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THE HEAD

By

Arnold R. Lipkind

B.A., University of Hawaii, 1964

M.A., University of Hawaii, 1966

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

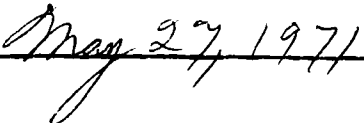
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1971

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Contents

"Rainy Season"	1
"Happy Days"	4
"A Brief History of the Life of Moses M. Smith"	10
"Red"	22
"Suzie"	42
"The Head"	48
"Listen, Herbulla"	57
"Love and Politics"	84

RAINY SEASON

I.

The trees are wet with morning. The flowers are soggy, the leaves slippery, the bark a running brown. They line the street, the empty trafficless street -- too early for other creatures' work or play, too early for others passing enroute to business or right there commencing to dawdle the morning away.

Except for birds chirping goodmorning or something. Not moving much, in their places still, keeping dry or drying in the new sun.

And caterpillars, wiggling on the bough, consumed now or about-to-be-consumed by some of those chirpers; but some unconsumed, maybe never, and flying away one morning at just this time.

And a big grey rock, round and large as a giant basketball. Who knows how much he shelters, how much he manages to keep dry and concealed from birds and men.

And a peeing dog.

I am writing a poem about six-thirty a.m. The freshness, the inactivity. The premises of emptiness and the promises of fullness, even clutter. For soon come the automobiles, bicycles, legs that carry people to their affairs.

How much I will them
Peaceful, playful.

II.

And a little old man raking leaves. The rake is bamboo, the man Japanese, coffee-colored in the shadows. The leaves are wet, the grass wet, the street and sidewalks wet, for it is not quite seven and, like most mornings of the Honolulu rainy season, it has been pouring much of the last three hours.

Cars pass; the little white-haired, tee-shirted, dungareed old man looks this way and that after the sedans and stationwagons full of schoolchildren, mothers, working-people. A workman in a chambray shirt drives by in an ancient beat-up Ford -- in this neighborhood he works, not lives, for this is a good part of town, near the University.

The old man stares at me a few seconds; I stare back; he turns to his rake.

I am across the street from him in front of the Friends' Meeting House, on a bench, under a corrugated tin shelter. I am waiting for the others, for the meeting to begin. We are the Students for a Democratic Society and we must ensure a strike.

It is drizzling.

The others are late. No matter. Think, work something out. Sheltered from the rain.

The little old man is carrying to the curb a garbage can full of leaves; the can is almost as big as he.

In my head I am writing a leaflet: How many more: boys, girls...? Nixon and Agnew and may they rot. But how can I blame them? -- as I tell my students. It's the system, the structure, the way things are....

I should be home working on my dissertation so I can get a job, a real one, at Oregon State or Florida Atlantic, so I can take care of my wife the way she sometimes wishes I would.

The little old man is gone. A comrade is walking up the driveway. The sun is tangled up in the telephone wires.

HAPPY DAYS

Happy stepped off the plane at 2:19. At the end of the walkway was Georgie, but beaming. "Happy," he squealed, kissing her, hugging her. "I'm so happy to see you!"

They walked to the baggage-claim. "Happy, Happy," he squealed, squeezing her freckled hand in his, bringing it to his lips. They waited at the baggage-claim.

With a shake of his head he refused the services of the negro redcap. A bag in each hand, he walked her through the main lobby to the waiting cab outside. Georgie was puffing. Inside the cab they settled back: he pulled her close, buried his pudgy fingers in her hair.

He'd taken the bridal suite at the very best hotel. Upstairs, Happy stepped out of her orange shoes, orange skirt, heavy white blouse. Georgie swallowed hard. Standing hushed and still he watched her across the room. He unzipped his fly: he was happy, painfully in the virile state.

"What's up?" Georgie said suddenly.

"Bad news, old buddy," she spoke for the first time.

"What's up?" said Georgie, pointing, pouting.

"This here's a falsie, old buddy," she said quietly, removing the mass of foam rubber from the left half of her

bra. Georgie's lower lip trembled.

"This boob," she intoned, "is no more."

He was flabbergasted, sank into the supple deepening easychair behind him.

She sat down on the edge of the bed, a tall girl, darkly freckled -- no girl really, not since the second marriage-and-divorce years ago; a bleached blond, unbleached these eight weeks, the russet coming through; thin, too thin, thinner than before, the face and neck worn, lines deep at the corners of the eyes and mouth, the neck scraggly, a chicken neck.

She lay back.

Across the room Georgie was staring at his feet -- nursed in the specially arched eighty-dollar alligators -- fifty-six year old feet, small and pudgy like his hands and arms and legs and head and trunk. He wanted to see those flat feet, the mottled skin, broken toenails, the flat calloused soles and heels. He removed his shoes and socks.

Happy sighed.

He lit a cigarette, blew the smoke down to his feet; it rose back into his face and he coughed. A wife he had, three kids in school -- two not even kids anymore -- a business, civic responsibilities. Family, friends, clients. But Christ! Could this Happy show a fellow....

It was really too bad, she was thinking. Georgie. A good sport. Had been anyway. Had-been, has-been, it was

really too bad. Old buddy.

Georgie lit another cigarette. He was thinking about Happy, the first time they'd met. At a bar it was, or coming out of one. A guy was yelling at her, a drunk, yelling and kind of pushing her against the wall. He would never forget it. She was absolutely still against the wall. He'd have walked on but she was so absolutely still, so completely unresisting, unafraid, that he needed to figure it out. She liked it? was frightened beyond fright? was ready to pounce or scream? was a whore? was crazy?

"Something wrong, Miss?" he heard himself saying -- not loud, scarcely audible, but saying. And ignored by the man, though Happy, not especially happy then, looked him in the face.

"Anything the matter?" he heard himself saying, louder, still barely audible, still ignored by the one, watched by the other.

"Any trouble?" he fairly shouted. The man spat. "Fuck off," he wheezed. Georgie glared; Happy stared from one to the other. The man spat. "Aaaaa," he muttered, waving his palm in annoyance, "not worth it," and was gone.

Georgie found himself, an hour later, nude and straining on a narrow, creaky bed, in a tiny apartment, a big soft blond astride him; later, straining still, he astride her; and later still, enjoying still, straining to enjoy. She laughed and laughed, kissed his peter and

called it Pete. He laughed too.

He got her a flat, here in Des Moines, where he had business twice a month. They had wonderful weekends, eating, drinking, making love. They were always laughing -- this blond beauty and he -- and the strain of life was no strain at all. Until, two months ago -- ages! ages! -- that note she'd left:

Gone a while. Dont't be
mad. Love and kisses.

How he worried! wept! How the days went by, one by one, by one, at home or in Des Moines. A vague and black and doleful dream. And now she was back. Here. On her back.

She lay there, looking up at the ceiling. Nice, she was thinking. But she missed her apartment. Hers? Theirs. Theirs? Whosever and if ever hers again, she missed it. She missed Georgie, had missed him the whole damn time like crazy, that terrible time on her back, in that bed, in that hospital, the cutting, the pain, the dreams of cutting and pain. Old buddy. And now, titless on the left, who-knew-what on the right, she stared at the ceiling.

Georgie was nice, she was thinking. Shorter? Five inches, four and a half. Older? nineteen years. Okay? the greatest. From that night years ago in that creepy bar -- what was its name? -- with that creepy guy -- what was his name? -- that last of the creepy bars and creepy

guys for all time -- forever? -- from then till now anyhow, Georgie had taken care of her.

His pudgy belly on hers, sweaty, slippery together, his Pete plowing away. And: dinner, dancing, the night life; sitting in the park, walking through the zoo; smooching in the parlor and reading the papers together, dinner cooking on the stove. A good sport; never yelled.

She was sobbing.

"Don't," he murmured, beside her now, leaning over, stroking her neck, belly, things now. "Don't be blue," removing her panties now, sliding them down her thighs, over her kneecaps, down to her ankles, and up over her long narrow feet, the red bikini panties with the white flowers all around. Kissing her now, her thighs, the wet rose petals between them.

"No!" She pulled her legs together, tried to rise. "I won't let you!"

He tried to hold her but she shoved to a sitting position, snapped off the brassiere, and held the huge, soft, smooth, freckled, stiff-nippled right breast in one hand.

He began to laugh, kissing the other, the nothing, white-bandaged still and plastered it seemed, strapped around the shoulders back, kissing the breast that used to be but no more, and she laughing with him now as he came

over her, into her, his mouth to the huge right breast
(which was about as high as he came up to her).

A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE LIFE OF
MOSES M. SMITH

Pastor of Door of Faith Baptist Church

Purdy, Missouri

July 4, 1915

When the war of the rebellion started, father sent me to mill, I was seventeen. He walked me outside, patted me on the back, and looked me in the eye and said, "Don't look from the sun to see spider threads because you can't, neither can you see your sins unless you look to Jesus Christ." Mother was crying on the porch. The next morning I put the team up in a Mr. Schafter's stable, and sold the wheat and left the corn, and started with the 6th Ind., Reg. Inf., and started for the front.

Marched three days thru' meadows, woods, and farmlands, from early dawn to late dark, picking up volunteers on the way and two or three times a whole company. The first day out we passed the Prewitt farm, I could see him and his boys out in the corn; and the women were among the chickens. I watched them cutting the corn, they worked hard, and I thought about corn bread and corn on the cob and corn pudding all hot from the fire, and fried chicken of a Sunday afternoon. Rested in the reeds along Hapsack

creek where just last week I caught mother a mess of crop-pies, sweet and juicy. Got thru' Little Deer woods that day on the track Elder Oates laid out years and years before.

After that it was mostly unfamiliar. I had many thoughts and questions as I marched, and in camp around the fires and sleeping among the men. But I kept my own council. Rose early the fourth morning and by dawn could see the Ohio river below, I had seen it only once before. On this side of the river was fully five regiments, thousands of men in a long line of companies waiting to cross by ferryboats and barges, the river was filled with all kinds. The other side was Louisville, there were hundreds it seemed of white and yellow and red buildings, smoke coming from their chimneys. For the first time I was afraid, thousands of us would be marching thru' a city of tens and tens of thousands, the troops and the city spread out before me all day long. Crossed at dusk, my company was the last to cross. Tho' raised by religious parents I was unsaved.

We saw no action for several weeks but continued south across Kentuck, camping sometimes for days on end. I got on alright with the men and did my duties as I was told, I worked hard. One man, older and smarter than most of us to be in the ranks, struck up many a conversation with me. His name was Dun Shubert and he was of

Jennings Co., too, but I never heard of any Shuberts in Jennings Co. nor had ever seen Dun before. He was tall and spare as a river reed of grass, and had some kinds of pox marks all over his face and a long orange scar along the side of his neck, and a smaller one on his forearm. I remember he had a low droning voice, like sawing wood. He got to working with me side by side to explain the war. "Them so-and-so's (he was given to cussing) is to try and get Kentuck and Tennessee and Jennings Co. to seseed, but we can't let 'em, no, we will stop 'em dead." And when we were all firing at the targets he would work his rifle very excited, yelling, "We will stop 'em dead, Mose boy." He patted me on the back when I made a good shot.

The months went by quickly. We kept on to the south and on into Tennessee in a rain and hail storm; we had to camp most of December, then moved southwest to find the river. It was freezing and we had to camp part of January too. We spent most of the day shooting game and cutting down trees for chopping wood for the fires. We slep huddled close together with canvas and wood chips on top of our blankets, small camp fires burned all around us. I heard tell of a dozen of the Regiment died of cold or the fever, but none of my company. Dun complained of the cold all the time, he was sick a great deal with fever and I didn't want to sleep with him but was afraid to hurt his feelings. "This here

is such-and-such," he would say. "Them so-and-so's would freeze us and starve us out. If I wasn't in the ranks I would do something about it, sure enough." I didn't know what Dun could accomplish but I kept my own council.

When we reached the Tennessee river we met with some resistance and lost a few men tho' none of my company. If I was afraid I did not know it yet. I felt strange carrying a rifle and sometimes aiming it at somebody I could not see firing at us from several hundred feet. We continued on down the river with more and more skirmishes and loss of life until the battle of Shiloh where our losses were very heavy. I saw many killed and dying. Throughout the battle I was truly frightened by the sounds of the cannon and the gunfire and the cries of men on both sides, I did my duty but I was sick at what I had seen. One of Dun's friends he sometimes slept with, younger than me, had both his legs blown off, I forget his name. A fat boy who's father owned some of the railroad thru' Illinois, he used to say, took it in the forehead right beside me, I could not do a thing. I saw men of my company down everywhere, red and black holes blown in their bodies, whole limbs blown away, I could not believe my eyes, I could not believe what I was seeing and what I was doing with my own rifle. But Dun and I came out of it safe and in camp I was sent to help the Regiment Dr. with the wounded. I made bandages and helped saw off legs and was useful.

I liked being around the Dr., he was father's height but a little fat, and was for the most part bald. He told me all about Louisville where he had lived most of his life, and his wife and children, and friends and patients and servants. He had with him an old negro servant named Jesse who stayed at headquarters with him and was religious and would pray a lot at night when in camp. The Dr. told me many stories, but Dun thought he made them all up. "He ain't a real Dr.," Dun said. How can you tell, I asked him. "He's a horse Dr.," Dun said. "Any fool can see that. And he ain't from Louisville neither." How can you tell, I asked him. "He's a thru' and thru' liar," Dun answered.

The Dr. didn't like Dun either. Dun asked him once if Jesse was born a slave negro and the Dr. got red in the face and said no, he had never had any slaves, his daddy had never had any slaves, his granddaddy never had any slaves. He told us slavery was unreasonable and the good Lord was a reasonable God, and so slavery was unGodly and evil. That's why he had joined the Regiment passing thru' Louisville.

One night Dun said he was sick and he would sleep in one of the hospital tents. A short time later there was some commotion over there, torches and shouting. Some of the patients were pushing Dun outside and the Dr. was slapping him in the face and he was cussing him,

and some of the guards hit him with the butts of their rifles and cussed him, but they were laughing too. They tied his hands and took him away. He was two weeks in stockade on bread and water and when he got out his face had pink blotches where his beard had stopped growing. He was sick and feverish and couldn't hold anything in his stomach and all day long he cussed the Dr. and cussed me for working there. "Tried to get me shot," Dun told me.

We spent the fall along Stone river, moving every so often but most often camped. We were many times attacked by raiding parties. At the battle of Stone river which lasted seven days we lost a dozen men and the Regiment lost ninety as a whole. I had gotten used to battle, but I was always frightened and somewhat sick at what I saw and what I had to do. We camped on the battle field the winter of '63.

I made a friend of a conscript from Illinois who had lost his Regiment and volunteered with us. His name was Tom Mead, he was my age, he carried a big Bible he had found where Gen. McCullum was killed, tho' rather large to carry (six by ten). It belonged to a J. B. Sloan, Tom said, who was killed probably on the southern side. Tom used it for a pillow and read out loud from it a great deal; he had a squeaky, high-pitched voice; sometimes I listened to him and sometimes I read from it myself;

Tom thought I had a preacher's voice. He said he had been saved from sin there and then the moment he had found that Bible.

Dun didn't like Tom much, thought he was a sissy. He would tell Tom to stop reading that hokum, but he let him alone most of the time. He knew I liked Tom and thought Bible reading was alright for a man.

One night after roll call we heard old Jesse praying, but it seemed he was closeby, in the stables. His voices was rising and falling in the way old negroes sometimes pray, wailing and moaning. Some of the men got to cussing and laughing and Dun said, "Let us go up and stop that." so he started and some thirty of us followed him to see what he would do.

The skies were pitch black that night, the only light was from the camp fires and torches. Two of the men carried torches into the stable and lit it up inside, there were moving shadows everywhere, and they stopped beside Jesse and lit him up. Jesse was on his knees moaning and groaning you could not tell what, his hands were clenched together so tight his nails were dug in and he was bleeding. We formed a ring around him and clapped our hands and Dun said, "Sing, Jesse, sing." Jesse began to wail, higher and higher, I was up front and it got so loud I wanted to put my hands to my ears against the wailing. Then he was moaning again, then

wailing, and through it all we clapped our hands and cried, "Sing, Jesse," and Dun clapped his hands only inches from Jesse's face which was bowed almost to the ground. Then Dun got down a saddle from the wall where it was hanging and put it on old Jesse who was still praying and said he would ride. He got in the saddle and jumped up and down in it and kicked the old servant and cried, "Giddap, Jesse. Giddap, boy." But Jesse kept on praying, harder and harder, moaning and wailing. All around him the men were clapping and shouting, "Giddap, boy; ride him Dun," and some of them asked Dun for a ride when he was thru'. But Jesse would not stop praying. Dun was riding and Jesse was groaning and everyone was clapping and stomping. I have heard thousands of prayers but nuthing to me like that one.

It got so I thought I could make out what he was saying, tho' I can't remember any of the words he might have said. He was sweating and crying and spitting into the dirt which was wet beneath his head. His tongue and lips were bleeding and he was vomiting, but he never stopped praying. Nobody could make him move by shouting or pushing him, and Dun couldn't make him move by jumping in the saddle or kicking him or pulling on his neck. I tried to see his face but Jesse never raised his head at all.

After a long while it seemed we had all grown quiet, I looked around, just Dun and Jesse were making any noise. Some of the men began to leave, but I couldn't

make myself go. Soon about half the men had left; Jesse was wailing again and Dun seemed to have gone crazy in the saddle shouting and kicking harder than before. Just then the Dr. came in the door and the men let him in the circle. He walked on up to Dun and just stood there looking right into his face. He never said a word, nor was there any sound at all but Jesse alone now, moaning low, Dun looking away from us all. Dun finally sort of snorted once and got off laughing and picked the saddle off of Jesse and hung it back on the wall. He and the others began to leave for their quarters.

When they were all gone but the Dr. and I, the Dr. got some water and washed down Jesse's face, then tried to make him stand, but Jesse stayed on his knees praying. He was no longer wailing but his head was bowed low and his hands clenched tight and his clothing was drenched in sweat. After a while the Dr. said to me, "Coming, Moses?" but I said I would stay. When I was alone with him I listened to him praying, I listened hard and carefully, and I thought I heard, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." I felt dizzy and wanted to vomit. I could not stand up, I fell to my knees; I was sick and feverish and I could not move. I cried, I do not know what; again and again I cried out. And later it was dark, Jesse was gone, and I carried these convictions to my quarters.

I talked a great deal with Tom about my convictions. I wanted to ask him some questions, but he said he had lost his Bible a short time before, it was a shame, where out here would he get another? I asked him if he still felt saved and he said yes, he could get another Bible one day, but he was very sad over losing it. "But I'm not saved, Tom," I told him. "What is it like?" He told me to put my faith in the Bible anyway, he remembered some prayers to say and we said them together. "You say them like a preacher," Tom said. "I know you will be alright."

I carried my convictions into the battle of Chickamauga, Sept. 19 and 20. The fighting was desperate from starting to finish. In the morning of the 19th I saw three old bunk mates shot down. I saw Dun trip, on a stone I thought, but he was still when I touched his eyes, I closed them, I didn't have time to find the wound. We had eaten mush together at dawn and now he was gone. All over the field and wherever I was the next two days men of my company were down and dying. I had to run on. The gunfire was all around me, cannons were exploding, trees were blazing, horses were running and falling everywhere without riders. It was noon of the 19th I came on Tom, I saw him on the ground and said, "Tom, are you hurt bad?" I do not remember what he said, but I do remember he took out an old pocketbook and handed it to me and said, "If you ever see my mother give her this, there is ten cents

in it." "No, Tom," I said, "you will see her before I."
He said, "You know I must die."

I went back into the fight but didn't take it. Poor Tom died soon. As I ran around the battlefield I could not help thinking of him and others of my bunk mates that fell that day. The daylight seemed to last twenty-four hours, it seemed that the noise and the fires and my terrible fears and sickness were never going to end. I lost track of time; I lost track of everything but where I was running and where I was shooting and who was running or shooting at me. I felt heavy, I felt a terrible burden on my shoulders, sometimes it was so hard to get up from one place and run on to another. I felt like I was carrying someone on my back all thru' the fight.

At dusk Gen. Walker, who commanded a division of southern troops, charged our lines. They were repulsed, our loss being very heavy. I heard tell of the Dr. and old Jesse blown from a wagon full of wounded; and our Col. fell in the open field with thirty or forty others. It was then very dark and the last of my bunk mates was either killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. I fell in with another company, we moved a quick pace off into the brush where the Regiment gave orders to lay down.

I lay down with strangers and felt very heavy and I looked away into the thick brush all around us. I was sick and I went out from camp into the thick brush and

fell on my knees and cried, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" I could not remember any prayers then and there, I was dizzy and with fever, but I repeated His Name. I shut my eyes as tight as I could and saw great fires burning in the night, and became dizzy and more feverish. Sometime later I opened my eyes and could see nothing for a time, it was pitch black, then I saw a star and the quarter of the moon. The Regiment was far off, I could not just then remember where, I did not care. Then I thought I heard something in the brush and I looked and thought I could make out Tom holding out his Bible and Dun Shubert chasing after him with a saddle. Then Tom became Jesse, then Tom again; and I thought I could make out the Dr. walking behind them slowly; and then I thought he was chasing after them, shouting at them. Then they were gone, they were all gone, but I was not afraid.

"I am not afraid," I told Him. "It is not that I am afraid so much, Lord, as I cannot bear the thought of going into your presence in my sins."

I went back to camp lighter and hungry and no longer tired. Passed on the next day thru' the fight which was desperate for we were with Gen. Thomas all thru' the fight. All told we lost about half the remaining Regiment, but the remainder of the battle felt lighter as I thought a great deal about the Lord.

RED

It was on the night of his son's bar-mitzvah that Bernie Schweibner first saw Red. In that queer state between sleep and wakeness he had started to tremble. The door was on fire! He struggled awake. A red haze hung on the door. His heart was racing; his palms, neck and forehead were dripping sweat. A pink wisp disappeared through the keyhole.

Estelle was snoring lightly beside him; the heat system was making those putt-putt sounds of adjustment. He was calmer now, vaguely nauseous, and very sleepy. It had been a wonderful reception -- a hundred and sixty-two guests, ninety-nine bottles of this and that. Tomorrow he would have some headache.

A few nights later, dreaming of his son, Bernie saw Red again. The bar-mitzvah service had been beautiful, flawless, and little Arthur, up there in silver cap and shawl, had glittered. Proud and glowing, Bernie began to tremble. There was somebody in the room! In that twilight sleep of his he could open his eyes a tenth, an eighth: A luminescent pink mist was pouring through the keyhole! He struggled awake. Leaning against the door was the form of
nothing

gone

but Bernie was panting for breath.

"What's wrong?" Estelle muttered drowsily.

"Nuthin. Go back to bed."

"You had a nightmare?"

"Yeah, yeah; go back to sleep, honey."

"What is it, Bernie? You ate too much?"

"Yeah," he said softly, patting her shoulder.

"Let's go back to sleep."

But he didn't fall off till early morning, and when he did he slept fitfully.

Arthur woke him roughly. "Com'on, dad; com'on, dad," Bernie could hear from somewhere far away. And Estelle: "Tell him it's late, Arthur. Tell him the bacon is cold." Bernie shuddered. "Com'on, dad; com'on, dad." He shuddered and shuddered and brusquely sat up awake. Arthur was shaking with laughter. "Tell him the bacon is cold," Estelle yelled from the kitchen.

He threw up his breakfast just before lunch and when he came out, pale and wheezing, Miss Tyler asked if he was feeling well. Vickie. If she could fetch him something -- an aspirin? sandwich? He smiled weakly. He didn't want to see her; he was sorry it was Monday and tonight he had to see her. "I'll make it up to you, honey," he said, turning back into the bathroom.

"You can afford a couple days off," Estelle said, standing over him, waving the thermometer. "You can come down with pneumonia in this weather."

He lay, quiet and relaxed, propped up on three pillows. "I don't think it's anything serious, Stellie. I'm just so damned tired." He reached out for her little bulging belly. "It's just nice to be in bed, know-what-I-mean?"

"That's not good for you, Bernie," she piped, standing in place, scolding with the thermometer. He rolled closer to the edge and brought his hand beneath her housedress. She sat down on the edge of the bed, smiling. "A hundred and a fourth is nothing to sneeze at." He lay his head in her lap and she stroked his cheek. "Rest, tottila, rest. I'll tell Arthur not to play his guitar when he gets back from school."

"That's some Arthur, Stellie. That's some little Arthur we've got." She was beaming.

He dreamt of Estelle, just twenty-two. Svelt and sunburned, Asbury Park. *The waves were oddly high and fierce and they played in them fiercely, and swam beyond them and back, beyond them and back, and ran hand-in-hand out of the water, on the sand, to the towels and the lunch under the huge umbrella, and back to the budget bridal suite, young and salt-smelling, face to face....*
/End italics/

He woke in the darkness twenty years later to the thump thump of her heavy feet: and plump, soap-smelling, she told him, "Now, bubulla...how's my big boy...you should stay home more often, darling."

When the Leontaub deal fell through, Bernie was in a foul mood. He was sorry and apologized, but Schweibner Real Estate could not afford to let deals involving whole subdivisions fall through its hands. Vickie was almost in tears.

"You know what a gonif is, Vickie?"

"A thief."

"He tried to out-Jew me."

"Why are you so loud, Bernie?"

"'The chance of a lifetime,' he tells me. The son of a bitch tried to out-Jew me!"

"You're upsetting me, Bernie. Why are you yelling at me? It's not my fault."

He started.

She was looking out the window. The snow was falling lightly. The little sunlight caught the flakes as they fell. She was so young. Her skin was white like the snow, her long hair was yellow like the sun.

Later, they lay back in Vickie's bed, smoking -- her hair across the pillow and upon his cheek. On the phone Estelle had sounded worried; she never had before. They lay

back, blowing the smoke above them. It was dark now, and warm under the blankets. Estelle had asked him to bring home a quart of ice cream, marshmallow-chocolate. At some point he dozed off.

/Italics:/ And he came right in as though he owned the place -- all in Red. He stood there, looking Bernie over, looking. He gave off a heat, and Bernie was sweating, straining to open his eyes, to see him better, shaking now */end italics/* because it was so real, so Red, and in the twilight sleep he shook and shook, trying to wake, trying so hard to keep Red from pointing like that, pointing --

"Sweetie, sweetie, sweetie. What is it? You're quaking the whole room," Miss Tyler said.

After that Bernie saw Red two or three times a week. He never knew when he was going to see him: on days when he was feeling as strong and chipper as he could hope for, under the circumstances, he would wake trembling to the pointing finger. On days when he was particularly irritable and upset -- from Vickie's leaving, for example; or young Anderson's quitting over the firm's restrictive covenants against Negroes -- on such days he might sleep like a log. He had been trying for some time to reason it all out, to psyche himself once and for all, but he could find no patterns, no consistencies.

He lost weight, was by spring positively thin. Had bags under his eyes and deep new wrinkles everywhere. Grey hairs doubled -- or was it his imagination? looking in the mirror so much? you were bound to see things. And although he was getting home now every single night before five-thirty, Estelle was perpetually worried.

Poor Stellie. She was looking older and older. For every pound Bernie shed she seemed to gain one and a half. He wished she wouldn't worry so, but when he was shuddering in the night, when he was so terrified he could not speak, he didn't know what he would do without her. He was less and less able to struggle awake out of the half-sleep; more and more he was relying on his wife to shake him awake, shout him awake. Sometimes, when he saw Red, it was all he could do to force out of his tight-shut mouth:

Ssstehhhhhhl!

Little Arthur, in that same time span, had shot up three inches -- he was two and a half inches shorter than his old man. Bought himself a whole new wardrobe of those mod outfits with his allowance and with the money he made picking things up after himself. Bernie didn't really like the new wardrobe, though he didn't especially mind the psychedelic records -- turned somewhat lower -- nor the psychedelic literature. He certainly didn't like the way Arthur's grades were falling, and he was not about to buy him another electric guitar.

"Look at him" Estelle said one night at dinner.

"Don't talk about it, Stell."

"Look at your father, Arthur."

Bernie looked from his wife to his son. Arthur was eating abstractedly, immersed in the magazine on his knee. Bernie swallowed his mashed potatoes. He hadn't the strength to chew much of the steak or raw vegetables or rye bread. He forced down the milk -- he hated it -- before all this he had never been able to drink it.

"Look at him, Arthur. He hasn't slept in three nights."

"Don't talk about it, Stell. You promised not to say anything."

"Promised schmomished. I'm going out of my mind, Bernie!"

"I told you not to talk about it!"

"What's wrong?" Arthur looked up for the first time. "What's with you anyway, dad?"

"He has nightmares, Arthur; your daddy has horrible nightmares. Why do you think we sleep with the door open? With the little light on?"

"What are you doing, you jerk!?" Bernie rose noisily to his feet, shoving the chair back and throwing a slightly nibbled slice of rye bread onto the table. "I don't want his head filled with all this garbage!"

"What's going on?" the boy stammered.

"I have to talk to somebody! I'm losing my mind. You have to do something, Bernie. We can't go on like this month after month."

"I'll go straight to bed."

"You have to do something, Bernie," she was crying. "Do something."

He shrugged. "What's to do?" They were staring at him. "I'll do something in the morning."

Just before morning Bernie woke trembling. Through the corridor...the misty Red...closer closer. No need to squeeze through keyholes and cracks, they were making it easy for him, easy

Bernie was wide awake!! He was somehow sitting upright in his bed wide awake and it was not frightening. It was not frightening -- he would no longer allow himself to be terrorized in this way.

And Red had remained, neither moved away nor dissipated. And Bernie was staring into the featureless face of the Red man-form standing there halfway between the door and bed. The Red man-form, raising its hand, pointing a finger

No! Bringing something out from his pocket and pointing it,

it

Blam Blam!! The shots exploded in his belly, the

hot bursting pain, and he was clutching himself and falling, falling, over the side of the bed, painfully dying, the blood pouring out of him, falling to the floor in a loud

thud!

"You have to do something, Bernie," Estelle was crying. "You can kill yourself like that, falling out of bed. Is that what you want? To kill yourself and leave me a widow? Arthur an orphan?"

He was sitting up on the floor, almost breathless, holding his belly, his hotly throbbing belly, Estelle cooling his forehead with a washcloth.

"Irving," she said,

"your friend

"from the old days...."

The dawn, outside the windows, was pink and hazy.

"Well, Bernie. Speaking as a friend, one of your very oldest, I must say I am not undistressed. You've got no little difficulty. Dreams like this I wouldn't wish on a thief. But, Bernie: there's worse than this, believe me. You should hear some of the stories people come in here with --

"As a physician, one specially trained in ailments of the mind and the emotions, let me make some suggestions. Did your father ever threaten you, especially physically?"

Is there any one or two specific instances that you can recall where he, or someone in his stead, frightened you to death? And this redness: is it fire? were you ever in a fire? were you ever threatened by a fire? do you hate fires? And why did it all start right after the bar-mitzvah? -- which was, incidentally, Bernie, a hell of an affair; Marge and I were raving about it for two weeks -- Was it seeing old friends and family? Arthur a young man and his father middle-aged?

"And the mistiness aspect, that's a fascinating aspect...

"And the pointing aspect, and the gun...

"Ever have trouble sleeping before?...

"Feel guilty about anything you've been doing lately?...

"The blood tests...the urine tests...the X-rays...

"In any event, Bernie, the secrets of the mind are intricately hidden; their disguises and devices of concealment are positively diabolical in ingeniousness. Fortunately, unraveling is my specialty. Outside, with Miss Lipscombe the receptionist, you should set up immediately weekly appointments -- you can afford it, ha ha -- before these things get worse and worse and...."

Three more nights. He dozed at his desk in the office. His office. His firm. He had told them not to

bother him. He didn't care if nobody ever bothered him again. Six nights running. Clutching his belly and falling, falling over the side of the bed, painfully, painfully

And the phone.

And the phone.

And the buzzer.

And the buzzer.

"I thought I told you I didn't want to be disturbed, Sherry."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Schweibner, but it's Mr. Leontaub on the line."

"Aa, Leontaub. Always Leontaub..."

"Hello, Sidney!..."

"Yeah..."

"Yeah, but..."

"Not so good, Sidney, frankly speaking. My heart's just not in it anymore..."

"Don't call them that, Sidney. 'Nigger' is bad enough..."

"It just rubs me the wrong way, Sid. When you stop to think about it, it's a disgusting word. Listen to it: Shh-vart-tza. It's so harsh and ugly..."

"Everything by you is the 'dream of a lifetime'..."

"Well, I didn't mean to get into philosophy...or politics for that matter...but like young Anderson used to tell me before he quit..."

In the hot sun Bernie walked briskly down Broadway. The fumes from the noon traffic made him cough, sneeze. Four months ago, thirty pounds heavier, he'd have been puffing and wheezing with every breath.

PO

He was starving. He would eat and eat. Baked fish would be nice. Maybe pot roast or goulash. Lots of milk. He

LICE

passed two young nuns. They were wearing short blue skirts. They had on sunglasses. One of them was

KILL FOUR

very pretty indeed. It was sort of nice to be walking down Broadway like this. It was sort of nice to be hungry. Perhaps he would take Estelle and Arthur out to dinner -- he'd better call now -- and maybe a movie. Maybe one of those

STUDENTS! READ ALL

new ones at the shopping center. He bought a newspaper at the newsstand.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BERNIE, FROM THE AUTHOR:

/Italics:/ Your grandson's bar-mitzvah, Bernie. A hundred sixty-two guests; ninety-nine bottles of this and that. The Rabbi couldn't eat anything because the hall wasn't kosher -- in a red tuxedo he waited on tables instead. The

beautiful chorus line of Jewish neighbor girls and Broadway whores danced and danced. The cake was ten feet high, the Rabbi divied the cake, everyone got a piece to take home.

The young men smoked pot in the john. The Rabbi pushed his way in with the real dope. The beautiful girls laughed and laughed. The Rabbi held out his needle. One! Two! The young men cried and cried....

And you were there, Bernie. It was your grandson's shindig. You went to the john to vomit and found them there: the Rabbi, the young men. Your grandson you dragged away; and returned for another young man, and another. But the john was filling up faster than you could empty it: the way they thronged there, arms naked, entreating the laughing Rabbi: the girls thronging too: as needle in hand he took them, he took their arms, until, in the end, you slew him, Bernie:

the dream of a lifetime. /End italics./

July:

on the 5th he completed plans for leaving the area
on the 12th he completed preliminary negotiations
for selling the firm

on the 22nd everything was packed up and ready
to go

on the 22nd, also, he came to final terms with the
buyer

he would rest and relax in the tropical sun -- he deserved it; his family deserved it -- and try to come to terms, now, with himself. Perhaps he could even begin to indicate to his family, carefully and truthfully, all that he thought he had been learning.

On the morning of September 9th Bernie finally had it out with Red. It had been coming for some weeks, both of them knew it, expected it. Red had followed him there, as Bernie had expected he would; but whereas the Florida sun and the Atlantic sea had provided Bernie with a certain new perspective, Red had not appreciably changed. As frightened as Bernie still was by the other's spooky appearance, Bernie had learned to control his reactions, was perversely enjoying this self-control, this sense of accomplishment. Whereas his visitor remained, ...well, ...the same old aggravating Red.

Bernie rarely shuddered now; could wake himself immediately, without commotion; even slept with the door closed and the nightlight extinguished -- all of which had helped restore Estelle's former tranquility and figure. Indeed, some nights, as he was getting ready for bed, it seemed to Bernie that he could sense a morning visit; and sometimes he was already awake and waiting, watching the keyhole, as the first few Red particles floated in.

They would stare at each other -- Bernie, sitting up in bed; Red, standing there halfway between the bed and door -- for somewhere between twenty-five and thirty minutes. Face-to-face, if you could call Red's a face. And then, slowly, Red would turn, move to the door, to the keyhole, and, feet first....

Bernie had learned that so long as he could contain the trembling, Red would keep his pistol holstered. Nor was Red pointing much with his finger anymore. It seemed to Bernie that there ought to be a little more to it than this, it was getting to seem almost a waste of time. He was getting, to be frank, more than a little bored. Though he hoped he wasn't going to say anything he would be sorry for.

He had been talking to Red for several days now. Off and on. Not really talking so much as moving his lips, thinking hard -- but he knew that Red was listening. He was waiting for a reply. A response. Anything. He felt that Red had something to tell him, it was a very distinct and pressing feeling. He felt, he hoped, that Red would acknowledge his, Bernie's, Achievement: his new capacity for stoicism and his even newer capacity for actually changing things a little. He wanted to be -- though only in a manner of speaking, of course -- an "acquaintance" of Red's. Not a friend, exactly -- that was impossible; indeed, you could say, certainly, that

the two of them were already "acquainted." Bernie felt, hoped, that Red would enable them to be more playful together about this whole business, the whole business of life. Enough with the graveness!

He said:

-- You know, Red. Since I been spending pieces of the night with you, especially these last two months face-to-face, I feel that my whole life has changed. For the better.

--

-- You know what I mean, Red?

--

-- You know what's going on in my head, I guess. But talking is a different sort of thing. I wish we could talk, Red.

--

-- I'm glad I've learned to sit up with you, but I wish you'd answer me sometimes.

--

-- You stand there and say nothing, nothing at all. You must have something on your mind, something besides all this pointing and shooting.

--

-- Pardon me for saying it, but you piss me off, Red, you really do. You got no human warmth, no real personality. Let's face it, besides being a very scary

fellow, what are you? I don't really think you know beans about life.

-- LIFE, SCHWEIBNER

-- Ssssstehhhhhhhhhhhhl!!!!

-- IS A RESTRICTIVE COVENANT.

-- ...Ander...son...?

-- BUT BECAUSE OF THOSE RESTRICTIONS, SCHWEIBNER,

--

-- I CAN OFFER YOU THE DREAM OF A LIFETIME.

-- Leontaub...?

-- EVERY NIGHT, SCHWEIBNER, I'LL COME TO SEE YOU.

WE'LL SIT HERE QUIETLY, WE WON'T MOVE A MUSCLE. ALL NIGHT LONG, SCHWEIBNER.

-- Leontaub? Is that you, you son of a bitch?

-- OR, IF YOU'D RATHER, WE COULD CHAT, SCHWEIBNER.

--

-- I CAN TELL YOU FUNNY STORIES, I KNOW LOTS OF STORIES; AND I'LL NEVER SCARE YOU AGAIN, ON MY HONOR.

--

-- AND I CAN HELP YOU GET THE THINGS YOU WANT.

-- Get out of here.

-- ON MY WORD OF HONOR, SCHWEIBNER.

-- Get out of here, Leontaub. Get the hell out of my bedroom.

-- THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME.

-- Fuck off, you son of a bitch, or I'll...
I'll...turn the goddamned vacuum cleaner on you. You
filthy

Blam! Blamm!!!

He wouldn't fall. He wasn't going to let himself
fall. His chest was on fire, but it would always be, always
-- and he would have to clutch it, and he would have to
catch his breath, to hang on and wait for his breath to
return

thud!

"Again, Bernie? It's starting again?" Estelle
was washing his forehead with a cloth. He lay there on
the floor, breathing carefully.

"Just once in a while, Stellie. I'm sorry, but
once in a while."

A SUMMARY IMAGE FOR SCHWEIBNER, FROM RED:

A man in a blue uniform, Schweibner, has this to say:

"It was a red Corvair running a stop light. I
wisht we'd gotten the license number. But don't you worry,
Mr. Schweibner, we have our best men on the case. If it's
any comfort to you, he never knew what hit him."

Thank the man, Schweibner.

-- Thank you.

"We have our best men on the case," says the man
in blue, picking at a nostril. "But I wisht we'd gotten

the license number."

-- Thank you.

"Bernie!" calls the man in white rushing across the corridor.

Go, Schweibner.

-- Yeah.

"I've left orders to keep her under sedation for the next forty-eight hours. You can go on in after she's asleep. I'm really sorry, Bernie. Words fail me."

-- Thank you.

"I think, I hope, she'll get over this...this... tragedy. I keep remembering his bar-mitzvah. We danced and danced. But what can I say, Bernie. At a time like this, words fail me."

Change of scene, Schweibner. A man in grey flannel has this to say:

"I do think she'll like it here, Mr. Schweibner."

Speak up, Schweibner.

-- Mm

"The grounds are very lovely."

-- Mm

"The medical staff is one of the finest in my knowledge, and all staff members are of the Jewish faith, which'll be a comfort."

-- Mm

"I said, one of the finest in my knowledge."

-- Mm.

SUZIE

Dusty red and still. An early piece of new moon, a silver sickle, handleless. One star, barely. Hot and heavy, weary, wearisome, dusty red and hanging, hushed, silence in a

shriek!

The thousands of ticky-tackies, right and left and straight ahead -- up the hill, down the hill, in the valleys -- south and east and goldenwest -- a million movie-prop tombs floundering in an infinite sea of closecut cementery

grass. The smell of grass. Of miles and miles of grass. Outside. Outside the screened patio. The side screened roof screened patio. The screen cage that the dog follows with his eyes, step by step, pacing around the swimmingpool

-- the sound of little paws, but I can't hear them, I try but I can't hear them, they are too soft, tiny, and the only sound worth hearing is thus soundless, a sound I see and wish I could hear --

pacing, head turned to the grass outside, through the screen, if he could just leap through break through the screen; but body straight and feet forward he paces paces: to one end, to the right angle turn:

That is the grass where he does his duty: you must understand: In his secret places, sniffing, sniffing, where to, where to do: and a little bit here and a little bit there and a little bit anywhere/it is good to do one's duty, to lift the hindleg, aim, and shoot that short burst of Budweiser, or to squeeze down and stick out vulnerably and squeeze out black and brown curled snakes. To wander on this mission all around the house, on the grass, outside, to visit all the secret places.

He is sweet. A boyfriend already. My lover. Once around the house this morning at the end of his leash and I'm adored for life. A little light petting, a cuddle, and

in my heart of hearts there is no place for wishing. There is

the twilight, dusty red and still. There is no sound worth hearing, no life here in the miles of grass and swimmingpools, the smoggy dusk, the miles of side screened roof screened patios, the thousands of silver television antennas right and left and straight ahead -- nothing but the dog, pacing soundlessly,

and my little niece, screaming

-- Mommy! He hit me!

and the big idiot,

-- She asked for it! It's my program!

-- Mommy, Mommy!

-- It's my

-- Mom

My mother was as good as gold. My mother was gold in the hair, in the skin, in the pigment of her being, in the pupil of the pupil of her soft brown eyes. She would tell me,

Suzie.

Yes Mama.

Suzie, you got to

Yes, Mama.

get out of here

Yes

your sister, California

Yes

to make something

Mama!

out of your

Look at you, babyface. One walk around the house ten hours ago and you're spoiled rotten. Or are you lonely. Licking, you sneaked up on me, I didn't know you were there, give me back my hand, no, you can have it, here. One solid pee and you're hooked on me, hey? A hooked male, a babyfaced hooked

Barry, Barry, Barry. Oh honey, oh Barry,

Licking the hand that held the leash that took you around

do me, do me Barry, there isn't anything i wouldn't

"Leave me alone, damnit!"

do, i wouldn't have done; nothing; how could you

Babyface, babyface, I didn't mean it. "Brownie, come back here. Hey!" You wanta play, hey? "I got to chase you, hey?" Okay, baby, okay.

You're so beautiful. And a dog is a beautiful thing anyway: any dog. But you're so gold and pink, half retriever, half pork chop. I'm having a really good time with you babyface. But I wish it weren't

so grey now. The red is going, going, and soon not even grey, and the sickle of a new moon hanging on the wall of night by its invisible handle will drop, when we are not looking, into the well of blackness that is our floor, roof, windowless walls --

They will come and turn on the goddamned patio lights I just betcha...light up the swimmingpool, bounce them lights off the swimmingpool, off you, off me,

more

bounce

to

the

ounce

Deep down I wish that life were a television commercial, a jingle, a series of jingles, and there weren't any shows -- that one commercial ran into another and you

never had to wait for one, you were never bored

The big diesel grunted to a stop. The truckdriver leaned toward the passenger side and pushed open the door. He was big and fat and young and oldlooking, smiling lightly, interested in the eyebrows and the eyes, interesting.

"Who ya runnin from, sweetheart?" he yelled down to the road.

"Another truckdriver."

He laughed. I was already on the running board and straining to shove in my bag ahead of me.

"Give me a hand, Chrissake."

"Sure, sure. Cantcha make it?"

I had to strain to pull the door shut. I locked it. He was putting it into gear. We grunted off. I felt like I was in the cone of a volcano and it was fuming and rumbling, about to erupt. I leaned back, he was putting it into the next gear, we were grunting along. I felt like I was in an enormous tank and we were crushing through the countryside knocking down trees and people. I felt like I was on the back of a monster stallion, fifty feet high, just starting, up to a trot now, a canter, prepared to jump, always, at the least obstacle, up and over.

"Where ya comin from?" the truckdriver said, looking over. "You a college kid?"

"Ha!"

"You ain't a college kid?"

"I said Ha!, didn't I?"

"You look like a college kid."

THE HEAD

When he heard the sounds of the automobiles pulling up outside, the fright went through him wave after wave. His forehead throbbed and his skin went clammy, taut, and goosebumpy, and inside there was nothing but a sick churning emptiness, an inarticulate dry heave that kept promising to heave, wetly, at any time. The pulse of life pulsed in on him, closed him in, and he lost control of his head, forgot that he had a head, knew only that he was a head and that this was the way it was, the way of the world downstairs.

As he knew it would, it began to ease almost immediately.

The last hour he'd been off and on listening, in that cubbyhole of his in the subcellar of his mind, to automobiles and motorcycles, coming and going, stopping and starting. There, in that cubbyhole: where he kept himself just barely yet most amply tuned in to the signals of the world, the threats especially, the blood dangers:

waiting to hear; begging Someone, Something, that there would be no hearing, nothing to hear: no shrill-wailing sirens louder and closer; no raucously roaring cycles pulling up and settling with one last earsplitting rev; no cars stopping with their squeaks and grinds,

the doors opening, the doors closing, the voices far away, unintelligible, less far, less faint: the footsteps....

He was always scared when stoned, he knew it: on and off in streaks, yet in some incomprehensible way continuously, perpetually. He supposed that everyone had this fright -- this fear of The Bust, the fucking Bust, the Never let you live, the Never leave you alone again. He was aware, in that same cubbyhole, of the young man that he was, the young man petrified, the young man desperately (yet easily, naturally) trying to keep tuned in to his head, his cool, his will. There was something -- or other -- to keep concerned about, to be ready to act on.

Perhaps he did get a little more frightened than others he knew -- tuned in too finely. He thought of himself as a bit more serious about things than most of his friends, as into graver matters than most of his colleagues: did not view himself even remotely as a drop-out or crap-out. He was having Insights -- more or less profound -- for three months running, ninety-odd consecutive nights of being at least stoned and often ripped. He felt he was coming to know himself, to want to know himself, and cannabis was making these beginnings possible, was opening doors and windows everywhere.

The pulse of life pulsed in on him but he was less afraid now. It was easing, contracting, would leave

him soon almost completely -- except for the faint, remote rhythm of that inarticulate dry-heaving, attuned as it was to his heartbeat. It was easing now, it always did, and if he wanted he could begin to think -- to try to fit together all his feelings

about getting busted: He didn't want to make that scene at all, he was completely uncurious. In the weeks and years to come he definitely did not want this particular experience in his repertoire, to interpret for friends and for himself its meanings, its patterns of emotions. Embarrassed, booked, and bonded; tried by somebody's Jewish-looking grandfather; and demur; and get his ass good and fined and maybe even land it in a jailcell somewhere; and of course lose and forego, at least for a long while, the professional life on which he had planned to sustain his family and his own intellectual and moral concerns. On which he had once planned, for his plans were changing now, day to day, with his head.

It had eased considerably and he was relieved to the point of sighing. He was thinking...more easily... devotedly...About those times that he had smoked and smoked until he was floating nowhere, everywhere, hallucinating. When he would feel fright on those occasions, whether or not from vehicles and voices, he had little chance of coming out of it so easily, so automatically, as tonight. At those times the pulse of life was all there

really was: it was deep and cold then for what came to seem the longest time and he would actually shiver and shake and call Ginger to hold him tight and tell him there was nothing happening baby, everything was fine. Yet Ginger was, in fact, irrelevant, a dream, even when she was holding him tight, even when she was kissing his face and brushing the hair from his forehead, right up until somehow he came out of it, somehow they got him out, attuned again in that cubbyhole in that subcellar of that mind -- at those times the pulse of life was all there really was of life, and he would almost rather be dead.

It was almost gone now, the pulsating illusion that he knew was the only reality, and he gathered himself in short sighs and thought about it all, more detached by the minute, his loose and dancing mind enveloping the episode:

But even now there was something, very mild, fleeting, second-to-second: The very acknowledgement that there was such a thing, such a reality, that reality was such, truly, and it was best to forget it now, these thoughts were too much for now, he was not ready. Maybe later. Someday. And it exploded in his head again how he was always a little frightened, how everyone must be. Stoned or straight. Because deep down he was petrified. Everyone was petrified. Always. Only he didn't let himself feel it when he was straight (or relatively straight,

teaching those languid undergraduates), he hid it, suppressed it -- like most people -- in order to function, in order to do the hundred and one things that a straight man must do in a straight world in order to get by straightly, to eat and to sleep sheltered and to shafe affection. Tonight he could handle it, control it. Could make himself see, for a moment, for another, consecutive, moment -- and another and another, consecutively -- that it was just people down there, outside, pulling up in cars or away in cars. Just people baby. He could hear now the car doors opening and closing. Voices muffled. Footsteps....

Or were the footsteps brushwork of the drummer in the group playing on the stereo. Blood, Sweat, and Tears. Hiding there, in the background, in the shadows of sound, the way they hide there in those psychedelic records -- you never knew if the sounds were coming from the speakers, or if somebody flesh-and-blood were really speaking: to you, or outside your window, or next door through the walls. You could never quite tell.

A little anxious you had to be. A little tense. Like an animal was, all the time, alert somewhere, someway, to the way things were or might be. He was out of hash, hadn't been able to razorblade a sliver into the open joint of mediocre grass he had then rolled an hour and a half ago to give him this eight-to-midnight high. A mild

one, but high enough -- thanks to the perpetual psychedelic music turned up just a little higher than absolutely neighborly or safe; and the sporadic breathing exercises; and the strobing candle in pitch darkness from eight to eight-thirty and nine-thirty to ten. High enough to stun a little, sting a little, pull him apart and shuffle the pieces and deal out some new permutations of his insanely complicated 1971 self.

Whereas Ginger never worried. Only once had she seriously smoked. Acapulco Gold! And nothing happened!! Little Ginger, full of sin. The mother of his children. She trusted him completely, he knew what he was doing, if he wanted to smoke it was all right by her, so long as the babies were asleep, you know? Poor Ginger,

said the vision that was framing these last, long, three minutes. The Bust, Ginger, The Bust, The Babies. Months apart from each other -- and perhaps he would kill himself in the jailcell, or perhaps his cellmate, a crazy ignorant three-hundred-poundmurdering homosexual spade, would do the job instead.... Or else, and most certainly, and there was no way out of it: poverty, immediate poverty,

and, fuck it all! because of his irresponsibility. He was enjoying himself, admit it; having a real time, this eight-to-midnight; a supergroovygodawfulfrighteningly real time; it was hard to give up; while Ginger and the

kids were taking all the risk and getting none of the reward. A goddamn good girl, good kids, and the feeling welled up inside him, consumed him from inside, swallowed up everything there was inside him and left him a warm happy but always remotely frightened feeling, frightened because concerned, concerned because

There was somebody at the door!!

As much as he tried to hear someone knocking somewhere else -- in the music, say -- it was downstairs in the vestibule or nowhere. And voices too.

And the bell! Five long rings!

"Those are real bells, sweetheart," Ginger said, looking up from her needlepoint. He was on the floor facing the stereo; she was sitting up in bed in her terry-cloth. She hated to leave her needlepoint once she picked it up, hated to leave anything, this lazy bitch serene beauty that he loved so insanely, and what motherfuck was he going to do about all of this

fright passing through him, wave after wave? after wave?? clammy, taut, and goosebumpy; as she looked over at him, to make sure he was not too stoned to answer that fucking door down there; as he tried to keep his voice steady, wave after wave

he must try, he must listen to it all, listen to her, make sense of

her, she would be anxious, scared in a moment, if he didn't pull himself together, and he found that he was

stroking his penis, it was hard there in his lap, upthrust, outthrust, and he couldn't imagine how, frightened as he was, it was staying that way,

and he turned on his buttocks and pointed it at her, and he was so frightened now

wave after wave

yet beginning to pass; he could barely detect; just a little, a little, but he could feel it; For it could be anyone down there -- no doomsday Bust, no pigs at all -- trying to keep his voice steady:

"Get it, Ginge, would you?" waving his manhood at her;

She simpering, "Get it yourself, lazy. You're the man."

"Shit, I always get it," makebelieve irritably, voice steady, scared stiff in the neck, behind the ears, the scalp, but passing, passing, she was such a lazy bitch serene beauty, mother of us all, grinning there at his upthrust, outthrust

but it could be anyone down there anyone she was such a

Ginger was frowning: "Besides, it's probably Dorie with her midnight lesbian stories. Tell her I'm sleeping."

"And what do I do with this?!" whining, yelling probably, waving that thing of his side to side like a

metronome. "Suppose I fall down the stairs and break it off?"

but it was passing now. It could be greasy Dorie. In the vestibule. One of those voices anyway. Her purple-veined watermelon tits. Under the seethrough Seminole as she called it nightrobe and the strands and strands of Indian corn kernel beads hanging to her knees. But who could be with her? Anyone, anyone.

Ginger sighed. "All right, all right."

"Tell her she's a pig!" he cried, stroking his penis. "Tell whoever's with her they're both pigs." He dropped spit and phlegm into his hand and wrapped his dripping hand tightly around his penis and stroked and stroked -- the head of the penis unsheathed and super-sensitive -- as he followed with his ears the sounds of her bare dainty feet: into the parlor: he could pick up every dainty pat: as he felt himself coming, as he felt it tightening, wanting to sneeze: he followed her footsteps twenty-seven steps down the long stairway to the ground floor vestibule door: the doorknocks, the ringbells, Dorie and Glory, the door opening, the voices -- gruff, masculine?? -- three voices! four voices!! -- as into his fist he came and came in spite of the whole downstairs world cramping him

LISTEN, HERBULLA

Josie Speaking

This morning they knocked down the trees behind Hamilton Hall. They had said they wouldn't have to. The provost had told us they wouldn't knock down any more trees without his express consent, said the campus was getting too damned cluttered with buildings and couldn't afford to neglect "natural aesthetics." They were maple trees.

They used three big yellow bulldozers. The first time the first bulldozer smashed into a tree, thirty or forty birds scrambled noisily into the air. The second time four or five flew away.

They started knocking them down at six a.m. The bulldozers came from the site of the new administration building complex on the other side of the campus. Two campus police cars accompanied them; two campus policemen with walkie-talkies and holstered pistols got out of each car.

Alec and I had spent the night under the trees. Eight others were to meet us there at seven-thirty. When we heard the bulldozers grinding down the road we chained ourselves to the two oldest trees. By seven-thirty they

were the only ones left.

Alec

He was naked on the floor, on his back, his whole body twitching.

-- Help me, Josie

-- It's all right.

-- Please

-- It's going to be all right.

His voice was weeping, gasping/he was pulling on his left nipple/his whole body was twitching/I ran to the refrigerator for fruit and juice/he tried to call me but could not make the words/one hand was held out to me, the other pulling on his stiff left nipple

-- Drink this.

-- Hhh...hh

-- Please, Alec. Try.

--

-- Alec, Alec

With every heartbeat his body, from knees to neck, jerked upward; his feet strained downward, the toes curled tightly, red and white at the knuckles; his head writhed side to side. The sweat was rolling all over his face, neck, chest, thighs.

-- You...are..all..right. You are not having a heart attack.

He gagged, but swallowed. And after several minutes he had swallowed a pint of orange juice. I fed him apple sauce with a spoon. I held the cold can to his face. I fed him honey. He was breathing easier, twitching less violently, more sporadically.

-- Sorry...hon

-- Okay, okay.

-- ey.... Promised I prom

-- Relax, relax.

-- Shit b-bad shit d-don't

-- Shhh. Later.

-- don't drop it ever

-- I won't, I won't.

-- Hh...hh

-- Baby, baby.

-- Kn-know it's not...real, honey...if I c-can just
keep h-hanging on to this t-tit

Chairman Bill

"We" went through a number of actions the next couple of months -- against the campus food concessionaire (filthy food, high prices, starvation wages); R.O.T.C.; recruiters for the war -- Dow Chemical, the C.I.A., the Army, Navy, Marines (the Air Force never showed); against biological warfare generally and specifically against campus holders of research contracts with the war machine.

There was a march downtown on the Army recruiting station that drew seventy-five, thirty I had never seen before; a picketing of Central High School which takes the city's top students, four thousand of them, including three blacks and a Filipina.

And there was Bill, at every action, among the newspaper reporters with their tiny notebooks and Papermate pens, the radio men with their voice-stabilized cassette recorders, the photographers and newsreelers weighted down about the neck like bullocks in a yoke:

-- Are you Bill Neff, S.D.S. president?

-- Yes I am. (In tight green sweatshirt and green jeans.)

-- Can you tell us, Mr. Neff, what it is you are demonstrating about today?

-- Against American imperialism. Everyone knows (flexing his muscles, smoothing back his lush brown hair) that professors with Federal contracts are lackeys of the power elite munitions-makers who are running this country.

And there was Bill, strutting then, at the head of the line, at the head of all the lines, expounding, expostulating, flexing

And there was Herb. Running up and down the line. Surveying, remedying: up and down every line, at every demonstration of twenty or more partisans, bullhorn at the ready, clucking like a mother hen: "Com'on now;

keep it up; keep it moving; there's water from a hose around the corner, give the people with the hose three cheers, com'on" -- and out of the bullhorn, to all of us at once, to start us off and keep us going --

One

Two

Three

Four

We don't want your fucking war!

Ho

Ho

Ho Chi Minh!

Hell

No

We won't go!

And when they were all over, the actions; when they'd succeeded or sort of succeeded, as they always did; when we were back at one or another meeting place and Bill Neff was commending and reprehending and little Suzie was summarizing in a frenzy of short words -- there was Herb. Smiling nervously but confidently, not really smug, not complacent, but still tense, prepared to worry if anything worrisome were to present itself. Happy with himself, with the day's success, the rites of the afternoon, the bonds articulated and cemented, the sentiments successfully expressed -- with his and our parts in it all.

Vaguely stern, he was still clucking under his breath; vaguely exhausted, he was very glad, and very ready, if the fates allowed, to keep his next twenty-four hours Sabbath peaceful.

Political Science 351

"...correlate an infinite number of variables, one with another, so long as we had sufficient data on each. All sorts of articulatable, conceptualizable, entities could serve us more or less usefully as explanatory or intervening devices. Indeed, we have, over the years, operationalized some two hundred and twenty nine..."

"...births per thousand; Catholics per thousand; physically handicapped per thousand; members of two or more political groups or ethnically-affiliated quasi-political groups per thousand; number of military, paramilitary, police, para-police, or home guard or militia members whose loyalty is secured either by direct stipends or indirect aid to their families, per thousand..."

"...of them, we are left with the one hundred twenty seven most salient variables. Why one hundred and twenty seven -- these one hundred and twenty seven? What is more salient about them than about the other one hundred and two? Let me try to elucidate the factors that have gone into our evaluation of..."

"...data. You have to have data. Unless you have

data..."

"...point forty seven -- that's minus point forty seven. Now, how might you go about explaining such a drop given the consistency in variation among all the other..."

After the Rock Concert

After the rock concert the four of us somehow wound up together, squeezed onto the back seat of somebody's car. For some reason we all got out at my place -- Suzie, Juju, Herb, and I -- and went in. We were all a little stoned, three of us from grass, Juju from whatever.

Alec was gone. We ate cold weinies and graham crackers and Herb extracted a metal throat lozenge case from his shirt pocket and removed six fat neatly rolled joints and lit one up and passed it around. In turn, the three of us but Juju inhaled the sickly-sweet smoke, held it down deep and long. I danced to the light and flipped us into dark Ness.

Found a transistor radio somewhere, wonder full tinny music, we passed the butt around, and another, hit by hit and butt by butt, we sat in a circle with the tinny music and the cold weinies, weinie by weinie, and the wonderful graham crackers, honeyed, really honeyed, really honeyed graham crackers and very grahamy, take my word. I was really

I didn't like Juju at all. I discovered that I definitely did not like Juju. Suzie was good, I liked Suzie, she could speak for hours in very short words and do wonderful W.C. Fields imitations. And Suzie seemed to like Juju, and seemed to like me too, and Herb, and everybody, really. I loved the way Suzie seemed to like everybody, but I didn't like it that she liked Juju, though in a way I loved it the way she liked Juju because I loved the kind of girl Suzie was and that's the kind. Herb kept feeling up Juju who acted like she didn't give a rat's ass one way or the other.

I seem to remember her, Juju, monotoning: about two years of LSD and mescaline trips, how her head was right now, she didn't need anything external. Just wanted to live, to listen to the little voice of life that flitted in and out of her left ear, had been flitting in and out since the fifth or sixth of those acid trips. I really couldn't stand her, sort of hated her there, but I believed in her in a way, I couldn't help it, since I was hoping to reach that same conclusion, that same feeling of not needing anymore -- grass, family, this or that, anything in particular -- of being able to control myself at all times, to be in command of will, though at the same time absolutely aware of the makebelieve of it all, the arbitrariness, transitoriness, hopelessness. Once and for all I wanted to be free, a free soul -- whether by firmness

of will or pliancy of will or by surrendering will entirely I could not yet know. I wanted to be secure and spontaneous, secure in and through my spontaneity. Although I could not believe in voices-in-the-left-ear any more than I believed in Alec's left nipple, still there was something about that bouncing bouncing bouncing of Juju's head that drove me nearly insane with longing. At the same time, insane with hatred, the way that idiot Herb was so goddamned proud of her for no longer doing it, needing it, wanting it; for having had her big insights already, for having found herself or created herself so heroically -- all this was the worst kind of bullshit. Proud-proud-proud -- it was simply the wrong words, the wrong scene. She told him,

-- You'd better fuck me tonight good and hard.

-- Front or back?

I was almost sick. Thank god Suzie was doing her W. C. Fields imitations.

Summer

And somehow everyone is gone. The place is filled with nuns, schoolteachers, and social workers. You begin the waiting. You could, if you liked, spend a month in Chicago with Mother and her new Phil, another month in L. A. with poor Daddy, but you wait here, in the hot stinking city, a tenth of which or a ninth of which they'll

maybe burn in the next few weeks. You wait and you wait -- for this one and that one and five or ten new ones. For mid-September.

You read a lot

think a lot

see a lot of movies

You attend two black studies seminars, an urban problems workshop, and you try to crash a local Panther conference, you'd love to get in but I'm Sorry Sistah

A course in Far East art

A dollar eight-five an hour cashiering at the fucking bookstore, but nobody ever thinks to check your ten gallon handbag on the way out

Stoned out of your gourd

night after night

alone or not alone

And some new things, so you won't be such a schmuck in September

You sort of hate the summer: until this last year you had always lived in sun

On Women

"Too freaky for me," Carol was saying one evening in mid-October as she unsystematically picked her nose and wiped the pickings on her new jeans bleached old overnight. She blushed: "That cunt is too fucking outasight. Juju;

Juju -- what the hell kind of a name is that, anyway?"

We had just gotten back from a "special" meeting at the suburban home of an off-and-on Communist from the old labor union days when he'd functioned as a prep-schooled, Harvard-educated ideologist -- a labor man with class. He was trying now to

-- "organize an action, kids -- a big, vivid, meaningful action -- right here at the goddamned Marine Base. They're having -- can you believe it? -- a birthday party. Open to the public. Political celebrities and pass-in-review horseshit and someone's going to cut the birthday cake with a sword -- Senator L -- or that fascist bastard A--, and wouldn't it be -- what's the word? -- funky, kids, to be out there in real force, in the stands, to sneak on-base disguised as straight citizens, and in the middle of it all to run out onto the parade grounds in full view of everyone in the stands, especially the brass and the big shots and the newsmen, and in the midst of hundreds of those jarheads who are getting fucked over every day of their lives to scream and chant and pull out banners and placards we can hide on our person...and, uh,...blow their minds!..." --

"The way she just sat there," Carol was saying, picking her nose with her long unpolished but well cared for fingernails, "so still and peaceful, taking it all in through one ear while taking that other thing in through

the other. She says she listens for it, bounces her head around and listens, and it turns her on and tells her what to do. She swore up and down she wasn't stoned, that she's never stoned, and as far as I can recall I can't remember ever seeing her with a joint."

Right in the middle of everything Juju had stood up and, smacking her open hands together explosively/metrically, started in to chanting:

-- Fuck fuck fuck the flowers/Fuck fuck fuck the flowers.

The labor man became extremely uptight:

-- If anyone has something to say we all want to listen. Just come up to the front of --

-- Fuck fuck fuck the flowers, Juju chanted, and some of the others began to take it up. Handclapping, footstomping, until nearly all of us were singing along. The labor man's forehead was sweat-shiny, he was mopping it with a blue handkerchief. Bill Neff finally managed to quiet us down.

"Don't get me wrong," Carol was saying; "I'm in the fullest agreement with her argument. Who does that ofay son of a bitch think he is with his 'flower brigade'? The day I hand out flowers and free feels as a political tactic...."

"I don't know, Carol. It certainly is one way of stopping the parade."

"Josie, Josie, Josie. That is not the function of women, women mustn't have particular sex-related functions. Let the goddamned studs throw the fucking flowers and pass out the free feels, or let's all draw straws for it." She was digging into her right nostril.

"I don't know, Carol. From the stands it would look kind of nice -- all these young girls rushing to the first line of Marines and sticking flowers in their hats and kissing them -- urging the fighting jarheads to make love instead -- and at the same time we can slip some of them those American Servicemen's Union leaflets and tell them about the meeting."

"Next thing you'll be wanting to sing Hare Krishna on the streetcorners."

"Look, Carol; I'm just trying to figure all of this out, all right? You're probably right, deep down I guess I know you are. Just give me some time, okay?"

She grinned. "Just don't let Suzie hear any of that bullshit. Once you get on her 'list'" -- Carol blushed lightly -- "you're up cunt creek without a paddle."

Alec

Can't I even come over? I just want to...I don't know, Josie, only...well, ask him to go out for a few minutes, that's all...shit, Josie, after all the...sure,

sure...I just want to talk, what kind of a fucking hippie are you if you won't even...I never used to, I just came on over, since when do you need a fucking appointment to... oh, shit, Josie, shit cunt motherfuck, I'm feeling like shit and I need somebody to talk to...look, I'm sorry, Joze, I really am, for all the bullshit...good thanks thanks good good good, honey, I'll be right over, thanks really, really, I'll bring some....

Political Science 352

"...is the notion of 'system.' The 'political system' thus consists of variables in terms of which entities such as personalities, policies, groups, may vary. Whereas the notion of 'political process' refers to..."

"...naming symbols, having meanings, more or less useful. Thus, when we study 'process' we are studying variation among different 'states' of the 'system.' 'State of the system' is, of course, a purely heuristic conceptualization since -- as all political scientists know -- all in politics is process, all is flux..."

"...certainly true that we can identify, ultimately, the axial characteristics of a given politico-cultural system; indeed, this pursuit is more than just intellectually interesting or pleasurable -- it is of the greatest possible..."

"...the notion of 'political stability.' All systems -- including the 'personality system' of each and every one of you sitting in this classroom -- tend toward what we might think of, simplistically, as a state of equilibrium. Ultimately, and more or less perpetually. In other words, the 'normal' state of any political system, social system, economic system, personality system -- from the point of view of..."

After the Birthday Party

He was sitting there, hunched over an open book, brushing away the cigarette smoke, his knees knocking together easily, clearing his throat and swallowing what he cleared. But he looked up this time almost immediately and smiled sheepishly:

The big shiny cut on his chin.

The small shiny cut on the tip of his nose.

His eye slightly purple.

He looked like nothing so much as little Nordic Herbullla next door: pink skinned, fair haired: running home to supper he had tripped over one of his running feet and fallen onto the sidewalk and gotten little-boy bruised. I was sorry I hadn't been able to make it to the Marine Base.

-- Carol came barging in which thoroughly pissed

me off. She said,

-- Hi, Joze.

-- Hi.

-- Hi, Herb said.

-- Hi, she said.

She hadn't been able to make it to the Marine Base either, she said. I didn't say anything. She said she was sorry she hadn't been able to make it, but she was

-- tied up

-- tied up

-- tied up.

He did not look away but avoided my eyes for the most part as Carol and I got settled on the floor. He turned his chair toward us, took out a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket and stuck a pack of matches in the cellophane and tossed them to Carol, fuck her. She took two, stuck one in her mouth and one behind her ear, lit up, and passed the pack to me. I threw them back at Herb.

-- I don't smoke, I said. He smiled.

-- How'd it go? Carol said.

Looking her in the eye a long moment he said, Not badly, it hadn't been bad at all. "You should have been there; we missed you both." He was the only one that had scuffled, and that was to the good. They'd singled him out -- he was sure of it. They had called him by name, Bill Neff too, and the ex-labor man, and some of the others. The jarheads had identified many of them as they had

entered the base. The MPs had them staked out in the stands, yet still the demonstrators had been disruptive: "There were dozens of MPs all around the stands and edging the parade grounds, so we had to cool it during the parade and the invocations and the cutting of the motherfucking cake." He looked me in the eye: Then, just as it seemed to be ending, as the visiting civilians were beginning to climb out of the stands and mingle with the dozens of MPs, the demonstrators had run out onto the parade grounds unfurling their flags and hoisting up their placards, chanting in unison. Many of the civilians filing out from the stands had seen them, some had shaken fists; the newsman had gotten a ten minute interview with Bill Neff moments after the demonstrators had been bused off-base; the photographer had gotten a sharp picture of Suzie being arrested just outside the base for swearing at the first civilian cop she'd seen. "Only my trouble was downright physical," Herb said.

"It's all right," he said calmly, his cigarette-holding hand poised calmly in the air. "I got in a few licks too, I'll tell ya." He inhaled deeply and held it down several seconds as if it were grass, then exhaled most of it into the air, coughing out the last bit nervously. Our eyes touched just a minute, just an accident; he flushed. "I got one of them in the balls," he said softly. "I'm sorry you missed it. The both of you."

Afterward Carol told me:

-- He looked like a little boy all bruised up. He was so funny looking. I almost felt sorry for him. I wanted to take him on my lap -- almost -- and hug him carefully and say it'd all go away, everything would be fine, and after dinner he could go out and play.

I was pissed.

The Moratorium

Then it was Moratorium Days, November 14 and 15, and we had demonstrations and marches and an almost legitimate program at the university. We would be death-marching to the Marine Base to coincide with the one on the Pentagon. A couple of Panthers -- a woman, their Secretary of Interior or something, and her bodyguard -- had come from the West Coast to participate.

Hundreds of students, university and high school, members of one or more radical groups or liberal groups or unaffiliated with any groups at all, as well as non-students from groups outside the college community or from no group at all -- hundreds of them would be marching Saturday. And thousands would come to the Amphitheatre Friday to see and hear the Panther Woman.

I had been participating haphazardly, inattentively, in the planning of these activities -- had gone to several meetings but had actually done very little. But

now I was getting excited: the size of the crowd:

Friday: ebony, lanky, years of uncut kinky hair in a perfect black hemisphere: in a black mini and shiny thigh-high black leather boots, a shiny black coat with various insignia, a shiny black bodyguard:

Crying:

-- you muthafuckin white bastids don know whad id is to live inna ghetto. You muthafuckin white bastids don know what id's like to hafta go n fight in Vitnam agains youh Asian bruthas.

And Bill Neff, lightly dressed for the chilly morning: face and hands snow white beside the Panther woman: summarizing:

-- You motherfucking white bastards don't know what it is to have to go and fight in Vietnam against your Asian brothers!

Later there were rap sessions in the quadrangle and in classrooms reserved for the purpose. And because classes had not been officially cancelled -- the provost had stopped short of ordering cessation of all business-as-usual -- we ran everywhere with bullhorns to disrupt them. At twilight there was a prayer march to City Hall led by religious and semi-religious groups. We lit candles, sang, chanted, some prayed, and broke up about 2 a.m.

And all that day, anyplace you were, there was Herb. Any threatening cluster of rightwingers or apoliticals or even acid freaks Herb could handle, break up smoothly, friendlily, with big smiles and soft words and pats on the shoulder for the guys and on the ass for the girls (for which Suzie charged him vitriolically with male chauvinism). His cuts, though no longer shiny, were so scabby that his facial insecurity seemed to be in a constant state of tension with his sureness of action. He was "handling things" -- and the things that required big smiles and soft words, the kinds of sentiments and manners that Herb possessed in abundance. He was blissfully busy and his ordinary nervousness gave way to the fleeting anxiousness of the man of action.

"I've got to think it out carefully," he said later, returning from the twilight-to-two prayer march. I was hanging onto him on the back of his motorcycle. I could hardly hear him. He shouted: "I said, I've got to think today out carefully. Today." I could hardly hear him.

Saturday:

As we began the two mile march in a freezing
wind:

Our breaths frosty white:

Uphill for the most part:

Six hundred of us, breathing hard, I didn't think

there could be that many, I knew hardly any of them, three-quarters of those faces I would sworn I had never seen before, anywhere.

At the base, an hour or so later:

From somewhere two loud-speakers were produced and set up; a small podium erected; microphones were connected. We formed ourselves into a human chain -- three human chains -- a solid human wall three layers deep completely surrounding the podium and the people who would be speaking. There was a rumor that the hundreds of jarhead MPs stationed along the wall just outside the base might try to break up the demonstration "as a threat to the security of a military installation" or that the twenty or thirty city police stationed there, aided by scores more hiding around the corner, might try to arrest some of the speakers on charges of conspiracy to disturb the peace.

Bill Neff spoke first, I thought he was effective. The "hippie priest" Father Donovan spoke. The president of the Young Democrats; a city councilman --

A stir. Cries, shrill cries! The chain tightening!

-- Get them! Stop

-- The pigs! They're city pigs!

-- Tighten up! Hold it tight!

-- What's happening? What

-- The Panther woman! Pull them off! Get

-- Motherfucking

We couldn't see what was happening inside the circle, inside the wall that we were making; we were facing out, not in; we were holding that circle together, that wall -- that was our job, our duty -- and we were linked tightly arm in arm in arm in arm, a single living organism, a living chain straining and struggling for an as yet unspecified purpose but against the very realest of blood dangers.

Cries! Fists rising defiantly straight up in the air!

-- Right on!

-- Pigs!

-- Right on!

Herb was at the mike. "The pigs have just tried to arrest Miriam Thomas, our Black Panther guest, on the charge of obscenity in her speech yesterday at the U. They were in plain clothes and they infiltrated our group. They have been forcably ejected!" -- cries! cheers! right on! -- "and this program will continue!"

Herb was at the mike and we were holding tight. We held on to each other for an hour or more. We heard two professors speak; three members of the Resistance; Herb Andersen again; the Panther woman. We heard them, we did not see them; and several of them began their

addresses with "Fuck the pigs!"; and there were no more attempts to arrest any of them; and we were never tired, and it was never tedious, and I was close to a Marine sentry, a skinny boy eighteen or nineteen, and I shouted: "What are you doing over there? You should be on this side!" and he was black and he started to cry.

And later in the day I cried a lot too.

Sociology 414

"Without further reviewing the literature we can conclude that 'alienation' remains, even to the theorists and field workers of today, a confused and a confusing concept. But if there are many dimensions to 'alienation', that is because men have conceptualized it in many different ways. Reviewing and comparing the different scale items as they appear in the different empirical formulations of the writers we have been discussing, it makes intuitive sense to call all of them measures of alienation. The man feeling powerless -- unable to influence domestic or international events; or, more generally, unable to achieve what he feels he deserves -- is surely estranged from his political system on the one hand, and, more generally, from his rightful role in society. The man feeling that events transpire, that men behave, without regard to, or under conflicting, norms, is surely estranged from socio-cultural mores and values that pro-

vide guidelines for the means of achieving socially-valuable ends. The generally despairing or desperate individual; the detached and isolated; the one for whom the everyday happenings and values of his mass culture and society have no meaning whatsoever, life generally no purpose -- all these are 'alienated.' But just because all these aspects or connotations or dimensions make intuitive sense as conceptions of 'alienation', we should not refrain from asking why. Some common theme, thread of meaning, or core idea might be found to relate these different dimensions, to frame them, to give them a structure.

"That thread of meaning, of course, must be in terms of power -- the 'powerlessness' component. J. P. Clark's almost exclusive concern with that dimension...."

Hanging On

He said: "I've got to split. It was nice talking to you."

"Why don't you come in?"

He said: "I've got to think. I've got to work something up for the cafeteria workers' strike." He had never gotten off the motorcycle -- rev rev rev.

"But I'm just beginning to make sense of it all. I want to -- "

He was gone, fuck him. Fuck them all. Fuck the university, fuck the universe. Fuck people and politics everywhere -- the Panther woman, Bill Neff, SuzieJujuCarol -- all the makebelieves. Fuck me. Fuck me.

/Italics:/

The book lay open on his desk and I stood in the doorway and watched him read. It remained open to that page a long time, several minutes -- he remained hunched over it, waving away the smoke, taking a nervous drag from the cigarette then and replacing it neatly in the ashtray without looking at it. The smoke was dissipating all around me, around my eyes; they were almost tearing.

From his body motion and the creaking of his chair I could tell that he was moving his legs together-apart. I stood there in the doorway: for several minutes the book lay open, Herb reading, aware I was sure of me watching him.

Watching.

Finally I walked in and sat down on the floor and picked up a battered magazine lying there. Liberation it was, and it bored me after a page. I looked up and he was still hunched over the open book.

When he'd finished those two pages he looked up, turned his head around, looked down to me squatting on the floor, threw me the cigarettes and matches, looked away, turned the page, and resumed his hunched posture. He

dragged on his cigarette and moved his legs together-apart.

Herbie Andersen. Little-boy bruised, but he had come out fine. Simple. Little-boy bragging, but he was right on, always. Working, playing; thought, action; himself, beyond --

Beyond Herbie Andersen? (Little-boy bruised, but he came out fine. Simple. Little-boy bragging, but he's right on, always.) Beyond little Herbie. I would not. Care to....

Healthy!

I liked his healthiness -- that robustness of body and spirit -- of bodyspirit, for Herb would deny the duality. Thought and action equals thoughtaction; work and play equals workplay:

Confidence and diffidence, sureness and shyness, boldness-and-hesitancy, impulsiveness-out-and-compulsiveness-in, firmnesspliancy, himselfbeyond

I was shaking like a leaf, my insides were churning like the insides of a machine

-- With his long blond hair and blue eyes and long head and straight nose and pink and white skin and big chest and shoulders popping out of his dungaree shirt -- he looks like a goddamn Viking. With his long, blond, curled eyelashes; his smoothshiny blond eyebrows; the wrinkles of fun at the corners of his eyes and mouth

and the wrinkles of seriousness at the corners of his eyes and mouth. With his long blond hair and blue eyes --

I was calm. My insides were calm. My head was bouncing a little, but just a little. There was a voice in my ear, but it was my own voice, entirely.

"Listen, Herbulla," I said firmly. "I've been working something up for the cafeteria strike. We can't incite the workers to strike from the outside, they won't be attending any of our rallies. What we have to do, Herb -- the two of us, say -- is go to work there ourselves, washing dishes with them, talking things over, getting intimate."

LOVE AND POLITICS

I. 1950

We were sitting Indian style on the bed, watching the snow through the window. The radio was low. The snow seemed to be falling to the music.

Sheila was older now. I had just gotten her out of a Saturday matinee with a first-grade friend. Sheila was delighted, she laughed and laughed. Until she shivered.

It wasn't the temperature: the room was warm and she was wearing a sweater. It was another kind of shiver, a way I shook sometimes independent of place or season. And through the first twenty years of my life.

She couldn't speak, just looked at me sideways. Peeking like she wished I hadn't noticed but was glad I had. I pretended she was cold. She began to cry quietly.

She watched me go, biting a forefinger, surprised. "Be right back," I said, closing the door.

"Now what is it?" Mother was on her knees, polishing the brass paws of the coffee table.

"Can't I even go to the bathroom?"

"Don't dirty it up. Can't you wait a minute? I spent the whole morning in there.

"Your father never gives me any help -- none of you do.

"And be sure and pull the chain. And wash your hands!

"And don't get any water on the floor!" she yelled after me.

I flushed the toilet and turned the faucet on and off and wiped out the sink with a towel. I crammed the container of talcum powder into my pants pocket, concealing the bulge with my shirt tails.

"What did you do in there?" Mother said from the floor. "Did you dirty it up?"

Sheila was half turned, watching the door. Her whole body was making those little quiet heaves. She turned back to the window.

I sat down beside her and sprinkled some powder into my palm. "Snow," I said.

She ran her palm over mine. The heaving stopped but she was still trembling. Her head quivered sideways like a taut rubber band barely touched. I spread some talc on her cheek with my forefinger, it caked from her tears. I spread on more and more until it was smooth on her cheek, my finger working slowly back and forth. She stopped trembling, stroked the talcum on her nose.

She took the talc and spread it all over my face, ran her fingers on it in circles. A long unhurried tickle -- I was grinning ear to ear.

She blew on my face and tiny particles fell through the air. Tiny grains of snow in the warm winter of our room. Then we were laughing loud and hard, we could not stop. "You're so funny!" she choked.

We heard the knob rattling. "What are you doing in there?" Mother's voice was high and frantic. "Open the door this instant!"

I was giggling when I opened the door. Mother's eyes were so wide she had no lids; the pupils were distended grotesquely.

"What's that on your face? What are you doing?" She was flushing now but would soon be livid. She was panting.

Sheila was trying to hold back the sounds of glee. When her mouth forced open she tried to smother her laughter with her hands but it forced through anyway, hard and high. She was rolling all over the bed.

"What's so funny?" Mother was screaming as she came to Sheila and grabbed her arm. "Your truckdriver father is gone all day and I don't even have a colored maid. Not a colored maid!"

Sheila had stopped laughing. The only sound in the room was Mother's gasping. Then: "What's that doing on your face?" Faster now, singsongy, building to crescendo: "What's so funny? Why are you laughing?" Control lost, shrieking: "It's all over the rug!"

Sheila's arm was white and red where Mother was gripping it. She was sobbing now in a different way from before -- shrilly, like her laughter a moment ago. Her eyes were wide like Mother's, like an animal's. Mother lifted her in the air by her forearms and shook her furiously. "You're making the whole house filthy!"

She saw the container on the floor, threw Sheila down on the bed. With one deep groan Sheila lost her breath. Mother's eyes found mine; she took a step toward me, and another. Her bloodshot eyes dropped thick tears of rage down her cheeks, her teeth were tight. Sheila was wheezing for breath, I was afraid for her, Mother grabbed my arm but I pulled away, again she grabbed, her face was turning to chalk. "Get away from here," I said steadily. Her brows arched. "Leave us alone."

Sheila was watching us silently, breathing barely. Mother was motionless, her hand extended, for a dragging moment. I said, "Get out of our room."

Her eyes seemed to pop, crimson crept back into her face. "I'm calling the parental home!" she cried. "This minute!" Her breath, through her nose, was like an exhausted or excited dog's. She burst from the room.

"No, Mommy. No!" Sheila cried, fist at her mouth.

"The parental home!" Mother cried from the kitchen. You couldn't, but you were sure you could, hear

her dialing.

"No, Mommy! Please!" Sheila started running but I grabbed hold of her tiny fist.

"She's fooling," I told her, somewhat diffidently. Sheila tilted her wet red face like a puzzled puppy.

"You can't get rid of kids so easy. The parental home is for kids without homes. She can't do that to us."

"-- I'm dialing!!"

"She's calling," Sheila said. "I hear it." But she was no longer afraid. "Isn't she really?" The wrinkle of a smile curled her mouth. My confidence soared. Her wet red eyes stopped blinking.

"She's faking," I said now with conviction; "she's always faking. Mrs. Godkin said you can't do it so easy yesterday; she told the whole class. You can't just make a phone call and send your kids away."

"What did Mrs. Godkin say?" Mother was at the door clutching her red neck. "What did you tell her?"

She stood there.

"I told her how you dial the parental home. When you're angry. To get rid of us forever."

She was choking.

"It's an orphanage, Mrs. Godkin said. They don't beat you with a strap. They don't lock you up in little dark rooms."

In the room, dead silence. And out of the middle of it Mother's moan. She smashed my face with the back of her hand.

I had to cry. I didn't want to but it stung awfully. I felt the tears trickle down my unslapped cheek, the smashed cheek was numb. She stood there, bent, her arm hanging loose, her lips wet.

"Drop dead," I said, coldly, deliberately. She stood back, tried to speak. "Drop dead." I walked to the bed sat down by Sheila. When I looked up she was still backing away. A tremor went through me. I said,

"I hate you like poison."

She turned, fled. I listened to the thumpy scratching of her bare calloused feet, then her bedroom door slamming. I closed our door, smiling, quivering. I Chuckled, started to laugh. Sheila looked horrified. I coaxed her, cajoled her, and after a time she was smiling too. But she wouldn't laugh. "She'll hear us," she said.

Hours later Father pulled at our door and I opened it. "Where's your old lady?" he said. I shrugged. Soon they were yelling back and forth and something shattered. Mother screeched and Father left, slamming the front door. Mother came to our door dragging her leg with both hands. "How can a Jewish man do such a thing to his family?" she sobbed. "A truckdriver." Outside, the car started up and pulled away. Mother dragged her leg back to her own room.

An hour later she fixed us scrambled eggs. She did not speak. She bathed Sheila, left me alone. At bedtime Sheila called her in to say goodnight. "Aren't you going to kiss me, Mama?" After, I shut and locked the door. Although Sheila seemed happy and unafraid, she crawled in and we slept together all night.

II. 1953

I talked to Morry Goldenblach, a Y.M.C.A. counsellor, about starting a Young Judea Club for seventh-graders. We rounded up seven other. I had never belonged to anything before, all my friends were neighbors: stickball in the afternoon, spring-summer-fall, and varieties of hide and seek in the evening; winter snowball fights with rules, snow architecture, sledding, and visits with each other indoors. Now, in junior high, I was without a club; in Hebrew school without a clique.

The long walk to the Center was pleasant, pretty. The snow was cleared from most sidewalks, houses outside and trees inside were lit up for Christmas. Avenue A was bright with streetlights; beneath them patches of snow gleamed; the air was cold-clean; the stars were coming out. It happened to be the first night of Hanukkah so at our meeting we settled the first order of business easily: we called ourselves the First Lights.

Morry was a muscular, Nordic-looking, twenty-five. He had been a popular athlete in high school, sandlot baseball, and later at Rutgers in football and basketball. He had a law degree but did not practice. I was uneasy around him: he wore a scraggly goatee and scragglier sideburns: you'd think a hero could raise more hair or a professional man would own a razor.

He wore a prayer shawl under his underwear; against the skin; you could see part of it at his neck. I was startled the first time I saw it, had thought it worn thus by very old men and only in the synogogue. He wore a hat, indoors and out, holy day or no. The sweat dripped down his forehead. He was sponsoring four other clubs (different grade levels); had been to Israel twice, pioneering.

Louis Green, the Alderman's son, had brought along two gentile friends. Louis was tall, unbelievably fat, mustached and manicured. He looked a prosperous eighteen but actually ran the seventh grade newspaper: he had a press at home.

While Morry was theorizing to us about Young Judea, Louis was circulating around the room, chatting with each boy in turn. Looking up every now and then: but Morry ignored him. He spoke with everyone but me and though uninterested I felt funny about being left out; and Morry bored me. I daydreamed.

"I move we elect a president," Louis, deep and booming, squashed my reverie. He was on his feet behind me, right hand chin high and forefinger extended straight up from an otherwise tight fist. One of his gentile friends, a short pale fellow with a man's shoulders, rose at once to second the motion.

"Well now, just a minute," Morry replied with his forefinger. "Let's finish up on Hanukkah first."

Billy Something, whom I remember as nondescript but ubiquitous, raised his hand. I remember his voice as high, whining. I can't remember anything he might have said describing the holiday, but I recall thinking how very well he was saying it, just the way I said it sometimes. The way I would say it again. I felt ill; closed my eyes.

I opened them: my name was out there, in the middle of the room. Louis was pushing me up, out of my seat -- "Go on, go on." I was to conduct the election.

Mickey Sachs, a tiny violinist, was nominated first but shyly declined. Each of the Gordon twins kiddingly nominated the other. A big Italian fellow, Louis' other friend, nominated Louis.

Then, in his seat, Morry turned toward me and nodded. "Don't you think we oughta nominate Dave here?" he said. "Doing a fine job, don't you think?" Vaguely delighted, embarrassed, and perturbed, I neglected to

decline and wound up elected.

Outside, Louis, shortie, and Italian were waiting with slush snowballs. I got hit from behind with a piece of ice and lost my hat. I ran blocks and blocks until I slipped and tore my pants knee (my father would love that) and scraped my knee (my mother would love that). I was petrified that Louis and his gang would catch me there, on my knees, stunned and defenseless. I became aware of the dull ache in my neck where the ice had hit. I was crying as I picked myself up and ran on.

It was about ten-thirty when I got home. Father was watching the fights; Mother was at Canasta or Mah Jong; Sheila was long asleep. "What happened?" he said quietly, looking up. "Who'd you fight with?"

"I got chased," I stammered.

"Your pants are torn. Where's your hat?"

"Lost."

"Who chased you?"

"Guys."

"What kind of a bullshit answer is that? You know how many hours I have to work to pay for those clothes?"

I didn't answer.

"Well, do you?"

I shrugged.

"Say something, goddamnit! Don't just stand there like an idiot...."

"You're just like your old lady...."

"Stupid...."

"Ganged up on me," I stammered, vaguely ashamed.

Then less vaguely.

"Mm...." I could smell his beer-breath.

"I fell."

"Mmm...."

He leaned down and poured a glass of beer from the bottle on the floor. "Fix yourself up," he said quietly.

"Need any help in there?" he called after a time. A few minutes later he was at the bathroom door. "Need any help? I been asking you."

"I'm okay." I stepped toward him, eyes averted.

"Let me see your neck. Do you need anything for it?"

"It's all right." He moved from the doorway and I passed him into the hallway.

"Ice cream in the Frigidaire."

"No thanks. I gotta get to bed."

"Well, goodnight," he called.

I wished Sheila and I were still sharing the same room. I wanted to talk and talk: they couldn't catch me, Shelly; they tried but I got away. And I won't ever give them the chance again.