid them. In exchange he demanded a full description of her situation. What brought her to Europe? How had she ended up in Paris? Why hadn't she notified her parents? How did she survive? What were her plans for the future? Her imagination stimulated by the first decent meal in quite a long time, (and more from habit than necessity), Judy embroidered a pack of lies transparent to any sane and intelligent person. He could not resist interjecting a touch of sarcasm from time to time. Yet he now recognized that her need was genuine.

Solomon pulled out 25 francs from his pocket, his worldly fortune until the following morning, and handed her the entire amount. As parting words of advice he cautioned her that it wasn't a good idea to attempt this sort of stunt too often. The next time around she might land someone who would not be so accommodating. Then he stood up and left the restaurant. Judy remained behind to finish up with coffee and dessert. He never saw her again.

III.

It was now the middle of January. The Hotel Luxembourg stood on the rue Royer-Collard adjacent to the Café Crocodile, separated from a Chinese restaurant across a narrow and twisting cobblestoned street. 5

Only a few blocks away from the Luxemburg Gardens, its prices were low, its services minimal. By virtue of its location, it always housed some foreign transients, a class of people who frequently skip out on the rent. Its owners were understandably high strung and nervous, and the hotel frequently changed hands. Gordon Solomon had lived there for 3 years without any problems, although he took no credit for making an adequate income at this particular time.

His tiny room, situated on the ground floor, was reached through a door from the lobby that gave access to an inner courtyard, where it stood third in a row on the right. The noises of street traffic rarely penetrated this far into the interior; it was not a bad place to live for someone seeking privacy and quiet. Conditions were austere. Neither cooking nor overnight guests were allowed, yet both were tolerated both were tolerated in moderate doses. Many of the tenants were Sorbonne students and some degree of flexibility had to be maintained.

Hotel policy dictated that everyone's keys, brass objects long as fountain pens from which nubs of metal dangled like serrated pennants, be placed, when exiting the building, on a board in the office of the hotel clerk. This was located on the right side as one entered in the dismal lobby from the street. Yet when Solomon returned that evening from a

bitterly cold day, he discovered that his key had been left cradled in the lock of his door.

It was upsetting, though not surprising. This would not be the first time he'd forgotten his key in this manner. The fear that someone might try to rob him never entered his mind. What did he own, beyond a battered portable typewriter, with an English language keyboard, not worth the time invested in exchanging it for a few francs? Otherwise some clothes, soap and sundries, and a large number of books, about a dozen of them checked out of the historic Biblioth  que St. Genevi  ve a few blocks away. Only recently had he become a patron. Such things are not easily granted to foreigners in Paris, but Gordon had persistence. There were also piles of manuscripts on the desk, the shelves and on the floor. Worthless to anyone else, their only value to him lay in the fact that he could not in good conscience discard them.

Strange all the same.... for he was certain he'd given the key to the day clerk when he went out that morning. They'd exchanged a few routine words, he was sure of it. Solomon pushed open the door. Together with the two windows adjacent to them to the left, the panes of glass on its upper half allowed a bare trickle of light to penetrate during

the day, scarcely enough to justify the loss of privacy. He entered the room and closed the door behind him.

Not exactly a cubby-hole, though it wasn't very large. A small table covered with a torn flower-patterned oilskin stood beside the windows. By necessity it combined the virtues of kitchen table and desk. At the back stood a metal frame cot covered with a pair of blankets, sturdy though a bit tattered. Though far from luxurious, Gordon was satisfied with the room and its amenities.

Even before stepping completely inside he sensed that something was wrong: someone else had been there. Turning to his left he saw more than enough to justify his suspicions. A suitcase rested on the table in the area normally reserved for his typewriter and papers. Small though ample, suitable for short vacations and short trips, it was a tacky thing, constructed from bits of blue plastic fastened onto a chassis of thick brown cardboard. A certain charm was given to it by the collage of customs labels slapped on in airports and train stations in the US, and various countries of western Europe.

Solomon stared at it in some perplexity. Had it perhaps been left there inadvertently by the cleaning woman? Possibly the hotel staff had dredged it up from the storage basement. Somebody may have thought

that, because he was an American, this peculiar piece of luggage belonged to him. Shaped like an inflated cigar box, its vertical dimension was less than a foot, while its flat surfaces measured 20 by 28 inches. Standard dimensions. As soon as he pulled on the handle he realized that it was full; in fact it was fairly heavy. He pulled up a chair, sat down, aligned the suitcase and disengaged the clasps. The array of items that presented themselves to his bewildered gaze had no connection with him or the world he lived in.

The upper layer was completely covered over with piles of loose drawings, sketch-pads and tablets. Opening them up he saw that all of them were filled with sketches and drawings in a variety of media, watercolor, gouache, pen, pencil, charcoal. Largely conventional, much of the work was good: nudes, landscapes, still-lives. Obviously student work, with indications of progress. Here and there one noticed the beginnings of an original conception, quick sketches carried to a certain point and abandoned, as if the artist lacked the energy or enthusiasm to carry them to completion.

A student with talent, obviously. Any connoisseur, even Gordon with his superficial acquaintance with the graphic arts, could place such work correctly, certainly not amateur yet equally far from

professionalism or mastery. A series of charcoal studies of the same nude body caught his attention. The final version had struck out boldly on its own, rendering all the previous ones irrelevant. In the sinuous arcing of the naked flesh the artist had somehow captured a metaphor of imprisonment, the enslavement of the spirit in the confines of the flesh. Solomon switched on the table lamp. He placed the drawing on the windowsill and gazed at it with fascination. Who was this person, identifiable only by the initials "J.W." scrawled at the bottom of some of the drawings?

After placing the art work in a heap on the floor, he began a rough inspection of the remaining contents. For the most part this consisted of items of clothing from the wardrobe of a girl not yet out of her teens. Opening the window to let in the fresh if frosted air, Solomon closely examined the garish orange, purple, green, flower-printed, tinseled and sequined sweaters, blouses, pullovers, trousers, underwear and stockings that, taken en masse, pungently evoked an image of contemporary college age fashions. Its peculiar mixture of conservative and "hip" fashions indicated a recent conflict of lifestyles. He extracted and lifted up to the light a severe three-piece suit. A vague sense of embarrassment, a feeling that too much preoccupation with female clothing might be

indicative of some obscure perversions, caused him to quickly replace everything and lock the suitcase once more.

Behind this strange intrusion there had to be some simple explanation! He was not accustomed to having total strangers come into his room, leave their suitcases behind, and disappear. The reverse was unfortunately all too common: there are certain kinds of people who make it a practice to walk into the rooms of total strangers, take their suitcases, and rush off!

Decidedly unconventional, to say the least. But of course there were plausible explanations. No doubt some young lady had been resident at the Hotel Luxembourg in recent months. She'd skipped out on the rent and the management had impounded the suitcase and the rest of her belongings. The girl hadn't returned; now she might be anywhere, from Berkeley to Woodstock, grooving on rock, tokeing grass and dreaming of being a great artist. Sometime that morning the janitor had discovered the suitcase in the basement and, under the impression that it might be Mr. Solomon's, had left it on his table, forgetting to remove the key from the lock. That had to be all there was to it. Very simple, really.

The landlady would be sure to know. She should be sitting in her office that very moment, tallying the day's receipts. Solomon left his room and crossed the courtyard to the lobby. As predicted, she was working in her office on the 2nd floor 6, adjacent to the winding staircase. A pleasant, daffy woman, her blond hair stacked on an unruly heap on top of her head, something of a shrew to her husband, generous with delays on the rent.

No: the janitor hadn't discovered anything in the basement. She knew, because he kept a detailed inventory of everything impounded from the residents. The police required it. Her memory was quite adequate, particularly in such matters where she was certain to take an interest. People were jumping the rent all the time, it was in some sense the national pastime of the Latin Quarter, but she had no recollection of an American teen-aged girl doing such a thing, not in the recent past.

Nor had she given the key to anyone. There was a possibility that someone had come in and lifted it from the board in the lobby office, while the day clerk was out attending to something in the street. She would have a talk with him the next morning.

Solomon thanked her. As he was taking his leave, she couldn't resist reminding him that his rent was already two weeks overdue. His

credit was good here: he explained that he was waiting on a check that the film studios had promised him would be arriving the next morning. If it didn't, he needed to travel over to the Right Bank the next day in any case, and would see to it personally.

Solomon left the door ajar when he re-entered the overheated room. From a shelf above the sink he collected an opened bottle of red wine, a remnant of a loaf of bread and some cheese. Dishware and cutlery were already on his worktable. After preparing a snack he balanced the back of his chair against the clanking radiator and sat down again. Now, in leisurely fashion, he could give himself over to the exercise of his imagination.

Who was this person? Who might she be? The daughter of a friend? Some casual acquaintance he'd totally forgotten? A new tenant of the Luxembourg who'd mistaken the room?

Was someone secretly in love with him? Solomon smiled: now there's a thought! Silly. Perhaps. Not implausible; nothing is, for a novelist or script writer. Not a very good script, he reflected. For a short time he mentally experimented with ways to improve the plot. Women don't do that sort of thing, he concluded. Or do they? He didn't know; he hadn't had much to do with them over the past two years.... excepting

only that squalid incident in London a few months back, when he'd made a complete fool of himself...well; not exactly....

Solomon rudely shook himself awake: what rubbish! He must have become very lonely indeed to waste so much time on such considerations! Besides, he didn't know any adolescent girls, certainly none as odd as this one. When she finally comes around for her things, he promised himself, he'll let her know where to park them, and herself for good measure!

Now Solomon turned his attention to more realistic possibilities. Why should one assume that the suitcase was left by the woman who owned the clothing? Somebody might have stolen it, then given it to the cleaning woman for safe-keeping. Criminals might be involved. Even weapons and narcotics. Was it too far-fetched to imagine that he was being set up for a police raid? No it was not: less than 3 years ago, during the events of 1968, the police were known to have planted incriminating materials in the rooms of student leaders. He'd also read up on the dirty tricks of the various branches of the French secret services, in connection with a film he'd collaborated one a few years back. Fully aroused, Solomon dragged the suitcase from the back of the room, slammed it once again onto the table, and snapped open the locks.

Evidences of habitual drug activity were scattered all through the interior. Underneath the items of clothing he discovered pipes, rolling papers, hypodermic needles, pieces of rubber tubing, empty vials and flasks. Flakes of hashish and marijuana clung to everything. He dug out goof balls from the pockets of trousers and shirts. Here and there he found sugar cubes, probably saturated with LSD. Packages of white powder indicated cocaine.

Now it seemed to him incredible how little he'd noticed in his preliminary inspection! Hastily he assembled pipes, papers, organic substances, needles and tubing and dumped them into a paper bag. His hands trembled, so that he was obliged to make frequent halts to avoid sticking himself with the hypodermics. Finally he got up, threw on his winter coat and quickly left the room, locking the door securely behind him. Avoiding the eyes of the night clerk, he handed over the key. Clutching the bag in a tight grip, he strode through the lobby to the tall wrought-iron door and out into the street.

The rue Royer-Collard (named for a monarchist philosopher of the post-Enlightenment) awkwardly pursues its abrupt descent onto the busy thoroughfare of the rue Gay-Lussac, (who discovered a law known to every chemistry student). A promenade of less than a hundred yards

brings one to its intersection with the Boulevard St. Michel. Rushing across traffic one finds oneself facing the imposing gates of the Jardin du Luxembourg . The baroque park was closed at this time of night. Solomon hurried quickly south along the boulevard for half a mile until he approached the vicinity of Montparnasse. Over to his right lay the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, where he walked with considerable anxiety until reaching the tiny upper-crust rue Vavin. Simone de Beauvoir lived there at the time. There, fortuitously, he found an opened dumpster into which he dropped the bag, quitting the precincts immediately. In the movie we will have a cat jump out of the dumpster.

The experience had shaken him. Returning to the Boulevard de Montparnasse, he strolled for awhile amidst the carnival atmosphere that reigns there at all times of the year. Finally he stopped into the Café Rotonde where he brooded for an hour over a lone cup of espresso, stolidly ignoring the legions of assorted visiting drunks, slobs and bores getting high on the Paris experience.

He returned shortly after 10 PM; the walk had restored his composure. He would refuse to bother himself further over the mystery of the suitcase. No doubt its owner would be returning the next day. He would continue to make inquiries of the cleaning staff and the

management. Ultimately he could just dispose of the artifact and be done with it.

Yet a fortnight passed and no one showed up to claim it. Inquiries around the hotel and in the Crocodile Café yielded no additional information. Nobody had noticed either the arrival or the departure of a mysterious visitor carrying an odd blue plastic suitcase covered with customs stickers. Eventually the mere presence of the suitcase began to oppress him. Solomon reflected bitterly that his days were passed waiting for letters that never came, telephone calls that went unanswered, and mystery women who never returned.

Still, he didn't feel that he could just get rid of it. If it belonged to that unhappy girl he'd met at the Greek restaurant a few months back, he ought to be making some effort to locate her. By now he was fairly certain of her identity. He'd recognized certain of the items she'd worn on that November night. Nice girl, he recalled. Thoroughly screwed up. It wasn't his business to straighten her out, of course. If she were still living in this part of Paris it should be easy enough to track her down.

IV.

In the first week of February, Gordon Solomon retrieved the suitcase from the shallow closet set into the side wall and hoisted it onto his table. This time he made a complete and careful overhaul of its contents, inspecting brushes, combs, personal items, lipstick cases, subway tokens and other bits of change from France, Scandinavia, Germany and the US. Although a few odd drug-related remnants were dropped into a box for immediate disposal, the sense of urgency was gone. A stack of about a dozen letters in their envelopes had somehow been missed, wedged between the pages of a sketch-book. From the pocket of the jacket of the prim suit he extracted a small, much deteriorated black address book. On the inside cover, in a fine, minuscule hand, was written the name: Judy Waldmeyer.

It was the same name that appeared on the field of the envelopes. All of the letters came from her parents in some Ohio town. He transcribed their names and address into his own address book, dimly suspecting that this information might eventually prove to be of some importance. The contents of the letters were trite, even boring. After reading a few of them he found it difficult to digest their steady

monotony, yet persisted through the entire stack, anxious to glean the sparse bits of data concealed in them. Half an hour later he stood up and sighed. Letter-writing is an all but dead art; even the letters of today's professional writers tend to be dull, even insipid. The lives of these unimaginative correspondents were as devoid of excitement as their social world and the unexceptional town, Slateville, they called home.

From their letters Solomon learned that Judy's father was a prosperous businessman involved to some extent in local politics, a respected (or respectable; in such circles there is little distinction) member of the community. Her mother busied herself as chairwoman of the Garden Club, board member of the Chamber of Commerce, and active volunteer on several church committees. Judy's parents notion of a good time on the town didn't seem to go much beyond attendance at the high school fashion show or receiving awards from business associations or the local branch of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Some mention was made of Judy's siblings; details were lacking by which they might be located. Gordon began to understand why Judy had found it necessary to flee. The overall picture of her family filled him with a certain curiosity. He tried, but failed to find any way in which their wealth and security might make them enviable.

Now he turned to the address book. All of the Parisian entries were grouped together in 6 pages in the middle. It did not surprise him that he wasn't able to recognize any of the names. He did take note of several familiar institutions: the American Embassy, the American Center for Students and Artists, Shakespeare and Company, and so forth. These were all visited over the next 3 days, but none of the people he spoke with had heard of her. This in itself meant nothing, only that it was time to get onto the telephone and begin the rounds of personal visits.

One of the addresses in the book was in his neighborhood, a short distance away. A couple was listed as living on a narrow street adjacent to the Sorbonne, in back of the College de France. In all likelihood they were students. He dialed them, right after breakfast, from a cafe across the plaza from the Odeon theater. A youthful husky male voice answered. The accent was German. The respondent, who spoke an acceptable English, was not unfriendly at first. With the mention of Judy's name the tone of voice turned distinctly hostile. Yes, he knew who she was. He didn't know where to find her and didn't want to know. Gordon's inquiries were cut short by the sound of the receiver slammed into the cradle.

V.

A few days later it so happened that he ended up in their neighborhood. On an off-chance he walked up to the 5th floor of their building and knocked on the door. It was opened by a slim, engaging Italian graduate student named Claudia. Dressed in blue jeans and a plain sweater, with thick glasses and a manner of disconcerting seriousness, she, like most students at that time, appeared more comfortable with political abstractions than the tedious details of daily life. They spoke in French. From her Gordon learned that she and her boyfriend had found Judy huddled against the cold sitting alone in a cafe on the Place Contrescarpe. They'd felt like helping her and put her up on a couch in the living-room. Judy had left precipitously on the 3rd day, taking with her about 500 Deutschmarks and a camera. Claudia emphasized that no, they didn't want these things returned; they were content if she never came around again.

Gordon returned to the address book. On the 3rd page of the Parisian entries lay a strange notation: a single first name, Yakoub, followed by an address in Belleville. This is the colorful immigrant quarter on the other side of town, on the Right Bank between the Bastille and the Père Lachaise cemetery. There was no telephone number.

The next day he made a trip to the apartment building. The concierge, the generic elderly woman who usually fills this post, explained that Yakoub worked every day, for very long hours. The best time to find him was on a Sunday between 3 and 6. She told Gordon that she would inform Yakoub that he'd be coming the following Sunday, and promised to call him if the appointment needed to be changed.

That weekend was cold and overcast. On Sunday the fine rains had started falling shortly before dawn. Piles of uncollected snow gave variety to streets which, though dark and wet, sparkled with that charm that makes Paris uniquely beautiful, even in bad weather. Gordon paused before one of those enormous doorways opening into the courtyards of Parisian apartment buildings, a late 19th century architectural rhetoric designed to convey the message of elegance and power. Today it more often than not conceals living conditions substandard by all modern indices. It is not hard to understand why Parisians spend so much of their time in restaurants and cafes. He walked through the courtyard all the way to the back, where he discovered and mounted a steep staircase. At the 6th floor he strode across a balcony to continue his ascent via a twisting fire escape at the further end. Altogether he'd climbed 8 stories.

Now Gordon found himself in a dark narrow corridor with an indentation to his right that diverged into two passageways. Following the one on the left he arrived in front of the door of room 29. He knocked.

" Qui est la?"

" Bonjour. Je m'appelle Gordon Solomon. C'est moi qui avez parlé avec la concière il y a quelques jours."

"Eh bien! Qu'est que vous voulez?"

" Excusez-moi. Connaissez-vous une fille qui venait d'Amerique? Son nom, je crois, c'est Judy Waldmeyer, n'est pas?"

" Pourquoi? Je m'en fiche de cette fille! Vous etes son père, sans doute?"

" Non, monsieur. Elle a laissé ses baggages chez moi."

"Eh? Qui vous a donné mon nom?"

"C'est très simple, monsieur. Ne vous inquiétez pas. J'ai trouvé son carnet d'adresses, c'est tout."

The door was opened. A heavy-set Algerian, age about 30, dark hair and moustache, thrust his head into the darkened corridor. He was

wearing khaki slacks and an unbuttoned red shirt hastily thrown over his muscular shoulders. His manner was suspicious yet deferential. Everything about his appearance indicated a person accustomed since childhood to hard manual labor. Gordon posed no threat to him; his years in the restaurant trade had taught to deal with people from around the world. He even attempted a few halting phrases in English. However they conversed in French, broken though educated for Gordon, an indigenous dialect for Yakoub. (What follows may be considered a grammatically sanitized translation.)

"You can be certain she's never coming around here again. That kind of girl wears out her welcome very quickly." His manner indicated contempt for a whole class of humanity.

"Can I come in for a moment? To tell you the truth, I think I know who she is, but I'm not even sure of that."

Yakoub stepped aside to let Gordon enter the cramped apartment. It consisted of 3 small rooms, kitchen, bedroom and the alcove in which he now found himself that substituted for a living-room. The toilet, of the old-fashioned hole-in-the-floor construction, was down the hall and serviced the entire floor. He sat on the couch against the back wall while his host went into the kitchen to turn up the gas fire under the tea kettle.

A heavy cloud of smoke from an uninterrupted diet of Gaulois cigarettes lay in suspension on overheated cloying air. At that time Gordon was a smoker, though not to the extent he'd discovered here. Some back issues of newspapers in Arabic and French lay on the low table in front of him, the room being otherwise barren of reading material. Items of clothing that had been washed by hand in the kitchen sink then hung out on hooks to dry, covered much of the wall space. Two pictures cut from popular magazines, both of Algerian soccer stars, were affixed to the wall above the couch with Scotch tape.

It was easy to divine that Yakoub worked 12 hour days, 6 days in the week with a half day on Sunday, and that all of his earnings beyond necessities were immediately converted into remittances to be sent back home to his wife and children. He soon returned from the kitchen and sat down in a chair opposite Gordon. The offer of a cigarette was politely refused; Yakoub lit one for himself.

Now Gordon narrated the whole story of his dealings with Judy Waldmeyer, pausing only when Yakoub went back into the kitchen again to prepare the glasses of sweetened mint tea that he brought out on a tray. He stressed the fact that fully 2 months had passed between the evening on which he'd bought her a meal in a restaurant in the area

around the Place St. Michel, and the day on which he'd discovered her suitcase, filled with drawings, clothing and the incriminating debris of drug involvement, on the table in his room.

The parchment-dry skin covering the taut musculature on Yakoub's face hardened visibly with the statement of each new detail. From time to time he shook his head as if to say "What do you expect? I could have told you as much."

When Gordon had finished, he said: " That's her exactly. It's the same girl, Monsieur, I assure you. Tell me: no doubt you met her elsewhere? Didn't she ask you to take her home with you? Did she steal anything from you?"

" As far as I know, we only met that one time at the restaurant."

" I, too, have a story to tell about her that much resembles yours. I work at two restaurants in the Huchette district, Tunisian and Chinese, also for a French cafe in the vicinity of the Gare du Montparnasse. It may come to you as a surprise, but all the restaurants in that neighborhood, French Greek, Chinese, Russian, Arab, are largely staffed by North Africans. We North Africans even work in the North African ones!"

Trade humor; it broke the ice. They picked up their glasses of mint tea and saluted. Yakoub continued:

" She came up to me one evening as I was entering the back door of the Chinese restaurant to go to work. The same story: she was hungry and homeless, except that she didn't pretend otherwise. I bought her a meal out of my own pocket; restaurant workers can get food more cheaply, but you know the owners never give anything away for free. She left as soon as she was finished without saying good-bye. To be honest I was too busy in the kitchen to pay much attention to her. I often do this for those sad vagabonds around there who strike my fancy. I don't give it a second thought.

"That night I didn't get out until 2 in the morning. Usually when it's that late I have to walk home, though sometimes the owner or a member of his family will drive me back in his car. As I was leaving she came up to me again to ask me to put her up for the night. I suspect she'd been evicted from wherever she was staying. She walked home with me. I put her up on the bed while I curled up on this sofa you're sitting on.

Excuse me Monsieur, I've got a wife and family back in Algiers. I try to be faithful but it's hard; you're a man of the world so you'd

understand. She wouldn't let me touch her. Looking back I don't regret it. Of course never a word of thanks.

"I'm out early every morning and don't get back until late at night. Maybe you work to live, Monsieur, but I live to work. Here in Paris there's nothing else in my life. In two years I plan to go back to Algeria and buy a plot of land out in the country. Friends of mine have done it. Some Algerians come to France to stay but I can't see that. I detest the highly-praised so-called French way of life. This is a racist country, I don't know why anybody would want to stay here. That's neither here nor there, Monsieur, excuse me for taking up your time with my worries."

"That's quite all right, Yakoub. It's interesting. I'm a writer-I collaborate on film scripts."

"Writer, huh? Someday I'll tell you the real story of my life; it'll make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Well, getting back to this young lady. I let her stay here for almost a week, even gave her a key. She didn't cause any trouble and - what can I say - I was worried about her. She needed someone to look after her. Then one night I returned to find her and half a dozen of her friends occupying all the rooms. They were sitting around, smoking hashish and drinking. I

joined the party and we passed around the pipes. We must have sat up until dawn. Some of them had brought sleeping bags and I let them all crash in the bedroom. I was too high to sleep myself, besides I had to get ready to go to work. The concierge didn't like it, but I told her it was only for one night.

"By 6 AM I was out the door on the way to the metro and the Gare du Montparnasse. I work in the cafe from 7 to 11, then head over to the Tunisian restaurant in time for the lunch crowd. I usually have a few hours off from 3 to 5 when I'm due at the Chinese restaurant to get ready for dinner. I never get out before midnight, usually later.

"When I got back that night I found Judy and her friends still lounging around the apartment doing the same things: sleeping, smoking, playing a bit of guitar, passing around drugs. I doubt that any of them had gone out since I'd left them that morning. Naturally I insisted they all leave at once. You know, they weren't the least bit offended. They'd expected something like this - it comes with the territory you might say - They cleared out quickly enough, all except for Judy and a young man. The guy claimed to be her boyfriend. We exchanged words. He may have become belligerent. Look, Monsieur, I know what you're thinking. I was very tired and frankly quite angry. I'd

worked 3 shifts while these rich kids were sitting around the whole day doping themselves up. I'll admit to you that I threw him down the stairs. It was either that or call the police. I'm a North African, you understand that this option was not available to me, let's rather say it would have been suicide.

"Don't be upset for him, Monsieur. I didn't break any of his bones, He ran off in a hurry."

Yakoub had worked himself up. His voice rose with the narrative and his hands gestured with animation. He lit up another cigarette by compulsion before continuing:

" I came back to the apartment and locked the door. Judy was still there, lying on the couch, crying and terrified, just like a child. I tried to be gentle with her but explained that she would have to leave early the next morning. I'm not a monster, Monsieur: I gave her 50 francs until she got herself on her feet, but of course I didn't expect to see it again. Suddenly she began acting as if she wanted to have sex. That put everything in a different light. You're from America, my friend. You must know that your young women have no sense of shame. They'll do anything for money or thrills. Don't get angry, Monsieur, I'm not putting down your nation, for which I have the highest respect. I intend to go

there some day. I've got a cousin in New York, living the way I do. We may go partners on the land deal. Look, I apologize: I shouldn't be insulting your women, but the girls who come over here all act like whores, excuse my language."

Gordon understood that Yakoub was a little ashamed of his behavior on that night and did not pursue the matter.

"The moment I touched her she began screaming. That did it! I jammed her suitcase in her hands, probably the same one she's left with you, and shoved her out the door." Yakoub clapped his hands together as if he were striking off dust. "That's my story. Now I've not got the slightest idea of where she's taken herself off to."

Yakoub excused himself to return to the kitchen and came back with a plate of baklava. He poured out more cups of tea and the two of them sat around talking for another 15 minutes. Gordon stood up to leave and Yakoub saw him to the door. They shook hands before parting, and he added:

"I'm surprised to hear that her suitcase wasn't followed by another visit from her and her friends."

VI.

Gordon didn't go home immediately. At the Belleville metro station he got on a train that took him to the Etoile. This is at the head of the Champs Elysees, right by the Arc de Triomphe, and only a few blocks from the film studio for which he was doing translations and developing dialogues in English. He let himself into the building by a back door and worked for another 3 hours. Dinner was taken in the colorful old marketplaces at Les Halles, which had not yet been demolished. By the time he returned to his lodgings it was after 11.

An hour or so was given over to reading. Just before turning in for the night he opened the suitcase for the last time and reviewed the evidence present in the piles of sketch-books and drawings. He had all but concluded that it was time to chuck the suitcase and its goods out into the street. Now he hesitated. This was a real person, albeit a fairly irritating one. Real potential as an artist was evident in all of her work. Clearly someone in trouble. At the very least he ought to be writing her parents to let them know that he was in possession of her things. He made a note to write to them that Wednesday evening. Then he turned in.

Arising at 6:30 AM Monday morning Gordon made his way down the hill along the Boulevard St. Michel to the banks of the Seine. In the 60's and 70's a pleasant way to begin the day was to take an early morning breakfast at Le Petit Bar. At all other times of the day its popularity made it something of a horror. The night-time crowd was impossible.

Le Petit Bar stood at the very foot of the rue St. Jacques, across from the bouquinistes , the book-sellers on the Quai St. Michel and Le Petit Pont, which links the Left Bank with the Ile de La Cité and brings one within less than a block of Notre Dame cathedral. During those years the grandiose facade of Notre Dame was swaddled in scaffolding for extensive cleaning and repairs. All the same it was still possible to entertain the harmless illusion that one was getting some kind of mystical experience out of staring at it while drinking up one's cup of espresso, particularly when a thick fog was settled around it.

The day was uncharacteristically mild; there'd been a break in the weather and the establishment had ventured to put a few tables out on the sidewalk. Despite a slight nipping chill Gordon remained outdoors, it being preferable to the pernicious snarl of the jukebox inside, the contents of which hadn't been changed for many months. As he waited

for his order of deux oeufs plats, fried eggs, bread and wine, he spread out the pages of Le Monde before him.

At a table to his left sat a group of friends, 3 men and a woman, none of them older than 22. Nothing in the contents of the newspaper engrossed his interest and it was inevitable that he would begin eavesdropping on their conversation, conducted in loud voices and apparently for public consumption. Bits of French and German were mingled in a discourse that was largely in English. Two of the young men were Americans, the other was German. The girl was French.

The German, Hans, an art student from Dusseldorf, was the oldest. He had light frizzy hair and pale, almost albino features. A kind of magician's cape fell loosely over his shoulders, secured about his neck by a necklace of medallions. He was not talkative. Apart from short and forceful verbal outbursts he sat apart and brooded.

The French girl was small and chubby. Braids, saucer eyes, pink skin and full lips evoked the image of a porcelain doll. Dark brown bangs fell over her forehead. Between periodic sniffles she clutched at her boy-friend, a fellow called Bob, a tall, bony American teenager with long sideburns dressed in a black leather motorcycle jacket. His guitar and rucksack were deposited on an adjacent chair. Bob gabbled on an

endless stream of mindless chatter. Gordon found it annoying, but the others didn't seem to mind; it was more than likely that he was speeding on Benzedrine. To the French girl's desperate gestures of affection he made no acknowledgment, but also, he did not reject them. By his attitude it appeared that she was just another drug habit he couldn't shake off.

The other American, Tony, shorter and younger, spoke very little. Self-absorbed and demoralized, he appeared worn from too much travel and too little sleep. Baggy shirt and trousers, hair dyed a bright red, his person decorated with hand-crafted leatherwork and jewelry.

Their conversations revealed that they'd passed the night hitchhiking up from a commune in Burgundy, in the neighborhood of Auxerre. Tony had lived in France for some time. Bob was a more recent arrival and interspersed his monologue with comments on political developments back home. Gordon used the opportunity to interrupt:

"What's going on in the protest movement against the invasion of Cambodia?" The speaker was delighted that someone else had taken an interest:

" It's been really bad, man! Like, if you ask me, Nixon's a bum. But he really blew it this time. Man. it's a downer! All the campuses are out in the streets. Yeah. Like, I got friends in San Francisco and Toledo who got their heads bashed in - yeah, by the fucken pigs, man! because of that shit. You dig?"

Tony chimed in like some bedraggled, bleary-eyed Greek chorus: "Uh-huh! Like it really blows your mind. No way I'm going to be stuffed in no body bag for Tricky Dick."

" Let's hope the protests bring an end to the war", Gordon replied, " I won't be going back until its over."

" Oh yeah?", Bob asked, " Like how long you been here, dude?"

" Five years, minus a few months. I guess you could call me an expatriate."

" Ex - Patriot? Like what's that mean? You from the Korean war or what? "

Hans explained: "It means he stays citizen of his own land, but maybe he lives here because he prefers the French way of living. Many Germans also are 'expatriates'. "

" Really?" Bob continued, " That's cool, man. I've been here three months. Vietnam ain't our thing, you know, but I guess we gotta go back there and take our chances. Say, dude, you into dope?"

" No. But you may be able to help me out on another matter: do you know where I can find a young woman - about your age - by the name of Judy Waldmeyer?"

There was an astonished silence. Tony kept his head down, not looking at Gordon directly. Lacing together a leather pendant, he mumbled:

"I didn't know her personally. She hung out with a different crowd. A few days before going down to the commune we heard she'd committed suicide. Like, taken her own life."

Gordon stared at him, stunned: "That can't possibly be true!" A wave of panic starting in the pit of his stomach overwhelmed him as he buried his face in his hands. They all looked at him in amazement. Bob pointed to the girl and volunteered:

" Marie-Claude knew her. Didn't you, Marie?"

" Yes. It was very sad. She was an unhappy girl."

Gordon struggled for words:

" I can't believe it! Here's this - person -who just - walks into my life - uninvited! She leaves her things -with me - then disappears! I've never been so worried; this thing's gone on for a whole month!"

He was close to tears. Nothing made any sense anymore:

" She's turned my whole life upside down! So, she's dead, that's what you're telling me?" - Gordon made a gesture of desperation - " Can anyone tell me how it happened? Why did she do it?"

"I think", Hans suggested, " she loses the will to live. I meet her a few times- I think she loses hope."

Marie-Claude nodded her head in agreement: "No-one believed her when she told us she was going to kill herself. She injected herself with an overdose of heroin. It happened very late at night in somebody's apartment over on the Ile de la Cité.

" Could it have been an accident?"

" Perhaps, but everybody knew she was thinking of doing it. Now I remember, it was on a Wednesday. Not the last one but the one before that."

" That's almost two weeks ago! Why didn't she come back to see me? There must have been lots of people she could have turned to! Even Yakoub, in spite of everything! "

"Well sir, you know, she wasn't a friendly person. So far as I know she didn't have a single friend. She just used people, took advantage of them. When they became angry with her she just ran away. Her people over in the United States were rich. I mean really rich!"

" Yeah." Tony interjected, " Like, the military-industrial complex. Like big executives. Corporation presidents, those kinds of dudes."

" Dad, tell you what. ", Bob expanded, " Like - I've known chicks like that from back home.... All over! They're lost, man, like they're really lost! I've seen it all, believe me! They just wander about from one crash pad to another, high on speed and pot. Take it from me: I know the type. Like - they O.D. too, man! You dig what O.D. means, don't you, man? Overdose! Yep!", Bob nodded his head up and down like a Yo-Yo and strained to establish eye contact, " Yeah; uh-huh! And - like - they do

head games on you, too, man. I mean - like they really fuck with your head! A sad case, yeah. You dig, man? A really s-a-a- a-d case!"

Bob crossed his arms defiantly, as do persons who are always sure they know what they're talking about. Even Marie-Claude was revolted. She broke away from him and said:

"Let me get Danielle. She's sitting in the Cafe Popoff on the rue de la Huchette. She knew Judy better than any of us."

She stood up and walked around the corner. In a few minutes she was back with Danielle, a younger, delicate girl who sat down at Gordon's table and responded to his questions. Shy, slender and soft-spoken, Gordon was relieved to be able to talk to somebody who evidenced a measure of self-possession:

"I think she must have been terribly afraid of something.", Danielle explained, "She had no-one to turn to, no-one to confide in. I remember sitting with her a few times, holding her hands while she broke down and cried. She did a few bad trips on LSD. Somehow she got onto hard drugs. She was always trembling with chills. For days she went without eating anything. She always dosed herself near the limit. It's no surprise that she finally went too far."

"We could never get her to go to the Embassy, and she never once wrote to her parents. Now it's too late, isn't it?" Danielle broke into tears and was unable to proceed further. A long silence followed. Gordon's laugh, when it did come, was nervous and embarrassed:

" You're going to find this strange. A week before she died she dropped her suitcase off in my room. I've still got it. It probably contains all that remained of her worldly goods."

" Oh, you must have known her then!" Marie-Claude exclaimed in surprise. All of them looked at him with newfound interest and respect.

" Not really. I bought her a meal and gave her some money once. That was about 4 months ago."

All sat quietly, pondering the strange things that life brings in its wake. Hans remarked:

" Well, sir, maybe she likes you. Maybe, as the expression goes, she thinks of you as the only friend she has in this world."

Gordon considered this for a moment before replying: " You may be right, although the explanation is probably much simpler. Judy may well have intended to return the same night with her associates to set up another crash pad for a few days. She'd probably noticed me walking

about the Quarter or sitting in the Luxemburg Gardens, then remembered me as the person she'd encountered in the Greek restaurant last November. She followed me to my hotel, somehow got hold of my key while I was out, and went into my room to wait. Perhaps she stepped out for only a moment, intending to return; then one thing led to another. She lost track of me and the suitcase and decided at some point that it was time to put an end to herself.

"That's what makes the most sense; there may be other possibilities."

Gordon picked up their checks along with his own. Everyone stood up to leave at the same time. Just before going off, Gordon turned to them for one last time and cried out:

" But God dammit! Why the hell didn't she _____? "

The utterance was left unfinished. He'd realized how pointless it was.

7. February 1975

Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

Taking wing from Philadelphia, midst engulfing landscapes of visitation and vision, Chaos quickly traversed Pennsylvania by hitchhiking and on foot. Hallucinations malevolent and angelic were his companions of the road. At the heart of his despair, combined with unrelieved presentiments of danger, there bubbled a current of euphoria, perpetually-renewed, a knack for the sublimely ridiculous.

Although tribulation percolated through every stray thought, Chaos feared nothing in the external world. In common with the rest of humanity, he nurtured a private shame on the subject of his coward heart. He wasn't very strong physically, though not disabled. With respect to all physical activity he had always had the sense of being an actor in some amateur theater production.

Thus Chaos had always dreamed of being fearless; and paranoia instills an indomitable conviction of invulnerability. One imagines oneself the vessel of superpowers denied the common run of humanity. It is understandable that he would interpret all offers of help as transparent schemes to steal his prowess.

When King Lear's daughters lock him out of the fortress into the approaching storm it is we, as spectators, who are distressed by the cruelty of their conduct and the helplessness of its victim. Lear himself is impervious to any mere thunderstorm. Such delusions may carry rhetorical power: a sincerely maintained conviction of invulnerability can go a long way towards convincing others of its' validity. It is the means by which the fantasies of crazy dictators achieve a spell-binding power over the masses.

On the outskirts of the town of Columbia, PA, in the encroaching twilight of an icy February day a born-again Christian driving a pickup truck and trailer saw Chaos standing by a country road. He gave him a lift. Chaos spent the night in his trailer. As with many people Chaos would encounter on his journey, his host made token efforts to convert him to fundamentalist Christianity. It appears that most of the population of southwestern Pennsylvania is a Baptist fundamentalist. The intentions of these missionaries were not malevolent. They'd understood, with far more insight than family or psychiatrists, that Chaos was deeply troubled. They were only doing their duty to suggest that palliatives from the New Testament might be of benefit to his soul.

The following morning Chaos was dropped off at a street corner in downtown Beaver Falls. This is a town just to the north of Pittsburgh, at the conjunction of the Beaver and Ohio rivers. Soon afterwards he entered a diner near the bridge over the Beaver River that connects Beaver Falls with the neighboring town of New Brighton. He sat at the counter, hunched over and silent. He was not alone; his entrance had generated some agitation in the group of truck drivers seated in a booth against the side wall. In fact they were taking up a collection. One of them stepped up to Chaos and, in an apologetic voice, passed him \$3 for breakfast. It had been like this all through this journey. Chaos rarely had to beg. He just happened to look the way he did.

It took him over an hour to finish breakfast. Then he left the diner to take a stroll along the main thoroughfare. People that he'd never met before greeted him, saying hello and waving to him. This came as something of a surprise: alienated as he was from himself, he'd taken it for granted that he would be just as alien to anyone else. Many years later he concluded that out that he'd been taken for a college professor. Beaver Falls is a college town; the (evangelical Christian) Geneva College was just up the hill. He looked like a professor; he even talked like one.

Despite this apparent friendliness there was no doubt in his mind that the forces of evil remained omnipresent. As Chaos walked the streets he paid close attention to street signs, posters, the advertizing in store windows, and road indicators. These were interpreted as messages from higher agencies, telling him what he had to do next, or where he had to go. He'd altered his route any number of times on the basis of a few words perceived on the menu sitting in the window of a restaurant.

This preoccupation with messages from the beyond was not without its drawbacks. A few days later he came across a placard on the side of a long building that brought him to a complete stop. It caused him to avoid that part of Beaver Falls for several days. The sign stretched the length of the side wall. Its large letters read:

American Red Cross

Such a message is frightening enough to normal people. To Chaos it was petrifying. The words by themselves were bad enough; it was the cross-referencing of associations they'd evoked which had made it impossible for him to proceed further:

AMERICAN Exxon; Bell Telephone; Ford Motor Company Nelson Rockefeller, president of Exxon, (the company whose logo is the double-cross.) ;

RED Genocide, American Indians; Aztec human sacrifice ; Communism; KGB ; Blood

CROSS Crucifixion ; Anti-Semitism; the Exxon double-cross; the Anglo-Saxon establishment; Karma; Fate

Obvious associations: most of us do not break into a cold sweat when confronted with so much menace in a single short message. Word games, the traditional recreation of poets and psychotics, can be a substitute for normal thinking. That, too, is not always a bad thing.

By late afternoon Chaos had become acutely aware of the freezing weather and a gnawing hunger; without hesitation, he walked onto the nearest porch and knocked at the door. A woman lifted the shade of a low window to see who was there; then she came to the front door and opened it a crack. She kept her body wedged in the doorway. The interior, filled with shadows and suggestions of dense accumulations of cobwebs, did not look inviting;

"My husband will be back later." she said, as if that put an end to the matter. Since Chaos remained on the porch, lost in his clanking reveries, she called the police.

An elderly policeman drove him in a squad car down to the station. The walls of the holding tank were covered with graffiti: lots of food for interpretive gymnastics. Chaos used them to figure out the history of the world for another century. A cup of coffee was given to him with rather bad grace; room service in this hotel was definitely not up to standard. While he lay on a cot the cops ran a computer scan on him. The extra-galactic supervisors in Washington informed the clone-cops of Beaver Falls that the time had not yet come for Chaos to be destroyed.

The aged cop, not an unkindly man, drove Chaos back to the downtown and left him off on a street corner. Before letting him go the cop delivered a standard lecture, the gist of which was that the old days of tramps and hobos were long past. It was time for him to settle down. Then he told him to get out of town within 24 hours. As the warning didn't make any sense it was ignored.

In any case, the warning appears to have been *pro forma*. A few days later Chaos was adopted by an evangelical shelter called "Fishers For Boys" in New Brighton. Underneath the sign above the door was a

kindly epigram: "Jesus Ain't Heavy; He's Your Brother". As long as he stayed there the cops didn't bother him.

That evening, after his release from jail, Chaos returned to the diner. Less than 10 minutes after he seated himself in a booth, a middle-aged waitress came over and offered to pay for his dinner. Chaos sat alone with his meal for the next hour, smoking one cigarette after another. Getting up from the table, Chaos got into a conversation with some teenagers gathered around the pinball machines. They thought him a likable fellow. He told them that he was in town looking for a job. They believed him, because he believed it himself. A cute young girl told him that the local hospital was looking for orderlies. When he started to leave they wished him good luck. Convinced he had at long last re-entered the mainstream, Chaos left a large tip for the waitress. Then he returned to the embrace of the chilly night.

It was getting onto 9 PM. Thoroughly disoriented, Chaos waltzed back into the downtown. He well deserved his name of Chaos. Among other strange notions, he believed that the phenomenal world is a multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle of interpenetrating schemes of symbolic manipulation, all of them rooted in his own uniqueness.

Not a soul was out on the street (Since in the darkness of his present state he couldn't see his own soul, this is not a contradiction). A living presence was evidenced by the glimmering lights of bars and nightclubs. Chaos didn't know a single inhabitant of Beaver Falls. Before that morning he hadn't known of the existence of a town named Beaver Falls.

He really needed to come in from the cold.

What did he do?

This visionary nomad, buoyed up on inspiration alone, walked down a residential street. Proceeding systematically, he knocked on each door in turn. It was his intention to ask if he could spend the night in someone's basement. The recent spell of incarceration in the local jail had taught him nothing! This time he was lucky.

The first two attempts were greeted with silence. At the third house the door was opened by a college student. After a brief conversation the student sized him up as a wandering destitute romantic poet, a charming, perfectly sane stranger who happened to have ended up homeless in his town. He walked Chaos down to a hotel on Main

Street and paid him into a room. Then he invited him to a drink at the bar in the hotel lobby.

The lobby was barren and sleazy. In a corner to the left of the door a weather-worn alcoholic sat watching the TV. Chaos immediately understood that the program he was watching was sending him messages from the Montreal-Washington axis, re-transmitted to Chaos via by the tall century plant leaning over in a pot at the back of the lobby. Chaos understood what was in these messages: they revealed that the college student was an agent of the force fields governing the cosmos. It was these demonic agencies which had brought about, through a series of planned coincidences, his arrival at this very hotel on that very night. In a few hours Chaos could expect to experience death preceded by prolonged and horrible tortures.

No cause for alarm: Chaos had imagined this fate at every ride, stopover, hotel, shelter, soup kitchen and flophouse in his freakish flight from Philadelphia. The scenario had become so familiar that he'd gotten to playing around with it. That man sitting at the far end of the bar: obviously he was the executioner. There, hidden underneath the counter were the instruments of torture. As he sipped his whiskey his mind galloped off in a riot of confused associations. Although it is impossible

to do justice to Chaos' state of delusion, it did not take the expertise an eminent Main Line psychiatrist to realize that alcohol was extremely bad for him. His idealistic host made several attempts to open the depths of Chaos's wisdom, his insights into metaphysical realms, and his eloquent renditions of romantic poetry. All in vain.

Chaos excused himself and got up from the bar to go to the bathroom. It was in a room at the back where they were playing pool. He entered a room crackling with animation and light. What he saw there so terrified him that he nearly ran out of the hotel. His hallucinations made him believe that all the creatures in it looked like monsters: horns, tails, snouts, jowls, fangs. Experiences like this had led him to flee Philadelphia. The theory of interpenetrating symbolic universes made everything plausible. Chaos never doubted its irrefutable logic.

Somehow he made it through this nightmare, did his business, and returned to the bar. His benefactor, deeply disappointed, had finally realized that Chaos, no doubt through haughty pride and artistic arrogance, was not going to dispense any of his wisdom on that particular night. He got up and left. Soon afterwards, Chaos made his way up the staircase to a dark landing to take possession of his room. He crawled under the covers of a huge creaking bed with broken springs. He

did take off his shoes. He did not remove any item of clothing or loosen his belt. The light remained on throughout the night.

It can get rather boring waiting for inevitable tortures. Chaos closed his eyes and almost immediately fell asleep.

II. Valentine's Day

It came to pass, through a chain of events straining verisimilitude to its limits, that, on the afternoon of Valentine's Day, February 14th, 1975, a notable loony chanced to be seated at the lunch counter of a department store in the downtown shopping district of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. It was his way of taking a break from tramping through the streets in confusion and despair.

The loony had been attracted to the store by the galaxies of cardboard hearts of many shapes and sizes on display, in its windows and throughout the store. Seated at the lunch counter over an endless cup of coffee, his fascinated gaze encompassed the multitudes of rosy-red Valentine hearts dangling over counters and tables, or as candy boxes within glass display cases, in the bins holding greeting cards, rolls of gift wrapping papers, stationary and trinkets - myriads upon myriads of proud little hearts pulsing like bubbles in a sparkling stream!

The shimmering aura arising from all these little hearts dazzled his eyes and soothed his deranged mind. After days of erratic wandering through the winter-ravaged Pennsylvania countryside, the loony had found Love.

It is almost superfluous to add that this personage was displaced several standard deviations beyond the run-of-the-mill homegrown loony one could expect to find on the streets of Beaver Falls. Though he'd quit Philadelphia without a stitch of luggage, the loony was dragging a suitcase stuffed with psychic videogames, variations on conspiracy, persecution, man-hunts and assassination plots master-minded by the FBI, CIA , KGB and Mossad, radio and television networks, vengeful psychiatrists and mad doctors, conspiracies of Quebecois separatists, militarists, religious fanatics, and the customary hate groups.

How far someone who has taken leave of his senses can travel in this world on the power of an idea, is a cause for utter astonishment. Consider the situation: since July the loony's mind has been in the grip of delusions and hallucinations that have pursued him like the Eumenides from Montreal to Indiana; then, via Chicago and Toronto, back to Montreal, where he ended up in a strait jacket and under heavy sedation at Montreal General Hospital. It shipped him down to Philadelphia to be with his parents. Six months later he returned spontaneously to the road, fired up by some vague notion of heading out to California and climbing Mount Shasta. He thought it preferable to

vanish in the snows rather than be torn apart by his enemies and the crowds. He had to act quickly: Armageddon, he was certain, was only a few days, perhaps only a few hours, away.

Normally garrulous to a fault, his conversation has been reduced to incoherent mumbling. To outwit his enemies, the loony changes and discards clothing frequently, his shoes in particular, sometimes several times in the same day. In Montreal he ground his glasses underfoot to evade recognition, or perhaps for religious reasons. It left him almost blind. In November, in Philadelphia, he was fitted out with another pair. One should not think that paranoids are unable to learn from experience: the strategy was not repeated. The process of separating out poisoned items of food on one's plate can be painfully time consuming.

Over a period of 5 days he'd walked, staggered and hitch-hiked through Philadelphia, Yeadon, West Chester, Lancaster, York, Gettysburg, Shippingsport and Columbia, to end up in Beaver Falls. He'd hung on there for a week, as the realization came to him that he could go no further. Despite his grandiose ambitions for travel, Beaver Falls was, in point of fact, the end of the line. Tears came spontaneously to the eyes of the compassionate population of Beaver Falls, (and there are many compassionate people in Beaver Falls), merely through

watching him walk down the street. Without their help, their dollars and free meals, their couches and contacts, he would have perished in the snows.

Sitting at the lunch counter, he understood at last that his real need, all along, had been for the warm interior of a small town department store filled with little red Valentine hearts, an ocean of tiny yummy love candies which, without any need for lengthy expostulations, learned analyses, or preambles of critical assessment, supplied a tiny corner of the universe in which there was a God Who Cared.

A couple came into the store and sat at the lunch counter to his right. In strong contrast to the loony and his appalling disarray, both man and woman were showered and well-dressed in new clothing. They also knew something he didn't, which was that his powerful reek could affect others. The couple itself was painfully aware of his reek, along with other anti-social habits, like talking to himself and making strange gestures in the air, but affected to take no notice of him. It was, after all, Valentine's Day; and they may have been in love. Between intervals of staring into empty space with his eyes closed, and a kind of bored

waiting for death, he gazed at the young middle-American couple with moist eyes brimming over with devotion.

"LOVE!" he thought to himself, "That's where it's at! To be just like them!"

Subsequent events will reveal that the gentleman to his right had an excessively good heart. Given that it is difficult to be good-hearted when one is trying to impress an attractive woman, his initial reaction to the embarrassing presence of the individual to his left was a grimace of annoyance, followed by an attempt to ignore him.

Yet there was little hope that he could continue to do so for too long. For one thing, the loony had an odd way of staring at them. In this souped-up environment, this dense syrup flowing with so many little valiant hearts, with embers and sparks swarming upwards from the blazing foyers of Love, the loony had idealized then as the hierophany of carnal love hypostatized and incarnate, direct projections from the realm of Platonic ideas onto the movie screens of the phenomenal cosmos.

Excuse this admittedly strange reflection; for, you see, the loony was an intellectual. At various times he'd read or re-read works by Plato, Kant, Sir James Frazer, Cassirer and Eliade. He could have even told you

what “hypostatize” means. His yearning to gain entrance into their cloud of romance had temporarily focused a mind in which disoriented thoughts and emotions surged at random.

It was by reflex action rather than design that the loony began imitating their gestures and actions. When the charming woman asked the waitress for a glass of water, he also asked for a glass of water. When her companion lit up a cigarette, he too lit up a cigarette. But it was after he'd ordered a plate of chocolate chip ice-cream and, in close imitation, the loony also ordered a plate of chocolate chip ice-cream, that it finally dawned on the man that, despite his optimism, broad smile and recently pressed blue winter coat, something was rotten in the state of Pennsylvania.

"Hello? What's your name?"

The gentleman had taken the initiative by opening the conversation with the stranger to his left, the one in the torn and filthy, though sturdy wind-breaker jacket which had been given to him by the manager of a short-order food stand on the outskirts of Lancaster, the one who had not bathed for a month because he believed that the bathwater might electrocute him.

"Do you come from around here? Where are you staying?"

It isn't clear whether the loony mumbled a reply or merely shook his head in the negative.

"Where are you from?"

Philadelphia. He must have said at least that much.

"Do you want to go back there? Can I call your folks and have them send you the money for the bus?"

Broken and exhausted, resigned to his fate, yet glad to have found a friend, the loony nodded dumb assent.

"Come on; give me the phone number and I'll call them."

The loony wrote out the number on a piece of paper. The gentleman picked it up, excused himself temporarily from his friend, then went outside the store to a telephone booth to make a call to Philadelphia.

This much was learned about the gentle man while they sat in his car and he drove the loony over to the hospital of the Mental Health Association of Beaver Valley. He was the manager of the local concession of Logos Bookstore chain, selling Christian literature. Once a candidate

for the priesthood, studying in a Jesuit seminary, he'd dropped out, no doubt faulting himself for failing to make the grade; or he may have decided that he enjoyed secular life more.

Or there may have been other causes which the loony, his hearing warped by the inflammation of his brain, didn't understand. No doubt the man had been on a Valentine's date with the young lady. It has often been observed that a lapsed priest is twice a priest. The decision to come to the aid of a wretched fellow creature encountered on his path had been made with very little hesitation.

What follows is a reconstruction of the telephone call, based on attitudes and opinions known to have prevailed at the time of these events.

The book store manager dialed the operator to put a call through to Philadelphia. A few minutes passed; then the ringing was answered at the other end by an anxious, suspicious woman's voice:

"Hello. Who is this?"

"How do you do? My name is ----. I'm calling from Beaver Falls, a town near Pittsburgh. Your son is sitting next to me at the lunch counter of a department store."

"Oh. Thank you. We were wondering what happened to him."

"He's in terrible shape. Is he mentally ill?"

"Yes. He's crazy."

"How long has he been wandering around like this?"

"What's your interest in him? What business is it of yours?"

"Well. I thought that perhaps he ought to be sent back to Philadelphia, where his own people can look after him. He's completely lost here in Beaver Falls."

"So ? I still don't see what you want from us."

"Do you think you could send the money for a bus to take him home?"

"I'm afraid not. He's a grown man now. He's 36 years old. He should be able to take care of himself."

"I hate to intrude on private family matters, Mrs. ---. He doesn't know a soul here in Beaver Falls. He's completely destitute. In fact he's lucky to be still alive. It's hard to believe that you would abandon your son for the sake of a few dollars. He seems to be well educated, someone who can still be a useful member of society."

"How dare you say we haven't given him any money! We've spent thousands on him! He's always failed at everything. He's very smart, but he's a bum. After years of going from one thing to another he finally found himself a fiancée and a good job as a radio announcer in Montreal. A year later he cracked up. That's not our fault.

"But we tried to help him anyway. We brought him down from Montreal on a plane. We put him into the Philadelphia Psychiatric Institute: it's the best mental hospital in the city. We're still waiting to be reimbursed by my husband's medical plan! Then he stayed with us for a few months. He wasn't getting any better. It was costing us money every day, all wasted. So I gave him \$200 and told him that was it, for good! That was our last payment on our obligation to him! "

The lapsed seminarian, manager of Logos Books in Beaver Falls, PA, stared at the telephone receiver in a state of shock.

"Okay, Mrs. ---. Is there anything more that you want to add?"

"I don't want you to think that we don't love our son! We love him very much! He never listened to us and ruined his life. We appreciate very much what you're doing for him. But please, in the future leave us out of it. I resent very much the implication that we don't love our son."

"Are you short of funds? Is that the problem?"

"Goodbye." The woman, wife of an eminent retired professor, mistress of an elegant 3-story house in the upper crust neighborhood adjacent to Rittenhouse Square, hung up.

The bookstore manager saw to it that the aforesaid loony was safely delivered to the Beaver Falls Mental Health Association asylum. He asked the doctors to keep him informed of new developments. About a week later he visited the new inmate. Before leaving he shoved a copy of the New Testament ("Good News" for Modern Man") into his hands. Over the next few weeks, before being returned to Philadelphia and a succession of half-way houses there, the loony did peruse the book. Whatever its merits or failings, at least it wasn't psychiatry.

8. Cambridge, Massachusetts May, 1980

A. The Delusion of Juan Rodriguez

John Bertrand's legs are damaged. Short and physically weak, he needs crutches and leg braces to move about. When I got to know him John was enrolled at the Harvard School of Engineering. This was not his first choice of occupation. Despite his handicap he was determined to support his wife and two children; his fierce, perhaps unrealistic demand for independence could be frightening at times. He'd therefore come to the conclusion that living on what he earned as a graphic artist was not to be thought of. After I'd known him for about a month he invited me to dinner at his apartment in Somerville to meet the rest of his family.

The bus picked us up at that locus which, if not the geographic center, may be called the barycenter of the Harvard campus. The intersection of Kirkland and Oxford Streets sits at the confluence of the School of Architecture, the post-Victorian Saunders Memorial Auditorium, the Busch-Reisinger Museum of Medieval Art, and the dipsomaniacal Science Center designed by Bauhaus conscript José Luis Sert.

The bus rumbled along Kirkland Street as far as Inman Square and its neighborhood of Portuguese immigrants, then turned left into the rough industrial slums that cover most of Somerville. Trainyards stand less than a block away from the building that held John's apartment. Only the day before they had been the site of a major ecodisaster. A diesel engine had collided with and ruptured the steel membrane of a tank car, releasing thousands of gallons of phosphorus trichloride into the atmosphere. The whole neighborhood had to be evacuated. The gas vaporizes instantly on contact with the atmosphere. A complex chemical reaction with water produces hydrochloric acid, with potentially toxic, even lethal effects to flesh and eyes. John was returning home after thirty hours of exile.

We got off the bus and crossed the street. His building was situated at some distance along a winding incline. In another time and place it might have led to the ramparts of a castle. We were not unnoticed as we started up the street. The man approaching us was unlikely to have been gyrating about the sidewalk in the odd, random fashion that he'd adopted had he not been drunk. He was Afro-Hispanic; robust; garbed in a tan overcoat, his head decorated by a knitted green cap. Despite his evident befuddlement, there was an urgent purposefulness in the

manner in which he accosted us. On the other hand, he may just have wanted someone to talk to:

".... This here whitey just as much as told me he could pay me what he feels like, 'cause I's a black man... " - he cut off my response - "Cool it, man!he didn't say it just like that, naturally...but you knows how you mother-fucken whiteys talk..... "

Evidently conversation was going to be difficult. It did not escape me however that exposing himself immediately afterwards to the injustices of yet two more mother-fucken whiteys took a bit of courage:

"I learned how to kill people in Korea."

Two frail and timorous intellectuals, Bertrand and Lisker, plodded their way in silence up the steep path, goaded by their strange companion. In response to the man's last observation, I tried to explain to him how students throughout history have always resented training which cannot later be applied to remunerative employment. Yet he'd already wandered into other pastures:

"You wanna to know somethin' about my wife? I'll tell you about her. When I was away in Korea, outta her sight? : Man! she was the world's biggest whore. But I don't blame her none. Cause, before I left

her I fucked her into bad health! Then they sends me over there to kill people. She weren't no saint, but lookit man, I weren't no saint neither... DOES YOU HEAR ME? "He shouted as if he expected his words to reach the heavenly courts where ultimate justice is dispensed:

"I sends her \$8000 from what they pays me over there...and she done spent every goddamn last penny of it...

"So I gets back, right? I says to her: You gimme a child! I wants you to make me a child! And so she did, dammit: a beautiful girl-child. I raises her for two years...but DAMN if her mother, that cock-sucking whore, don't steal her away from me and run off to California!

"But I got even, later.'Cause, a few years after that she drops dead, caus' a drinking and bein' a whore; and so I gets my daughter back. I raises her alone. All by myself! .. Until 4 years ago when I kicks her ass outta the house and sends her off to live with my sister-in-law down in Baltimore..."

A true story, a moving story, graphically related. Would he now, having gotten the sad story of his unhappy life off his chest, now leave us alone?

"I was a PARATROOPER! ... You heard me right! I killed all kinds of people! They calls me a warrior! ...You know what that means?"

His facial muscles stiff and distended with rage, his eyes flashing belligerence, the stranger blocked the road, leaning up against us with defiance, covering us with his whiskey breath. One hand was already contracted into a fist; the index finger of the other jabbed at the air like a stiletto:

"You better LISTEN to me! I don't think I'm GETTING THROUGH to you! I DON'T LIKE IT when people FUCKS with me!"

Then, just as suddenly, he stepped out of our path, his posture of violence liquefying into sheepish indolence through the same aleatoric rhythm governing the sequences of all his changes. He allowed us to continue up the street, though staying close to us, unburdening his soul to our cost right up to the steps and railings of the building holding John's apartment on the second floor.

To this day I don't understand how I could have so misread him as to believe that he would now leave us in peace. In fact this was the crowning moment of theater for which he'd reserved his full powers as an actor: the scene before the door.

"An Army instructor in Maine taught me how to snap necks."

John's hands were trembling as he reached for the keys.

"You got any books to sell? You know, man, real books, nice books." At first I thought maybe he meant pornography, but he staggered away from the railing and began babbling away about "philosophy books" and "deep books" and "nice things" and "antiques". His mind moved mysteriously about paths of free association until it became trapped in a cul-de-sac, a strange delusion from which it could not be pried loose:

He was convinced that John owned the building he lived in. This being the case, he intended to brow-beat John into selling him all the wooden trim around the windows and doors. He claimed to have contacts with antique dealers who would pay him well for such things. Over and over again John explained that he was not the owner of the building. Given our state of terror, his patience was exemplary. Perhaps a life of struggle with paralysis had conditioned him to deal with bouts of prolonged stress.

Our tormentor demanded pen and paper and wrote down his name: Juan Rodriguez. He started to add his address and telephone

number. Once again he seemed to forget what he was doing and stepped aside to let us enter the building. Then he crowded us into the doorway. He insisted we invite him in and serve him a cup of coffee. He changed his mind again: now he wanted us to go back out onto the street and share a cigarette with him. He demanded that we accompany him to the nearest bar and buy him a drink. As if in preparation to swinging at us, he clenched his fists and took some potshots in our direction.

The situation had become desperate. I dare not speculate as to what might have happened to us had not another of the building's residents come along just then. A humorless heavysset individual, he seemed to have little of Juan's imagination but a considerably more pragmatic approach to life. The three of us were able to lock poor Juan Rodriguez out into the cold.

Reflecting upon the incident over the years it's my opinion that Juan Rodriguez should be given tenure at some small elite New England college. His teaching methods need some polishing, and he certainly showed he 'weren't no saint'. Still, John Bertrand and I learned more from him in those critical 15 minutes than in many a week of sitting around in classrooms.

9. San Francisco, January 1984

Bay Area Sketches

A. The Post Hotel

The Post Hotel provides a refuge for the down-and-out, the transient, the desperate and the abandoned. At this time in our history people fitting all of these descriptions may commonly be seen moving about the core of downtown San Francisco , which, like most of the downtown areas of America's big cities , is extensively rotted away.

Though rarely desirable, desperation, abandonment and transience are not always bad things. Some pious moralists claim that they make for a better kind of human being than conventional stability and rootedness. The amount of virtue in their situation is increased, no doubt, by the fact that most Americans treat them as if they were carriers of a contagious disease.

Let us try, if at all possible, to avoid moralizing. Speaking for the defense, the population of the Post Hotel is no more desperate, transient and abandoned than the neighborhood in which it stakes its claim, right at the intersection of Post and Polk. That this neighborhood lies on the boundary of San Francisco's famous tenderloin introduces a further

attraction, that of danger, rendering it as lurid as it is unsavory. There isn't anyone who doesn't look dangerous on these streets, jolly with prostitutes, cut-throats and bawdy houses, drunks and insolent street punks trying to appear as tough as their imaginations will permit; though to my mind they are already quite tough enough for most purposes.

Shielding the interior of the Post Hotel from the street stands a grilled metal door. Every resident has a key to this door. The lock emits a disquieting sound when rattled. In other particulars as well this door does not inspire confidence. Anyone sitting in the lobby on the second floor will observe people walking in off the streets at any time of the day and night. The inhabitants are in no danger: the protection provided by staying at the Post Hotel resides in the fact that no gangster with any professional pride would waste a minute sticking up a dive, no resident of which boasts of either possession or purse.

You enter, stomp the dirt off your boots in the lobby and ascend the stairs. At the top stands a set of Dutch doors enclosing the reception office. Behind the registration desk sits the night-clerk, Jamal. In the scale of humanity, Jamal is a radiate gem. By my second night in residence at the Post it became horribly clear to me that , were it not for

Jamal's inventive bookkeeping, everybody staying at the Post would be (in the baseball sense) "out" on the street. I never asked Jamal how much he made at his job; it is not unreasonable to suggest that he gave away more than his salary. Hard-headed businessmen might argue this isn't possible. One must not forget that saints have superpowers transcending mere possibility.

When I got to know Jamal, a black hippie, he'd probably spent a decade or two in the Haight-Asbury area coming to terms with the doctrine of Enlightenment-via-LSD as promulgated in the 60's and 70's . He was short, bony yet stocky, with thick Afro hair, large arms and hands, and an ingratiating smile of intelligence. On my first night at the Post I watched as Jamal paid for someone's rent out of his own pocket; doctored the books to allow someone to stay on an extra night; advised yet another resident to pay for a week in advance because he knew that the landlord intended to spring a surprise rent hike over the next few days; accepted a week's rent two months after the fact. Other irrational and suspicious deeds of the same nature were no doubt being conducted while I was out of the office.

On my second night at the Post I witnessed him advancing \$5 to one man; receiving \$100 in long delayed back rent from another; and

doctoring the books in my behalf so I could stay an extra night. By the morning of the third day I'd become ashamed of exploiting his generosity and, migrating to Berkeley, returned to the more honorable expedient of embarrassing academics.

Not all of Jamal's activities were sedentary. In 15 minute intervals he jumped off his seat. Leaning over the upper portion of the Dutch door he bellowed into the corridor:

"Peaches! Go to bed!"

More than once he left me in charge of the office to confront Peaches in the corridor:

"Peaches! You'd better go upstairs and go to bed! "

"I've had it! ", he swore when he returned to the office "Tomorrow I'm throwing Peaches out! I don't have to put up with this stuff! "

Knowing Jamal, I doubt he would have had the heart to put a cockroach out into the sinister world of Polk and Post, let alone poor Peaches. As I soon discovered, 'Peaches' was the moniker for a big, bold and brassy transsexual. He was arrogant and ridiculous in turn, a combination relieved by his possession of a rich sense of the ridiculous. He promised to be a "good girl", then went upstairs as if to bed. 15

minutes later as I walked down the corridor towards the room to which I'd been assigned, I became the involuntary witness of Peaches taking a crap. He'd left the door of the tight closet housing the bathroom wide open. Upon seeing me he jumped up, simulating a mixture of play-acting and horror, as I ran down the hall, laughing.

A few hours later Peaches showed up to share, with several other individuals, the room Jamal had given me for the night: number 7. Seven is a number that is sacred to the superstitious. Heptagons cannot be constructed with ruler and compass. There are 7 factors to Enlightenment. Either good or bad luck, its claims are never indifferent. That night's luck was distributed in unequal proportions, mine not being the worst by any means. My stay in room 7 was made memorable by a party lasting until 2 in the morning. The bottle of vodka was contributed by Peaches. Discretion forbade that one inquire too closely, or at all, into his means of acquiring it. Furthermore the question of its original ownership is a rhetorical one, given that I don't much like vodka. On this occasion I would not have shared in its comfort and cheer in any case. Survival dictates that one develops a good instinct for knowing when to play the puritan.

Among the gladsome revelers were room-mates Jim and Jared, a prostitute named Laurie that Jim had hired from off the street, and of course Peaches. Later that night, while I continued pretending to be asleep, Laurie was brutally tossed out into the cold.

It is time that we take a brief stroll of the hotel's interior. The term "firetrap" would be a pallid euphemism, and this was not the sort of palace that tolerated euphemisms. No provision had been made anywhere for escape. The windows, all of them interior, did not open up into fire-escapes, alleyways or even sidewalks, but into narrow sealed-up asphalt trenches only a few feet deep and filled with beer cans and other trash. This did not deter the proclivities of smokers, who were in the majority. Since the room lights were rarely, if ever, extinguished, one can safely (or not so safely) assume that several dozen cigarettes were kept burning at every hour of the day and night. Even Jamal chain smoked like an unregulated power plant: can anyone blame him?

All of the corridors were thinly wedged between a containing wall on one side and a solemn procession of bruised and damaged doors flaking yellow paint on the other. No keys were issued for the rooms. They would have been superfluous given that the locks, when there were any, didn't function. The Post issued no towels, sheets, pillowcases

or toilet paper. I slept rolled up in a cotton blanket, on a bare broken-sprung mattress. The other residents worked out their own solutions.

To be absolutely fair in such matters: during my brief sojourn I didn't notice even a single cockroach in the Post. They may have been out for a night on the town. The Post was dirty enough, certainly, to house many generations of cockroaches, whole tribes, even empires. None being visible, one can only pity the wretched cockroaches who had not the common sense to come in from so dangerous a location as Post and Polk. Certainly one must be grateful for the presence of the saintly Jamal for a labor of love and insecticide inconceivable to mere mortals.

B. The Red-light District

Midnight, March 22, 1984

San Francisco's fabled "Sin City" lies to the north of the intersection of Columbus and Broadway, across the street from Chinatown and less than a block away from City Lights Bookstore. A panorama of gleaming neon signs drew me inexorably to squalid aisles lined with flesh temples of lurid demeanor:

!! The CONDOR !!

!! The ROARING TWENTIES!!

!! PIGALLE!!

!!THE HUNGRY EYE!!

!!THE WORLD'S BEST MALE STRIPPER ACT!

!!SEXATIONAL ACTS!!

!!MAN & WOMAN LOVE ACTS!!

From a distance I could make out a crowd gathered in front of *The Roaring Twenties*. Were there really that many sex-starved males in the Bay Area eager to do business with this establishment? An idle reflection, certainly: "johns" in puritanical America, (in contrast to the open spectacle of brothels in some European countries) are not encouraged to make a public display of their participation in the traffic of bodies. Furthermore, when I came closer it could be observed that the number of women in the crowd was comparable to that of the men. Could there have been a fire, even a murder, in one of the clubs? Answers to these questions were not forthcoming until I penetrated its outer limits and discovered that it contained two sorts of individuals: spectators to, and extras in, the making of a movie.

The movie set, complete with traveling tracks, extended a full city block. Starting at the leading edge of The Roaring 20's at the corner of Columbus and Broadway, it continued along the length of the long proscenium of The Condor up to the corner of Romolo Street and the entrance to The Hungry Eye .

Technicians swarmed over the track and around the cameras. Prominently visible by virtue of his black beret and orange vest of polyester a staff member could be seen moving up and down the street, directing and mollifying the groups of spectators. He appeared very much in charge. Tall, muscular and agitated, his bright eyes glowed in a shrewd, yet friendly face tarnished by a day's growth of beard. The excitement of watching the film-making, mingling with the extras, gawking at the night-life and observing the reactions of the crowds captivated me until 3 in the morning.

I found myself standing next to one of the extras: a short man, not much above 5 feet, balding, stolid, draped by a grey trench coat that could only have come direct from the costume shop. I asked him to tell me something about the movie. He honestly confessed that he didn't have much to tell. It was being produced by Columbia Films. The director, Jerry Schatzberg was known to the public from *Panic in Needle Park*. The title was familiar though I knew nothing about it: I like movies but rarely go to them, preferring to sample a century's accumulation of classics available from the public library.

For the moment the film-in-process was being called "No Simple Affair", which to me frankly sounded so phony that one could imagine it

being used in a satire on Hollywood. That Hollywood parodies itself in its every gesture is so familiar to us that, were it not so true, the very mention of it would appear tedious. Even the story line was not yet fully worked out, save that it concerned a young free-lance photographer who falls in love with one of the nude dancers. All of the actors were relative unknowns: no celebrities, no glamorous stars.

Multiple inversions of what is traditionally deemed 'reality' were witnessed in the spectacle unfolding through the night. So great was the estrangement between the fictive and the real - (the reality of fiction as exemplified in the imaginative antics of transvestites and exhibitionists strolling the area; the demeaning of the imaginative to gratify the dull calculations of profit by studios and distributors) - that one can easily understand how I might come away feeling that only the imagination is real, and that all real things are falsehoods. Needless to say, I'd believed this implicitly long before I got there.

All of the actors and extras were costumed, so it was an easy matter to distinguish them from both the spectators and the circumambulate nightlife of the district: they were the ones who looked so drab relative to the world about them! An ensemble of actors and extras tricked out in hum-drum attire, exemplifying hum-drum attitudes, was being set

against a background in which was concentrated all that was most exotic, extravagant and flamboyant! For starters, most of the male actors and many of the women were dressed in trench-coats that must have just been taken out of the back of the delivery van from the dry cleaners'.

Looking around, I didn't notice any of the neighborhood residents wearing laundered trench-coats. A Mafia hood might possibly do so, although popular mythology tends to dress them up in black leather jackets, slicked hair and sunglasses. Instead I observed prostitutes strolling by in flimsies of every texture and textile; big-boned transvestites outrageously attired, bearing huge and outlandish wigs, furry as raccoon muffs, decorated with garish red streaks; pom-poms, lace, thick make-up, rouge , lipstick; also tough street types: pimps; barkers; punks; drunks; cops; thugs. With admirable determination and thoroughness, the film-makers blocked out every sound, sight or smell associated with this intensely pungent world.

How American! It is we alone who wrap our cheeses in plastic, guaranteeing that they will be without taste or aroma; tasteless; who take showers every day to cleanse mind and body of all sauce and spice; who churn out stale TV docudramas and painfully predictable movies, dreary magazines and pulp fiction in endless quantities ; who have

invented the plastic smile and the limp handshake; junk food; junk religion; junk journalism; junk bonds;

.... Junk Truck Junk Truck Junk Truck Junk Truck Junk Truck Junk Truck...

How extraordinary it was to be able to witness the manufacture of *Plastique Ameriqwahna* before my very eyes!! Apart from the trench-coats there was scarcely a single item of clothing free of banality or artifice. The stuff was all too clean, too new. Purses all too obviously stuffed with paper. Trite color-matching schemes in evidence everywhere, socks against corduroy jeans against green sweaters. Ubiquitous umbrellas that never had and never would be opened. Running true to stereotype, the Afro-Americans were dressed in slightly more colorful ways than the Euro-Americans. Nor were there any Chinese or Japanese in this crowd scene on the borderline of San Francisco's world- famous Chinatown.

The impression the director was trying to create appeared to be that of a typical New York City West Village scene, say along 6th Avenue around 12th, composed of office workers, students, commercial artists and so forth, who just happened to be walking around in circles in the vicinity of the famed sex palaces of San Francisco! That the director

might envisage such a crowd 'strolling' before gaudy brothels on its lunch-break seemed to me the height of absurdity. Real human beings are either fascinated embarrassed, saddened or repulsed by such a proximity. One expected leers, stares, blushes, grimaces, annoyance, even fear. Instead we were invited to watch a sea of blank visages shorn of all expression.

Inside the doorway, across the entrance to the Roaring Twenties there rustled a red velvet curtain edged with gold trim. Before this sat a semi-nude girl who must have been in her 20's. Enticingly she dangled a leg, a bit of face, an inviting arm. Soon another thrust her face through the curtain. Bobbing her head up and down, she ogled about foolishly like a drunk sheep. A third strutted by, flaunting her black flimsies and a 'primitive' Amazonian string skirt. Shortly afterwards, all 3 disappeared in the darkness to be quickly replaced by others.

Out on the street, before the door stood another young man: the barker. Grey suit, black shirt, lemon sherbet tie. His blond hair and gross mouth gave him the aspect of a grown-up juvenile. Full of brass. Unfocusing blue eyes and a twisted gaze. Not hardened or sinister, really: just a two-bit punk with a deformed conscience.

To the right of the door 4 extras, all women, were sitting on a concrete ledge. They were cold, tired and bored; no doubt they'd been out there for hours. One of them, somewhat taller than the others, was shivering. She stood up, stubbed out her cigarette, and began walking rapidly back and forth in front of the door of The Roaring Twenties with her hands in the pockets of her trench coat. As she passed the curtained entrance the young barker tried to cajole her to come inside. For response he received a hard, hostile stare. Her message to him, reinforced by the wincing of her face and shrug of her shoulders, was unmistakable: I'm in a film about your world, you criminal punk, but I'm not part of your world.

I noticed a stocky San Francisco cop, on assignment to the set, standing by my elbow. He was massively built, tough-faced, apparently unhappy with his assignment, not sure of what attitude to assume. He, at least, was up and running in the costume capers: bulging revolver, club, walky-talky, cartridge belt and, no doubt, tear gas and Mace.

Unaware of his surroundings an elderly drunk, dressed like a sailor, had marched insolently into the thick of the merry-go-round. He walked up and down the set, waving his arms and talking to himself in a loud voice. His intentions appeared harmless. It seemed that he just

wanted to join the fun. Certainly he brought a level of authenticity to the dull, mechanized routine. Alas! The cop seized the drunk. In an instant he was yanked out of the procession. One of the man's arms was twisted behind his back and he was pushed out into the street. Once away from the set he was released with a warning. Twenty minutes later I saw him on the other side of Broadway, fishing through a garbage can.

Now the actor portraying the role of the young photographer stepped up into the glare of the spotlights. He was crew-cut, dressed in a grey Ivy League suit over which was draped the ubiquitous trench-coat. His contribution for the evening was to stand in the lobby of The Roaring Twenties and appear to be snapping pictures. It was not easy to decide whether his overtly clumsy, *qua* amateur, manner of manipulating the camera was part of his role, or simply an indication of his inability to do otherwise. His acting appeared acceptable. His episode finished, the extras began lining up on the pavement outside the clubs. The signal given, they began marching in both directions, breaking their stride and reversing direction in front of The Hungry Eye. They'd been instructed to walk very rapidly, as if it were winter - no doubt the snow would arrive in the morning, trucked in from the Sierra

Nevada Having reached the end of their circuit , some of the extras bounded across Romolo Street to take a rest on the opposite curb.

A local prostitute followed behind me as I walked the length of the set down to the intersection of Broadway and Columbia. She and I were headed to the same place, a small convenience-package store inserted, like other small stores and restaurants coated by the tawdry glow of the district, between two burlesque houses. She was dressed in jungle fatigues, expensive imitations of standard Army/Navy store merchandise. Tall, swaggering, buxom, aggressive. One glance from her was sufficient: Don't mess with me. Had I wanted too, that look would have sufficed to redirect my attentions. I picked up a can of ginger ale at the store and returned to the set. A short distance to the north of the clubs, well above eye level and the bright lights, hung a white sign with blue lettering advertising a Basque restaurant and a little hotel: Marconi's. Beyond the hotel, swerving steeply upwards, one saw only wintry streets, desolate and quiet as the grave.

Most graves anyway.

Two men walked out the front door of the Marconi Hotel. Emerging from the dark veil of secrecy of the brothel bedroom, they had stepped unknowingly into the glare of movie spotlights! A situation

replete with imaginative possibilities! A married man, unhappy and perhaps disoriented in his life, with little political perspective and an unresolved hostility against women of which he's probably unaware, furtively enters the rendezvous hotel. There he rents woman and room - function and functionality - more or less degrades himself, then tries to slink away. Instead he finds himself an involuntary participant in an international co-production that may well end up in the movie houses of Nairobi, Tashkent, Singapore!

On the second floor of the Marconi, at the windows and above the little sign, a few persons had gathered and were looking out into the street. The event had become fully 3-dimensional. Mirror mirroring mirror-image, in limitless permutations.

I'd seen all that I'd come for. It was time to move on.

10. Monaco, 1986

Princess Grace To The Rescue

It was June 21st, 1986, the date of the French *Festival de la Musique*. I'd checked into a cheap hotel in Cannes. For a week or more I would be wandering the Riviera as an itinerant street musician. The *Festival de la Musique* is *typiquement francais* - as so many things are. More than mere tradition, the festival is on the civil calendar, a true national holiday. From Nancy to Brest, from Toulon to Lille, from Bordeaux to Metz, French citizens are encouraged to promenade about the streets with penny-whistles, accordions, guitars, double-basses, pots-and-pans, spoons, castanets, or - (in default of all else) - their unrestrained voices, to bang, scratch, screech, schnoodle, yell, simper, cry and croon from dawn to dusk. June 21st is the one day on which the French police are restrained by law from proscribing street music. The vagrancy laws against street musicians are rarely enforced here anyway; there will always be the overly- officious cop.

At 8 in the morning, after storing most of my luggage in the train station's lockers at Cannes, I set out on a concert tour that would take me along the eastern part of the Riviera, through Antibes, Nice, Monte-Carlo and Monaco. The journey would terminate at 7 PM in Menton, virtually

on the Italian border. My equipment consisted of a violin, large boom-box, and a collection of Music Minus One tapes: piano and orchestral accompaniments of violin pieces without the violin part. For costuming I wore a fantastic Mexican party shirt, courtesy of the Goodwill Thrift Shop in Santa Fe, New Mexico, \$3.50 cash on the line. And a light backpack holding a few books, journals, maps, some clothing. My first train stop was at 11:30, the town of Antibes. Antibes is a scenic delight; but then, so is the rest of the Riviera. Antibes was founded by those ancient paradigms, the Greeks. This being their westernmost settlement, they named it Anti-polis: the anti-city. Since they were Greeks, every early inhabitant must have had his or her own idea of what the anti of their city consisted of. Even 25 centuries ago it was a popular resort. Everybody wanted to live there and real estate speculation sent prices soaring.

Modern Antibes is not as it was in classical times. I arrived to discover the 3-hour lunch-break siesta roaring full blast. The streets were devoid of audience and customers, nor were there many places to perform were they to suddenly materialize. Bowing to the inevitable, the restaurant to which I made my retreat served up a

delicious *omelette aux fines herbes avec crudites* cushioned by *un bon vin de Provence* .

Onwards, to Nice; which on that day lived up to its English homograph. Gorgeous sunshine, good playing and generous tips. Back to the train station, another short journey, and descent at Monte-Carlo by mid-afternoon. Outside the train station I opened the violin case and placed it on the sidewalk. Two hastily lettered signs were balanced inside the lid before taking up the violin:

Vive Le Festival De La Musique

and

Je Viens de Philadelphie, Ville De Princesse Grace

, which is nothing less than the truth. Neither my stirring performance of Bach's Brandenburg concerto #5, nor the information provided by the signs had much influence on passengers leaving and entering the train station. The receipts, in this paradise of the super-rich, were scarcely enough to offset inflation. This was not surprising. The train station is quite literally on the other side of the tracks. Monte-Carlo itself could not be much more than the dormitory town for lackeys, servants and serfs of the aristocracy of Europe's only remaining (other than

showcase) monarchy. What hope was there, even for chump change, in this popular setting of ticket takers, cafes garcons, clerks, office workers, street sweepers, traveling salesmen - a class no wit inferior to any other, mind you - yet hardly the proper reception committee for a co-metropolitan of Princess Grace! As an artist who has journeyed to the Riviera for no other purpose than to play his heart out during the *Festival de la Musique*, I had every right to insist that my performances be attended by the real people ! My proper audience should be royalty, (deposed or otherwise), movie stars, tycoons, politicians! With a write-up in Vanity Fair, or People Magazine, or Paris-Match! And photograph, (complete with Harlequin party-shirt), up there next to Catherine DeNeuve.

"S'il vous plait monsieur: ou se trouve le Casino!?"

A cab driver pointed down the boulevard:

"Vous y allez tout droit!"

Down the Yellow Brick Road, off to the fabled Casino of Monaco, Europe's last bastion of monarchism, fabulous amphitheatre of swindles and suicides, patron of grand opera and ballet, birthplace of Monte Carlo methods in Black Jack, quantum statistics and elementary particle

theory! Soon I found myself on a winding causeway surrounded by tall needle-sharp cliffs, cavernous abysses, staggering architectural miracles. Far away to the right sparkled the ashen foam off the bitter waters lapping the docks of the port of La Condamine; to my left a dizzying mega-cathedral of high-rise apartment complexes bursting forth from the sheer cliff faces. Too overdone to be designated either beautiful or ugly; a grand passacaglia atop the groundswell of Fritz Lang's Metropolis.

This exotic wasteland, fascinating as it might be, could not continue on forever, and I eventually entered onto a stretch of clean, quiet, well gardened and paved streets sloping downwards into the plaza of the historic Monaco casino, which I will not attempt to describe. Across from the entrance to the Casino sits a traffic island seeded with grass, gigantic palm trees and little walkways. I walked to its edge and placed my violin case on the ground. I began with a Mozart concerto, #4 in D major, without any orchestral background. From where I stood I could observe the dull, disinterested stares of persons walking through the Casino's entrances into those dark moronic mills filled with one-armed bandits that are (so I have been told) identical in almost all respects to the machines in Reno, Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe. I doubt that I'd played as much as 3 minutes before noticing a heavyset, jowled, scowling,

weaponed, over-bathed, starched and booted, conscientious and much irritated local cop, goose-stepping his way through heavy traffic to get at me.

"Qu'est que vous faites la?" (What do you think you're doing there?)

One has to understand that in France the name of Mozart conjures up, to the uninitiated, everything that is most bourgeois in culture, thought, art, education, class..You must pronounce it as "*Mowzzzarrrrrr.....*" I could not have presented a better passport to respectability.

"Je joue un concerto de Mozart!"

"Oh? Really? Who gave you permission to do that?"

"Isn't June 21st the Festival of Music?"

"In France; not here."

"I didn't know that. I'm just an American tourist."

"*On ne fait pas la musique a Monaco!*"

This inimitable phrase might be rendered in at least 3 ways:

(a) You can't make music in Monaco

(b) One doesn't make music in Monaco

(c) Music is not made in Monaco!

(c) is probably the most accurate. It implies that the making of music is somehow alien to the Monagasque national character. Strange indeed that he should make such a claim. Did he not know of the operas commissioned from Camille Saint-Saens and Jules Massenet by the mighty sovereigns of this land? Nor of the sensational concerts of Paganini and Liszt? Nor of the world premieres of Stravinsky scores? Nor of the world-renowned Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, heir to Nijinsky, Bakst and Diagheliev?

I was not about to remind him of this distinguished history. I figured that either,

(1) He was a boor, argument with him therefore being useless.

(2) The entire nation of Monaco has back-slid into barbarism.

I cannot believe that there is any merit in (2). I have before a biography of Grace Kelly, which indicates that she was fond of good music from her childhood. I quote:

"Her favorite mood was 'sentimental' and her taste in classical music romantic, Grieg's Piano Concerto and Debussy's 'Clair de Lune', which her classmate, Doris Snyder, used to play for her on the piano at lunch time in the barn where they liked to put on records, jitterbug and giggle."

This leaves only (1). My shock was therefore understandable. Who was this man to tell me that "music is not made in Monaco", when I've accumulated so much evidence to the contrary? I knew more about this subject than he did! Little difference that he had probably lived here his entire life. But I was tired from a hard day, nor disposed to argued with 250 pounds of muscle, a weather-beaten and trenched face, a pistol, club and tear-gas canisters all gathered in a single locus in association with one lost human psyche: "I'm sorry", I repeated, "I didn't know that the French festival of music isn't celebrated here. I'll leave right away."

"No. You will pack your things and come with me." Not a cloud troubled the sky of this now deeply troubled bright summer day as we walked the block and a half to police headquarters. The room into which he ushered me was narrow, painted a drab uniformly pastel blue, with a bit of sunlight coming in from a few small transom windows. There was no furniture. Facing the entrance stood a high semi-circular counter; behind

it sat another policeman. A telephone stood on the counter in front of him. The table at his left held a computer monitor. His uniform resembled that of his friend. Crew-cut, younger and thinner, he combined a goofy grin with a tendency to laugh at just about everything. On the back wall, to his right, at the level of the razed plain of his scalp, stood a round electric clock. Above it was suspended, in an ornate frame, a large, intensively retouched photograph of the late Princess Grace Kelly- Rainier. Pearls bubbled from the corners of her eyes, their pupils enlarged, perhaps after a recent visit to the optometrist, by belladonna. Odours of American Beauty roses wafted around the edges of ruby-red lips. Her bared, delicate throat lay poised to allow the passage of that familiar 'can of Heinz's tomato soup' voice which is almost a trademark of us Philadelphians. Her green dress crinkled like crisp money. My rude guardian took my passport and passed to his colleague. "Scan the records to check if we've got anything else on this bum!" He unhooked the telephone receiver and dialed the number of his commanding officer:

"Hello? Captain? This is Frank. I brought in this *Ameriloque* ! You won't believe it! He was begging in front of the Casino! Yes - you heard me right the first time – *begging* !"

Ah! What linguistics can do to honest toil! Obviously I hadn't been begging. Yet, even had it been so, stack this up against the millions of dollars pissed away at the roulette tables while most of the world goes hungry. But who am I to argue against the moral priorities of Ruritania? He hung up the telephone and waited for the results of the computer search. I used the interlude to point to the royal countenance:

I began: "That's Princess Grace, isn't it?"

"I come from Philadelphia myself. In fact, my family knows her family." Necks craned in my direction: "We went to the same performing arts academy. She studied theatre; I studied violin playing. We also went to the same high schools."

Now they were listening seriously, "When I return home, I'm going to let the Kellys know how their son-in-law treats visiting Philadelphia artists."

Could I be telling the truth? Their glances became uneasy. These were unsuspected dimensions! "Go on." I waved at the computer console, "You can check the records. I've lived in Philadelphia most of my life. It's a small place; everybody there knows the Kellys."

One can see that a degree of poetic license was being worked into these revelations: Stevens School for Girls is not Central High School, nor is the American Academy of Theater the same as the Settlement Music School. However, although Grace and I may not have attended the same performing arts academies, but all of us glamorous Philadelphia superstars, like Mario Lanza, Sylvester Stallone, Bobby Darran, Grace Kelly and yours truly, learn the secrets of our craft from walking the resonant sidewalks of our hometown, unrivaled in music and dramatic art since Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's librettist, taught Italian there to Jefferson's Afro-American children. And every native Philadelphian has certainly met someone from the ubiquitous Kelly family at least once in their lives. Then I uttered the most important of my claims, which had the additional merit of being true: "When I return home, I've only to pick up a telephone to contact the Philadelphia Inquirer. That's the city newspaper. They'll be thrilled to run this story!"

Again the cops exchanged furtive looks, suspicion mingling with foreboding. With an exasperated gesture, (the Gallic shrug), the arresting officer retrieved my passport and returned it to me. There was nothing in my criminal dossier in any case. I appeared to have won this round.

Under other circumstances, I might have been locked up overnight, my passport stamped *Entry Denied*.

"Monsieur; you can go!" His tone of voice was weary - a job as hard as this one wasn't worth the pay. Raising his voice he cried: "This is not France!" He waved his arms and pointed to the north. "In Monaco there is no Festival of Music! When you walk out of here, you go straight - that way! Go past 2 traffic lights - then turn left. That's France!" He rubbed his hands together, washing off so much dust: "There you can play the violin until you collapse!" He returned my case and we shook hands.

As I stepped out the door he delivered the "afterthought" - like in the movies, when the police sergeant packs up and is ready to leave, then turns around and says, "Oh, by the way, we checked the registration of the gun. It's in your name.": "So! "he remarked", pointing to the violin: "You must have learned to play that thing in a good school"

Of course. Philadelphia has the best music schools in the United States." All Philadelphians believe this. Is it not the cradle of Walter Kapell, Marion Anderson, Peter Serkin, Samuel Barber, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.....?

"Indeed, I've heard of it: *L'Ecole des Quatre-Vents!!*"

With that he waved me out the door. In a state of elation I ran down the street towards the indicated traffic lights: graduate of *L'Ecole des Quatre-Vents*! Literally, The School of the Four Winds: Alma Mater of quacks, charlatans, cranks, schnoodlers, con-artists, poetasters, and all self-promoted vagabonds! A badge of honor, a credential to carry with pride, bestowed upon me by a renowned academy, by virtue of the powers invested in a Monagasque cop! Granting rightful entry into any co-fraternity of troubadours, Cours des Miracles, Estaffod, Mead Hall, or gypsy caravel anywhere in the cosmos!

All of my friends, including any number of distinguished maestros, take notice! I, too, have earned my laurels at the shrine of the noble art of music, and fully expect the deference appropriate to my entitlement!!

11. Lawrence, Kansas ,1987

Report on The Beat Generation Poetry Festival

University of Kansas

Subtitles: Blues for Christian Hermann; and

Pass Me That Enchilada

Invariably, the wilderness spawns magnificent and exotic grotesques. With prolonged drought arrive familiar symptoms of euphoria, delusions and hallucinations in which ecstasy and acute suffering are commingled. One can cite the ravishing recitatives of Olivier Messiaen's "Quartet For The End Of Time". These, he claimed, were transcriptions of the sound hallucinations he'd

experienced from days of starvation in a German prison camp.

Frequently there will be a more direct expression of one's misery through inflation of the culinary imagination. Dreams of fabulous banquets, interminable successions of succulents, sauces and delicacies will gratify the mind while the stomach burns with pain.

Accounts written by former prisoners of war relate how groups of inmates of the camps would gather around a heel of bread to conjure up

dinners at 5-star restaurants, feasts at the courts of Persia and Cathay, the gluttonous orgies of ancient Rome, stupendous creations of French haute cuisine, all from the pieces of crust and crumbs picked out of this one ragged scrap of dough and handed around with scrupulous care.

Similar phenomena are to be found in the cultural sphere, and for much the same reasons. Cultural starvation, extreme and prolonged such as existed at the edge of the American frontier for a few centuries, has been known to translate itself into excesses born of desperation. These have shaped the art of this country, giving it a distinctive identity vis-a-vis its' European roots: notably those characteristics which snobs, critics, professors, aesthetes, and a timid public uncertain of its own judgment have termed "primitive".

Primitive Art - by which one means the paintings of Grandma Moses and Le Douanier Rousseau , (not the highly sophisticated classical art of African sculpture) , has been, until quite recently, at the heart of America's contributions to the arts. As a confirming example, one can point to the extent to which American jazz, the only musical language in history with universal appeal, has conquered the world. There exist tiny villages in Uzbekistan proud of their home-grown rock bands!

Wastelands come in for their due. The Missourian T.S. Eliot may speak of the roots that clutch, the cricket giving no relief, the dearth of running water, fear in a handful of dust. Yet cactus and sagebrush are, in their own way, every bit as beautiful, even as "pretty" as the overly mannerist tulip and the rose, (ruined as they are through centuries of genetic selection). It's more than a little wrong-headed to deplore our wastelands without having examined the inventory of their bizarre tormented gems.

A ride along route 70 through western Kansas can uncover many peculiar memorials, eloquent tributes to the heroic efforts of souls struggling in considerable isolation to give expression to their artistic visions. Soon after crossing the Colorado border into Kansas one reaches the town of Oakley. Opinion in Oakley is divided over the role (if any), played by the redoubtable Annie Oakley in its history. What is definitely known is that it was a popular hangout for sharks and dinosaurs in the Tertiary Age before the great extinction. Bones abound in the region, some thousands of which have found their way into the display cases of the Fick Fossil and History Museum, or in

reconstructions of their theoretical distribution within the genealogies of vanished reptiles.

What rivets the attention of its visitors are not the menacing bulk of old skeletons, nor the 11,000 shark teeth, but the hundreds of fossil paintings, mosaics fashioned by Mrs. Fick by patiently gluing thousands of bone splinters to wood or cloth panels. These tableaux, clearly the labor of love of an unschooled amateur, deploy a subject matter randomly gleaned from the annals of history, mythology, religion, political, commentary and sheer imagination.

The absence of formal competence signifies the presence of an artist completely cut off from the centers of culture, from teachers, schools, professional artists or museums. The notion of "technique" could not have been anything more than a vague abstraction. Yet another clutching root under the shadow of the red rock, fear in a handful of dust.....

Getting back onto the road: from miles away one can already see the 50 meter high towers of the St. Fidelis Cathedral, otherwise known as the Cathedral of the Plains. We travel along the highway another 50 miles then turn off near the town of Hays. Proceeding along another two miles brings one to the hamlet of Victoria. It was so named by English

blue bloods of the 19th century, for whom it was a vacation resort for equestrian activities. The cathedral is located in wheat fields on the outskirts of the town. The builders of this massive imitation-Gothic church had even less to do with British aristocrats than did Annie Oakley with prehistoric dinosaurs. They were all descendants of Russian and German immigrant farmers. Following the traditions of the Middle Ages they toiled for many decades to erect this solemn and splendid edifice, finding such time as they could from the work of cultivating the fields which surround it. The building was completed in 1908. Craftsmen were then brought over from Munich for the painting, decoration, and the installation of stained glass windows and panels. Since then it has stood, in a perhaps ludicrous yet altogether imposing presence in the silence of cornfields, grasslands, silos, fences, warehouses, roads.

We return to the highway to continue our search for further evidences of the artistic heritage of pioneer Kansas. After another 50 miles we turn north to the tiny town of Lucas, renowned for its "Garden of Eden". It will turn out to be Mrs. Fick all over again, though immensely amplified through enterprise and sheer imaginative power. Not all eccentric persons are conceited, not all conceit breeds eccentricity- yet one often finds the two united in a single person.

Colonel (so he claimed) S.P. Dinsmoor, a veteran of the Civil War married, at the age of 81, a woman of 20 before retiring to this desolate edge of Kansas. Here he devoted the rest of his life to the agglutination of an American primitive Merzbau (global sculptural environments in the spirit of a work of Kurt Schwitters destroyed by Allied bombing in WWII.) The Dinsmoor house is constructed from stone blocks shaped to resemble wooden logs, and indeed at a distance one does have the impression of coming to a log cabin.

The entire estate, grounds, fences and railings, and the interior of the house from basement to attic, are overstuffed with innumerable allegorical groups of dreadfully misshapen statues. Their themes are classical, Biblical, historical, political, personal: The Garden of Eden, The Soldier and the Indian, The Trusts versus Liberty, Joan of Arc ... In the garden one may visit an American flag composed from concrete blocks. Some of these monumental pageants of were designed to make money.

One example is noteworthy: Dinsmoor gave every window in the house a unique shape, size and location relative to the foundations of the house. His explanation was that since were expected people to pay good money, they ought to get their full money's worth. #5... The garden holds a crypt, with windows through which one may see coffins

holding what is left of the rotting remains of Colonel Dinsmoor and his wife. An accompanying plaque reads: "I have a will that none should go in to see me for less than a dollar ... if ... I see the dollar, I will give them a smile." One dollar was a lot of money in his day. Despite the binding nature of the will, time and necessity have pushed the price up to \$1.50. Perhaps the additional 50 cents covers the increased property taxes.

My tour of the sites of primitive art in western Kansas was accomplished in September of 1983. My tour guide for the occasion was a woman named Adele, a Vedanta devotee who kindly drove me from Boulder, Colorado all the way to St. Louis after our mutual attendance at a Buddhist-Christian interfaith symposium at the Naropa Institute.

Advance exactly 4 years to September 1987: flip Route 70, put the starting point of the itinerary at St. Louis, Missouri, to be driven in the reverse direction to the city of Lawrence, Kansas. The time is 6 A.M. Saturday, September 13th, 1987. In the apartment of a friend, Kenn Thomas, in the fashionable West End of St. Louis (who should not be accused of being a member of the plutocracy; his wife is the building manager), he and I waited for Phil Gounis to arrive in the car that would take us to Lawrence.

Both Kenn and Phil were archivists (Kenn still is) at the St. Louis extension of the University of Missouri. Both were fanatic collectors of the artistic artifacts of their own times, maintaining in their homes mammoth accumulations of books, files, records, tapes, videos, clippings, magazines and other items relating to the counter-culture-shaman-guru-prophet-Messiaoids of modern America, those best minds of our times destroyed by madness: Bob Dylan, Allan Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Abbie Hoffman, John Cage, William Burroughs, Gordon Alpert (Ram Das)....

Apart from the fact the Lawrence was the only city to declare war on itself in the Civil War, why should we have wanted to go there?

Because of a gathering! (gathering! (gathering!))) of Beatniks! (Beatniks! (Beatniks). A gathering of beatniks! (gathering of beatniks! (gathering of beatniks!))) being brought to you LIVE at the University of Kansas, (in Lawrence, Kansas) under the management of Dr. Wedge, (English professor (at the University of Kansas, (in Lawrence, Kansas))).

Allan Ginsberg!! Anne Waldman!! Timothy Leary!! Peter Orlovsky!! William Burroughs!! Michael McClure!! Diane Di Prima!! Jello Biafra!! Jim Carroll!! John Giorno!!

All of us have read, seen or listened to most of them in years gone by. They're an interesting bunch, though some of them can get tiresome with repetition. It hardly seemed like enough motivation for investing 10 hours, \$30 for gas, bills in restaurants, and from \$12 to \$20 for tickets, just to hear a gang of beat writers whose medium and message have changed but little in 30 years.

The reason that this event was special was not: "The Beats Are Coming! ", but: "The Beats Are Coming to LAWRENCE, KANSAS!" Lawrence, you may recall, (no one holds it against you if you don't) was the setting chosen by CBS for its gigantic nukesploitation flop: *The Day After*. Among all mid-West middle American college towns it is the most middle.

Imagine the possibilities! Peter Orlovsky wanders across the campus of Lawrence U., offering to suck cocks. Timothy Leary is arrested for dropping acid at the busiest intersection in town on Massachusetts Avenue. John Giorno shouts his memorable Ode: "Scum and Slime"! , to R.O.T.C. cadets. Ann Waldman and Diana Di Prima wade to give their poetry readings at Liberty Hall through streets thronged with blond collegiate skirt-and-sweater drum majorettes of sparkling teeth and beribboned irises, who stare at them and stay

things like : "They look weird. " or "Where's a cop?" By itself Lawrence is worth at least one visit. Taken in combination with the beatnik onslaught, the excursion fully merited the title, "Blues for Christian Herman?" But who is Christian Herman?

In 1987 (when the original version of this article was produced), Christian Herman lived in St. Louis where she edited a DaDactic publication dubbed "Velocity". Its publication record was rather unexceptional: about one issue per decade. She'd planned to come with us but changed her mind. Her ticket was waiting at the box office of Liberty Hall; so that I might imbibe 4 hours of warmed-over Beat Poetry, I became Christian Herman for the occasion.

The Blues are as much for me as they are for her. On the other hand: What is the thing with this enchilada?.. Read on...

Sitting alone in the back of Phil Gounis's car, I clutched a violin, a tape recorder, and a suitcase holding Music Minus One cassette tapes and cameraready manuscripts of Ferment Press books and old copies of Ferment I intended to flog on the campus of Kansas U. Kenn and Phil were in the front of course, involved in a non-stop conversation that went on for 5 hours as we traveled from the Gateway To The West to the Town Of Quantrell's Raiders . I was happy to listen as they

exchanged the latest in counter-cultural gossip. A sampling: In an interview for Mother Earth News, Allan Ginsberg lamented that reasons of health obliged him to give up bagels, gefilte fish and matzo ball soup. Bob Dylan had recently enraged the government of Israel - Peres to be exact - by not showing up for an appointment to visit the Wailing Wall. John Simon had likewise enraged militant blacks everywhere by cutting a record in South Africa.

Then my hosts began working through the complications of a weird contretemps having to do with experiments with psychedelic drugs involving Timothy Leary, the C.I.A. and John Jay Chapman. Timothy Leary was starting up his own computer software company. Its first project would be a make-your-own movie kit dubbed "Cyberpunk". Its cast of stars included, of all people, Gordon Liddy. The creator of the "Captain Marvel" comic book series had filed a lawsuit to have his artwork returned. Somebody had a theory that LSD had been distilled from the fallout from atomic bombs. Ram Das was carrying on an affair with a "holy woman". She claimed to have received the stigmata in her gums.....

I knew nothing about any of these important developments. Without my annual visits to St. Louis and Kenn Thomas I would be

totally uninformed about the counter-culture. The editor of Ferment just goes through the proper channels, brings home the bacon and does his thing, if you dig my meaning. Like, cool. I know less about the counter-culture than I do about culture. In fact, when I hear the word "counter-culture" I begin target practice with my revolver on tin cans.

Careening into the heart of downtown Lawrence brought us to within a few blocks of the campus. The first of many squat humdrumogenous pedagogical fortresses burgeoned on the horizon: "My God!", I yelled, "They've finally constructed a university building that looks just like a Holiday Inn!" Beyond this defensive wall there stalked an assortment of hallowed halls of Victorian pseudo-Gothic that brought to mind a stage reconstruction of Sarastro's temple in some hokey production of The Magic Flute.

Our destination was the Jayhawk Bookstore located inside the Student Union. To get to it we had to pass through a glum sequence of antechambers. Small groupuscules of students, lost in random walks or slouching on couches, stared at us with inquisitive boredom, an occasional face lighting up with recognition that we were identified as delegates to the River City Reunion beat poetry conference. Inside the store we learned that the first book-signing event was scheduled to

begin in one hour. This gave us time to do some pleasant browsing. Works by beat writers adorned a dozen tables. Lots of Kerouac, naturally. A single table had been set aside for writers native to Kansas. Kenn and Phil had brought books with them that they wanted signed. Unfortunately I had to leave them at that point to return to the center of Lawrence and (literally) scrape up the money for dinner and the cost of admission to the poetry reading at Liberty Hall that night at 8. We arranged to meet at the Paradise Cafe for dinner at 6.

There is comfort to be drawn from the recognition that the percentage of residents on this planet who are as crazy as I am is about equal to the ratio of the height of the Empire State Building to the distance to Mars. If anyone out there wishes, after reading this, to live the way I do, welcome aboard the Narrenschiff. There's always room for one more. The day was laid out before me as follows: First a quick run into town to buy a violin string, and a stroll through Lawrence to find good locations for doing street music. Lunch, quick and cheap. A visit to one of the 3 outlets of Kinko's Copies to print up a few copies of small books on Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Einstein. Campus door-to-door sales to faculty and students. A race back into town to retrieve violin and tape recorder from Phil's car. Two hours of street music. Dinner

with Kenn and Phil at 6. At 8 I turn into Christian Hermann and listen to poetry for 4 hours.

Needless to say, life has yet to go according to schedule. In the best of circumstances life proceeds according to a schedule of which we're unaware. Most often, life neither proceeds according to schedule, nor do we know what it is or isn't. Purchasing a new violin A- string was the least of my problems: 3 music stores stood next to one another on the same block.

My walk-around-town was also speedily accomplished. "Downtown" in Lawrence consists of 12 blocks along a single street, Massachusetts Ave. The entrance to the University of Kansas is on 13th, the auditorium of Liberty Hall down at 5th. And Mass Ave holds few surprises: a tree-lined succession of shops typical of most prosperous suburban college towns. It holds no good venues for street music or similar crafts: no shopping centers, malls, busy intersections, piazzas, crowded bus stops. The best I could hope would be some shaded corner storefront in the shade, its entrance facing away from the street. I ate lunch in the Paradise Cafe, a counter-cultural health food store with good cooks, tiny portions and outrageous prices. And there was a branch of Kinko's Copies on Vermont Ave., just 3 blocks away.

For a brief moment it seemed as if the gods had smiled (or at least S.P. Dinsmoor had smiled) upon me. Ah! Foolish stripling! Has a long and dismal interaction with the personnel of Kinko's Copies, in concessions straddling the nation from Berkeley to Philadelphia, from Santa Cruz to Cincinnati, (from San Diego out to Maine!) taught you nothing? How many hours have you wasted in waiting as each employee in turn made the discovery of his (her) ignorance of how to use the electric stapler? Has it ever once happened that you've handed a properly formatted camera-ready one-to- two-sided manuscript for a booklet over the counter, and received a correctly paginated copy in less than 4 fuck-ups? Reflect upon the many times in which these same personnel have rejected manuscripts that had been copied successfully at PIP, Copyrite, Gnomon, CopyCat , Minuteman , Speedy Copy and most other copy shops , with the solemn rebuke (delivered with the weighty authority of less than 2 hours training in pushing two buttons): "You've collated it incorrectly" . In the distinguished tradition of concession chains everywhere, the managers of Kinko's Copies have gleefully sacrificed the angels of quality to the devils of speed. At least ninety percent of the workload on a typical day consists of large bulk orders of a single one-sided page: for example, 2000 copies of a one-page ad announcing the opening of a new pizza parlour down the street. For such work one

doesn't need to learn how to push more than two buttons: the first registered the number 2000, the second starts the machine. The training of Kinko personnel doesn't go beyond the acquisition of this skill. Beyond that, even a single complication, like making a reduction, feeding colored papers or card stock, working the staple machines, making back-to-back copies, demand the services of a specialist. It is rarely possible to find someone who knows how to do all of them. (I actually met one in Philadelphia). Kinko's Copies concessions can draw obscene profits on volume alone. Therefore their managers don't give a damn. The mean employment time span can't be more than a month and may be closer to two weeks. Many of their copy clerks are students in the college towns where they tend to be located. While reflecting that such work is far below their intellectual station, they cheerfully botch any job requiring even a moment's attention.

The two young women at the first Kinko's shop I visited in Lawrence took an entire hour to reproduce a single 10-page back-to-back camera-ready manuscript. They worked together as a team: whenever one of them made a mistake they threw away the whole order and started over again from the beginning. Although the Molochian machine confronting them held 30 or more buttons and dials for doing

every sort of back-to-back or collated manuscript, each of my pages was fed into the machine with embarrassing care.

By 1:30 PM I had exactly one copy of a book of essays on Bach, Handel and Mozart. How foolishly I'd assumed that all 3 books would be done by 1 o'clock! One of the young ladies behind the counter examined my second manuscript: In Memoriam Einstein, an account of the Einstein Centennial Symposium at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 1979.

"I can't print this."

"Why not?"

"It says copyright on the first page. You have to get permission from Mr. Roy Lisker. Is he around?"

"I'm Roy Lisker. These are my books."

"Oh, all right then. Show me your ID card."

"I haven't got any ID on me. All these manuscripts, including the one you just copied, have my name on them. Everything in my backpack has my name on it."

"Then I can't print it. If you weren't Roy Lisker, I'm sure he would appreciate the protection I'm giving him."

"But I am Roy Lisker."

"I believe you. But you must show me some proof you're you."

On the wall to her left was hung a large poster holding a larger-than-life image of George Washington. His stubby forefinger was pointed directly at me, and his mouth was turned up in a snarl:

**ATTENTION: IF YOU REPRODUCE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL,
YOU MAY BE BREAKING FEDERAL LAW!**

Because of the hour wasted on the product of the booklet on Bach, Handel and Mozart, and the half hour wasted on debating the legality of printing my 80 report on the Einstein Symposium it was now 2 PM. I left the store and ran to another Kinko's located on the university campus. There another young woman got the Einstein book right after only two tries, not bad for Kinko's. By 3 PM, at a cost of \$7 (very high at the time for a college town) the merchandise was ready, though selling was out of the question. Somehow I had to find a way to wing it on the fiddle playing.

Yet another one of those Beat Poet extravaganzas!! Once again the same line of brand-name detergents shipped express to generic supermarkets! How many more decades will this ghoulish mash of nihilistic hedonism, Zen-Tantric pseudo-Orientalism, mind-depleting drugs and pederasty oppress the American soul? How much longer will it captivate the mytho-poetic consciousness of a drunk empire? Onward The Plastic Renaissance! America's Flayed Imagination! Torn To Shreds, Like Raw Beef Livers In The Claws Of The Ravenous Vultures Of Media Blitz! Dispersed Like Chaff Through Mammoth Mountains Of Mental Mush , Jingles And Jingoism, Moldy Politics, Religious Dogma , Cracker Barrel Cant, Psychiatric Superstition and Paradigmatic Anorexia (Self-induced cultural starvation caused by the scholastic worship of a barren handful of classical paradigms.).....

To this ongoing nightmare the Beats have provided the palliatives of sado-masochistic nonsense, destroying mind, body, soul and nuts through the pursuit of dementing thrills, thereby hoping to find, in the bliss of babbling self-immolation, the Buddhist Nirvana. Unfortunately what one usually ends up with is a panel discussion by dirty old men telling each other pornographic anecdotes that lost their savor after high school - or was it junior high?

The emphasis is masculine to the point of being totalitarian. If there is one cadre of modern letters upon which the feminist revolution has not made even the slightest impact, it is in beatnik poetry. Since most of the male beatniks, being homosexuals, (and since most of them are male), womankind has some difficulty in finding recognition in their writings. When it does, it tends to be employed, like the cars stolen by Neal Cassady, as just another vehicle for transporting the reader to some cosmo-galactic auto-destruct thrill, like LSD, or fist-fights in bars, or jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge (this really happened). Despite the stated intention of enriching the starved soul of the West through the popularization of ancient techniques of Mahayana meditation, the mantras that the beats have been giving us are little more than dreary recyclings of monodromic tits-and-ass refrains of the Enlightened Media: Hollywood, Playboy. Hustler, talk shows, stand-up comics...

Having disgorged my disgruntled critique a question naturally suggests itself : if all of the above is true, that is to say, if Roy Lisker who writes this articles, believes it's true, (why else would he write it?), then how is it that he finds himself ending up in one beatnik event after another, in full possession of the knowledge that no divine light will surge o'er these gatherings of illuminati, and that their version of

Buddhism is more embarrassing to Buddhists than Shriners to Islam, Hari Krishnas to Hindus, Jews for Jesus to Jews, or Reverend Falwell to Christianity?

Yet he has discovered rare items of interest in their poetry, however device-ridden and stale it may be, despite the fact that its only technical advance over the heroic couplet has been the laundry list. (As in:

MOLOCH! Who dada, dada, dada, dada, dada, dada, da...

MOLOCH! Who dada, dada, dada, dada, da...

MOLOCH! Who ... Or:

BIRDBRAIN! : DidleyDidleyDidleyDidleyDidley

BIRDBRAIN! : DidleyDidleyDidleyDid...

BIRDBRAIN! : Didl...

While at the same time he, Roy Lisker, all battered bleak of brain in the drear light of zoo, has labored these 30 years to bring forth a brood of sturdy children out of the womb of our mother language; does not believe in desecrating the higher truths of the world's religions by using them as rationales for his own brand of foolishness; does not believe that the experiments of teen-age boys in locker rooms are the

grounds for a higher morality; yet who has developed a radical lifestyle that makes their much vaunted nomadism, their Dharma-bumhood look like the trite Madison Avenue publicity seeking it really is

What we're really trying to say is that while the beats were chucking their psychic vomit over the stage lights at Liberty Hall, somehow kidding themselves that the starry-eyed youths of the Great American Wasteland were eagerly absorbing this wisdom like disciples at the feet of venerated sages, Roy Lisker was forced to raise the admission to listen to their sermons by standing out in the streets of Lawrence, Kansas and playing the fucken fiddle!!

The corner on Massachusetts Avenue where I lay my opened violin case on the ground, inserted a Music Minus One cassette into the tape recorder and began playing, was only a few blocks away from the campus. It was 4 PM, rather late in the day. Soon afterwards a trio of teenage girls strolled by, smirking. As they walked out of range one of them turned around to face me, and cried: "That's illegal in this town, Mister!" There doesn't seem to be very much that you can do in Lawrence, Kansas, without some decent hard-working tax-paying citizen coming up to you and reminding you that there's a law against it.

Yet, as the concert developed I found myself forced to revise all my facile generalizations, resulting in a stern lecture to myself later that afternoon on the folly of jumping to conclusions. In a single hour's playing I pulled in \$30, a princely sum in this business. A retired music teacher walked by. By the sad way in which she shook her head I knew that she was grieving my faulty intonation. Moving on she dropped a dollar in the violin case. A college kid from Oklahoma introduced himself as a college kid from Oklahoma and dropped another dollar in the case. A U. Kansas Professor out on a stroll with his wife, deposited a five dollar bill in the same place. A tall, bearded young man, his limbs badly dislocated from cerebral palsy, appeared from a distance to my left. Staggering down the street he stopped before me long enough to explain that "the city fathers weren't in favor of what I was doing". They wouldn't harass me, he re-assured me, unless I made a public disturbance. Then he threw in some change and moved on.

Soon afterwards, a police car appeared. The dour cop within took my measurements in his gaze, then drove on. Even the teen-age girl who'd snarled at me that I was breaking the law returned to drop a dollar in the violin case! What is one to make of all this? \$30 for one hour of unexceptional violin playing (mediocre in technique though

imbued with musical awareness at the highest levels of sophistication!)
 on the streets of a strange town is a royal sum. Even in places like
 Berkeley, California, the most advanced city in the world, I'd never
 experienced anything like it. Had I truly been inducted into the
 pantheon of Mrs. Fick, S.P. Dinsmoor, the builders of the Cathedral in
 the Plains and other wonder-workers in the Kansas wilderness who'd
 cultivated their maverick gardens to feed the starving multitudes?

A Beat Poem Inspired By The Above Events

Dropped! One Dollar! In my violin case! By a retired music teacher
 sadly shaking her head at my poor intonation.

Dropped! One Dollar! In my violin case! By a college kid from
 Oklahoma who introduced himself as a college kid from Oklahoma.

Dropped! One Five Dollar Bill! (This really happened). In my
 violin case! By a U. Kansas Professor out on a stroll with his wife.

Dropped! Spare change! In my violin case! By a handicapped and
 bearded youth who swiveled and staggered down Massachusetts
 Avenue, dreaming dreams of oblivion in a rain of enchiladas.

Dropped! One dollar! In my violin case! By a young lady who had, in the company of her companions, previously smirked, then shouted: "That's illegal in this town, Mister!"

Dropped! Criminal charges! By a police officer who drove by, gave me the once-over, then departed.

Dropped! One acid cube! By Timothy Leary, on the slopes of the campus of Kansas U., time out of mind and plastic Mary on the dashboard.

Dropped! One piece of underwear, exposing the pubic beard of a flashing poet, ripe and moist for beatnik Nirvana.

Dropped! One Mahayana Sutra (I forget which one) , on the bumper bumper bumper of a Volvo Volvo Volvo, racing from Boulder Colorado to Lawrence, Kansas, on a trip in which I had a vision and he had a vision and you had a vision... and Blake will be cremated on the Autobahn!

This rambling narrative of the events of September 14, 1987 has arrived at a bifurcation node, a non-degenerate stable singularity, whose paradigmatic exemplum is the classic Maxwell potential well, or

some other contemporary resuscitation of the medieval dilemma of Buridan's Ass.

To wit: shall it proceed immediately to the hi-jinks and splendor of the Beatnik Poetry Reading, or should it stick to its narrow chronological course and explicate the enchilada? There is much to be said in favor of chronological order, which exercises such constraining power in daily life that one would hope that a reasonably savvy writer would uncouple its manacles. All the same, it should not be forgotten that there is much to be gained by holding off on the parable of the enchilada to the very end. There is no climax like an anti-climax: the apotheosis of surprise in the defeat of expectations! Life, as the beat sages have taught us, is a shaggy-dog story with neither point, moral or termination. We pass our days waiting for death, tension and expectation building up within us right to the breaking point, and beyond. Then, when it does come ... well, there's just nothing there. Onward to the Beat Poetry Reading....

We were only able to attend the last day of the five day River City Reunion conference. All of the readings had been sold out three weeks in advance. Had Kenn not reserved our tickets and Christian Hermann not changed her mind and dropped out, we couldn't have gotten in.

Arriving outside Liberty Hall at 7 PM, we discovered that the entire counter-cultural intelligentsia of the Middle West had converged on Lawrence for this final gala reading, in much the way that entire galaxies may be sucked up into the interior of a Black Hole

The crowd was such that we couldn't see the facade of Liberty Hall, which was all to the good since, when we did finally take a look at it, it turned out to be an exceptionally commonplace building, not a hall exactly, nor arousing any sentiment of liberty, basically a drab red brick building with glass doors, a few potted plants, and ticket office poised on hastily deposited planks. At the far corner of the building stood an improvised kiosk for the vending of comix, video-cassettes and rock music disx.

Balsamic Night Waxed And Waned, Barmy As All Get -Out! We stationed ourselves at the far end of a line stretching over a block down the length of Massachusetts Avenue. In vans parked alongside the curbs video crews squatted, nurturing their equipment. Desolate individuals sitting on stoops and fire hydrants held aloft crudely lettered signs, pleading for tickets. Beside the line not far from the entrance stood a standard-model Jesus-freak. Happiness surged from every corner of his face as he waved a Bible and jumped for joy. Coming into hearing

range we realized that he was singing "I'm looking over a 4-leaf clover": a hard-edged proof of happiness if there ever was one.

The time had come for us to confront the ticket sellers. No glints of suspicion escaped from their half-opened eyes when I stated that I was Christian Hermann. After turning over to them 40% of my day's earnings, (never doubting that it would be donated to the Endowment Fund of the Beatnik Poet Rest Home), I and my friends were granted ingress to the auditorium of Liberty Hall. We discovered that the functional areas of the interior of Liberty Hall, (auditorium, balcony and stage) were basically those of a small movie house in some inner city neighborhood. Even as one enters one begins to savor the familiar aromas of popcorn and Coca-Cola, with stickiness of chewed chewinggum underfoot, lots of dark and dismal regions, the blaze of a single spotlight focusing on a garish velvet red curtain, shrouding the muskiness of an inky stage.

The atrocious music that bellowed from the loudspeakers was considerably worse than anything I'd anticipated. We had no option but to endure it as we sat and waited for over an hour for the curtain to rise. This did not bode well for the poetry reading. What theater manager in his right mind would dream of numbing the outer and inner ears of

audiences awaiting a program of recitations from John Keats, W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas or Robert Frost?

Granted: the Beats are decidedly more bellicose. Yet they do write some real poetry once in awhile. It was a considerable disservice to them that the receptivity of their audience should be soured in this fashion before they made their appearance. It's the price we all pay for living in a culture that no longer makes any clear distinction between food and shit. When, after waiting for an hour, nothing continued to happen, the audience started clapping in unison.

This worked: the lights dimmed and the curtains lifted to reveal a gloomy space covered with odd pieces of equipment, speakers, electric guitars, snare drums, mikes....

We pause momentarily to allow us to tortilla the enchilada story between sections of this beatnik poetry reading review. I'll keep it brief, a few paragraphs so you won't think I invented this enchilada stuff just to grab your attention.

The Tale of the Enchilada

Before coming to the reading Kenn, Phil and I had taken dinner in the Paradise Cafe. Among the items listed on the menu was a dish holding one enchilada and some bean sprouts. That's what I ordered. In due time the waiter returned with a plate holding 3 sections of something that looked like an enchilada. The bill handed to me at the end of the meal charged me for 3 enchiladas. Responding to my complaints the waiter asserted that he'd only brought me what I'd ordered: one enchilada *platter*. Enchilada platters were listed in another part of the menu: they hold 3 enchiladas. As we got up to leave Kenn and Phil urged me to repeat my complaint to the girl at the cash register. Our dialogue went somewhat like this:

"I ordered one enchilada, not three!"

"But you ate all three!"

"I'm not going to pay this."

"Oh yes you are!"

"See for yourself! I only ordered one enchilada."

That's when the young woman picked up the menu and pointed at the tiny tiny print above the enchilada section. By squinting closely one could discern the informative message:

For People Under 12

Of course I delivered my customary response on such occasions. After paying the bill, I started to walk away, only to turn around and shout, loud enough for the whole restaurant to hear: *This is a rip-off joint!!* Wrapped in our cloaks of invincible hubris, the 3 city slickers made their way out the door.....

As the curtains were lifting Kenn hefted a TV camera onto his shoulder and focused it on the action. Sometime during the first half hour Timothy Leary entered the auditorium and took a seat just behind Kenn. In the interludes between readings, Kenn swiveled his camera around to take footage of Leary who, delirious with ersatz bliss, was shouting war-whoops above the applause.

The first performer was the poet/song-writer Jim Carroll. He wore black, all black, nothing but black, suggesting that perhaps this was not an accident but derived from a deliberate intent of costuming. Around his neck was hung a big scintillating cross. Jim macraméed a drunk weave about the stage as he unraveled tales of spooky underground horror movie crypt lore. The rock music carried more than its weight of the action, which happens often enough when a poet leans too heavily on the music to make the words "more accessible".

Following him appeared John Giorno. Shaved skull, jaundiced skin drawn taut as a terrorist's face mask. Giorno unleashed a spell-binding poetic diatribe bitter with pissed-off misanthropy. Loads of obscenity, most of it gratuitous. To listen to him talk, Giorno hates everybody and everything, but himself most of all, the whole equation cancelling out to universal love, of a sort. He is addicted to repeating a certain phrase over and over again, which works once in awhile, though I suggest he experiment a bit with repeating his phrases in reverse order, which is what I do....

Diana Di Prima. To the extent that she writes poetry meant to be listened to as poetry, she must be deemed something of an anomaly. Her numerous sins against orthodoxy arise from her way of selecting words for their tone, beauty, aptness, color: crimes against Beatnikism if there ever were any. Trees, grass, sun and moon, love - who needs this crap when it's obvious that what the world needs is more poetry about assholes? To make matters worse she read several poems of political commitment: Vietnam, Nicaragua, and feminism, civil rights. Hey, that ain't art-for-art's-sake! How could it be any good, when I'd attended classes in college that told me that political poetry has to be lousy? The

enjoyment I'd experienced from listening to her reading merely proves that I don't know a thing about art.

Intermission: popcorn and soda water. A crowd was gathered outside the building, people who'd come all the way from Alberta, Canada and been late, and were now trying to sneak through the glass doors. Groovy countercultural security guards let a few in then turned the rest away. The TV crews were frenetically running around, acting as if they own everything: We're important! We're the media!

One eager pen-pusher, steno tablet at the ready, turned to Kenn and myself and asked: "What're you, a pair of burnt-out old hippies?"

Time to return to our seats.

Ann Waldman: Just terrible. Bad material badly done. None of her experiments ever seem to work, and one wonders why. Perhaps one ought to learn from her failures, much as scientists learn from failed experiments. Her problem seems to be that she throws - and I mean throws - herself completely into her act: she appears unable to establish any distance between person and persona. The result is always some sort of hysterical display: we watch her going to pieces while at the same time nothing is coming across. Everything comes off as derivative, as if

she'd done no work on her initial inspiration after its emergence. And there is the ever- dependable laundry-list:

DAD'DAD'DAD'DAD ': EMPTY SPACE!

DAD'DAD'DAD'DAD ': EMPTY SPACE!

DAD'DAD'DAD'DAD....

When Allan Ginsberg adopts this mode of expression, it works - sometimes. With her it doesn't work at all. She too calls upon background music, though no connection is ever established between the words and the music. Her worst piece, (the worst of the evening) was a polemic against Reagan's Central American policies rambled against the banging away of a rock band. As Ann stomped her feet arbitrarily and with no relationship to the musical beat, she roared: "

CON! CON! CONTRADIC'TION!

CON! CON! CONTRADIC'TION! CON! CON!

CONTRADIC'TION! "

No doubt she should have left politics to Diane DiPrima.

William Burroughs. Grandmaster of warped morality and mordant cynicism. Crime versus the Law, in multiple inversions. Eventually the

very word "law" comes to means hypocrisy, while the word "criminal" becomes tinged o'er with the auras of sainthood. Burroughs of course, far more than a Beat writer, is a master. In addition to which he is a superb raconteur and accomplished narrator of his own writings. He hadn't brought us anything new to recite at this event: everything was a re-run.

Allan Ginsberg: HOWL FOR CARL SOLOMON! *God what a performance!* The best I've ever heard him do. Despite the "howlers" to be found in the many stagnate and sterile imitations of this rapturous ode it remains one of the great poems in English of the 20th century. Of all the works presented at this reading, it alone had genius. Alas, it was written over 30 years before ... which just goes to show... After 600 (or thereabouts) performances it hardly comes as a surprise that Allan Ginsberg can communicate the fiery brilliance of Howl with unsurpassable command. Furthermore the reading of it was done in such a fashion as to give the impression that he'd written it just the day before and was sharing it with us for the first time. Rich, alive, breathtaking.

The remaining poems recited by Ginsberg were further specimens of the derivative dreck he's been churning out ever since he got religion

(Translation,; Chungpa-Trungpa's brand of "crazy wisdom" at the Naropa Institute) . Such as a trite little ditty about the futility of desire. He obviously didn't believe in any of it, so how could he hope to convince us? Allan rounded off the evening with a snappy "Meditation Song" accompanied by guitar, a charming snippet of Tantric Gospel sing-song, fathoms below the irrepressible Howl.

Conclusion

Blues For Christian Hermann

*My woman don't love me no more
 My woman don't love me no more.
 Cause my woman don't love me no more
 Think I's gonna creep all over the floor.*

*That college ain't no Holiday Inn
 That college ain't no Holiday Inn
 Cause that college ain't no Holiday Inn
 Ain't gonna let no beatnik gurus in.
 That ain't your copyright
 I just know that ain't your copyright!
 Cause that ain't your copyright
 You ain't gonna get no Kinko's copy tonight!
 Hey mister: that's illegal in this town!
 I said: that's illegal in this town*

*Cause that ain't legal in this town
They're gonna lock you up, inna city pound!
You ate them enchiladas, honey
Yes, you ate them enchiladas, honey
Cause you ate them enchiladas, honey
I'm gonna take all your money!*

12. Hudson Valley, New York State 1989

Returning from France in April, 1989 I moved back to Boughton Place in Highland, NY., across the river from Poughkeepsie and a few miles from the village of New Paltz. The name "Boughton" refers to Dr. Robert Boughton, organizer of the Tin Horn Rebellion in the Hudson Valley in the 1840's. This was a peasant revolt, an uprising of serfs against their absentee landlords. The rebellion was quashed, and Robert Boughton was incarcerated in SingSing for a few decades. In the aftermath of the Civil War, serfdom was abolished in New York State by the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation, and he and all others involved were exonerated and freed.

Boughton Place holds an attractive 2-story rooming house, a conference center with meeting rooms and guest rooms, a theater building holding a psychodrama stage. These facilities provide the setting for various services, activities and organizations, primarily in the areas of Conflict Resolution and Psychodrama..... also nature hikes, book discussion groups, solstice celebrations....whatever the market will bear. The center is under the direction of Clare Danielsson, M.A. in Social Psychiatry and Executive Director of Mediation Services for the State of New York, in Ulster and Sullivan Counties. It is surrounded by several

acres of grounds partly cultivated and partially wild, a choreography of which Goethe would have very much approved, but which seems to be due more to the limitations on time, money and labor for subduing the entire landscape to civilization, than to any manifestation of aesthetic theory. She and her 95-year old father, August, have marvelously landscaped and cultivated the grounds. For the gardens alone it is well worth a visit.

I fulfilled numerous functions in this socializing experiment: secretary, editor, translator, ghost writer, mediator, library researcher, major domo, minor domo, handyman, errand boy, whipping boy, mascot, friend, shoulder to lean on, critic, resident intellectual. In exchange I had a place to stay, at least between quarrels, and the use of the office equipment for preparing and publishing Ferment.

A truckload of grievances had accumulated between the directorship and myself which, in a tempestuous broil on September 24th, 1990, (the date of my 52nd birthday); spilled over and, like a swollen blister, burst open, spilling its contents into the maelstroms of legend.

The editor of an independent newsletter has the advantage in any quarrel, of having at his command a large and (hopefully) sympathetic

audience to whom he can relate his point of view. Journalism frequently burdens its practitioners with irresistible opportunities for gratifying the bullying side of their character. We are daily witnesses to the extent to which reporters, publishers and editors abuse this capability.

Consequently, although an account of this quarrel would certainly be provocative, interesting, scandalous, shocking and the stuff of which great literature is made, there are many reasons why I can't write about it here, (and everyone knows how I hate to throw away a good story!)

The strongest of these reasons is that the people with whom I quarreled and I are once again good friends. It is not so much a matter of letting sleeping dogs lie, it is rather a case of not obliging them to tell the truth. My tendency would be to tell my side of the story; however I do not think they would want it published even if I were to tell it from their point of view. There's as much good material in what happened after my escape/eviction from Boughton Place.

The ensuing account will summarize everything that's happened in the two years from the morning in mid-October, 1990, when I found myself on Rt. 299 (between New Paltz and Highland in New York's Hudson valley) with a pocketful money but no idea of where to go, to my arrival in Colorado in June of 1992.

I had and still have, several friends in the region. Some months before these events, Christine - young, all salt and sugar, crazy and wild - had stormed into my life. For the short time that we were together she spurred me into a welter of reckless and courageous acts before spinning off into her own unhappy, tragic orbit. I owe much to her in this period, also to Donald Silberger, a politically obsessed mathematician who teaches at the SUNY in nearby New Paltz. Together they helped me to move to Motel 87. Located only a few hundred feet from the NY Thruway exit and less than a block away from the New Paltz shopping malls this motel, although the best of the lot, was a dismal, dirty and expensive dive. \$40 a night gave me the freedom of the ubiquitous color TV in a single brutish room without cooking. Apart from the tragic-comic aspects of the situation, it was hardly a fit reward for a life of unremitting toil.

Christine cooked up a gallon bucket of pasta at her place and brought this over, together with sandwiches and some canned fruit. On the third morning of my residence there Christine came with some good news. She had taken the initiative to telephone Beth, a mutual friend. Graphic artist, potter and jewelry designer, Beth was then living in a tiny (honest-to-goodness real) log cabin heated by a wood burning stove and

without running water in a tiny settlement named Alligerville about 20 miles away on the western slopes of Mount Mohunk. If I were willing to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water, and part-time baby-sitter for her boisterous 3-year old kid, Zander, she would be happy to put me up for several weeks.

Don Silberger came by for me at 3 that afternoon and we caroomed down route 299. The car pulled into Beth's driveway just as the sun was flexing its last febrile points of fire over the mysterious cliffs and caverns of the shaggy, mystic and unfathomable peaks of the Schwangunk Mountains.

Alligerville must at one time have been known for something, although the derelict husk of its former fame now consists of little more than a small general store, a blacksmithery operated by a New Yorker gone back to the land, a string of log cabins along a road rising up from the lake, and an abandoned hotel by the lake shore.

It is the kind of region that inspires one to long walks. Although winter had come early in that year and the hills and roads were already blanketed with snow, (a very beautiful sight indeed), it was chilly rather than cold. It could be bitter all the same when, in the middle of the night,

the fire went out in the stove and one had to go outdoors to bring in some more wood.

The town of High Falls is the nearest way station to the north. Reputed as a haven for unrepentant hippies it, like so many other places, is now the site of expensive restaurants for wandering tourists. The nearest even remotely sizable township is Rosendale, about 12 miles to the farther east and on the highway between New Paltz and Kingston. At the time of these events Zander's father, John Schoenfeld, a potter, and piano tuner, lived there. John and Beth oscillated from estrangement to reconciliation to estrangement. In the meantime they took turns looking after Zander.

Fetching the water for Beth's cabin I loaded a dozen empty plastic milk bottles onto a toy wagon, exited out the back and wheeled the wagon around to the front of the property and across the road to a place alongside the banks of the frozen creek. Implanted there was a narrow pipe disgorging clear water even in the coldest weather. This chore had to be done twice a day, usually before the dish-washing. There was no plumbing; the cabin's waste-water was collected in a plastic tub and tossed out into the snow. The latrine was in a shack down the hill.

That first night, with Zander sleeping, the dishes washed and put away, and a strong fire crackling in the stove, Beth and I found places on the couch, curled up under blankets and watched a videotape of Hitchcock's *Gaslight*.

Zander began every morning gratifying his addictions to the Ninja Mutant Turtles, Nintendo and other conspiracies for lowering the intelligence of Western Civilization. Figuring out ways of weaning him away from the TV exercised much of our ingenuity. After breakfast, Beth dropped him off at the kindergarten, then drove to her job as a jewelry maker for a nearby company. Most of the day I had to myself. What did I do? As the cook reminds us in Isak Denisen's "*Babette's Feast*": an artist is never poor.

For much of the evening Beth would be on the phone with Alfie, a rediscovered former flame living in Madison, Wisconsin. She spent so much time talking to him over the telephone that she became convinced that life with Alfie was the way to go. She left Zander with John and went down to New York to wind up some business before flying off to Madison. I had the cabin to myself for 3 days. On the second of these nights John drove up and brought me down to Rosendale for dinner. John is an amazing cook. We talked pianos and music, politics, pottery,

and books for 6 hours before John took me back to Alligerville. When Republicans accuse homeless people of having the nerve to enjoy life they're onto something.

I left Alligerville in a few weeks to go Albany where I had some business to attend to, then made my customary tour of the familiar haunts: New York City Cambridge, Middletown and Philadelphia, before returning to the Hudson Valley and its homeless shelters.

Ulster County's homeless shelter is in Kingston, and a certain amount of animal cunning (that miraculous trait found in peasants which intellectuals invoke, to explain how such backward stupid people can come up with interesting strategies for survival) is needed to get into it. The trick is to show up at the Social Services offices in Willow Park, an administrative district in Kingston, at exactly 4:30 PM on a Friday night. You must walk in unannounced and tell the intake clerk that you have no money and no place to stay. The laws oblige the state to put you in the shelter over the weekend.

The Darmstadt Shelter is located in the basement of a Methodist church at the extreme southern edge of Kingston, over two miles away, in an area known as the Roundout owing to the extensive spiralalalalalingily roaaaaaadwayyyyyyyyyyy that ferries people and

vehicles down into the river valley. We are more or less yet not quite on the other side of the tracks. About a block away from the Shelter one finds a stretch of street accommodating genteel souvenir shops, bookstores and health food restaurants.

This may bode the resurrection of this moribund neighborhood, however it is more than likely that it's just another false start. One of the endearing charms of the Hudson Valley is that developments never develop. The tiny enterprises hang around for awhile, just enough for one to enjoy their health foods or quilts or small press books. Their lifespan is never long enough to displace the poor sturdy folk who consider these areas their neighborhoods. In a sense everybody is happy; everyone that is, except (perhaps) the lurid-eyed petty businessman who somehow imagines he can cheat the timeless traditions of Sleepy Hollow and survive.

Darmstadt Shelter was clean, warm, with a population of about a dozen, no more demoralizing nor dangerous than its clientele. I enjoy staying in shelters from time to time, because they tend to be staffed by the same kinds of people I went on peace marches with in the 60's. When I am in a strange or unfamiliar town, staying in the shelter gives me a means of finding the very people I came there to meet. This assessment

proved once again to be true of Kingston: the staff were all volunteers with Family, a conglomerate of hippies, trolls, leprechauns, flower children, peaceniks and rebels of all shapes and sizes that operates walk-in crisis centers in Kingston, Woodstock, New Paltz and Ellenville. Between myself and the two young activists who recorded the data they needed from me for Social Services, we turned the intake ritual into an informal discussion group about Hudson Valley politics.

On my first night there I shared a room with two other persons, one of them a hefty alcoholic whom I'll name Fred. Fred came in around 1 in the morning, reeking like a brewery that gets its water from a creek infested with the corpses of plague - riddled beavers. He stank up our bedroom so badly that we couldn't enter it for the rest of the day. On the next night he showed up for the dinner hour. He commented to me that I was a dingbat because I read books when I didn't have to, otherwise he left me alone. He went out again after dinner. When he returned, to throw himself onto his cot at 9 PM his stench was, if possible, even more potent than it had been the night before.

I informed the night staff. We tried to eject him from the Shelter but were unable to move him out of his bed. I volunteered to walk the 4 blocks to the neighborhood police station. I arrived and my information

was taken down by a desk sergeant. At one point I apologized for the trouble I might be causing poor drunk Fred. The sergeant chuckled: Fred, he explained, spent more days out of the year in their boarding house than he did in ours. Two cops were dispatched. The desk sergeant suggested that I not return to the Shelter right away, lest Fred make an automatic connection of myself with the law. For the next hour I sat sipping espresso at a yuppie coffeehouse. When I returned I returned Fred was gone.

I called up John the next day and related the incident to him. He groaned: "Oh, Roy! Really, that's too much. If you had gone on to get your Ph.D. and been tenured at some decent college, none of this would ever have happened!" What can I say? A few weeks later, Beth returned from Madison. The romance with Alfie had fizzled from the moment he met her on the steps of his apartment. She now lives in John's house in Rosendale. John has moved his piano factory to Tilson, a mile away.

(On a visit to them in 1996 the four of us, John, Beth, Zander and myself, after dinner sat in the living-room and watched the marvelous videocassette "Beethoven Lives Upstairs". Zander in particular was thrilled by scenes of the great maestro throwing flowerpots across his room and swearing like a fishmongress.)

After Fred's expulsion from the Darmstadt Shelter the other residents teased me all weekend long with gruesome fantasies of what Fred would do to me if I happened to run into him on the streets of Kingston. Clearly it was time to decamp.

There were other reasons as well. If I couldn't find a place to stay by Monday, the county was going to place me in a halfway house filled with alcoholics, drug-addicts and released prisoners. I've got nothing against these people, I've often enough lived with them. I don't much like getting robbed or beaten up or, even worse, have the valuable time I invest in music, study, research and writing violated by ignorant drunk slobs who are unable to form any mental image of privacy. There has always been something burnt-out about Kingston (read your American history). It certainly isn't congenial to persons of my peculiar cast. New Paltz with its university, or Woodstock with its 20 geological layers of remnants of aborted arts colonies are my obvious habitats.

Through my contacts I was able move into a building in a municipality with the signifier of Shady, a handful of houses on Woodstock's northern slopes. My room was on the second floor of a dilapidated rooming house that I'd lived in briefly a few years back and

which is known to its alumni as "Laurie Sherman's shithouse." Laurie Sherman is Ulster County's most celebrated miser. Her 3-story rat- and-firetrap warehouse in Shady is stocked with welfare recipients, primarily acidheads whose neural wiring had been melted down in ancient drug trips.

No repairs are ever made in the building. The money that ought to be put aside for such purposes probably goes to the building inspectors so that it won't be condemned as a general public menace. It may get some paint on it once a decade. No locks; you buy your own. No mail delivery; you either get a post office box in Shady or arrange to have your mail sent to the Family office on Rock City Road in downtown Woodstock. The toilet is always broken. One wouldn't want to go into the bathroom anyway because of the permanent slick of water on the floor and the mold in the bathtub.

I washed up in the kitchen, a surrealist's dream of filth. This was not so much the fault of Laurie Sherman, as it was of the tenants who sat around smoking Top tobacco from dawn to dusk, rarely emptied the garbage, and never washed any of their pots or plates they used in their heroic cooking. During my tenure there the microwave oven had become a kind of rooming-house within the rooming house: I don't know if the

roaches gave their welfare checks to the occupants of the kitchen. I used my food stamps to buy picnic lunches from the supermarkets, or I ate out in restaurants, which seems to defeat the whole purpose of the welfare system; but there was enough money coming in from selling Ferment Press books and other items to make this possible. Coming home at night I would stride through the front door, wave to the wretches around the dining table, pet the mangy house dog, mount to my room, and lock the door.

I never came out before dawn the next day. After throwing some water in my face from the kitchen sink I dashed across the road to hitchhike into Woodstock. Sometimes I would walk the four miles downhill through beautiful countryside. On many of these trips I would chant to the trees and the birds: "I don't deserve to live in a shithouse! I don't deserve to live in a shithouse!"

Oh well: only moral uncleanness is defiling. Read any of the ancient books of wisdom. Laurie Sherman financed this palace by confiscating every single penny of the residents' welfare money (apart from the food-stamps, which she couldn't touch). What more is there to say? Her aged mother, all but senile, a Russian-Jewish refugee, lived in a 3-room apartment on the first floor behind the door to the kitchen. I was

told by someone that her late husband had been a concert violinist. People say things like that to give a place class.

I was fortunate to be a resident of Laurie Sherman's shithouse at a time when it was bathed in the glow of Andy Warhol's 15 minutes of fame. Laurie used to tell us that her 20-year old son was a gifted painter waiting for his dazzling career. The implication was clear: he was not like one of those lazy rotting invalids from whom she harvested her bread and butter. One afternoon when everyone was out, the Narcotics Bureau launched a raid on the attic. In it they discovered a chemistry laboratory holding sacks and bottles of all the ingredients that go into the making of Ecstasy and other designer psychedelic drugs. The son was picked up in Albany and, as far as I know, is now serving a long prison sentence. The other residents of the building were naturally very frightened because they could all have been busted for possession. I doubt however that the narcs were interested in the small fry.

In June of 1992, utterly homesickened, I made a phone call to Dr. Michael Lightner of Niwot, Colorado, administrator and tenured professor in Electrical Engineering at the University of Colorado at Boulder, a friend and steady patron of Ferment. Mike told me that if I came to Boulder he would make me a visiting scholar in Electrical

Engineering. Nobody ever said that universities were totally evil, and they are sometimes useful for escaping drug infested firetraps.

I rode into the sunset around the 1st of June, covering all the expenses of the journey besides the bus ticket by playing the violin on the street corners of New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis and Denver. It was one of the last times I've used street violin as a steady source of income. I'd grown to detest the instrument, (hardly the fault of the violin, one of the supreme inventions of mankind). Eventually it was pawned in Denver for about \$200. I was never able to work up the resolution to redeem it. Now my instrument is the piano, with which I've fallen in love.

