

## TRANSCIENCE ...

### 1.

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 were 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, also, there were 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 come to fruition on her first trip abroad. Thereafter she became increasingly 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 loses 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 café - 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 cafés 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 than

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 <sup>1</sup> ; 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 <sup>2</sup> 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.

## 2.

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 miasmatic 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 to 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 cafés already described mentioned, notably the rue de la Harpe, the rue St Severin, the rue de la Huchette and the rue Xavier Privas, (consult map), 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! 3

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, (Marché 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 pan-handlers 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 ). 4 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 teen-ager 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 terribly 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 ought to recognize 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.

### 3.

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 . 1 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 pennets, 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 Bibliothèque St. Geneviève 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 lifes. 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 of 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, tinselled 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, toking 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 2, 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

#### 4.

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.

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 addressbook, 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 addressbook. 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.

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 addressbook. 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."

"Donc! 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 êtes 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 a unbuttoned red shirt hastily thrown y 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. Thus what follows may be considered a grammatically sanitized translation of same.

"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 found ( and expected ) 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 imagine 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!"

Obviously this was trade humor. It broke the ice. They picked up their glasses of mint tea and informally 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 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 great 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 cup of teas 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."

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.

## 5.

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. I don't know what the cafe has become in the meantime, or even if it is still there. During my year in Paris in the late 80's I never went there. 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. Plaits, 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 hitch-hiking 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 it's 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?"

" 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 Café 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."

As the young people had ordered nothing more costly than coffee and rolls 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.

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