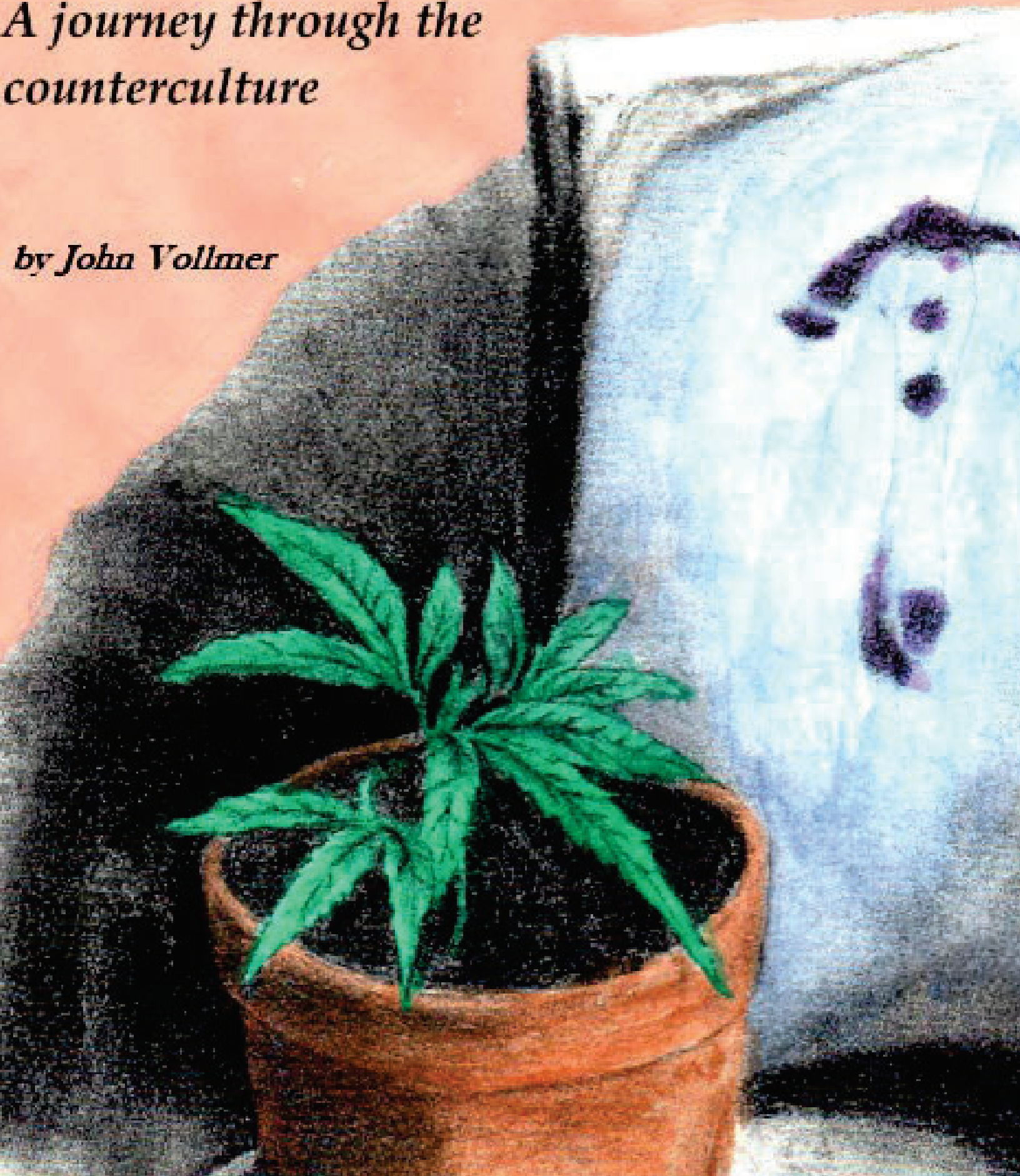
We Only Came To Dream

A journey through the counterculture

by John Vollmer



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WE ONLY CAME TO DREAM

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We only came to sleep
We only came to dream
It is not true, no it is not true
That we came to live on this earth

—Aztec poem

"Well, John, when you're young and full of life, you do strange things."
—Chief Washakie. In: John McPhee, *Rising from the Plains*

PART I
Blooming-gulch

"Why a duck?"

—The Marx Brothers

On a broad windowsill, seven floors up in the Indiana Motor Inn, I sat watching the Courthouse Square below. The window was up and there was no screen, nothing to keep a person from tumbling out into the night. It was late fall, 1968; I was 18.

There is a kind of wind in the fall that seems always to be threatening to become a storm, but never quite does. The trees on the square below were perfectly still one minute, then tossing around in a fever the next. The air was soft and warm, but a chill stirred from underneath and when the wind caught the branches it sent them raving like Lear on the heath. The shadows they threw under the streetlights were wild and sinister, then eerily still again — as if waiting, in a trance. The half-lit dome of the courthouse lingered atop the mass of dark limestone, hovering above the maples like a UFO deciding whether or not to land.

I had arrived in Bloomington on a Greyhound bus the day before, knowing only one person in town and suddenly minus the large cardboard box that had most of my possessions in it. Behind the counter an ancient crone sat and listened unimpressed to my tale of woe and wearily handed over a form for me to fill out, making it quite clear that it was all a waste of time. They had "lost" it, she said, and I was furious. I began to vent my feelings with some bitterness, backing slowly toward the door so none of the other passengers would have to strain to hear, but the more enraged I became the more the old hag seemed to enjoy it. She was standing now . . . smiling and silently mouthing my words in perfect unison, nodding her head in complete agreement. She had heard it all before and loved nothing more than hearing it all again, her very own nursery-rhyme. Defeated, I banged out the door and stomped down the street, spitting threats and colorful adjectives. At last, I sat down on a low stone wall, realizing I had no idea where I was or where I was going. Now, gazing out at the night on the windowsill, thinking over Things In General, it was beginning to dawn on me that it was all just so much stuff, literally baggage. “Freedom’s just another word for nothin’ left to lose.” A quiet peace finally began to settle over me.

There hadn't been a soul on the street for hours and by 3:00 AM I was deep within myself, smoking cigarettes and watching the storm-that-threatened peter out; the night was still, watchful. Then from my seventh-floor perch I suddenly noticed something that I should have seen long before. There was a large weathervane, perched on top of the dome of the courthouse, and it seemed to be . . . a fish. Hmmmm. Why a fish? No ocean for several hundred miles . . . no fishing industry that I knew of. Was it any particular *sort* of fish? No, not really. Just a big, golden . . . maybe a carp. Local sense of humor, perhaps?

I worked this around for a long time. At last I went to bed but the next day I began stopping people on the street to ask them about the fish. Their faces would go blank and they'd say, "What fish?" I'd point up to the dome and they'd say, "Huh, a fish. Well, there's a fish up there . . . why do you suppose it's a fish?" Well, that's what *I* wanted to know. Then they'd offer some lame notion about the sculptor being fond of

bass fishing or perhaps one of the early mayors had been a sea captain — but in fact they were as surprised as I was that it was up there at all. They'd never even noticed it before. Nobody had a clue. Why a fish? I asked about it for several days and eventually a curt, bearded professor-type from the university hauled me over to the local library and got *them* involved but, alas, they didn't know either. Took a while to figure it out.

Nov. 5, 1968 — Richard Nixon defeats Hubert Humphrey in the presidential election by fewer than 500,000 votes.

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Look out kid, it's somethin' you did
God knows when but you're doin' it again
—Bob Dylan

Zeke, who had convinced me to come to Bloomington in the first place, had a

room in the IMI directly above mine. The next day, having lost the box, I didn't feel I could afford such a palace so he hauled me over to the only other place where you could rent a room quick, the Turner Hotel. It was a pathetic old wreck — they advertised rooms at $8.50 a week and the lobby lived up to the billing. My heart sank. A gray-faced old coot with rotting teeth showed us up to a room. It had a bare bulb hanging from a cord in the ceiling, a bed left over from Father Damien's colony, and a window with the glass entirely painted over . . . presumably to hide the view from potential suicides. I just couldn't take it and we trudged on back to the IMI.

That evening, after a harassed and confusing bike ride (taunted by every passing redneck — "Get a haircut!" "Hey, girlie!"), Zeke came by and took me up to his room to meet his girlfriend, Erica. She was the (most recent) love of his life and he was crazy about her. She was tall and thin, with a slightly hawk-like face. She looked something like Julie Andrews and instantly you felt that nothing, anywhere, could ever be so bad that she couldn't fix it then and there, just by being alive. Unfortunately, she also made it perfectly clear that you had not a chance in the world of ever having her (Zeke, sad to say, seemed to make a habit of this kind of relationship).

They were talking about how Erica had just gotten back from visiting her sister, newly engaged. She said, "Well, he's getting a degree in Library Science and I liked him." "Even tho," said Zeke, "you say he looked kinda like a troll? I mean the hairy back and arms and all...." "So? What makes you think I'm attracted to narcissistic men?" Erica was ceremoniously pulling out a bag of big, brown, doughnut-type things with a white filling, apparently one of Zeke's favorites, and he broke out the dope to make an event of it. Now when she took those things out I just naturally assumed that they were gigantic donuts with a monstrous glob of vanilla cream filling in them. Looked good to me. I took a huge bite out of one and stopped cold — my mouth wouldn't move and I stood there, transfixed, gazing down at it feeling puzzled and hurt. It was a bagel with cream cheese, something I'd never heard of before. I couldn't chew but I couldn't swallow, either — Erica was spluttering, laughing thru a mouthful of cream cheese; Zeke threw me a sidelong glance, grinning an evil grin. At last I downed the whole mess in one choking gulp, retired the bagel to the bag and sat there, drinking a Coke and pouting. Expectations are everything.

Zeke was a sleepy-looking character with a scraggly brown mustache and a grin like a gnome plotting some outrage. To emphasize his delight in my absurdity, he winked at Erica and pulled his favorite stunt of taking some processed-cheese-in-a-can, holding it high (eyes shut, head back) and squirting a long ribbon of cheddar into his mouth. For some reason this grossed her out no end so, naturally, I did the same. She suggested we take a walk over to Kim and Anton's. She was delicate-looking and lithe but Zeke had warned me that she could blurt out the most outrageous things. She said, "Oh, wait a minute. I gotta take a leak — wanna listen at the door?"

Dec. 1, 1968 — The National Committee on Causes and Prevention of Crime issues a report calling the police actions at the Democratic National Convention a "police riot."

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Well she looked at me and I, I could see
That before too long I'd fall in love with her
—The Beatles

We walked past the square and down Kirkwood Avenue, which ran straight to the university, lined with head shops selling pipes and papers, patchouli oil, incense, etc., record stores, two theaters, boutique stores with the latest in fashion that you never saw anyone wear, a bar catering to frats, a wonderful pizzeria with an eclectic décor, the beautiful new library building and the Gables, an old-time café where Hoagy Carmichael was said to have written Stardust late one night (then the Book Nook; the alleged piano was still there). That five blocks were the heart and soul of Bloomington. (Zeke said that it also used to be lined with maple trees, until a certain mayor decided he didn't like maple trees and had them all cut down in the middle of the night. Communist arboreal plot? Indiana politics tend to be quirky.) On our way we skirted the north edge of the campus and I got my first glimpse of a broad expanse of lawn dotted with sycamores called Dunn Meadow. Running along the inner edge of the meadow was a tiny little stream, rather grandly called the Jordan River, and looming above it in the moonlight was the huge Student Union building — a sprawling place topped by an enormous medieval tower, square and bulky.

We walked a long way. Anton and Kim lived in a trailer park several blocks north of campus called the "Emerald City," for the ugly shade of green of all the trailers. When we got there it was already late. Anton let us in — a tall Yankee with a full beard, semi-long hair, and a wonderful overbite. He exuded an air of formal politeness that just bordered on being courtly. Kim didn't seem exactly beautiful to me at first, but she had the most intriguing eyes I had ever seen. She had a way of looking up at you — sideways and from underneath — with a questioning, playful smile that reminded you of druids and moonlit dances in a woodland grove.

Anton made tea and talked music with Zeke. They had gone thru school together, Zeke studying composition and Anton the piano, and they launched into shop talk. Erica chatted amiably with Kim. The cramped trailer was studded with oddments — a Spanish guitar, Van Gogh posters, an old telescope, camera gear, tie-dyed sheets over the windows, and a coffee table cluttered with music, geodes, sandwich remains, ashtrays, and a tiny Chinese vase, looking decidedly fragile. Books were scattered everywhere. There was a knock on the door and Anton let in Ian and Tammy.

Ian was square-jawed and implacably good-natured. He wore a perpetual grin that varied from mild bemusement to outright delight in the world and everything in it, and he gave the impression of having not a care nor an enemy on earth, which was undoubtedly true. Tammy was smallish, timid, anxious-looking, red-haired, and Irish. She looked like she wrote poetry of the "Oh, god, the pain! . . . aren't the pretty little flowers pretty?" school; exceedingly wistful. Everyone struggled to find a comfortable place to perch in the cramped trailer and when we all got settled in, Ian pulled out a tiny wad of something brown and resinous-looking, wrapped in tinfoil. Zeke began to fashion a hashpipe from an old briar — now *this* was more like it.

Anton and Zeke had been trying for months to get Kim stoned, with no success. Some people are like that — it takes several tries before it hits them and they're asking things like, "Am I stoned yet?" Invariably they get the answer, "Well, it's a little like fishing . . . you'll know when you get a bite." But this time was to be the charm, for the hash was truly first-rate.

Ian had the readiest laugh I'd ever heard and he chortled gleefully over every remark as he broke off one tiny bit after another and stuffed it into the pipe Zeke finally got fashioned. As we passed it around, getting that first stinging hit, I could tell that Tammy didn't really like getting stoned — she took just these small, sipping little hits while the rest of us toked down mightily. Anton turned down the lights and in five minutes my mind was catapulting into the ether every ten seconds. Anton was trying to describe the first few minutes of a rush — how your mind jumps the track, flitting off like a dog after a rabbit before springing back to where it had been (or something *like* where it had been — who could tell?) and when I glanced over at Zeke, he was gazing at Kim with a questioning look. Ah, yes, she was stoned. Utterly, majestically stoned.

Kim had a natural huskiness in her voice that I found absolutely devastating. She was more than a little intense (a philosophy major), but that laser-like focus took a quantum leap as she vaulted into a magnificent stone. She latched onto Erica and began a complicated discourse on phenomenology. Erica caught on right away, merely smiling indulgently and letting Kim run on. Tammy, however, made the mistake of trying to interject some remark or other — and the old adage proved wrong, for it wasn't a *bit* like fishing and Kim *didn't* know she was stoned.

Kim had the knack of being completely warm and open one minute, then turning as aloof as Queen Victoria the next. This threw Tammy off completely. She was *trying* to agree with Kim, but getting nowhere; Kim's specialty was arcane philosophy and nothing could be worse than agreeing with a philosopher . . . it upsets their rhythm. (Too, like all serious thinkers she was fond of using categories — while making it *quite* clear that *she* could never be slipped into one herself.) She bore in with relentless logic. Tammy, by contrast, was conventional, emotional, and totally agreeable. She hated confrontation and would have gladly gone along with a wild-eyed, bible-thumping doomsdayer, if she thought it would avoid an argument. She had that daydreamy

quality, a way of letting her eyes drift off into the middle distance every few seconds — it was no match at all. Tammy taking on Kim was like Porky Pig taking on Vlad the Impaler.

Anton saw it coming and put on some music, trying to preempt the inevitable, loudly describing every thought that passed thru his head. He was going on about the essential randomness of music (!) and how even raindrops pelting on a rooftop were "organized sound," saying that was how he would like to compose, "stochastic pointillism," etc., etc., but all of this made no impression on Kim at all. She bore in on Tammy, in rapid-fire detail describing her own intellectual development and how that related to the general, cosmic theme of . . . something or other. By turns she was baring her soul in intimate detail, then expounding on the overall meaning of transcendental existence. She was tossing around Kant and Hegel like other people talk about Wally and The Beaver, then dissolving, telling each of us how she could *see* us all so *clearly.*

We were all listening now, awash in this cascade of intense self-revelation, wondering how long it could go on. If she had stopped even for a moment Kim might have realized she was stoned, but she didn't, of course, and no one else could get a word in edgewise. Finally she reached her grand interpretation of the Oneness of the Universe and Tammy, her eyes having drifted off into the far corners of the galaxy, at last woke up and tried to interject, "Yes, yes, I know what you mean — it's . . . it's like . . ." and that was as far as she got. Kim snapped out, "It's not *like* anything. I'm not *saying* what it's *like,* I'm saying what it *is* . . ." and off she went again.

Tammy looked like she'd been slapped and her eyes curled inward . . . she shrank into a little ball. Kim was oblivious, of course, as the rest of us tried to pretend we hadn't been listening; we simply couldn't ignore the grand absurdity of it all, however — and we started to giggle. Tammy shrank even further and Ian went over to her, gently drawing her away. Lacking a target, Kim finally wound down and at last realized what had happened. Anton was grinding his teeth.

Ian and Zeke did a marvelous job of turning it into some minor foible, neither ignoring it nor at the same time aiming judgment at Kim. They were masters at taking the lighthearted, what-the-hell tone and before long even Tammy was laughing again. Kim looked chagrined, but that soon passed as Ian recounted one tale after another of his encounters with the supernatural. Eventually we drifted off into the night.

It was a long, quiet walk home. Despite all the folderol, I found myself incredibly attracted to Kim. Anton, too, was without a doubt special. They were absolute opposites — Kim grounded herself in rock-hard rationality, a no-bullshit realist, while Anton was the total romantic. A concert pianist, he devoted himself to music utterly and could have no more discussed Kant than a cat (and cared just as much). He fed on the counterpoint of existence as only a poet can. They spoke languages as different as integral calculus and whalesong. This, it seemed, would bear watching.

Dec. 13, 1968 — A study published in Science *calls marijuana "medically . . . harmless."*

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Here come ol' flat-top, he come
Groovin' up slowly
—John Lennon

If you were a native of Bloomington, a "townie," you naturally gravitated to either the north side (for the well-to-do) or the west and south sides (the low-rent areas). The townfolk seldom ventured to the east side, which was reserved for the university and the dorms. Not that anyone would have cared if you were to walk around the campus, but few people actually did — the buildings were huge and forbidding and, for the most part, townies simply felt out of place there. The students, faculty, and staff probably made up a third of Bloomington's population but they, in turn, seldom went beyond the campus and Kirkwood Avenue — the rest was for the "rednecks," also known as "grits."

And, indeed, they *were* mostly rednecks. Southern Indiana is unlike the rest of the state, which is flat cornland dotted with farms and heavy industry. The lower fourth is hilly and rural — even the accent is "southern" (like Kentucky) reflecting the fact that for a very long time southern Indiana was the last and greatest bastion of the Ku Klux Klan. Students were tolerated, in their place, but subject to hassle if they strayed too far from home — and you could just forget about any little side trips to Spencer or Martinsville. The Klan was still very active there and to them "student" was just another word for "Commie." One nearby town still held a Klan parade and picnic every year, where children could thrill in the glory of sheethood and soak up devotion to the flag at a cross-burning. The Klan's favorite sport was driving into Bloomington at night to beat up black men seen in the company of white women. Longhaired "hippies" purely gave them fits.

Living on the square was living in a kind of no-man's land — neither campus nor quite the town itself. Kirkwood brought too many college types that way and the longhairs were beginning to make inroads, much as the locals hated it. The hotel was comfortable enough, except that it had that temporary feel to it. I spent a lot of time in Zeke's room when he was out, a speaker plastered to each ear, blasting Sgt. Pepper or Bach. I must say, tho, that compared to mine Zeke's room was — how shall I put it — well, mangy. They had been identical when we first moved in, but. . . .

Zeke was a percussionist as well as a composer and when he played the drums or the marimba it was absolutely astonishing. He was completely ambidextrous, and when he played he was downright graceful. More than that, he had a quick, fluid

motion — especially on the marimba — and it sometimes seemed more like ballet (very rapid ballet) than just music. And yet, the second he was away from an instrument he was a paradigm klutz. There was something absentminded about his hands — he would be talking away and suddenly, *swoooop,* down would go his fingers unerringly to upset a coffee cup. He dropped cigarettes often, which was no big deal — except that he *forgot to pick them up.* He would lay one on the desk and leave it there as it slowly burned a nice long gash in the wood. Or he might put an immersion coil into a cup of water to boil and simply forget all about it. Eventually, of course, all the water boiled out and the coil began to sizzle and smoke, reeking of melting metal and ozone. Finally he'd notice the smell and panic, grabbing the thing and yanking the cord out of the wall. It was too hot to hold, so he'd instantly drop it onto the rug. When the foofaraw was all over he'd lean back against the desk and comment bitterly on the unreliability of modern implements.

He went thru something like this about once a week and it got to where I wouldn't even bother to warn him of the impending trouble, I became so fond of the show. The maid went into Teutonic hysterics almost every week — coming into his room to clean up and finding some fresh atrocity to report to the manager. This long-suffering soul would storm up and protest loudly that cooking was strictly *not allowed* in the rooms — at which point Zeke would vehemently deny that he even knew *how* to cook (which was perfectly true) and they'd go around and around that way for some time. Kept them both happy.

Ballerinas seem that way too — maybe they're so used to knowing precisely where they are on stage that they just forget to watch where they're going, bumping into trees and bushes and furniture with astonishing regularity. Zeke was like that, only with his hands.

Dec. 20, 1968 — John Steinbeck dies at age 66.

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The man in a trenchcoat, badge out, laid off
Says he's got a bad cough
—Bob Dylan

We were all avid smokers but we couldn't afford store-bought cigarettes, of course, so we bought the roll-your-own kind. After sampling Tops and Friends and Bugler we finally settled, more or less, on Drum — more expensive, but a mighty tasty smoke. There was a tobacco shop just off the lobby of the hotel, however, and one day we spotted something called Three Castles (which we pronounced Three Caftles, from the old-fashioned script on the label). The shopkeep had ordered a case by mistake and

he asked us if we'd like to try some at half-price. Even so, it was a lot more expensive than Drum, but we figured, what the hell, why not give it a try.

Three Caftles came in a tall green can with a quote from Thackeray on the lid extolling its virtues. It had a beautiful tan color and the texture of shredded silk. The aroma that wafted up when we opened it was like nothing I'd ever smelled before — rich, mellow, and earthy. It rolled like a dream and that first drag was a revelation — like going to heaven and finding Jesus sitting on a sofa with Mark Twain, smoking a big black stogie and calling out, "C'mon in, fellas, have a cee-gar!" *This* was it.

Unlike the cheap stuff, it didn't come with papers and we experimented with all the brands before settling on OCB's and Riz-La. We ran thru that first can in no time and sauntered into the Tobac Shoppe, trying to act nonchalant as we bargained the owner into letting us have the entire case cut-rate. We pestered him continually when he didn't get in a shipment fast enough, got everyone else to smoke it, and quite possibly revived that company single-handedly.

Getting a steady supply of dope, on the other hand, was another matter altogether. While it was "common knowledge" that getting grass was as simple as walking around campus whistling "Panama Red," it was in fact nowhere near that easy. Half of the "dealers" were slimy little weasels and the other half peddled two grades: unaffordable and unsmokeable. Then too, the local cops thought it great fun to stand around on street corners in long hair and Salvation Army clothes saying things like, "Hey, man, y'know . . . like, wow. OK?" Narcs tended to be all of a piece and as easy to spot as a watermelon in a toilet bowl. You'd have to be pretty stupid to fall for one of their outrageous caricatures, but occasionally you'd hear about someone who had. Usually some speed-freak . . . the kind who wouldn't notice if they woke up in a tree. Generally they fooled no one but the other narcs.

They took turns busting one another, just to relieve the boredom. Conversation overheard between two of these idiots, when accosted by an obviously Hispanic buyer: (sotto voce) "What's the Spanish word for 'marijuana'?" Answer: "I don't know."

A friend got into the game once, going up to one of the "undercover" boys saying things like, "Yeah, like wow, c'n'ya like, dig it, man? Hey, wow . . . heavy, y'know?" — You could talk this way for hours to these morons and they'd never catch on. Eventually a couple of the narc buddies sidled over and I watched as "Cool" straightened up, looked back and forth between them, stern-like, and said, "What the hell . . . Johnson?" The narc, looking confused, said, "No, Benton . . . who the hell are you?" Cool gave him a pained look, flipped out a phony badge he'd gotten at a headshop, and said, "King, DEA. Would you guys get the hell out of here?" And they did!

Usually, tho, we were faced with horrible dry spells that lasted for weeks on end, nothing to be had at all. In the middle of one of these, Zeke knocked on my door late one night and walked in with a look that said it all . . . he positively beamed as he

pulled out a baggie, and with a smug, conspiratorial tone said he'd found *the* dynamite grass of all time. Naturally, I was intrigued. With a flourish he opened up a big, fat lid and proffered it on one arm, like he was presenting Toscanini's baton. Naturally, I was impressed. Then I got a whiff of . . . I dunno, something familiar, and I took a look. "Hmmm," I said, "looks kind of scraggly to me." Zeke peered down at the baggie, a little puzzled, but not yet concerned. "Well," he said, "maybe it got a little damp."

Damp. Yeah, right. Inside the bag was a moldy-brown mass of ex-leaf, packed with stems and enough seed to start a farmer's co-op. I said, "Little on the old side, isn't it?" and Zeke began to look confused. I took a big sniff and got a sharp tang of rotting compost, ammonia, and (yep, no doubt about it) oregano. "How much did you pay for this furball?"

Zeke started shifting from one foot to the other.

"Well, y'know, only seven bucks a lid . . . I mean, how can you go wrong?"

"Seven bucks?" I said, "Well, that isn't too bad. Hell, seven bucks won't . . ."

"I bought ten," he said, and began hauling out one bag after another, pulling it out of pockets, from the inside of his shirt — positively gloating, the goof. This was not good.

"Zeke, half of that money was mine — you mean you went out and bought *this* shit with *my* money. . . ?"

He sat down, poking at the mound pensively. "Oh, c'mon," he said, "just . . . just try it, OK?" He rolled up one of the ugliest J's I have ever seen and we hacked and gagged and toked on that crap for an hour or more. It was like sucking on a tailpipe. Nada. Nothing. I positively tasted catnip.

Finally I got the story. Two of the slimy sort (who, of course, *looked* perfectly reasonable) just "happened" to strike up a conversation with Zeke while waiting in line over at the Student Union. Eventually the talk got around to dope (what else?) and they offered to turn him onto a J — which they did, in Dunn Meadow. Apparently it was some of the most gawd-help-us, brazenly dynamite stuff he'd ever encountered but, of course, they couldn't *bear* to part with any. He wheedled and cajoled and after several more tokes on the J managed to wear them down. They took him to a seedy little dump where they pulled out some absolutely magnificent lids — each one packed with fat buds, dripping with resin and redolent of the spice fields of Jamaica.

Well. How these half-full bags of coconut rind found their way into his pockets, he had no idea. He was so astonished that they were offering this bonanza — for only seven bucks a lid — that it apparently addled his brain sufficiently (I suppose the second J helped) that he hardly even glanced at the bags as he greedily tucked them away. It was the classic bait-and-switch, as old as Moses, but what blew my mind was how *Zeke* could have fallen for such a ploy. *Me,* certainly — I was green enough to fall for anything. But *Zeke*? He explained that it was something about their manner, an indefinable . . . something, that just naturally inspired confidence or . . . something.

In lofty, colorful terms I expressed my total understanding and sympathy as he quietly tucked the hideous baggies away. From that day on it was referred to as the Infamous Bad Stuff and I did my best to let him forget all about it.

Like hell.

Dec. 22, 1968 — The 83-man crew of the U.S.S. Pueblo *is released by North Korea.*

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Yip yip yip yip, Mum mum mum mum mum
Get a job
—The Silhouettes

My money was dwindling fast and something needed to be done about that. Outdoor work sounded good and I heard somewhere that they might be hiring groundskeepers over at IU (the university), so I hiked out to apply for whatever was available. The "office" turned out to be a shack near the railroad tracks, not far from the football stadium. A wiry little guy waved me to a chair, but instead of giving me an application, he sat down to fill it out himself. In a loud whine he said, "Whazzer name?" I told him. He said, "Whirryew liv?" I gave the Indiana Motor Inn as an address. He said, "Ohkuh, whazzershushasurreritynonner?"

I paused, hoping some word would click into English, but nothing happened. Finally I took a chance and said brightly, "Yeah! Right!" He looked irritated and said, "Nuh, nuh! Whazzer-shushasurreritynonner?" I tried to look pleasant and said, "You bet!" He put down his pencil and with infinite patience said, "Naow, yewlissena me. Whazzer — sosshacurty — nonner?" The light dawned and I rattled off my social security number. He seemed satisfied but it went downhill from there — at one point I am positive he said, "Kinyewcannawperra-fillowman?"

This wasn't working out. The nicer I tried to be the more exasperated he became, treating me like an absolute moron. And believe me, it is a peculiar sensation to be treated like a moron by someone whose idea of conversation is to chew up an aluminum beer can and howl at you in pain.

Not surprisingly, I never heard from them again.

Zeke's status was none too good either, so we hunted around together and eventually found jobs busing tables at a restaurant on the square called Murphy's. Actually, we got only one job and alternated the nights we worked, neither one of us being very much into the Puritan work ethic. It was a good arrangement — we could take home the leftover bread and steamtable remains plus whatever canned stuff we could liberate from the pantry. We got a free meal while on the job and lugged home

enough for a day or two extra, so it worked out well.

Dec. 24-25, 1968 — Apollo 8 astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell and William Anders are the first men to orbit the moon.

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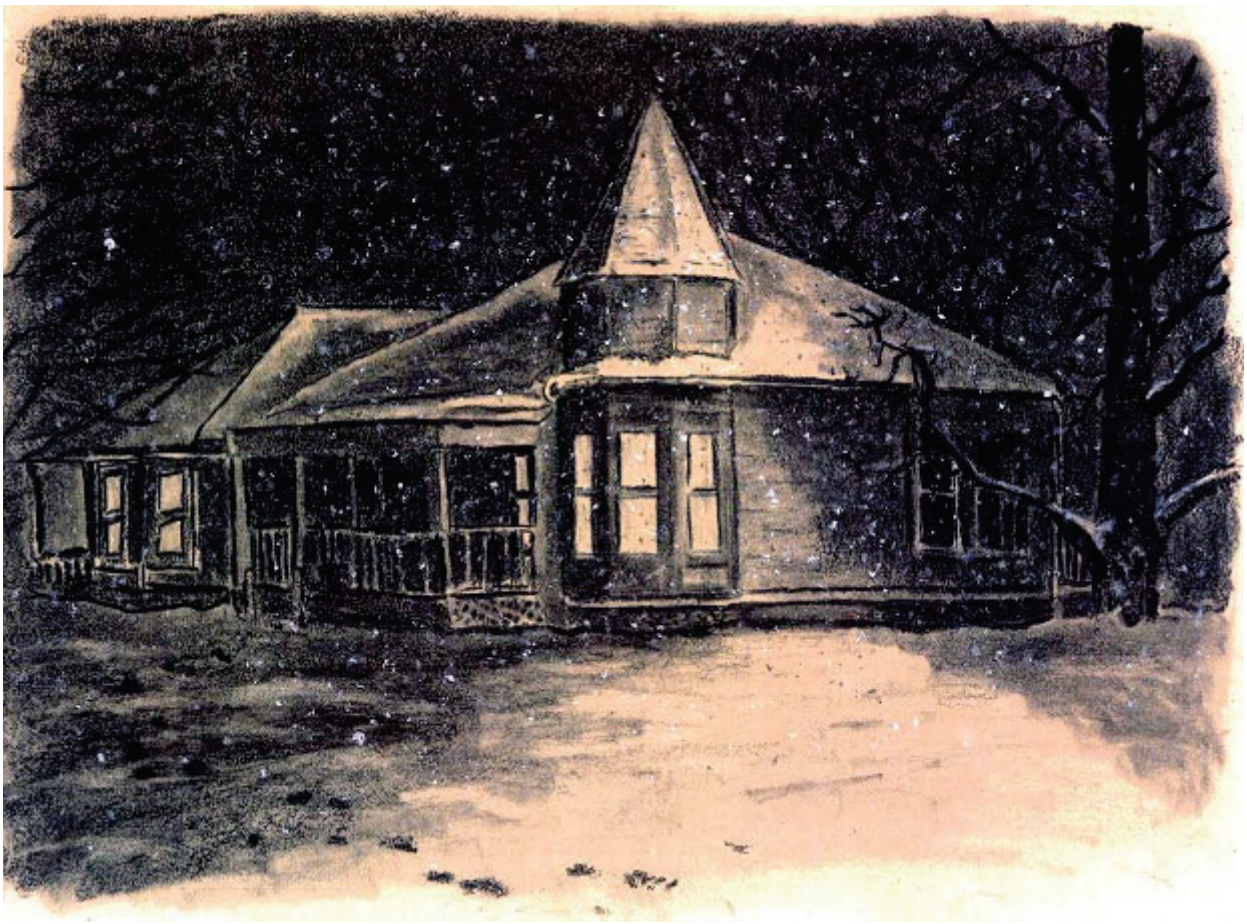
Suzanne takes you down
To her place near the river
—Leonard Cohen

Zeke disappeared for a few weeks (he *always* went home for Christmas) and everybody else seemed to be off somewhere, too. We had a snowfall the day before Christmas and that was lovely and traditional and all so I strolled around the Kirkwood area, smoking a cigar and looking for kids to chuck rocks at (a little holiday tradition of my own). The town was almost completely deserted. In my thin cloth jacket I was getting a little chilly when I finally spotted someone.

She was on the chubby side and small with a quiet, beguiling smile, faded old jeans and fuzzy long hair. She was about my age and joyfully innocent, granny glasses accenting great, dark eyes. As we passed I got the strong, musky scent of patchouli oil — I stopped and turned — she stopped and turned — then she asked me if I had any spare change (shades of a dropped handkerchief). We talked softly for a while and soon we were on our way to her place, holding hands as we shuffled thru the snow, smiling at one another and happy.

Her room was in a classic Bloomington house: a two-story white clapboard with vines everywhere and a long porch with a big swing on chains. There was a small round turret to one side and this turned out to be part of her place. Inside there were oak floors, beautiful moldings (hidden under many layers of paint) and nearly floor-to-ceiling windows. The turret formed a large bay area, where she kept her little stereo and a boxful of albums. It was chilly and the rest of the room was furnished with a few reed mats and some cushions, a low table with incense, candles and bells, and a single mattress on the floor. Nothing else, no TV or phone, of course, this being the standard "counterculture" setting. (The media adopted the word "hippie," to ensure our fringe status as an "other." We, in parody, called ourselves "freaks.")



The evening came down softly and she made tea and put together a bowl of fruit and bread and cheese while I looked thru the records — Joan Baez, the Beatles, Joni Mitchell, the Stones, Peter Paul & Mary, Hendrix, Dylan. We listened to Lennon's new album and talked shyly for a while, then got off our clothing and made love in the stillness as the snow fell coldly and gently outside, drifting down silently thru the lonely beam of a streetlight. We were safe and warm and the night was our haven. The air was laden with the scent of patchouli.

There are heroes in the seaweed
There are children in the morning

Sometimes languid and giggly, sometimes passionate and intense, we explored the hours and each other and smiled into each other's eyes. She talked in visions and the everyday in a contrast that swept me along on a current of the poetic, the half-mad, the startling image of simple acceptance; I became not-myself and found an exciting grace. We slept thru the long night and woke from time to time, just to touch and kiss and hold hands. In the morning we parted, carried in a kind of golden light. We never used last names so she was only Carla, but I returned a time later to look for her. An old lady,

bent down with the years, told me that she had gone. I never saw her again.

Dec. 26, 1968 — Paris Peace talks are deadlocked over the shape of the table.

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Slippin', dodgin', sneakin', creepin'
Hidin' out down the street
—Dr. John

While Zeke was out of town I decided to look around for better digs, since a hotel room, no matter how convenient, is decidedly antiseptic. (Well, in Zeke's case perhaps antiseptic isn't exactly the *mot juste*.) My standard method was simply to walk around town looking for "Room to Rent" signs and, while this might not seem very efficient, over the years it served me pretty well. There's a lot to be said for serendipity.

Walking due east from the IMI, I found a likely candidate in less than half an hour, not a block from the campus on Sixth Street — number 425. It was the usual type of white two-story and there were *two* rooms available, as luck would have it, but nobody seemed to know who I should talk to. Finally I was told that the landlady, who lived in the corner house next door, was out of town for the holidays (Bloomington was deserted on holidays) so when Zeke got back I told him about it and we went over to see what was what.

The landlady was a real Ma Kettle-type, with a booming voice and a no-nonsense air. (Marjorie Main, the original Ma Kettle, grew up not too far away.) She seemed friendly, tho — even cheerful in an aggressive sort of way. She ran down the list of things she didn't care for in her tenants but qualified each by saying, ". . . but you play ball with me and I'll play ball with you." She had a real fixation on that phrase and we got to calling her "Ma Balls" — for that and other reasons.

The rooms were on the second floor of the house next door, opposite one another. The one facing the street was tiny but comfortable. The back one faced the alley and was quite a bit larger — it even had a sink and a counter where we could set up a hotplate and cook. The bathroom was in the hall between the two. We tried to hide our delight when Ma told us it was only $10 a week for the front room and $12.50 for the bigger one — my god, paying *less* rent for a much better place was a terrific bargain. At first we acted jaded and blasé about the whole thing but by now we were grinning from ear to ear and she seemed genuinely pleased. She got more and more ebullient and for a minute there she looked so Gertrude Stein-ish I thought she was going to start slapping us on the back and going on about the Bulls of Pamplona. I guess she thought better of it.

The only real drawback, obvious as we walked down the stairs, was that those

living in the apt below seemed to have a cabbage fetish and apparently kept the pot boiling day and night. I had noticed it the first day, also.

But, signed and sealed, we headed back to the IMI to pack up our stuff. However, there was just one little detail, not to be overlooked — we were both a week or so behind in the rent at the hotel and we didn't care to burden the management with the news of our impending move.

Now, I had arrived in town only a couple of months before with, as noted, a single suitcase. All of a sudden I seemed to have acquired far more than any suitcase could carry and Zeke had much more still. How, we wondered, were we going to transport all of this stuff, underneath the very noses of the staff, without setting off the hue and cry?

I had a brainstorm. I said to Zeke, what if we got just one really *large* box — we could dump everything into that and possibly, just possibly, get it out the front door before the gendarmes caught on. No sooner said than done. We went out and found a refrigerator box and "smuggled" it in while the desk man's back was turned. We loaded up the whole shebang: clothes, records, musical instruments, stereo, minor pieces of furniture we'd picked up on the street, books, a lamp donated by the hotel — everything was piled into this enormous six-foot-high box with maybe enough room left over for a cat. We taped the lid on, smoked a J for luck, and dragged The Box out to the elevator and down into the lobby.

We tried our best to look matter-of-fact as we sweated to haul this behemoth thru the lobby, but people were flattening themselves against the wall as we muscled **AMANA FROST-FREE** past and, looking back on it, I don't think we were fooling anyone. I glanced over at the concierge as we struggled by — he had this look of absolutely dazzled, speechless amazement frozen on his face . . . as if the *Queen Mary* had suddenly decided to take a left turn thru his bedroom. It was so utterly brazen that when we'd gotten halfway out the door he broke down and started to laugh — *now* he'd seen everything. I believe he would've applauded, if he'd thought of it.

Well, getting it out the door was okay but getting it eight blocks down the street was something else again. A box that weighs maybe a hundred pounds when you first lift it begins to feel like a Civil War cannon a short distance farther along. To say nothing of the fact that they don't make refrigerator boxes like they used to and the damn thing kept coming apart on us after we'd gone two blocks. We had to stop to rest every few yards and put the box back together; people came out onto their porches to point and watch us go by. Kids came out of nowhere to follow along and offer advice.

It was a long trek and it got pretty gruesome near the end but we eventually made it. Then we remembered the stairs. By this time we'd concluded that maybe this wasn't one of my greatest ideas after all (tho it *had* gotten us out of the IMI), but now we had a problem on our hands. We were far too wasted to try and haul this ziggurat upstairs, so Zeke went and got Anton and Ian. They arrived and stood staring at the

box, professing exaggerated disbelief, but between the four of us we managed to shove the thing upstairs, banging knuckles and knees on the walls and stairway as minor objects got loose and went clanging back down to the bottom. We finally made it, and they allowed as how we owed them one.

It was almost dark when I got settled in, but it seemed worth it. Home at last.

January 16, 1969 — Five planes are hijacked to Cuba in the first 11 days of 1969. Expanded peace talks (including the Viet Cong and South Vietnamese) begin in Paris.
Jan. 20, 1969 — At his inauguration Richard Nixon says "The peace we seek . . . is not a victory over any other people . . . [it is] the opportunity for all the peoples of this earth to choose their own destiny."

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Contentment is a liquid
Happiness is a solid
But joy, man, is a gas
—Anonymous jazz musician

One particularly nice feature of the room at 425 was that the window opened out onto the sloping roof and, while it didn't have quite the grand view of the seventh floor of the IMI, I could climb out there and sit, watching the people go by or the stars at night. All that stuff from The Box suddenly seemed to have evaporated, leaving mostly bare space — we scrounged around to find mattresses, towels, and a few dishes. Simplicity was the rule, of course, and leaving the mattress on the floor was *de rigueur*; it cut down on furniture (and when you moved in a refrigerator box, that was just as well) and the need to hire a decorator. Since the bed was on the floor you tended to lower the height of everything else to match — low tables, cushions, low bookcases (always bookcases), a few candles and clothes stuck up on hooks or nails or heaped into a closet. The stereo sat on the floor, as did the small lamp or two — always with low-watt bulbs. (I never found anyone who could stand bright, overhead lights or, for that matter, peace signs, beads, black-light posters, Nehru jackets, and all the other nonsense. Except for the narcs, of course.)

No phone or TV; the expense and intrusiveness would have been intolerable. In Zeke's room there was a marimba, bongos, boxes of sheet music and other paraphernalia. Unaccountably, too, he insisted on putting his bed up on cinder blocks and planks. I made allowances — after all, the poor fellow *was* getting on towards 30. (Well, 25 anyway.)

There were two other rooms down the hall, at the head of the stairs, and the smell of incense was thick. The freaks who lived there never seemed to leave and they were heavily into hard rock, keeping Abraxis going day and night, punctuated with

Iron Butterfly, Cream, and Blue Cheer. To my mind they had taste and I liked to come in to the tunes they played. (The volume reminded Zeke of a certain friend of his, a fellow-composer named Jörgen. He had gone back to Norway before I arrived, so I never got the chance to meet him. Jörgen had been gifted with both money and a powerful, expensive, humongous stereo set (lovingly described by Zeke) that he kept cranked up to about an 8 on the Richter scale. He played only classical music, of course, but the neighbors complained loudly about the noise and Jörgen would finally stomp to the top of the stairs, shouting back that that was how music *had* to be played, how it was *meant* to be played, that they should do their best to *enjoy* such things — and to hell with all the cretins who couldn't!

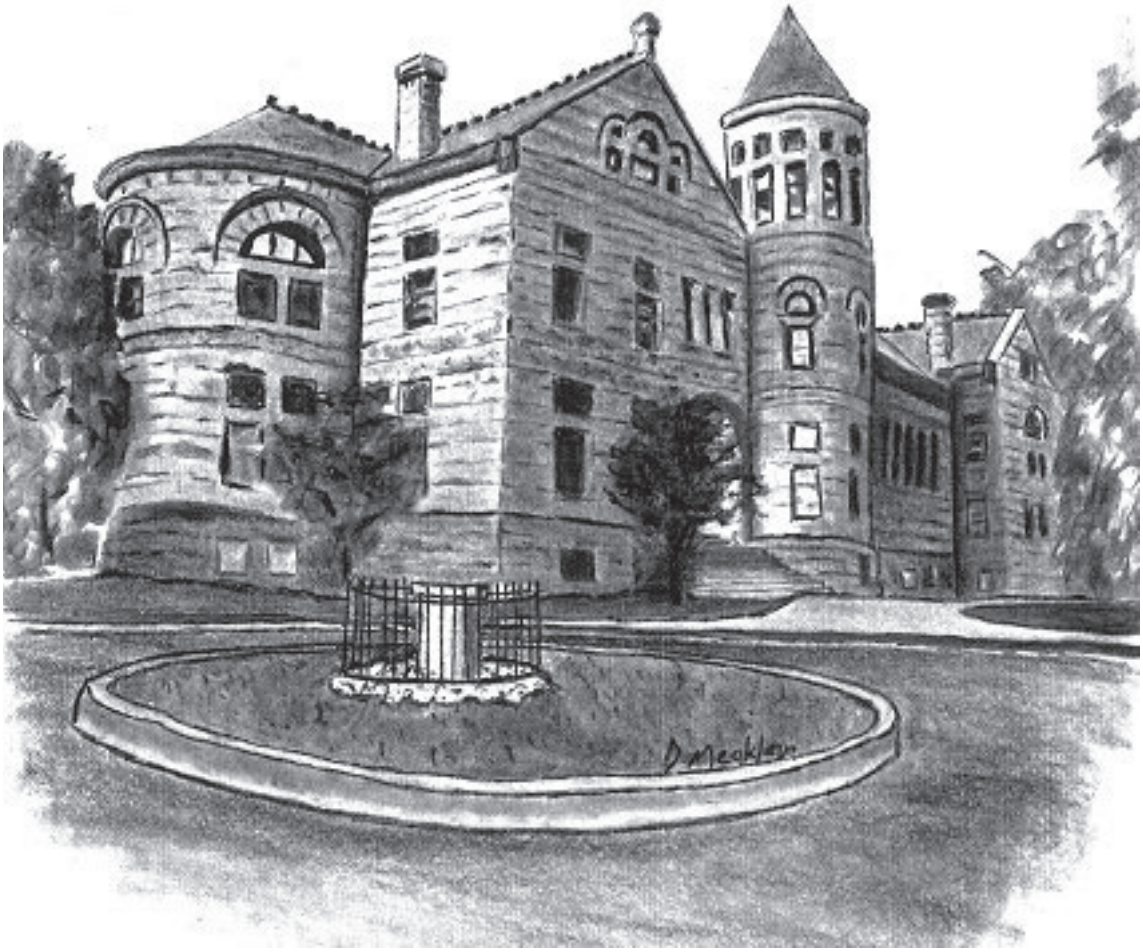
It was this same friend who, when it was explained to him that so-and-so couldn't do such-and-such because he had no money, said, "What are you talking about? No money? Why does he have no money? You should just *have* money!")

While Zeke and Anton tolerated rock, and even seemed to like a fair amount of it, their primary focus was on "serious" music. Thru Zeke's efforts I was just beginning to get a thorough grounding in such things and Anton willingly joined the fray. Not that I was reluctant. My first experience with classical music had been late one night when I was a kid and heard an organ performance on the radio from some cave in Canada. It was Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* and it was truly a revelation, a mystical experience. Ever since then I had been trying to find more such stuff but I had no way of knowing what to look for. My explorations were haphazard, at best, and I often wound up buying inferior recordings, since I was afraid to spend the money on something I might not like. I hated Tchaikovsky, for example, and thus tended to avoid *all* Russians, or, for that matter, after hearing one of his piano concertos, all piano music. Zeke had begun to correct that and he and Anton guided me thru a program that was comprehensive, eclectic, and nothing if not enthusiastic. Within two days of settling in at 425, they hauled me over to the Music School for the first of many sessions.

From the front the Music School looked pretty much like any other traditional campus building — a mass of green ivy and gray limestone. (Limestone was the predominant building material not only on campus but in the town; there were dozens of quarries in the area, making it literally cheaper to build in stone than in wood. Everyone had seen the Empire State Building, but *we* were able to peer down into the hole that it came out of!) The names of great composers — Bach, Mozart, Brahms, etc. — were chiseled into the frieze and inside there were concert halls, classrooms, offices, and everywhere the bleats and blats of tubas, trombones, saxophones and trumpets. Any others practicing were drowned out by the brass.

Once past the lockers and instrument rooms at the rear, however, it became a different world. A few years back a new addition had been tacked on and some swell *artiste* had decided that a round building would be nice. That was all very well but the transition was jarring — from the air, I am told, the overall effect was rather like that of

looking down on a gigantic toilet. It was disorienting to see the hallways arcing away in short, unfamiliar sweeps to the left and right. Almost all the rooms were practice rooms but it was suddenly eerily quiet there — the soundproofing was nearly perfect, except for the distant squawking of saxophones. (Nothing, it seems, can soundproof a saxophonist at work. Zeke said that Beethoven would surely have played the saxophone today, "since you have to be deaf to practice on it.")



Anton was an alarmingly fast walker and he flew off in one direction while Zeke ambled dreamily in another. We went into room after room as he plunked pianos — checking to find a "good one," he said. A piano was a piano, for all I knew, but Zeke pretended to show me the difference in "tone quality" and "action" (yeah, right). He said it had something to do with the humidity changing the "timbre" (yeah, right). After a bit we heard Anton calling that he'd found one — why they didn't just *remember* which were the good ones, I'll never know.

The practice room had wood paneling, acoustic ceiling tile and, mysteriously, a curtain over one wall, covering up nothing at all. Zeke carefully taped some paper over the tiny window in the door (I had no idea why) and pulled out pile after pile of sheet music as Anton sat down to play. From the first few notes, even I could see that Anton

was a genius at the piano (I do not use the word lightly). He had a connection with the instrument that was profound, absorbing, absolute. Suddenly I realized how *alone* he looked, how *incomplete,* when he wasn't at the piano. I had wondered at the incredible rush he always seemed to be in — he was anxious to get back to the keyboard. He ripped thru Chopin mazurkas, Debussy preludes and Bach fugues at incredible speeds; overly fast, in fact, in his fervor to be playing again. Zeke was turning the pages but Anton's fingers were a blur and he would reach up and snap a page over whenever Zeke was too slow.

I had never seen a truly gifted pianist up close before and it was a revelation. His delight in the instrument and in the music was a physical presence in the room — the only word for it was *joy.* You could see the admiration in Zeke's eyes. Finally he began to settle down and show me this passage and that passage and how they related to one another . . . how they *spoke* to one another and how each composer would use themes and developments in a way utterly unique to themselves. I couldn't follow half of it, of course, but what I could follow unlocked a door that I never knew existed. I thought I could *hear* music and that that was enough (and it can be) but here was a world of interchange and the weaving of a tapestry of the mind, a complex fabric that I never knew was there.

Anton played on, jumping from the Romantic to Baroque to Classical: Ravel and Brahms, Scarlatti and Telemann, Beethoven and Mozart. He raced from one to another, demonstrating the meaning of counterpoint, exposition, theme. His excitement was magnetic — he would stroke his beard momentarily between pieces and then Zeke would gently say something like "Do you remember that Frescobaldi suite in E minor? It's like that Scarlatti . . ." and Anton would tear into the stacks of music to find it. From time to time Zeke's own enthusiasm would take over and he'd push Anton aside, competing for equal time.

Even I could tell that Zeke's piano technique was, shall we say, unorthodox. When he played his fingers showed none of the absentmindedness that was his trademark elsewhere, but clearly he wasn't as at home as when he held a set of sticks. There was a kind of hither-and-yon quality to it, as if his hands had almost decided to go somewhere else before landing on the right key; as if they would have *liked* to make some commentary on the notes that he wouldn't quite let them. After an hour or so, Zeke pulled out a bag and rolled up a joint and then I understood why he'd covered the window. We blew the smoke straight up into the ventilator and within minutes, Anton went into overdrive. I sank into the calm center of the vortex and let it swirl around me, and when he wound down at last we gathered up the music, exhausted, and walked over to the Union to get something to eat. It was after midnight and we had been at it for seven hours.

March 10, 1969 — James Earl Ray pleads guilty to the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

and is sentenced to 99 years.

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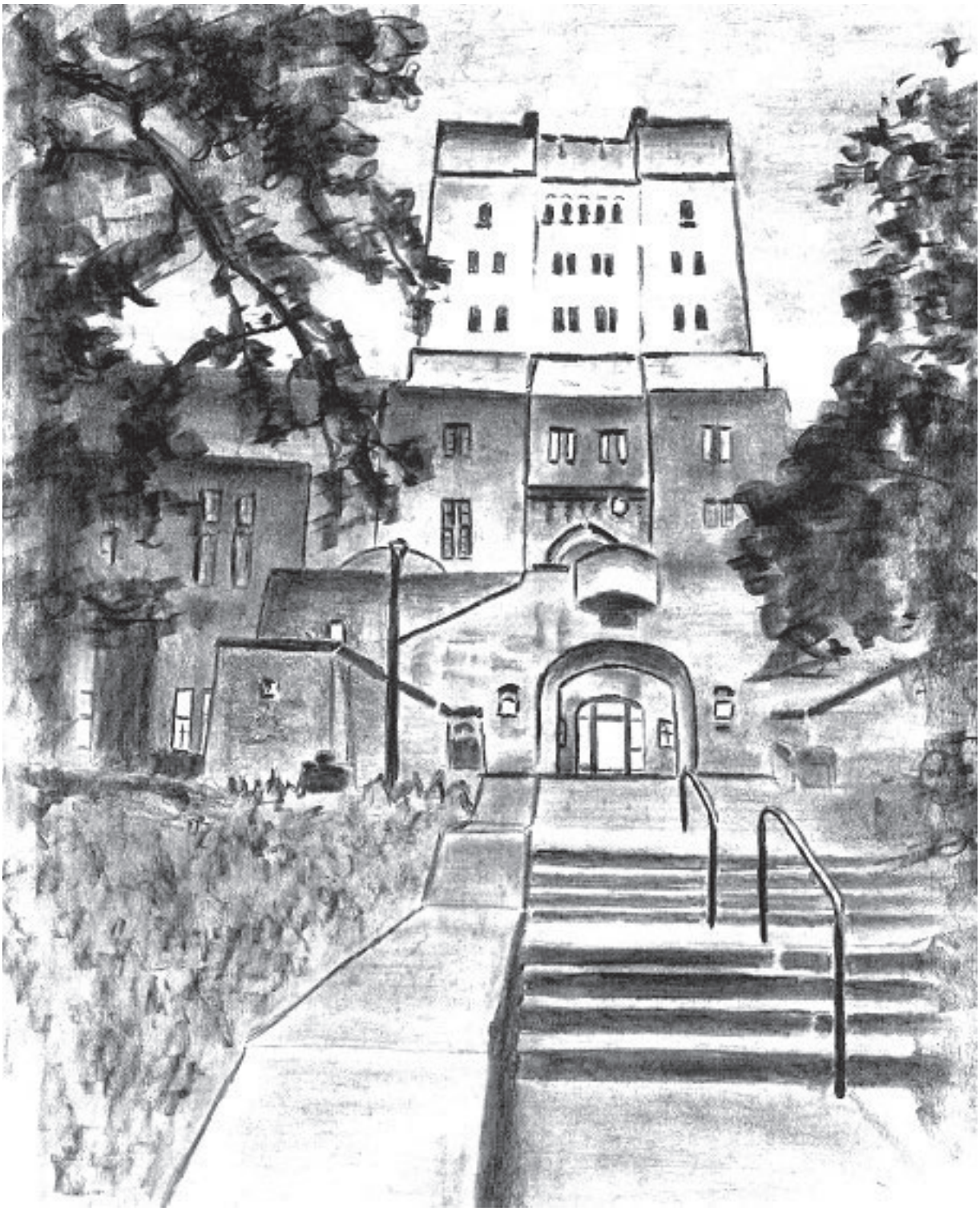
"I think I must be an experiment," said Eve,
"Or perhaps architecture."
—Mark Twain

The motto of the university was *Lux et Veritas* — which I translated to mean "Truth Is a Luxury." The campus sprawled over almost a third of Bloomington. On the north side it petered out into the low-rent housing and trailer parks where many of the married students lived, under the shadow of the football and basketball stadiums. To the south it blended into the limestone mansions and manicured landscaping of the town gentry and the rich professors. Further east it embraced a large shopping center and on the west side it came up squarely against the downtown area, where Kirkwood ended and the wooded central campus began.

You could read the evolution of the university in its architecture; like the layers of an onion they revealed the styles of the times for each successive building boom. From the plain-style, almost sterile modern outer ring to jarring Bauhaus to the fraternity and sorority houses, each modeled after English country homes (Georgian and Greek Renaissance), to the quaint inner campus, where all the old teaching halls were built in the same neo-Oxford University style, then finally to the heart of the campus, the central core that was the jewel of the university, built in the 1880s and framed by a small, lovely forest. 1920s streetlamps lit rustic brick pathways weaving among the ancient classrooms. Gargoyles were tucked up under the eaves and there was ivy everywhere, some with vines as thick as small trees. A small, round observatory lay half-hidden among the elms. At the center stretched the vast Student Union building — a huge, sprawling, schizophrenic pastiche of styles. From the Renaissance hotel at the east end, thru Tudoresque and Elizabethan sections housing bookstores, study halls, restaurants, and meeting rooms, to the Middle Ages square tower in the west, it was a crazy-quilt recapitulation of the confused blend of architectural forms. The monolithic tower came complete with tiny windows and a crenelated roof for that homey, medieval effect. A broad, grand limestone staircase bridged the elfin Jordan River, which made a nice little moat.

Further back you could not go without erecting a Parthenon.



March 14, 1969 — Despite promises of what was called his "secret plan to end the war," Nixon says "there is no prospect for a reduction of American forces in the foreseeable future" in Vietnam.
March 17, 1969 — Senator George McGovern (D-SD) denounced the policy of "military

attrition and moral disaster," and called for a sharp reduction in troops and an end to the war.

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And our friends are all on board
Many more of them live next door
—The Beatles

Ian, Anton, Zeke and a few others were part of a close-knit group of friends who had been inmates in a quad called Willkie Co-op a few years before. Being a little older than the rest, Ian had been the first to get out and find a place of his own — 140 W. Monroe, the back apartment of an old, tumbledown house on the west side of town.

Monroe was no more than a paved alley and 140 not much more than a lean-to tacked onto the rear of the house as an afterthought. There were just two rooms — a small kitchen that measured about eight feet by ten and a combination bedroom/livingroom perhaps twelve by twelve. The bathroom was down the hall, shared with one of the tenants in front. Because there was so little traffic on Monroe it was quiet and very private. The rent was only $37 a month and that suited Ian right down to the ground — he was Scots to the core, measuring goods on a cheapness/utility curve, and any grungy little hovel that charged only $37 a month was a palace.

Ian was an implacably good-natured, square-jawed Hoosier, the only native in the group. He had a smile that could charm a pit bull but he was one of the most gawd-help-us, immovably obdurate people I had ever met. One of my earliest impressions of him was on a winter day when it had been quite cold for more than a week. The gas stove, a Warm Morning space heater, was, as always, set on "low." I sat on it with my coat on. In a few minutes Ian came dripping out of the shower, padding down the frigid hallway wearing nothing but a towel; he leaned up against the wall by the breezy, frosted-over window, the picture of ease and indifference, chatting away unhurriedly as he dripped onto the floor. This insouciance was deliberate — Ian demonstrating to the world how opulently he lived. He stood there, laughing and talking until he was completely dry, merely to make it clear to one and all how comfortable he was. And I know for a fact that he would do this *even when no one was there,* just to drive the point home. That was Ian in a nutshell.

He could sometimes be as contrary as a vegetarian at a country barbecue. For instance, it was customary on campus for the students to stop wearing sandals on the day that the football season began. A minor yet reasonable little tradition. However, this all seemed rather arbitrary to Ian, so he made a point of wearing *his* sandals until the football season *ended.*

Now, Ian played the sousaphone in the "Marching 100" band and since he wouldn't dream of varying his routine, this meant that the year IU went to the Rose

Bowl (on a fluke) he had to wear his sandals straight thru the fall, past December and on into January. Furthermore, he would invariably show up for practice, even in the snow, not only in sandals but in shorts, sunglasses and a summer shirt — because that's what *goes* with sandals. They made him wear a uniform for the dress rehearsal and he complained about the heat.

He also had a fondness for Jack Daniels. One night we showed up rather late and Ian offhandedly pulled out a quart of this stuff. Now, Anton and Zeke were not really drinkers but it seems that the Code of the College demanded that you pretend to be an old hand at sipping bourbon. Well, with Ian leading the way it soon became more like swilling than sipping and before long I was in over my head, doggedly trying to keep up with the others. I would have preferred to switch to grass and asked Zeke to roll up a J, but he said it was a mistake to mix the two — and a waste of grass since the booze just takes over anyway. So we tugged away manfully on the Jack Daniels, getting soggier by the minute.

We were fairly well along when Tammy's dog, Sebastian, wandered in from nowhere. This strange little collie was none too bright and more than a little spooky. He would sit for hours just staring at you, until suddenly he seemed to have mesmerized himself and, with a plop, simply drop his head on the floor, sound asleep. They say that dogs take on the personality of their owners and that may have been why Ian told us this little story about Sebastian — he seemed to have something in mind.

"One day," said Ian, as we passed the bottle around, "Sebastian goes up to these guys playing tennis, over at IU. And he takes a liking to this one fellow and even starts retrieving tennis balls and bringing them back to him. They were all having a great time and Sebastian was all over the place, really getting into it.

"Well, after a while they get ready to go and Sebastian was jumping up and down and he follows this guy as he walked home. I later met him, name was, uhh, Bill, I think, and he said that he thought maybe Sebastian had been abandoned or something. He was even beginning to think about adopting him, Sebastian was so friendly and obliging and all. Anyway, they walked for about nine or ten blocks, Sebastian wagging his tail and following right in his footsteps all the way. And when they get in front of his house, right in *front* of his house, even before Bill could turn in to his walk, Sebastian hauls off and bites him on the leg. Hard." (We all gazed down at Sebastian, who merely lifted one ear.) "So Bill just stares at the dog — he's utterly amazed — and there's this blood running down his leg. Sebastian just stands there, grinning at him. Finally Sebastian calmly reaches down and bites him *again,* just to make sure he understood him right. Then he waltzes off back home like nothing happened." Ian paused to look at Sebastian. "It's a funny thing," he said, "ever since then, I sort of *like* Sebastian — but I can't *stand* Tammy anymore."

We all had another round and Anton started to say something, but couldn't, and then Zeke started to say something, but couldn't — and I didn't have anything to say to

begin with so we just kept passing the (second) bottle around. I was getting into the Jack Daniels pretty heavily by then but, somewhere around 4:00 a.m., I finally felt I'd done all I could to stave off whatever it is you're supposed to stave off with booze, so I staggered off toward home. Zeke and Anton had the sense to crash right there but, like a dimwit, I just had to make the journey back to the apt. I crashed, fully clothed, but got up again within five minutes and spent a half-hour calling to the little elf who lives at the bottom of the toilet bowl, Ralph O'Rourke.

The next day we avoided one another, each suffering mightily but pretending not to, just trying to make it to another sunrise. I suppose I should have learned something from that, but I didn't.

March 28, 1969 — Dwight D. Eisenhower (supreme Allied commander in World War II and 34th president) dies at age 78.

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Hey! You've got to hide
Your love away
—The Beatles

Coming home from Murphy's one night, I heard some to-do going on in Zeke's room and stopped by to see what was what. Both Ian and Anton were there, along with another of the group from Willkie — a tall, extremely thin fellow with an enigmatic smile named George. His deep, green eyes sat in hollows; he was gaunt and ethereal. George was an odd mixture of complete calm and searing intensity — that smile seemed to reflect a perfect inner peace, but also a hint of the sardonic, as if he were cooking up mischief of a high order. If there really is such a thing as reincarnation, I think George must be the oldest person I'd ever met.

They were just rolling up a J when I came in and they lit the pungent stick and passed it around. Stoned, most people get the "munchies," and they were well equipped with chocolate pudding and bananas, but my reaction to grass was invariably the opposite. Even if I was screamingly hungry to start with and someone laid out a feast, I couldn't even look at food when stoned. And while most people got drowsy after a bit, I stayed wound up until I was completely down. I never felt "spacey," either, when smoking grass but my mind would soar from one topic to another — to me it was all an intense investigation and I would talk about anything at all. Ian, on the other hand, grew mellow and relaxed and even more cheerful, while Anton became excited and enthusiastic, very focused and intense. Zeke slowed down to a dreamy thoughtfulness that bordered on catatonia and his wit became even more wry (if that were possible). But George didn't seem to change at all.

I mentioned, halfway thru the J, that I had never been quite satisfied with the

word "high" to describe a stone and Anton said he liked the word "stoned" even less. Both were associated with booze and the grass experience is absolutely nothing like that. Zeke said the best word he had ever heard for it was "in," as in "getting into it," which did seem a lot better. Grass got you "into" things, whether it was music or food or talking — whatever.

There was a soft knock on the door (even a soft knock can be startling when you're high) and Zeke went to open it. In came a fellow they called Calvin. He was not as tall as George but every bit as thin, with a scraggly beard and short hair. There was something slightly satyr-like about him — something earthy and direct — tho his features were refined to the point of being delicate. After awhile I caught on that Calvin and George were lovers.

As always, to be gay meant to be labeled as the foreign "other." Identifying gays or hippies or Commies was a way of reunifying the monolithic "us," forming a broad front against this "other" and strengthening the precarious "majority." Calvin had grown up among this Hoosier elite — he knew grit prejudice firsthand. He was, therefore, carefully undemonstrative but their quiet familiarity made it obvious that they were a pair. And, too, very soon it was obvious that "gay" vs. "straight" had little to do with sexuality at all. George loved Calvin; Calvin loved George; and love is far too strange and unaccountable to be dismissed in anyone.

Calvin joined the discussion on getting stoned. He was shy and hesitant but he loved to talk about words and their meanings. He professed to be puzzled even about the most elementary things, probing always for roots and shadings.

"But why do we call it stoned, or high, or anything?" he said. "Why does it need a *label* at all?"

"True," said Zeke, "but anything so mind-expanding ought to give you a clue as how to tell somebody about it."

"Who knows what we mean, anyway," said Calvin, "it's different for everybody. How do you communicate that? There isn't any way."

"Sure there is," I said, "just pass me that J and I'll think about it."

And I have been, ever since.

April 3, 1969 — U.S. combat deaths exceed those in Korea; 33,641.
April 4, 1969 — First implant of an artificial heart by Dr. Denton Cooley into recipient Haskell Karp.

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"*Who* . . . are *you*?" said the Caterpillar
—Lewis Carroll

Each time I saw Kim with Anton and I wanted her so much more that it actually frightened me. Then, late one winter night, she came by my place — alone. I suppose she only wanted to talk but I was so flabbergasted that within five minutes I hauled her over to Zeke's room. The three of us went out for doughnuts and talked for most of the night, about anything and everything. She came by more often after that, when she knew Anton wouldn't be around, but we always seemed to wind up in Zeke's room. It was much larger and served as a sort of communal center. Erica would often be there, too.

Zeke was reading *Alice in Wonderland* and when we got stoned he couldn't resist pulling it out and quoting passages from it. These became longer and longer and soon it became a thing for the four of us to get together in his room and read aloud to one another. Zeke and I did most of the reading while Erica and Kim lounged, but they got into doing the special voices — the Caterpillar, the Dormouse, or the Duchess (Kim did that one particularly well) and when we finished *Alice,* we went on with *Through the Looking Glass, Jabberwocky, The Hunting of the Snark,* and more.

Those nights spent by a dim lamp and some candles, sprawling on the floor, became magic. Lewis Carroll was a natural when we were stoned, of course, for the references to the giant mushroom (one side makes you larger and one side makes you small) and the Mad Tea Party and the Walrus and the Carpenter began to take on a whole new meaning. We got far more out of the puns and sly asides than when we were kids and we were much more aware of the slightly sinister air, which was left out of the super-sanitized, cutified Disney versions. Was it possible, just possible, that that shy math professor (with an "innocent" fondness for photographing little girls in the nude) had been, like De Quincy and (reportedly) old Walt himself, an opium smoker? The Caterpillar, in particular, was the perfect portrait, hookah and all, of an old-time hophead. To say nothing of the myriad imagery of body-and-time distortion.

Well, maybe it was just because we were stoned.

We couldn't stop after we'd gone thru Carroll, so we moved on to Dickens and *The Pickwick Papers.* We had to skip some long passages, since he tended to ramble on a lot, and when we finished I discovered a novelette called *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices.* It was perfect. For some reason, Dickens hadn't bothered with the outrageous padding of his other works and it moved along as quickly as a Sherlock Holmes tale. The Idle Apprentices, as Erica and Kim were fond of pointing out, were almost twins of Zeke and me — one full of projects and new ideas, the other languid and easygoing, but always game. There were race track stories and ghost stories — even a mystery or two. We had a ball.

These sessions often lasted until two or three in the morning and were both exhausting and exhilarating. We felt we had discovered something entirely new, which (post-TV) perhaps it was. But I was still perplexed that Kim would come over to spend time with me at all — I was several years younger than she and. . . .

By this time Kim was taking courses in philosophy at *both* IU and Purdue, commuting a hundred miles each way and wearing out both sets of professors. She was pretty high-powered and tho she didn't seem in the slightest pretentious about it, she could use flights and involutions of language that would have intimidated Wittgenstein. But the thought of actually approaching a married woman with . . . with thoughts of, well, ( ) scared me to death. I was glad to find an escape in our readings — but I got the feeling that things were not entirely as they seemed.

May 14, 1969 — Abe Fortas resigns Supreme Court seat under criticism for alleged improprieties.
May 15, 1969 — National Guardsmen battle 2,000 demonstrators in Berkeley over a university-owned vacant lot, appropriated as a "People's Park." 70 injured, 20 arrested.

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A-wop bop a-loo-bop
A-wop bam-boom!
—Little Richard

Gradually winter gave way to spring and Zeke and I were tired of the perpetual battle to obtain decent smoke. At last we tried growing our own, as an experiment. After all, it *came* with seeds — what could be more natural?

We began by germinating some seeds between wet paper towels and putting them in small pots on the windowsill. When they came up we thought we'd made some mistake, for they had two little rounded leaves — not a bit like the distinctive serrated leaves of marijuana. It certainly didn't *look* like grass and we began to doubt whether we'd really gotten marijuana seeds in our marijuana after all. But soon they sprouted two perfect little leaflets of precisely the right kind and then took off . . . too fast, as it turned out.

They shot up seven or eight inches, first with one leaf on each side, then three, then five. But the stalks were extremely spindly and after a couple of weeks they simply flopped over and died. I caught Zeke poking at them with a stick one day.

"Trying to revive them," he said.

"Is it working?" I asked.

"Not so far," he said. We had no idea what was wrong.

They were in Zeke's window, since his room faced south, and they seemed to get plenty of sun. What about the soil? We had gotten the best potting soil we could find but. . . . We called in Calvin to consult, since he had a tremendous reputation for a green thumb — George said he could grow a pine tree from a toothpick. He came over and gazed at the remains and said we'd used too strong a soil and watered them too

much. Simple enough. He showed us what to do and since it was still only March, we tried again. The little truckers came up strong and sturdy, growing much more slowly but on very hardy stalks. By April they'd reached almost a foot and were beginning to show signs of bushing out nicely and it was all we could do to keep from "sampling" them (my word; Zeke called it "rape"). About then is when Ma Balls struck.

A person is never more than one tiny step from a bout of raving paranoia when smoking grass. And one sure way to strike terror into the heart of any late-night toker is to wait until just that time of night when he's settled in, comfortably ensconced, with his dope pipe and a friend and then come a-banging on the door like the Cop from Hell. Preferably with a nightstick.

Zeke had just come back from work and we were in his room, alone, sucking down a pipeful when there came that awful pounding, that wham-bam-crashing, on the door. Understandably, we froze. Zeke nearly swallowed the pipe. Half a second later we heard Ma Balls bellowing "Open up this door . . . *now*!" and a split-second after that we realized it wasn't our door she was pounding on. Having forgotten to breathe, we simultaneously exhaled a cloud of blue smoke, half-dying from fright and relief. Ma Balls! What the hell?

Zeke quietly put out the pipe as I scrambled to open the windows, fanning crazily at the smoke with a magazine, and we heard Ma, down the hall, bursting thru a closed and locked door. Wood splintered. Metal crashed. She was not in a playful mood. She roared at the next-door tenants: "Don't you *Ma* me! What the hell do you think this is? You think I don't know what's going on in here? What's this? *What is this, Mister*? Well, *I* know what it is! It's *heroin, that's* what it is! Now you *get* (sound of a boot connecting) your ass (*Whomp!* "*Ow*!") out of here and don't you (*Kaboom!*) ever show your (*Whap! Bam!*) face around here again!" There followed numerous clattering noises as of someone making their way downstairs in an unusual haste, with all their belongings following.

There was a moment or two of silence and (I am not proud) in that silence we cowered. Seconds later the knock (somewhat softer now) came at our door and we fairly mewled as we opened it. Ma Balls stood there with a heaving bosom, the picture of a buxom Aunt Polly in high dudgeon. "Now, you boys want to listen to me," she began, ". . . I know you two are good boys but you smoke that-there merry-wanna . . ." (feigned astonishment from Zeke and me — wasted, considering the silken haze wafting into the hall) ". . . now I want you to understand something. I don't care about *that* shit, pardon my French, but you *will* not use anything harder in *this* house. Understood?" We began to choke out something conciliatory and reassuring but she only bellowed "Fine!", spun on her heel and left.

No, Ma, we won't.

May 16-17, 1969 — Russian Venera 5 & 6 descend to the surface of Venus, recording an

extremely hot, dense atmosphere.

PART II
Lampkins Ridge

You can't always get what you want
But if you try sometimes, you get what you need
—The Rolling Stones

The perpetual hassle of finding decent grass to smoke only got worse and we figured it was high time we got into the act as more than just hobbyists. As nice as it might be to see small, healthy dope plants growing on a windowsill, by late May it was obvious we needed to find a place to plant them. Having no car, the best we could do was to hunt around town, walking out as far as the outskirts in search of a suitable spot. This got us nowhere and we finally settled for digging holes and putting them in around the house at 425. We hoped they would be inconspicuous, but we knew we had just about no chance of getting them to maturity.

Calvin advised us to "top" them heavily — nip off the top buds as soon as they came out — in order to keep them as short and bushy as possible. That would help, of course, but there was no disguising those distinctive leaves. Few people actually knew what marijuana looked like, but the few who did were definitely not to be trusted.

Just for the hell of it, we decided to try the shotgun approach and gathered up as many seeds as we could and spread them hither and yon, in the hopes that one or two might survive to a pickable age. We put them everywhere — in planter boxes in front of doctors' offices, on the small islets in the middle of the Jordan River, around campus buildings and dorms, even in alleys and vacant lots. About halfway thru this, sneaking around in the middle of the night like the Thief of Baghdad, I realized that we'd accumulated, from our own store and friends, quite a store of seeds; we sat down to catalog them all. Of the primo varieties we had seeds from Jamaican, Thai, Afghani, and four kinds of Mexican — Panama Red, Sinaloan, Oaxacan and Michoacan. Not all of this was certifiable by the Department of Agriculture, of course, for whenever we bought grass the dealer would give it some fancy name just to bump up the price. Nonetheless, we were getting fairly adept at identifying the better grades and felt pretty confident about what we had. (Zeke was particularly good at judging grass and had acquired something of a reputation — people would bring the stuff over to get his expert opinion.)

Each variety had its own particular look, taste, smell and, above all, stone. (All smokeable dope is the female flower of marijuana. The male is almost useless and its leaves are called *bhang* — smokeable but very inferior stuff.) Jamaican had little purple veins running along the outside of the flowers. Thai was a bright, almost fluorescent

green and came tied up to a stem, hence "Thai-stick." Afghani was a rich, dark green with a powerfully earthy aroma — very unlike the spicy Thai or the almost hay-like Jamaican.

It was a little harder to distinguish the Mexican types but the stone usually gave it away. "Red" was extremely potent but also "speedy" and, to my mind, harsh. Michoacan was the exact opposite, a "downer" — very pleasant but rather heavy and opaque. It appealed the least to Zeke, who needed more of a kick to counteract his natural lethargy, but I found it pensive and smooth. Oaxacan and Sinaloan gave a beautiful stone — relaxed and mellow, yet spacious and vibrant. (Zeke claimed he could tell the difference between them by what he called the more "ethereal" quality of Sinaloan. From later experience, he proved he really could tell them apart.)

Realizing we were squandering a potentially priceless resource, we stopped spreading seeds around indiscriminately, but not without sowing the last of the "garbage" seeds in the university president's garden, in case the tomatoes got lonesome. Still, we were no closer to our goal of a bona fide dope patch and we were going to need a car to get us out into the countryside. Unfortunately, the only person we knew who had one was Anton — and Anton got paranoid at the very mention of growing dope.

Sometimes it was hard to imagine why Anton got stoned at all. The slightest disturbance would send him running with the dope-bag toward the nearest toilet. If an ambulance went by six blocks away, we had to grab the bag and issue dire threats to keep him from going off the deep end. If the damn *phone* rang, he'd jump six feet in the air and yell, "My god, what's *that*!" and for the longest time he wouldn't even keep dope in the house for fear of a surprise raid — we had to bring our own if we wanted to get high. (Come to think of it, maybe paranoia wasn't the whole story after all.)

Using his car was out of the question — he envisioned DEA officers following these two known drug smugglers and linking the license plates to him. However, there *was* Kim. We wheedled and whined and whenever Anton wasn't around she would loan it to us, as long as we were careful to put back in exactly the amount of gas we'd used. (Anton was also very big on gas mileage and watched over the odometer like a Bedouin keeping track of his lambs.) Finally we began to make a serious effort at becoming what we had dreamed of all those cold winter nights: Gentleman Dope Growers. Visions of sugar-plums danced in our heads.

The car was an ancient Fairlane and we put 500 miles on it in the first week, but it was astonishing how much of Indiana was given over to a desolation of corn fields, cow pastures and barnyards. What hadn't been appropriated by jealous farmers was clotted with mile after mile of dense, useless forest. Was the entire state a wasteland, we wondered? Of course, we hadn't the faintest idea what we were looking for — there were no signs anywhere saying "Gentleman Dope Grower's, Experimental Station No. 1."

After a couple of weeks Kim put her foot down and said, "Enough." Anton was

beginning to get suspicious and we were getting nowhere. We puttered as best we could with the plants at 425, but I was taking it pretty hard — Zeke, as always, hid his feelings behind a mask of genuine unconcern.

Mooning around like a lost calf, I began to focus my attention on Kim. That their marriage had been in trouble for some time was evident to everyone but me, tho I finally caught on when Erica mentioned one day that their marriage was in trouble. My ears perked up considerably (at least, I think it was my ears). I began to give her the eye more than just furtively, but so far there was little response. Then, on a fine Saturday in May, with classes over, Kim, Anton, Zeke, Erica, George, Calvin, and I all squeezed into the Fairlane and drove out for a picnic south of town. It was on the edge of one of those blasted state forests; we drove along a dirt path called Lampkins Ridge Road to a spot in a depressingly leafy glade. Anton brought along a couple of bottles of wine, which he opened with a flourish (he did everything with a flourish) and Erica had a big pot of potato salad. Calvin and George contributed an enormous wheel of cheese, Zeke brought some hot dogs and beans, and I brought my fast-becoming-overworked libido.

Zeke said that Erica could find four-leaf clovers at will, and within a few minutes she had three. (Erica had several other mysterious talents, among them perfect pitch and the ability to read a sentence rapidly, then recite the letters backwards; she was also forever giving up smoking and would bum them off us instead, saying "Roll me up a cow-turd, will ya?" Zeke professed to find this charming.)

We made a fire and cooked the hot dogs and beans and the afternoon went by in a dreamy haze. The others were carrying on in high spirits but my heart was still bitter over the dope business and confused by the urgings of deeply repressed desire. They may have noticed this when I mentioned that you could "cut the harmony with a knife." Kim peered at me with that from-underneath look, but she merely asked Zeke and me to go for a walk, up a nearby hill where she thought we might find some berries. We left the others to their orgy of amity.

From a short distance it looked like a relatively small hill but up close it suddenly loomed high above us. There was a track, of sorts, leading up the south side where the rains had washed deep gullies in the hard clay. Clearly, no one had been this way in a long time. It took us a while to climb the steep grade and by the time we reached the trees near the top, we were all panting. Sure enough, there were scraggly bushes of raspberries and blackberries growing in abundance beside the path and we began to gather them, testing them for ripeness as we worked our way up the last of the slope. Near the crest we could see daylight and then, all at once, we came upon a clearing that covered the entire top of the hill.

We walked a little way into the bright sunshine but it was not an inviting place. At one time this must have been a farmer's field but overcropping had killed it. The topsoil was all used up, leaving nothing but a brown-yellow hardpan. The only things that could grow there were rank weeds and huge clumps of briars; Kim immediately

dubbed it "the malignant meadow." I mused to myself that it shouldn't be called "malignant," since weeds needed a place to live too, and after all, what really was a "weed" . . . ?

I stopped in my tracks. Something in my brain clicked and I looked over at Zeke — Zeke was looking at me. We gazed for a moment at the meadow, then positively beamed at one another. With an air of satisfaction, Zeke took out his fixings and silently rolled up a Three Caftles. I rolled up a Three Caftles. We stood there, beaming, two perfectly happy idiots. Kim stared back and forth between us — probably having some doubts about the wisdom of eating those berries.

We beamed at her. The Mother Lode.

May 21, 1969 — Sirhan Sirhan sentenced to death for the murder of Robert F. Kennedy. Warren Burger named to succeed Earl Warren as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

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"***WORK*?!"**

—Maynard G. Krebs

On the drive back to town we had a good look at the area. The hill ran north-south and was actually a long ridge — probably the Lampkins Ridge the road was named after. There seemed to be access only on the south side and no farmhouses nearby. We would need a car to get out there, but otherwise the location was perfect. We began to plot strategy as soon as we got back to 425. It was late May but still early enough to plant, as long as we could find some transportation.

One possible solution was Ian. He had a car but it was out of commission 99% of the time. It was an old '56 Porsche, a real classic, and Ian doted on it, but no sooner would he get it back from the shop than something else would go wrong — so it would sit for weeks yet again until he got the money together to fix it. (Eventually the chief mechanic asked him to come and get it, saying he would fain never lay eyes on it more. At least, that's what Ian said he said.) We were getting desperate when providence sent us Davy.

Davy was a member of the group from the dorm who had been absent for some months. He was tall, blond, and athletic looking and had left town soon after graduating but returned (as so many people did) because he missed Bloomington and didn't know what he wanted to do next. Zeke greeted him like a long-lost brother. Davy was an army brat and had a slight German accent from his high school days near Hamburg. Like Zeke, he had a breezy, don't-take-anything-too-seriously attitude. He loved to take chances and, like Ian, he had that wry smile that made it seem as if he was in on some joke you weren't quite getting. He hadn't been in the room five minutes

when he asked Zeke where the dope was.

But above all, he had a car. More precisely, he had a VW minibus he'd inherited from an eccentric grandfather. It was fully customized — wood paneling, bench seats that folded out into a bed, a sink, an icebox — everything. Davy spoke of it in that hushed tone that was reserved for highly prized internal combustion machines, but when we told him about Lampkins Ridge he jumped at the chance to join in and gladly offered the use of it. Things were definitely looking up.

We got the seeds soaking and took a trip out to the Ridge the next day to reconnoiter. Due to the deep ruts, going all the way up the southern path with the VW was out of the question; we parked it on the slope and took the long walk up. All the way we watched carefully for signs of people nosing around but found nothing. Once on top we walked over the entire field, amazed at how isolated it was, looking for good spots to plant. It was an enormous place — four hundred yards long and a hundred wide. There were dozens of spots to put in dope patches and Zeke pointed out several areas near clumps of briars that looked particularly good. These thorny clumps were very tall, with big, sweeping, tangled arcs that would provide good camouflage — but the soil, everywhere, was dismal. It was a hard clay that, in places, even the weeds couldn't grow in. It certainly wouldn't do us much good.

We decided we were going to have to bring in something to build it up and hunted for an easier way to climb the ridge. Davy found another road on the north side, but it was so steep and overgrown not even a jeep could have gotten thru. The east and west sides were like the Matterhorn. There was nothing for it but to somehow haul the stuff up in bags. Being hard-pressed for time we went back to town and found a garden shop, bought a large bale of peat moss and ten bags of compost, and the next day began the assault.

We went out at dawn, to minimize the chances of being seen and to take advantage of the coolness. Davy parked the VW and we each grabbed two fifty-pound bags of compost and started up the hill. Within twenty yards we were panting and grunting, shifting the bags around on our shoulders to get a better grip. Once inside the trees the track petered out into a narrow trail and the thorns tore at the bags, dumping compost down our necks. Zeke was in the lead and at one point he walked smack into an enormous spider web, sending the bristly occupant into a frenzy. He dropped the bags and yelled, swatting at his clothes while Davy, who was following him, calmly remarked that he should be careful he didn't "scare the big fella."

We stopped to rest twice before reaching the top, with still a long trek to get to the spot we had settled on for the first patch. We sat heaving on the bags, more than a little shocked at what a kidney-buster this was turning out to be — and then realized we still had four more bags of compost, a bale of peat moss, and the shovels to bring up. It took two more trips and we were so exhausted by then it was an hour or more before we could begin shoveling. That's when we discovered the true nature of hardpan clay.

We laid out an irregular shape, ten or twelve feet long and about three feet wide, and started in. Shovels weren't as useful as dynamite would have been and it took two hours just to get down six inches. Calvin had said we should mix the compost and peat moss half-and-half with the clay, so we took another hour to loosen six more inches and began working in the stuff we'd brought. We hoped to have enough for several patches but the bags that had seemed so imposing when piled up among the weeds now looked pathetically inadequate. We had enough only for this one patch and would have to haul up another load, just as big, to get anything decent going. We were appalled. Being Gentleman Dope Growers was turning out to resemble a stint in the Gulag.

The seeds were beginning to sprout, so the next day we tried to get an early start on Patch #2, but Davy pled exhaustion. Zeke and I were determined, however, so Davy loaned us the VW. This time we bought eight bags of compost and a bale of peat moss and, as an afterthought, rented a wheelbarrow. By then it was noon but we couldn't wait — to hell with discretion. We drove out and loaded half of the supplies onto the wheelbarrow and tried pushing it up the Ridge. Apparently, those things are designed only for the gentle, even slope of croquet lawns and it was nearly impossible to push one in a straight line up a path carved out by Sherpas. And it was far *too* easy to push back down again. It seemed to me that whoever had come up with the idea of gravity had not thought this out clearly.

Eventually we got the job done and spread the seeds out, carefully patting them into the soil and calling out "Go!" It was a hot day and the bugs whirred around us in amused detachment as we sweated and strained to pull out clumps of dry grass and spread them as cover over "Matilda" and "Gertrude." We stood for awhile admiring our two beautiful patches — then we remembered water. A trip down to the creek near the road and a couple more grueling trips up the Ridge and we had them watered, tucked in, and blessed. We looked like escapees from Devil's Island but we sat in the twilight, smug and self-satisfied, grinning at one another as we rolled up Three Caftles: Gentleman Dope Growers at last.

It was all we could do to keep from visiting them every other day but we decided on a schedule of going up to the Ridge no more than once every two weeks. The farmers among you may now smile at the notion of a "schedule."

May 22, 1969 — Apollo 10 flies lunar lander "Snoopy" to within 9 miles of the moon's surface.

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Smoke, smoke, smoke that cigarette . . .

—Commander Cody

Anton had rapidly become a fan of Three Caftles and one day, while the three of

us lay back having a smoke, he said, "You know, we don't really have any perspective on this." We should have known better but we asked him what he was talking about and he said, "Well, we've had Tops and Bugler and Friends but actually they weren't that bad. Now, finding Three Caftles we latched onto it at once and, of course, it's all we've smoked ever since." (He peered at his lit cigarette, mulling it over.) "But we take it for granted — we have no perspective, no . . . *contrast* by which to judge its merits. We need" (he gazed at the ceiling to emphasize his keen insight into the matter) ". . .we need to take the long view — we need to find the *worst* tobac around . . . the better to appreciate what we have," and he idly flicked an ash somewhat near an ashtray. At first this seemed like a terrible idea but we couldn't resist a challenge and soon we were scrounging around the dime stores and newsstands. It became a contest to see who could find the very worst tobacco on the market and whenever we gathered at 425 we were obliged to sample the latest misery, passing judgment on it like professional wine snobs.

I combed the town but found nothing worse than a flaccid pouch of ages-old, crumbly Bull Durham. It was pretty bad but no prize winner. I also found some licorice snuff, but that didn't really qualify under the rules. Anton found something called Alhambra and it had definite possibilities — as potent as a stepped-on, rain-soaked butt of Gauloise (itself reputed to be made of butts collected from the gutters of Paris) and for a time it held the post of prime contender. It came with a strange rolling machine that got us sidetracked for a time on those contraptions.

Rolling is a bit of an art and we were not yet the craftsmen we should have been, so we bought several types of these things to test them out. One was a large, flat metal box with a rubber belt inside — you put a paper and some tobac in the middle, closed it slightly, licked the paper, then closed it all the way. *Voilà,* a monstrosity popped out that looked perfect — and fell apart as soon as you lit it. Another model was a small thing with two rollers and a plastic belt. It was harder to use but it worked a little better. However, there was no substitute for the real thing and in time we became adept enough at hand-rolling to disdain artificial apparati.

Zeke took the honors in the worst-smoke category when he showed up one day with an oblong gray packet of something called Five Brothers. He had paid 18¢ for it and even the look of the label told us we were onto something special. We broke it open and out came some shredded matter, as black as a crow and as coarse as horsehair. It had sticks in it the size of toothpicks and little round whorls of something woody. Zeke rolled up a lumpy cigarette and carefully took a small drag. He went green and coughed convulsively. We each tried a hit and were sent reeling and gasping for air — that stuff literally made your lungs hurt and we couldn't stop coughing after one small drag. It was powdered nuclear waste, foul enough to choke a diesel engine, the ultimate in raunch, and Zeke had won hands down.

Despite inducements we never found anyone who could take more than a small

drag of Five Bro's. In fact, we suffered a good deal of abuse for trying — some actually impugned our integrity for our enthusiastic efforts. Amateurs just don't seem to understand the scientific process.

June 2, 1969 — Student riots in Latin America force the end of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's tour. June 8, 1969 — Nixon announces the withdrawal of 25,000 troops from Vietnam (out of 550,000) and attacks critics of the war as the "new isolationists."

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Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me
—Australian folk song

The Student Union had one prime gathering place, a cafeteria with two large eating rooms and a long serving-line where you could get very cheap food. Their burgers were hard, flat, brown little things that were universally known as "gut-bombs." No matter what time of day you came in, they had been sitting around under heatlamps for a minimum of eight hours — I think they put them on a conveyor belt that trundled them down to the basement to hold them until they reached that perfect shade of stale. If you floated them in ketchup, however, they were more or less edible and we ate tons.

We met Davy there one day to plot strategy for the next visit to Lampkins Ridge but Anton had come along, too, and at first we were hesitant to go into it, since we knew how he felt about such things. But all at once he asked us if he could come along and help. When Zeke professed amazement that he would get within fifteen miles of a dope patch, Anton got all hurt and bewildered. What made us think he wouldn't want to take part? "Well, sometimes you get just a teensy bit paranoid about . . ." Zeke started, but Anton interrupted him. "Paranoid? *Me*? What are you talking about?" I pointed out that he had refused to let us use his car to look for a place and he protested that that was different — he had pictured us driving up onto people's private property and getting into all sorts of hassles. Now that we had a place, everything had changed and he wanted to help. What the hell. We gave him the benefit of the doubt and said OK — we needed all the help we could get.

The next time out we took his car. By now we had made it a rule always to go out at dawn — the Ridge was entirely shrouded in mist as we made our way across the field and it seemed like a good omen when at first we couldn't even find where we'd planted them. Far off to one side, Davy was yelling for us to come quick and we found him near a little depression. He was pointing at a huge mass of writhing snakes and Anton, in particular, was utterly grossed out. "What in hell do you think you're . . ." he began, but Davy stopped him. "Look at those things!" he said, "They're disgusting! God

I hate snakes!" They were big ones, too, and while I was rather interested in what they were doing (mating?) Anton and Zeke were already heading fast in the other direction. Now, Davy was truly afraid of snakes — he jumped every time one of them broke away from the heaving pile and headed his way — but he couldn't resist taking a long stick and poking at them, all the while exclaiming, "Look at 'em! Jees, they're repulsive!" (Poke, poke.) "God, what are they doing?" (Jump back.) "Man, I hate snakes!" He was almost as much fun to watch as the snakes but eventually I got bored and went off to look for the patches and when he lost his moral support, he gave up.

The plants were tough to spot but eventually we found Matilda and our hearts leaped into our mouths — peeking up in profusion from the dried grass camouflage were hundreds of tiny dope plants! And what truckers! Unlike the delicate little waifs that came up on our windowsill, these were positively gigantic! Almost all of them were four or five inches tall and their leaves and stalks were huge, fat, and a deep, beautiful green. We were astonished. Obviously, there were far too many for one patch but before we began to thin them we searched the field for Gertrude.

Gertrude was closer to the trees, on a bit of a slope, and either the drainage wasn't as good or the soil was less conducive to dope plants there. It was a smaller patch but, even so, they were at some mysterious disadvantage. Worse, something seemed to be eating them and we found several tiny little stalks with the tops missing. Davy got to hunting around and found some deer tracks and we wondered if deer ate dope plants. What could we do about that? This was a crisis and we raced back to town to consult with Calvin before doing anything else.

Calvin said that not only deer but probably rabbits and groundhogs would eat young seedlings. He said the best solution (aside from a fence — which seemed a tad gauche, given the circ's) would be to spread some bloodmeal around them, which would double as a fertilizer if we took care not to use too much. So the next morning we took up a bag of dried blood and sprinkled it around the patches; the deer had been back and there were more plants missing. We transplanted some of the seedlings from Matilda to Gertrude and watered them from the jugs we'd brought along and carefully tended each plant to see that it was free from bugs and weeds. Anton was doing all right but we couldn't help noticing that every bird that flew over caused him to jump up and glare.

We went up twice more in June and each visit was more exciting than the last. Once they got past the seedling stage they really took off and by late in the month they were waist-high. Despite thinnings, however, there were still far too many of them and we pulled up plant after plant, getting our first bonus — tender young dope leaves, suitable for smoking. Calvin came with us on the second trip up and showed us the best way to pinch back the tops, which gave us a another bonus. It wasn't much, but it was fine stuff.

Zeke had had the sense to keep each batch of seeds separate and we marked the

different sections where we'd planted them, hoping we could tell which was which. Even half-grown, every variety was distinctive. The Jamaican was low and bushy with short, broad leaves — quite a bit like Afghani, but Afghani had even fatter leaves and a deeper, darker green. The Thai grew tall and wispy, with narrow, brilliant, emerald-green leaves. Of the Mexican varieties, the Michoacan was far taller than any of the others, while the Oaxacan was similar to the Afghani and Jamaican, except not so short and with leaves that were long and wide, like Chinese fans. The other two Mexican types were rather like Michoacan but they weren't doing very well. The others weren't having much of a problem with the bugs but the Sinaloan and Panama Red (which really did seem a little red, especially around the stalk) were getting eaten up by them. The trunks were twisted and most of them just seemed woeful and unhealthy.

All in all, tho, they were off to a good start. We read everything we could find about grass (which wasn't much) and fussed over them like mama Republicans over a trust fund. There were a few scraggly semi-survivors around the house at 425 but this, definitely, was a crop in the making.

July 7, 1969 — A nervous three-year old monkey named Bonny is returned to earth after only nine days in orbit (of a scheduled 30); monkey dies the next day of a heart attack.

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And when you touch down you'll find that it's
Stranger than known

—The Byrds

I was fed up with joints. The long ribbons of smoke curling from the ends struck me as wasteful — joints were certainly more common, even more "correct," but a pipe could be corked between hits, saving grass, and passing around a pipe simply gave the whole process a sense of ceremony.

For a long time we'd made do with various contraptions — shoving tinfoil into the bowl of a regular pipe or fashioning hookahs from maple syrup bottles (cut a hole in the handle for drawing the smoke, make a foil bowl and put it on top of an empty pen barrel and stick that into the cap. Fill the bottle halfway with water (oddly enough, hot water seems to work better than cold) and you have a hookah — sort of.) We even sank so low as to make pipes from rubber hoses and toilet paper tubes but these could not compare with a genuine dope pipe.

Browsing in a head shop one day, musing over the scales, "bong" pipes and hookahs, I saw a hash pipe that went straight to my heart. This was a Work of Art, a Thing of Beauty. It had four gleaming brass bowls of different shapes and sizes, two elbow joints, some connecting rings and a wooden handle around a brass stem. The

possibilities were intriguing, to say the least, and I just had to have it. I went home and scraped together every cent I had and rushed back to buy it.

To break it in we needed something truly eminent and Zeke (doing his best to atone for the Infamous Bad Stuff) managed to come up with some devastating hashish. In fact, it turned out to be hash soaked in opium. Katie bar the door.

This jewel was as black as a lump of coal, with a spicy aroma as exotic as the teak forests and cinnamon groves of Ceylon. Zeke carefully broke off a piece, dropped it into the bowl and solemnly applied the match. The taste was sharp and sublime and I choked back a cough. We had a couple of hits each and didn't notice anything at first — just that things looked a bit . . . Peculiar. Then we got to playing with the pipe.

We unscrewed the first configuration and screwed together a whole new arrangement. Of course, the new one *had* to be broken in with a toke — then we unscrewed that one, designed a new pipe, toasted *it* with a toke — then another, and another and so forth. We just loved that thing. Each combination simply had to be blessed with a toke from the hash and the variations seemed endless: small bowl on a long stem, big bowl on a short stem, two large bowls connected to make one long Calumet and all *kinds* of ways to put in the elbow joints. It went on for hours. We began to give each new pipe a name — the "Ambassador," the "Baroque," the "Iroquois," and the "Bistro." We were two perfectly happy idiots.

What we didn't realize, of course, was that that thing only made about ten different combinations, but after every few "new" variations, we'd simply forget what we'd done fifteen minutes before and start all over again. We were delighted.

It was strange — when I was a kid I got totally wrapped up in putting together model airplanes and plastic ships, and I wasn't really the type. Eventually I realized that it was because I had my head stuck for hours on end in that airplane glue, getting higher than a Georgia pine. My new pipe was a little like that.

Somewhere around midnight I looked up and announced, quite seriously, that I thought I was stoned. Zeke gazed around at the potato chip bags and Coke bottles, at the chocolate pudding boxes and banana peels; he harrumphed. He said he thought so, too.

We decided to take a walk. This was a fine idea, I suppose, but walking proved to be a little more difficult than I thought it would be. It was nothing like being drunk, of course, but my feet didn't seem to quite connect with the ground — I felt disembodied, strange, and the wind felt suddenly so *distinct*; an invisible presence pushing me steadily along. All the proportions seemed wrong and I couldn't get a fix on things, couldn't locate directions. Things just looked — Peculiar.

We walked over to Dunn Meadow and felt drawn to the Jordan River; only now the Jordan, instead of being this quaint little stream, really *was* a river — in fact, it was an enormous, vast, rushing torrent! I couldn't believe it, it was at *least* a mile wide! There were rapids, falls and whirlpools, treacherous as hell! There were rocks in there

the size of houses, dense fronds of seaweed hundreds of yards long and what I had always believed to be lawn was now a *forest* of gigantic bamboo! And, most amazing of all, *I* had become a giant . . . my feet were *miles* below — no wonder I had trouble walking! My hands were massive, incredibly strong — by some mysterious process, I had been revealed for what I truly was . . . a Titan! I looked at Zeke and I could see that something similar was happening to him — we were gods . . . *gods*!

We boldly waded into the swirling rapids and flicked aside boulders with our toes . . . grabbed water weeds and raised them over our heads slowly, like Vikings hoisting huge trees. We bent over to observe with lordly eye the creatures of our domain and reveled in our kingly majesty — stomping up and down that little stream like two Gullivers in Lilliput.

(Looking back on it I can't help but think that we didn't look quite normal but, fortunately, there didn't seem to be anyone else around — no one who was getting very close, anyway.)

We utterly lost ourselves in this miniature universe and must have gone several yards upstream when suddenly, for no reason at all, Zeke climbed up onto a boulder and sat down with his feet pulled up under him. He looked anxious, terrible — I was astonished. I walked over and asked what was wrong and in a soft voice he answered that he couldn't get it out of his head, he must be killing millions of tiny little creatures with every step he took. He had become a monster! My eyes shot down to the ground and I froze — *I* didn't want to become a monster. What to do?

Then I had it: "Zeke," I said, ". . . over there! Jump onto the sidewalk!" and I leaped across in one stride, to demonstrate. "There *can't* be any of 'em over here — c'mon!" Zeke slowly gathered himself up and then made a tremendous jump to the pavement. After a shaky minute or two, with solemn deliberation, we made our way back to 425 — blubbering every step of the way like the Walrus and the Carpenter.

Which was the end of the Notorious Opiated Hash, except for a bit we kept for a few Special People.

July 18, 1969 — Mary Jo Kopechne killed when a car driven by Sen. Edward Kennedy plunges off a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island, Martha's Vineyard. Accident not reported for ten hours.

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Voices of the angels, ring around the moonlight
Asking me, said, she's so free, how can you catch the sparrow?
—Crosby Stills & Nash

Kim, Zeke and I often trundled around together, usually winding up in the doughnut shop (or "dog-nut" shop as Kim called it) smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee

and talking. In time, I began to see Kim without Zeke and when she came to me with a newspaper one day, asking if I wanted to go with her to look at rooms, I knew that the thing with Anton was over.

They had met each other at a summer camp for kids, where they were both counselors, and when Kim went away to college (she was a couple of years older than Anton) they had visited each other often. Kim didn't meet many other men because she had been stuck in an all-woman college with high academic standards and an administration that she referred to as "the biddy system." Anton studied piano at a local college and then transferred to IU. They had missed one another, so it seemed only natural to get married.

Their temperaments, however, were vastly different. Anton was the paradigm of an artist — warm and gentle, yet often rigid and dogmatic; full of enthusiasm, insecurities and high ideals. He was awash in contradictions: sensitive and insensitive, open-minded and judgmental, conscientious and incredibly absentminded, free-spirited and uptight — these needed no resolution, since that was merely the way he was. Artists are allowed.

Kim, on the other hand, was matter-of-fact, excruciatingly practical and intensely intellectual. While studying at Connecticut College, she had discovered Epicureanism and it had made a strong impression on her. This philosophy was no mere pleasure-seeking hedonism — Epicureanism holds the highest pleasures to be those of the mind, and Kim would let nothing get in the way of her quest for utter freedom and a special kind of self-gratification. Her intense investigation of life made for an odd juxtaposition, a set of contradictions no less startling than Anton's: she was deeply subjective yet she attacked subjectivity with an objectivity that was amazing; powerfully self-controlled and yet spontaneous and free-floating; incredibly demanding and yet as elusive and unattached as a butterfly.

That they both had contradictions, however, did not mean that they could understand one another — Anton was almost totally inward-oriented, immersed in music, while Kim's eyes looked outward, assessing and comparing life's experiences and the people she met as counterpoint to her own sensations. They did have one thing in common, tho — both were indignantly impatient when they felt they were not the center of attention. Anton, of course, was a born performer, center stage at all times, while Kim hated being in a room with more than one person, for she felt it devolved into small talk. Neither of them were obnoxious about it, but two such intensely absorbed people, each with passions that the other could not understand, were not made to be married to one another. I had no idea how Anton was taking it, since he never gave the slightest inkling that anything was wrong, but it was over and I felt both sad and elated.

Kim and I scanned the ads and found some likely places and began to hunt them down. Soon we came upon an old white house on Third Street with a lovely

wraparound porch completely covered in honeysuckle, where Mrs. Dooley rented out rooms "to ladies only."

Mrs. Dooley was very old and she eyed me with obvious suspicion, warily glancing at my long hair, but soon she let it ride and cheerfully showed us around. The vacant room was the downstairs one, next to an old-fashioned "parlor." There was a bewildering profusion of plants everywhere we turned and Kim asked about them. We got the complete tour, then, as Mrs. D (Nellie, by then) went into each plant's history, growth patterns and botanical lineage. They were incredible, billowing over chairs, tables and window sashes in lush disarray and Nellie was so tickled to tell us about them that by the time we had gone thru the entire jungle the rent was down to fifteen bucks a week. My guess was that Kim had played this game before.

Finally we came to a particularly overgrown specimen with leaves and vines tumbling in cascades over the fireplace. Kim asked what it was and Nellie gave her a sly glance (not unlike one of Kim's own glances) and said it was "the creeping mantle of household invasion." This seemed to be a hint that the tour was over — and also a sign that not all was quite right with Nellie.

Kim moved in the next day but still Anton gave no clue that anything was amiss, keeping up his stolid New England front and brushing aside Zeke's guarded offers to talk. It was enough for me, however, and I began to see Kim pretty often, going for long walks on the campus with her and doing my best to seem suave and sophisticated. (One of the things that just killed me about her, aside from that upward-looking smile of mischievous knowing-ness, was her compact, rolling gait — something like a sailor, just home from the sea. It conveyed an air of independence, directness and a cheerful, what-the-hell attitude.)

And then, one beautiful summer evening, right at dusk, Kim asked me to come to her room and I tried to keep from choking as I asked how we would get around Mrs. D. Kim told me to wait a few minutes and she would let me in thru the window and in no time the lights were out and we were in bed together. Still at a loss and not knowing what to say (!) I leaned over and earnestly crooned at her (in my very best Bedroom Voice) "You know, I *do* desire you!" — and she almost fell out of bed laughing.

Mr. Smooth I wasn't. Here I was, in *bed* with the woman at *her* invitation, perfectly stark staring *naked* — and I have to make like Cary Grant, mooning inanities at her. It was not a good start but, oddly enough, she seemed to treat me more tenderly than ever and we passed the night in complete and unpossessive happiness.

By morning I was totally in love, and my did it feel good. Oh my lord, how happy I was.

July 20, 1969 — Apollo 11 lunar module "Eagle" touches down on the Sea of Tranquility; Neil Armstrong and "Buzz" Aldrin become the first men in history to walk on the moon.

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One pill makes you larger and
One pill makes you small
—Jefferson Airplane

Davy and Anton were almost as much opposites as Anton and Kim, but in an entirely different way. Davy was open and outgoing, light and breezy. Tho intelligent, he gave you the impression that he found all intellectuals ridiculous. He couldn't stand pomposity and stuffiness and he expressed his derision with wry sarcasm. Even the mildly finicky aroused in him a display of scorn that I wouldn't have wished on a Republican. Anton, on the other hand, would have looked perfectly at home in a long, black frock coat. He was as dignified as a diplomat and his manner, at first, seemed aristocratic and aloof. Soon all of that would fall away, of course, and you could not find anyone more giving and warm. There was certainly nothing pretentious about him but the manner was enough for Davy.

They may have gotten off on the wrong foot back in their dorm days when Davy had tried to call Anton "Tony" a time or two. After all, nicknames were a part of the beer-festing, towel-snapping, practical-joke-playing atmosphere of the co-op — "Zeke" was a nickname, "Davy" was a nickname — even Ian had been known for a time (unaccountably) as "Starman." So why not "Tony"? Because Anton didn't *like* "Tony," that's why. And when Anton didn't like something he would put on this icy New England stare — said to stun a cow at fifty feet.

I sat in the Union with this pair one day and asked them if they'd ever done acid. I'd heard a lot of stories about LSD, but hadn't come across any yet and I wasn't sure what to expect. Was it wild and crazy and psychedelic? Did people really go mad on it? Was it true you thought you could fly and would try to jump out of a window? Did you always have to do it on the first floor, just in case? I asked Zeke but all he would say is that if I ever did it, I should have a "guide" the first time. Davy looked wise and knowing and said it wasn't anything he could describe (which is what Zeke had said) and I got the feeling that since this was precisely what Anton was going to say, he just had to contradict him. They were like that.

Anton said, "The time I did acid with Jörgen." Davy rolled his eyes to the ceiling. "We started out at his place — he had that apartment on Kirkwood — and we split a hit one day. I didn't feel anything at all at first, so we smoked a J, got hungry, and went out." Davy feigned total boredom. "We went over to the pizzeria and ordered up a sloppy one. It started to come on then, just as the pizza came. Well, you know Jörgen," he turned to Davy, who nodded wearily, "and he starts turning this pizza around and around and commenting on how it reminded him of what the backs of the victims at Nagasaki must have looked like." Davy spluttered. "Well. This was not exactly what I

wanted to hear, just as I was going into the most incredible rush of my life. It apparently got to him, too, for all at once he looked up and I could see it in his eyes.

"Jörgen was actually the most sensitive man I ever met but he couldn't help making those odd associations sometimes. Anyway. We left and began wandering around campus and wound up in the Union here. I was rushing so hard I could barely keep from babbling about every single impression that came into my mind." "No! Really??" said Davy. Anton ignored him. "But when we got here, the first thing I saw was this guy with these huge pockmarks all over his face — just like that damn pizza. And all at once his face became just this . . . monstrous *distortion.* I turned away as fast as I could but then there was *another* face, just as bizarre, with huge, staring eyes. I kept turning away but everywhere I looked I saw nothing but faces like circus freaks — not one of them was normal. People with twisted noses or rotting teeth. I started to panic and Jörgen took me outside and sat me down on the parapet upstairs and then went back to get us some Cokes. I couldn't move, I was freaking out. And then, I looked down and I noticed this arm . . . this . . . *weird* arm. . . ." Davy was quiet now.

"It was this . . . elongated, fantastically misshapen . . . *thing* that seemed to end in. . . . Well, finally I realized it was *my* arm." Davy started giggling but Anton turned to him and said, meaningly, "Of course, I guess we don't need to mention the fellow who freaked totally when someone pointed out that . . ." "OK, OK," said Davy, ". . . go on, go on — you're doing fine."

"Well, I guess that's about it. Jörgen brought me the Coke and after a while I started to calm down. He talked to me and pretty soon I could look at him and he looked just like he always did. But that rush about did me in." "So what did you do then?" I asked. "Well, you know, nothing much. Jörgen took me over to somebody's house, I forget who, and this guy had a nice piano and we played for a few hours. It was really pretty nice. But . . . I can still see those faces and. . . ." He let it trail off and for once Davy was diplomatic. "Yeah," he said, "I know what you mean." He turned to me. "Look, just do it when you want to and don't worry about anybody else. It's just not anything anybody can tell you about."

Which, naturally, made me want to try it all the more. Not because of the stuff about pizza-faces, but it seemed more mysterious than ever. Moreover, they seemed to be hinting that it was something worth doing — *once,* anyway. And so, the time came. Whenever I heard that so-and-so had some acid, I would get Zeke to take a look but he always turned it down. "Sunshine" was full of speed, he said; likewise "Orange 4 Way" and "Blotter," but one day I came across some stuff called "Windowpane" and that was the one he wanted. We were off.

Windowpane was a tiny chip, like a piece of mica, crystal clear and about one-fourth the size of a stamp. Zeke carefully used a razor to cut the chip in half — Ian was there, tho he wasn't going to join us, and just as Zeke got the razor poised, Ian quietly leaned over and in a soft, slow voice, intoned, "It's . . . neat . . . to . . . beat . . . your . . .

feet (pause) On . . . the . . . Mississippi . . . mud . . ." and Zeke burst out laughing as half a chip flew away. Ian chuckled gaily and left — I found the chip and Zeke cut it in half again. He took a tiny triangle on his fingertip and, without any ceremony at all, put it on his tongue. I did the same. He said we'd better get something to eat before it came on, because he knew I could never eat when I was stoned. He also pointed out the pot of honey and said that if I got into trouble I should drink a lot of chamomile tea with honey, which was said to bring you down.

We went to a gut-bomb shop and had burgers and then walked over to George's place. He wasn't around, so we sat and talked for awhile and out of boredom I put on some Jefferson Airplane. By the end of "White Rabbit," I was rushing like crazy.

When logic . . . and proportion
Have fallen sloppy dead

The first thing I noticed was a surge of adrenaline that made my skin take on a feel of super-sensitivity; it seemed like I could feel every cell, every pore, intensely aware of even of every single hair. My mind broadened, really "expanded," as if it had gained new powers of perception. Each note of the music was vividly distinct, louder and more intense. Nothing was taken away or dulled, nothing seemed distorted at all. My senses were heightened and stark — the kind of feeling that people describe when they have been in a life-threatening accident, or seriously ill, and their awareness takes a quantum leap. Time expanded to meet the demands of all one's perceptions and yet there was no sense of moving in slow-motion — only the knowledge that my mind could focus on anything and everything at once. The song seemed to go on until each moment became an island, encapsulated within a universe of meanings and nuances. Mentally and physically I was so sensitive that even the slightest movement or gesture was startling, thrilling, frightening.

The song ended and after a moment, with the infinite deliberation of a Zen monk performing the tea ceremony, I got up and turned it off. We sat and rolled cigarettes and the smoke was a powerful, biting explosion of acrid sweetness. The second drag was better and it calmed me down slightly but I was bursting with energy and I wanted to run, move, turn handsprings, climb mountains. Even so, I knew that such things were pointless activity and I restrained myself, smiling and trying to hide my mounting anxiety. My mind was a blank, a sponge — receiving but not capable of sending.

At last Zeke broke the spell and said, would I like to walk over to the campus? His voice was another surprise but, somehow, it seemed perfectly normal. I said, "Sure," and that was an even bigger shock — my own voice shook me with its power and intrusiveness. I wanted to say as little as possible from now on. Slowly we gathered ourselves and went out into the sunshine.

It was a hot day, late in the afternoon, and walking was an experience more

stunning in its variety and beauty than I had ever noticed before. What things I had taken for granted! At first I felt clumsy but soon I got the hang of it and marveled at the feel of the wind, the sidewalk, the heat. The fact that I could simultaneously see such incredible things as the blinding sunshine was astonishing, but I had to fight myself not look to at the sun. It's presence was one of such tremendous power I could not grasp it; I knew it as a fact and suddenly I could *feel* how it *made* the wind. Such intense heat from millions of miles away was terrifying — I could almost *hear* it. Indeed, I *could* hear, could *feel* the earth itself turning. It was spinning in the same direction in which we were walking and I was surprised I had never noticed it before. The flood of sensations, familiar, yet somehow different, was exhilarating beyond belief.

I avoided looking at faces. People were the scariest things of all — what would they do, what *could* they do? And why? I longed to be invisible and willed myself to be insignificant. The panic rose and fell but sensing Zeke by my side, seemingly normal as we walked along, was infinitely reassuring.

Trees! My god, had I never noticed trees before? They were the same trees I had always seen, yet now totally different . . . I could really *see* them — every leaf distinct, every branch a design of wonderful subtlety . . . they had a grace that was a towering song of right-ness. They seemed to speak, billowing in the wind, of truth and the burgeoning necessity of life. And they were water machines! I could almost feel the pulsating surge of water being sucked up into the leaves — their entire uniformity of function was something I had never truly understood before. My god, I could *hear them growing . . .*

By the time we got to the campus several days seemed to have passed, so many things seemed to have taken place, yet I don't think either of us had said a word. We wandered thru the cool woods and past the old library, past the old science buildings and then found ourselves behind the ancient Chemistry Hall. All of a sudden, looming there in a tiny courtyard, stood an enormous beech tree that I didn't remember having seen before — the smooth trunk must have been five or six feet wide and the lowest branch, as thick as myself, was ten or twelve tantalizing feet above us. Of one mind, we debated the possibilities of climbing it and at last, by grabbing the far end of a low-hanging branch, we solved the riddle and clambered up.

Slowly, carefully, we made our way up the giant trunk until we were well above the tops of the buildings. When I looked out and saw the sunset, I forgot where I was and nearly fell. We settled back and straddled two fat branches, captivated by the awesome, full power of the red, glowing sun as it visibly inched toward the horizon. The trees and birds grew still, in the hushed quiet that always accompanies the moment when the sun meets the distant curve of the earth . . . we were higher even than most of the trees around us and we watched as the sky grew paler, paler, paler still — shifting in the minutest shades from lavender to rose to purple. We clung tighter as the utterly smooth, round sun hung in the sky — glowing orange and then red, a silently roaring

maelstrom of fire. At last it began to disappear and for just one moment, I could actually see the distance from the earth to its nearest star . . . could *see* the size of the earth and the size of the sun and thus the distance between them. I came close to oblivion in that moment, perfectly still, lost in a tiny corner of a timeless universe. The tree cradled us with the warmth of an ancient mother.

Night came. We sat still for a long time, silent and immobile. I started to look up and stopped, just in time. Zeke warned me not to (he had just tried it) and we agreed to climb down, keeping our eyes on our business. Once on the ground we found a clear spot away from the trees and then looked up at the stars. I sat down with a thump, astonished. I had never been able to look at the stars for very long, for I could feel myself being drawn into them, into the vast distances of space — but now there was no avoiding it. Stars, space, immensity engulfed me and sprang into my mind, leaving no room for thought or feeling. I became un-me.

Sometime later I found myself walking and then, remembering Zeke, said, "Zeke!" From the darkness he said, "Yeah?" That seemed to settle that, so I said, "Where are we going?" and he said, "I dunno." So we walked.

We were in the Music Building. I could tell from the curving walls and the dim, feathery sounds of pianos. I asked Zeke if he was going to play and he said, no, he didn't think he could risk it, so we found a lounge and were abruptly confronted with a long row of strangely humanoid machines. I stopped short and then cautiously approached these phenomena. From the hieroglyphs on their fluorescent faces, I deduced that they wished to sell me things — I couldn't quite make it out . . . what things? Well, never mind. I dug into my pockets (what the hell are pockets and why do I have them?) and pulled out what I knew, by instinct, these friendly monsters ate. I fed one of them and it gurgled gratefully, dropped a cup into its navel and began burbling fluid into it. I said "Thank you" and took the cup. Zeke chortled.

We sat and drank something rather strange, something I've never come across since — it was brown and super-sweet, with spicy overtones that could barely make it thru the five or six pounds of sugar. Looking around I noticed that the plastic covering of the seats were a golden yellow and that the walls, ceiling, even the garish machine-beasts, all had a yellowish cast to them. I mentioned it to Zeke and he said he'd noticed that before on acid (acid? what acid?) and that out of the corner of your eye, things sort of flickered. I noticed it too, then, and wished he hadn't brought it up. From deep in the bowels of the building I could feel and then hear a constant, droning, bass hum and I pointed it out to Zeke; he said, yes, he could hear it now, too, and he wished I hadn't brought it up. I thought about going to the bathroom for a long time and finally decided to try it.

I dreaded the thought of meeting anyone but, miraculously, we hadn't come across anybody yet and there was no one in the men's room. (Um, *was* this the men's room? Yes, there's those funny, upright things.) Taking a leak was tremendously

sensual, a joy. I studied the urinal while I peed and the porcelain seemed to shimmer with colors — I could see tiny cracks running all over the surface and each little triangle of white began to change and dance with a myriad of colors. The more I looked, the more kaleidoscopic it became and finally I had to pull myself away. For the sheer pleasure of it I washed my hands in the sink (another kaleidoscope!) and as I did so, looked in the mirror.

Now who in the hell was *that*!? My god, did someone just come in? Uh . . . no, actually . . . that was *me*! Well, of all the . . . I peered into one eye — fascinated by the colors — but as I did so the *other* eye seemed to go . . . sort of strange. Quickly I looked over at the first eye — no, it was perfectly all right. Well, hell, now the *other* one is going weird . . . well, that one's all right but . . . now the *first* one is . . . I zipped back and forth but it was no use, I could never catch one in the act . . . to hell with it. I dried my hands with the dryer (*loud* sound!) and then on my pants and went back to the lounge.

By now that hum was starting to get to both of us so we went back out into the night. After a long time we found ourselves walking thru the Student Union — Oh, Christ, the Union! What had Anton said about the Union? . . . Don't look at the faces! But in fact I didn't see anyone that looked particularly strange and we moved thru the crowd with no problem. I could feel myself tightening up and trying to straighten my face but nothing seemed at all amiss and when Zeke went thru the cafeteria line, I followed. I couldn't eat, of course, but I watched the people while Zeke tucked into something absolutely disgusting and after a tense eternity or two, we headed back outside.

We wandered aimlessly around town, pointing out one bizarre sight after another, and eventually found ourselves in a laundromat, not far from the apt at 425. We had the place to ourselves and there were some huge, heavy duty machines. No beguiling monsters, these — they were squat, powerful and definitely menacing. Zeke was fascinated by the eldritch symbols on their open lids and actually walked right up to a few, nonchalantly inspecting their gaping maws. I couldn't make head nor tails out of it, all those runic symbols were utterly baffling — but Zeke began to read the "instructions" aloud, cackling over them like a lunatic. My god, I thought, what if they became offended and decided to attack us? Ah, no — wasn't it written somewhere that machines couldn't do that? I began trying to read them, too, on a big, upright thing with a round glass door. I still couldn't make it out but I dug into my pockets and, thinking to appease the gods of this thing, put in some coins (coins?) and pushed a button.

Zeke damn near died from fright. "What are you doing?" he said, and came running over. "What's that noise? Jesus!" Then it grew hot and we saw the innards of the thing spinning around and around, quite contentedly, and we both stood there laughing. We were flabbergasted by what this odd creature was up to — the loud hum seemed almost friendly and soon I ambled over to another machine that had caught my eye.

This was an enormous drum-like contraption, all shiny aluminum with a glass door in front and an outlandish collection of wires, coiled tubes and gizmos. It looked truly fierce and I wanted to find out exactly what it did so I began searching the hieroglyphs. At last I was able to make out a few letters and suddenly the writing sprang out, crystal clear: "IF SOUND LIKE THE SCREECHING OF AUTO TIRES OCCURS DO NOT OPERATE."

My god! Screeching auto tires! Jesus, was this thing about to start screeching like auto tires? Why? What would we do? I froze in my tracks and called to Zeke, who came over and read the baneful words. He roared with laughter and I tried to smile but all I wanted was to get the hell out of there. We drifted back into the open air, which was growing chilly and damp.

Remember what the Dormouse said
Feed your head, feed your head

We wound up back at 425 and at last I was beginning to feel hungry. I could feel myself coming down and within a few minutes I was putting away a bowl of chocolate pudding. The acid fell away from me like a cloak and the relief was overwhelming. If that had been the end of it, it would have been all well and good. It had been an intense, often beautiful six hours. Now it was well after midnight and we went over the experience, savoring the highlights and playing down the fears. I got so wrapped up in the revelatory aspects of the "trip" that all of a sudden I suggested we do it again. At once. Zeke shrugged, hesitated, and brought out the remaining chips of Windowpane. We took them. Again, for a long time nothing happened — so to "kick it in gear" we smoked some hash. Neither idea, as it turns out, was a particularly happy one. The hash kicked it in gear all right. The rush hit us like a freight train and before we knew it, we were out on the street again. Only this time there was no beautiful sunset — it was the dead of night and we had nowhere to go, nothing to do.

Revisiting the tree or the Music Building, or doing anything else, for that matter, seemed like a bad idea — so we just walked. Over on the west side of town we were just passing over the railroad tracks and I noticed something I'd never seen before — the buildings came right up close to the tracks, forming a little tunnel, and a bay window, an *apartment* bay window, leaned out right over the tracks — not three feet from where the trains came thru. Now who in hell would want to live in an apt where . . . "WHUMNP" — suddenly, from behind us, there was a loud bang and I jumped straight up in the air. I spun around and saw a big bundle of newspapers on the sidewalk and a guy driving a truck away, having a good laugh. This was not a good omen.

We walked this way and that, finding nothing to do and nowhere to go. All too soon we found ourselves back at the laundromat again but going in there seemed

depressingly awkward — and then, just as we came past, a car began to head towards us. It slowed to a stop, blocking our path . . . two cops got out. Oh, shit, I thought.

They put on their meanest possible pose and in that scrawny, ugly, Indiana twang demanded identification. We gave it to them and my mind was racing, almost in a panic — what in hell did they want? They started up with what they considered a real hassle: where were we going, where did we live, etc., etc. I could barely speak, so Zeke answered for both of us. The cop nearest to me was peering at our IDs in the lights from the car (right in our eyes, of course) and finally he demanded, "Dew you-all go a-walkin' aroun' this late *of a night* in wherever the hell yew cum frum?" Zeke had had enough and shot back, slightly sharp, "What's that got to do with it? Are you saying we've done something wrong?" My heart stopped as I waited for these two goons to jump us — but nothing happened. They made some pitiful attempt to keep it up but Zeke simply replied laconically and before long they got tired of the game and let us go.

Totally bummed out, we headed back to 425. I downed as much chamomile tea and honey as I could and waited for it to work — which it finally did, more or less. But I couldn't sleep lying there in the dark while I watched the shadows on the ceiling change shape, coalescing into new and bizarre forms. The acid seemed to linger on and on — I tossed and turned, trying not to panic but that utter terror of existence itself, what Sartre called The Nausea, had me in its grip. The night dragged on for an eternity.

August 5, 1969 — Mariner 7 flies to within 2,200 miles of Mars, transmitting pictures.
Aug. 9, 1969 — Director Roman Polanski's pregnant wife, Sharon Tate, and three others are murdered by followers of Charles Manson in California.

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Something in the way she knows
And all I have to do is think of her
—George Harrison

At dawn I was still wide awake and shaky. I walked over to Kim's place, to see if she was up yet. She wasn't but she let me in anyway and we lay together quietly for a long time, until she felt ready to get up and go out for something to eat.

I needed to feel something ordinary and everyday and Kim sensed this. Tho I probably told her that I'd dropped acid the day before, she didn't zero in on me with questions — simply letting me trail along after her as she padded around campus with her camera. She had taken up photography and often spent the day just walking around shooting pictures

After the frenzy of the acid trip, this was a blissful morning. Kim was calm and matter-of-fact and I followed her like a puppy, grateful for the slightest attention. She

took shots of the buildings and the people, of the interior of the Union and the freaks playing Frisbee under the golden sun in Dunn Meadow. By midmorning I felt safe again — we stopped by 425 and she asked if she could take my picture. The image she showed me later was one of a shy but happy person, just slightly glowing; the reflection of relief, yes, but also of a young man obviously in love. He has that quiet, artless smile of peace.

August 15-17, 1969 — 400,000 young people gather at Yasgur's farm, Woodstock, N.Y., for a three-day concert; performers include Joan Baez, Joe Cocker, Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Arlo Guthrie, and Crosby Stills Nash & Young.

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Goodness, gracious
Great balls of fire!
—Jerry Lee Lewis

Murphy's, where we worked as busboys, pretended to be an Irish restaurant, sporting an Irish flag, Irish linen and all manner of cute Irish memorabilia. Certainly the owner, the chef and the bartenders all drank enough to qualify. It was a high-toned place, which meant the busboys, regardless of hair length, had to wear ties and the waiters had the insufferable air of temporarily misplaced dukes. One of them, however, did not quite fit the mold.

His name was Paul and Zeke had known him for a long time, from the Music School. Paul had studied oboe on and off for ten years and he was first-rate, having soloed with the St. Louis Symphony. Now, however, he was well on his way to becoming a perpetual student — he had majored in PoliSci, Business Administration, Math, Eastern European History, and (for reasons I never quite understood) Urdu.

He was utterly charming and easily the customers' favorite. However, he was also even more inept than Zeke when it came to table service and this kept the patrons hopping. Part of the problem was that he was so well-liked that he chatted incessantly with the clientele, taking fifteen minutes or more to get their orders — which none of the others seemed to mind since he was so delightfully animated and cheerful.

But because of that Paul lived in a permanent state of distraction. He was as elegant and poised as a dancer, but one who had forgotten what the props were for. He would often reach in front of someone with a plate as he innocently gabbled away — while coolly pouring the gravy (in a beautifully straight line) straight across someone's forehead. They usually protested.

He was strictly forbidden to handle the silverware but at least once a week he would find some reason to polish a spoon or replace a fork and (perhaps because of

some unconscious killer instinct) almost always manage to impale something or someone with it — usually backing into *another* table in horror as he did so, then whirling around and getting the tablecloth caught between his legs in the process.

One magnificently memorable night, when he hadn't had one of his little "accidents" in, say, a week or so, he was chatting away amiably with a nice couple at a table for two — an elderly professor and his decidedly obese wife. I was watching from a distance, for by this time I had developed an instinct that told me when Paul was in top form. Sure enough, he prattled away gaily, holding high a small plate with a steaming baked potato on it . . . up and down went the potato, back and forth, and finally, *swwooop,* there it went, straight down the fat lady's cleavage, sour cream and all.

She let out a scream that would have startled Dracula and tipped the table over onto her doddering mate. He went over backwards with an anguished cry, taking a martini full in the face. Mama was hopping up and down and screaming while Paul, completely flustered, thrust his hand down her dress trying to rescue the potato. No such luck.

She hopped, Paul hopped, and his arm by now was up to its elbow in a place where it had no right to be. Finally the hot spud obeyed the laws of gravity and exited her dress with a *plop.* The bartender damn near died laughing, half-biting a towel in two, while the rest of the patrons sat in stunned silence — contemplating, no doubt, the precariousness of modern existence.

An ultra-suave waiter by the name of Alfredo (a very highly born Argentinean-in-exile) came patting the air with his hands and restoring order as swiftly as it had been displaced but I heard him, some time later, as he calmly walked up to Paul in the kitchen and in his best, accented, confidential tone say, "Ah, Pol, that lady you tried to keell would like her check now."

By and by I came to feel that being a busboy was demeaning, since I had been an actual cook my last two years in high school. Zeke looked upon the job as nothing more than income — he was, after all, a composer, certainly not a busboy. But I needed a bit more dignity in my work and quit Murphy's when an opening came up in the beanery next door for a fry cook. True, it was going to be real work for a change, but only on weekends so it suited me fine. To say nothing of the enhanced opportunities for creative pilferage.

I got a free meal out of it for Zeke and Kim by having them come with me to Murphy's on a night when Murph was gone but before the waiters knew I had quit. Alfredo grandly proffered the check for me to sign when we were finished, which I did with a flourish. I knew better than to stiff him on the tip, however.

August 17-18, 1969 — Hurricane Camille tears across Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi; 283 deaths.

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But I would not feel so all alone
Everybody must get stoned
—Bob Dylan

As for our "schedule" at Lampkins Ridge, that went out the window in August, when the annual drought hit.

Anton, Zeke and I went up just to check on things and found them chest-high and flourishing. The lower leaves were yellow and dropping off but Calvin had told us to expect that; the middle leaves were fat and happy and the upper buds were numerous and green. Anton came face-to-face with a praying mantis as big as a ladder rung, sitting motionless on a dope plant, and instead of shrieking and falling over in a faint he calmly picked it up, shoved it under my nose and said, "What's this?" I shrieked and fell over and Zeke recoiled in disgust, as if Anton had picked up a human finger. When we figured out what it was Anton carefully replaced it, remarking only that it was "an ugly bugger." He was full of surprises, the bastard.

But there was no doubt we were in a drought. The ground around the patches was as hard as concrete and some of the plants were beginning to wilt under the hot, glaring sun. We had brought along some plastic bottles and made a run down to the creek to haul up water. It took three grueling trips to make even a dent and we realized we were going to have to do this at least once a week until we got some decent rain.

All that month we hauled water and sometimes Ian, Anton or Davy would come along. Once even Kim helped out but that proved to be embarrassing because, as always, at every slight movement in the trees or distant sound of a car, Zeke and I ducked down and froze while Kim, the picture of aplomb, glanced briefly our way in mild disdain and walked on ahead, unconcerned. We got pretty fed up with this attitude, I can tell you.

Late in the month the rains finally came and on an afternoon when we had planned on making a trek out to the Ridge Anton, Ian, Zeke and I gathered in my room instead to smoke dope. We kept the window open so we could smell the chill rain mingling with the dusty earth and Ian brought along his hookah — the genuine article, this time; a tall, green, Turkish model with two hoses.

Zeke loaded up the enormous bowl with the last of our toppings and we lounged around on cushions, passing the hoses and luxuriating like the Begum of Bengal. Anton made some remark about "hippies" and I took umbrage at the word. He said, "Well, *you're* not a hippie. (pause) Anyway, *I'm* not a hippie. (pause) Well, I'm not . . . I don't . . . (pause)"

"Yeah," I said, "You're not sitting here with a beard and sandals, smoking dope from a hookah and munching granola. Of course, your hair isn't as long as mine, so . . ."

He waved a palm and gave in. From there the conversation went thru the whole dreary bit about what a "hippie" was, etc., until Ian said, "But why isn't 'dope' as bad as 'hippie'? You hate the word 'hippie' but you use 'dope' all the time."

"Well in the first place," said Zeke, "'dope' is just sarcasm. Grass isn't a drug, so. . . ."

"Oh yeah? Then why is it illegal?" asked Anton.

This was the crux of the matter. If marijuana was not a drug (a narcotic, like heroin, or even a seriously dangerous intoxicant like alcohol) then why did everyone get so upset when people smoked it?

"Well, because it *sounds* like a drug," said Ian, "you smoke it, like opium, and it gets you high, therefore . . ."

"Well, but it doesn't hurt anyone, so . . ."

"Oh, I dunno," said Zeke, "I hear it grows breasts on men, causes birth defects, drives people crazy and deprives you of all motivation in life — I could go on but I don't really feel like it since that last hit . . ."

"Yeah, but every time they come out with a new study saying it does something like that, six months later another study says that the first one was a lot of crap. Only, *that* story is reported on the last page of the *New England Journal of Philosophy,* so who ever sees it?"

"And don't forget who gets the funding for the next study . . ." said Ian.

"That may be," said Anton, "but why is it still illegal — why does it get lumped in with all the other stuff when . . ."

"The blacks." said Zeke. (Pause)

"Excuse me?"

"The blacks — the jazz musicians who took up smoking grass."

"Ahh, right. Filthy, sex-crazed 'niggers,' getting high on pot and luring decent peoples' daughters into Harlem."

"Exactly. Dope. That's what got the whole thing started and now people use this moral outrage to . . ."

"To justify 'modifying' people's 'behavior'."

"Fine, fine, fine," I said, "but what about now. We got ten million people . . ."

"Kids. Just kids."

"OK . . . but maybe even *twenty* million — smoking grass and getting high and nobody's getting killed or losing their minds or . . ."

"Perish the thought," said Ian, "but you missed the point — getting high itself is, by definition, depravity . . ."

"Unless you do it with booze," put in Anton.

"Right, . . . and even if it's totally innocuous, we got this growing thing in this country that says that other people's morals are subject to the dictates of the so-called majority."

"And it ain't a-gonna stop with grass, either," said Zeke, "next it'll be the 'right' of the pious ones to teach anti-ee-vo-lu-tion and outlaw homosexuality and . . ."

"They already got laws on that . . ."

"Yeah, but they'll get more."

"Why sure, separation of church and state is un-American . . ."

"Right — that's what the 'silent majority'* is all about."

"But nobody's ever succeeded in doing that . . ." I said.

"It only takes one . . ." said Zeke, "Nixon."

"Aha."

There was a long thoughtful pause. It always came around to Nixon. He was playing up to the "silent majority" pushing any of the buttons available to prosecute a bankrupt war, blame the war on the people who were trying to stop it, stall the advances against racism and sexism, and repolarize the country. When Nixon said "peace" he meant "war" and when he said "bring us together" he meant cheering on the hardhats who attacked demonstrators. He used the bogeyman of the counterculture protesters to pretend that he stood for "family values." He attacked everyone, from the Press to the liberals to Congress, stirring up the hag-ridden dreams of the fundamentalists and pushing the country into a new "imperial presidency," which stood for repression, presidential power, and militarism. He did not, as Ian would say, mean well.

All rational debate was suspended for the duration of his reign, leaving nothing but slogans: "Love It Or Leave It"; "Burn, Baby, Burn"; and "Peace With Honor." Every idea worthy of the name had been turned into a caption and TV was raising the shibboleth into an art form; jingoism finally had a champion who was as obsessed with doubletalk as McCarthy, yet as adept at image-making as Machiavelli. Nixon was the personification of corrupt, secretive power.

Zeke had accomplished a bit of minor fame during the '68 campaign when Nixon had arrived in his home town while on his fifty-state tour. AP newspapers had run a picture of Zeke holding up a sign at the airport with nothing on it but a giant exclamation point — the slogan reduced to its simplest form. It did double duty by being as enigmatic as Nixon himself.

"But not even Nixon can ignore the fact that this situation is no different than Prohibition," said Anton, "and sooner or later they'll have to legalize it. Otherwise the Mafia will just get stronger and more . . ."

"Right," said Zeke, "Him and his pals will be out the biggest money-maker they ever had. That's real likely to happen."

This was a mild shocker so we waited for him to drop the other shoe.

"Listen. If marijuana stays illegal, then that keeps open a pipeline that gets bigger every year. And what's in that pipeline? Grass, sure, but also smack, coke, speed and every kind of pill from Valium to lithium. And who makes the biggest profit from *that*

shit? Do you think they want grass made legal when it's the one *bulk* item that keeps the rest of the trade flowing smoothly, with a network of dealers all along the way?"

"Wait a minute," Ian said, "you're not really suggesting that *Nixon* is in the *Mafia*?"

"Why not? Who funds him? He's got the biggest campaign funding of anybody who ever lived. Who has a bigger stake in keeping things the way they are than the Mafia? It was the same during Prohibition . . ."

"Well, that's seems a little far-fetched," I started, but then something occurred to me. "Tho I do seem to remember . . ."

"What?"

"Hmmm. When Kennedy was killed."

"Oh, Christ, not that again . . ."

"No, listen. The day Kennedy was killed, you know who took a plane out of Dallas just one hour before his plane landed?"

"I'm going to guess Nixon, right?"

"Right. Now, who hated Kennedy more than anybody else? Hated him with a passion — him and the whole family. Listen, forget all that crap about the CIA and the FBI killing Kennedy, all right? I mean, that's just paranoia shit, OK? Kennedy didn't bungle the Bay of Pigs, the CIA did — but never mind all that, that isn't any reason to kill a *president,* fer chrissake. They covered it up, yes, because they had bungled it and not taken the hit seriously. And the Warren Commission went along because the FBI and CIA manipulated them, *but* . . .

"Who wanted him dead more than anyone else? Nixon. And that guy who killed Oswald — Ruby — he was a member of the mob, right?"

Anton mulled this over and said, "You're not seriously saying the Kennedy assassination was a mob hit — funded by Nixon — as a . . . as a personal vendetta?"

"Not just as a personal vendetta — tho I wouldn't put it past the bastard — who, by the way, *does* seem to have a lot of friends among that crowd. The point is, it put the spike thru the heart of liberalism, which was just starting to take hold and grab people; we really began to *believe* that things could get done . . . for the poor and blacks and all . . . and this could only be done at the expense of Nixon and the rich and his whole crew."

"So he's the master of manipulation," said Ian, "what does this have to do with the Mafia and Kennedy?"

"Well, who are his pals? Who advances his personal power? Agnew, Rebozo, the Sinatra crowd. . . . The Mafia hated Kennedy almost as much as Nixon because JFK had appointed Bobby and Bobby was the first guy in history to actually go after them, which is the real reason why Hoover hated them *both.*

"The Mafia know more about murder than anybody in this country and they would have *loved* the job of killing Kennedy. And he stood for everything Nixon hated, because in every sense he was Nixon's antithesis."

"And the payoff is," said Anton, "they keep the drug trade flowing — using us naive 'hippies' with our grass and acid to create the biggest pipeline ever in the illegal drug trade."

"Feeding on the 'moral outrage' of the idiot-people to keep it going."

No one had anything more to say for a while. Zeke had put a little lid on the hookah but now he took it off and relit the pipe. We smoked a toke or two, to let the air settle down, and listened to the rain. It was getting damp and chilly but we didn't even turn on a lamp, not wanting to break the dark mood.

Zeke said, "Well, maybe so. Nixon is just devious enough to keep grass illegal so that his pals can make money on it. But . . ."

"Would he do that with the war?" said Ian.

This was a sore point. We were all of draft age and, for all the same reasons, not about to let ourselves get drafted. Anton was still getting his student deferments but Zeke wasn't — he had just tried to sign up for the Reserves, but hadn't heard back yet. Ian was contemplating a stint in the Peace Corps and I had only had one physical, getting a temporary deferment for being underweight.

The emotions that the Vietnam War brought out were almost too intense to talk about, and yet every serious conversation got around to it sooner or later. We tugged away at the hookah.

"Yeah, the war." said Zeke.

"What mean," said Anton, "do what with the war?"

"I mean would he keep the war going, just to keep the profits going."

"But he ran on the promise to end the war . . ."

"Oh, yeah, *right* . . . I forgot . . ."

"But he's begun the withdrawal, and . . ."

"And the bombings will resume and nothing will change."

"The war could have ended in '68," said Zeke quietly. "Johnson wanted to make a deal. He tried to make a deal."

"That's right. He tried to get the Paris talks going. But it was too late, the North . . ."

"No, the North went along."

"That's right, the *South* backed out and . . ."

"They changed the rules . . . they didn't *want* to talk anymore."

"Well, they're the most corrupt of all, they're making more on the war than GM is, fer chrissake . . ."

"But who got them to change? If Johnson wanted to end the war, he could have ended it — but not without the South and why couldn't he strongarm *them* the way he did everybody else?"

"Didn't the North offer a treaty?" I said, "The South Vietnamese wouldn't even talk about it, remember?"

"Right. And somebody wanted them to back out, to change the rules. Somebody with a big stake in keeping the war going. Otherwise Johnson would have had no problem with Thieu."

"Somebody who might maybe keep the war going until the *next* election, just to use as a little campaign gimmick . . . ?"

Another long pause. Ian had hit the main point. It was Johnson's war — but Nixon had adopted it as his very own, for reasons and with backing that was never fully explored.

"That's ridiculous, *nobody* would stoop *that* low, using the deaths of soldiers to . . ."

"Oh, no?" I said. "Whose interests run together here? The Mafia, the conservatives, the munitions people — they all want to keep the war going. And they had the same interest in seeing Kennedy dead *and* in keeping grass illegal."

"That may be true," said Anton, "but we're still the ones who smoke the grass that keeps the pipeline open."

"Well, in ten years *we'll* be in power," I said, "and then we can make it legal." They seemed unconvinced.

Sept. 3, 1969 — President Ho Chi Minh dies at age 79.
Sept. 16, 1969 — B-52 bombings of North Vietnam are resumed.

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Winter spring summer or fall,
All you got to do is call
—Carole King

These smoke sessions often lasted well into the night and could include anybody. But when Ian wasn't there, something like the following would invariably happen.

Come two in the morning and everybody would still be hanging out — nobody quite willing to break things up and go home yet. There would be a lull until finally some idiot would say, "Well, how's about we go out and get a big ol' sloppy pizza?"

Dead silence. Nada. At long last some other idiot would break down and say, "Well if you're *asshole* enough . . . (pause) to go out . . . (pause) at *2:00 a.m* . . . just for a goddam *pizza* . . . (pause) well, hell, I suppose I'll go along."

Still nothing. Silence. Nobody moves. Finally a third idiot would suggest, "Well, you know, we could always ask Ian to go along . . ." and that would do it, off we'd go.

Not only would Ian never show the slightest irritation at being roused out of bed at 2:00 a.m. (except to mumble something about "obnox-shitity"), not only would he never even *consider* turning down the offer of some pizza — but, for us, the mere

thought of watching Ian eat pizza was enough. So we'd trundle on over to his place and wake him up and then we'd all trudge over to the 24-hour pizzeria.

It would take a long time but at last it would come — an enormous sausage-pepperoni-mushroom-and-green-pepper monster, so huge and so hot that the waitress had to use a little trolley to bring it over. Much too hot to eat, of course, so we'd talk for a while longer, ignoring the pizza. Naturally, this failure of resolve was entirely too much for Ian — damned if *he* was going to admit it was too hot to eat!

And of course, mere *temperature* heat isn't enough — so with pointed deliberation he grabs the big bottle of dried hot peppers on the table and begins to shake it onto a piece. Shake, shake, shake . . . (pause for thought) . . . shake . . . *tiny* shake. Then, gingerly, he grabs the thing and starts to eat.

Sweat beads on his brow, his eyes are swimming in tears, but every other bite he is complaining to the room in general: "*God* this pizza is hot . . . why do they have to make it so *hot*?"

We do our best to ignore this production. At last Ian reaches out and grabs a beer, gulps down about a pint, takes a napkin and mops his brow. Sigh. He grabs another piece, stops to consider. What the hell. Shake, shake, shake . . . (pause for thought) . . . shake . . . *tiny* shake . . . eats pizza. Sweat beads, eyes swim, etc., etc.: "My *God* this pizza is hot . . . !" Never varied one iota.

He carried stubbornness to an artform that was unequaled for grace and sheer capriciousness. This, coupled with his flair for language (so far as I know, he invented the terms obnox-shitity and Blooming-gulch) could create some interesting situations. Sometime in the fall, on a night when there was a tremendous thunderstorm, I sat talking with Ian and Tammy in her apartment. He and I were smoking dope (of course) and thru the windows the lightning flashed and the thunder boomed, sending Sebastian into whimpering fits. Tammy was none too comfortable, either, for this was a real fire-and-brimstone banger. All at once, the lights went out. Tammy lit some candles but they only increased the dire gloom. It grew worse until finally Tammy insisted that Ian go down to the basement and check the fuses.

Silence. A long pause. And then, in a calmly indignant voice, he intoned, "You . . . want . . . me. To go downstairs. In the *dark.* To that *slithery* basement. And for me to *grapple* . . . in the *dark* . . . in said basement . . . with a fusebox. A cold, blue, shimmering, electric *fuse*box.

"To even *open* the aforementioned fusebox . . . with water dripping over the wires . . . the cover . . . and the fuses. And *reach up* with my *hand* and *grope* with those fuses!?

"Nay! I say again, Nay! It shall not be!

"For as life beats yet in this bosom of mine, I say I *like* the darkness; yea, verily; and curse all fuses eternal!"

And that was that.

Ian's classes had been over since the spring and the time was rapidly

approaching when the long arm of the Selective Service was going to reach out and grab him. He had run out of deferment possibilities and therefore had opted for the Peace Corps. He had signed up in July and the notice finally came — he was being shipped out to the Philippines.

We gave him a party to send him off. The time came and Ian left; Zeke and I would inherit 140.

Oct. 8-11, 1969 — The SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and Weathermen (a militant offshoot; "You don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows" [Dylan]) stage protests at the "Chicago 7" trial. Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Tom Hayden, et al., were arrested for "conspiracy" after the '68 Democratic National Convention (where the police had rioted, clubbing hundreds of peaceful demonstrators).

PART III
140

Bother me tomorrow, today I'll find no sorrow
Doo-doo-doo lookin' out my back door
—Creedence Clearwater Revival

The first thing that came to mind when you saw the rickety old screen door of 140 was "Gee, did those things go back as far as the Civil War?" It was a homemade affair and the boards were all askew — flaps of rusty screen hung at odd angles, so rotten that you could poke a hole thru with a finger. It was of no more use in keeping out the bugs than a neon sign that said "EATS," and our primary defense against the marauding hordes was a well-fed brigade of spiders.

Just in from the front door there was a minuscule closet which held a broken tennis racquet, jigsaw puzzles, a box of greasy car parts (for the now-defunct Porsche), some dusty ties and a lampshade. This was all a legacy from Ian and we continued the tradition of using the closet only for oddments, keeping our clothes in the tall wardrobe that stood off to the right. There was, of course, no phone or TV.

Beyond the closet was the Warm Morning stove — well-loved and cheerful in the winter, tho the fan rattled like the chains of Marley's ghost. There were some decrepit chairs and two beds separated by a curtain; the dust finally got to me and I grudgingly raised mine up on concrete blocks.

Within a few weeks of our taking over, Zeke found an old upright piano for $75 and wedged it in against the south wall, next to the only window. Despite the piano, marimba and all the other musical junk, the room seemed large — hard to know why, since it was only about 12' by 14'. The bookcases were bricks and boards (a wonderfully modular design) and we hung up Van Gogh, Monet and Cezanne prints that we got from the library. On the far left was the door to the hallway and the bathroom.

We shared the bathroom with the tenants in front and since nobody dared upset the balance of nature, it hadn't been cleaned since FDR died. You could tell from the stain marks on the sink that no one ever touched anything but the handles. The toilet is best left to the imagination — it would have disgusted a swamp-troll. We mostly relied on restaurants and public places, using it only as a last resort. (Erica went back to use it one day and actually let out a shriek that could be heard for miles.) The bathroom was unheated, of course, and in the winter ice formed on the floor of the shower and the hot water only lasted long enough to get wet, turn it off, soap down and then rinse off fast — but at least the smells weren't so bad in the winter.

140 was almost a lean-to tacked onto the main house and the kitchen made

another lean-to, tacked onto 140. It sat on a concrete slab and you had to step down to go in. It was unheated, too, so in the winter a blanket was kept up over the door to the living room. The only appliances were a large double sink and a pre-Columbian refrigerator. There was a long metal table and a few creaking cabinets, but no stove; we used a hotplate and an electric skillet.

An early Bronze Age door led from the kitchen to the back "yard" and there was yet another lean-to attached to the kitchen — a large catchall shed that housed more junk than an abandoned stable. We never opened it, except to amaze friends with the variety and sheer incomprehensibility of its contents. You could pull out any piece at random and puzzle over it for days, like a Mycenaean potsherd.

The "yard" was a small patch of barren grass with one lonely tree, just beyond the shed. It was a strange kind of tree which grew a fruit that neither Zeke nor I could figure out — was it edible . . . *was* it fruit? We stood there peering at a piece of it one day and the ancient geezer who lived up front came out to gaze at it, too. The three of us stood there mulling it over (linear B perhaps?) and at last we asked him if he knew what it was.

His grizzled face broke into an enormous, toothless grin and he said, "Yep! You bet! That's a paw-paw! Where th'hell yew frum, yew don't know a paw-paw?" I asked him if it was edible and for an answer he reached down, picked one up and ate it. Zeke started to pick one off of the tree but Gramps said, "Nope. Them's is no good. Gotta waitn'til they plops off'n the tree. Try one!" So we did.

The reddish-yellow fruit was about twice the size of a pear and the sweetest thing I have ever tasted. Far *too* sweet, in fact, with slightly cloying undertones that lingered for a long time. But once the strangeness wore off it wasn't that bad — if you could get past that overwhelming sugar-hit. Zeke (who put five or six spoonfuls of sugar on his cereal) found it just to his liking and he downed the first and reached for another.

What really bothered me, tho, was the texture. It was extremely soft and pulpy, like an overripe banana. I asked Gramps if they could be eaten when just a bit firmer, or were the ripe ones always this soft. He gave me another huge, gummy grin and cheerfully answered, "They get *softer*?" I thought maybe he hadn't understood me so I repeated the question — his face lit up and he said "They get softer!"

(Finally I realized that he was quite deaf and got by entirely with lip-reading. Over the next few months I had a lot of talks with Gramps and the conversations always edged into the surreal. I discovered that the only time he made complete sense was when you discussed quantum mechanics or Goethe — then he sounded just like everyone else.)

Before long Zeke was competing with Gramps for the paw-paws, trying to get the jump on him, and then we began to find other surprising gifts. I had never come across persimmons before, either — they were small, round, reddish things, as soft as

paw-paws but pure ambrosia. After the first frost they came down from the trees in stunning profusion and the aroma filled the air with a delicate spiciness. We soon caught on to the great fall harvest that was there for the taking all around us: apples, chestnuts, crab apples, small hard pears, hickory nuts . . . even plums, peaches and grapes, if the owners didn't mind you climbing their fences and helping yourself (at 3:00 a.m.). We didn't know how to can anything, so we simply stopped to have a feast whenever we came across something good, grazing away like goats under an oak tree. Kim and Erica eagerly joined the hunt and we traded the locations of our best finds, mapping them out for later forays.

Oct 15, 1969 — "Moratorium Day" demonstrations draw hundreds of thousands nationwide; Vice-president Spiro Agnew calls the protestors "an effete corps of impudent snobs."

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The Auroras of Autumn

—Wallace Stevens

Fall was finally in full swing and, despite the late start, the patches on Lampkins Ridge were doing well. Matilda was by far the better of the two but Gertrude had several plants over six feet and by mid-September they had begun to flower. Most of them were strong and healthy, with big leaf fans that could more than cover my hand. The scent was astonishing.

At first we had some trouble telling the difference between the male and female flowers, for we hadn't been able to come up with any pictures. The flowers of marijuana are very similar, not much like normal flowers at all — more like small clumps of grapeshot. They pollinate on the wind, not with insects, so they are compact and strictly functional. The tallest plants flowered first and produced little clusters of yellowish buds. As they matured, others began to put out slightly different, greenish buds, but it wasn't until the yellow ones opened and clouds of pollen came billowing out that we knew for sure which was which. The tallest plants were always males.

The female flowers, even when fully grown, were no bigger than small peas, forming at the tips of every branch and from tiny stalks at the base of the leaves. They were covered with a downy fuzz and sent off a pungent, grassy smell that was heady with promise. Long after the males were in full bloom a long, white stamen shot out from each female flower and we knew they were ready to be pollinated. We sampled extensively — testing for the best stone — since we wanted to cross them carefully. Before the males reached full flower we took them out and Zeke came up with a way to pollinate the females from only the best ones — which wasn't easy, since the clouds of pollen from even one male could fertilize an entire field. We covered each male in a

plastic bag and pulled them up before the pollen came out. We kept the roots moist and they continued to flower, coating the bag with pollen. Then on a rainy day (to cut down on pollen migration) we'd take the bags up to the Ridge and cover the female we wanted, shaking the bag lightly.

We eliminated the Sinaloan and Panama Red entirely (since they grew the worst and had the weakest stone) and crossed Jamaican with Afghani, Michoacan with Oaxacan, Thai with Jamaican and all the other possible combinations. It was a lot of work but nothing like the grind of hauling up bags and bags of compost and jugs of water. Anton and Davy took turns coming along and they contributed a great deal of advice that Zeke studiously ignored. He didn't even consult Calvin anymore, for he was developing a feel for marijuana that got better and better with each trip up to the Ridge. By late September we'd done all we could and waited, smoking the feeble gleanings and anticipating great things.

By mid-October the plants behind 425 had dwindled down to one gaunt little recluse, off by itself on the shady side of the house. It was only two feet high but perfectly formed. It had been raped several times, of course, but it seemed to be thriving nonetheless. Nothing else had made it past the predators except one fairly large specimen in the university president's garden, which was regularly tended by unseen hands. I had one rather hardy survivor on the grounds of the courthouse for a time but the less said about that the better. I will only mention that the lunatic courthouse staff were perversely vigilant and seemed to be on the local track-and-field team.

To ensure maximum growth for the seeds we let the Lampkins Ridge plants go until late October. There were a couple of light frosts and we anxiously went out to check them, but they didn't seem to be affected at all. They were heavy with flowers and so many males had been taken out that there was plenty of room for each plant. Few were all that tall but they were thick and bushy and wonderfully vibrant. Finally there was one last, lovely warm spell and the slanting light of fall told us that it was time. We gave them one more warm day in the sun and then drove out in Davy's bus and harvested Matilda and Gertrude. We pulled out each plant by the roots, enveloping ourselves in the aroma, shook off the dirt and carefully wrapped them in big sheets of plastic. The evening came down gently and even the birds seemed to wish us well. It was a tense drive back — paranoid as hell, we kept telling Davy to slow down, watch the stop signs, but he just glared at us. Under the cover of darkness we carted them into 140 and hung them upside down, as the books advised, in the wardrobe. We could barely fit them all in and had to put a few large bunches in the closet. We stepped back to admire them and it was an inspiring sight. We figured . . . what? . . . a ton at least. Maybe two!

The rich, special aroma of newly harvested marijuana filled the apt and we couldn't resist drying out a few flowers on the hotplate for a celebratory smoke, staying up and gloating over them until way after midnight. The next day, however, that sharp

pungency was suddenly a little *too* overpowering and we knew we were headed for trouble — the people next door were bound to notice, sooner or later. We tried hanging them in a big arc around the window in the kitchen, with the fan blowing out . . . but then that distinctive aroma was simply being wafted across the entire neighborhood. In desperation we cleared a spot outside by the window and began burning leaves, letting the fire die down so that it smoldered for hours. We soon ran out of leaves and took to raiding the neighbors' yards in the middle of the night — they must have been a little surprised that year at how little raking they had to do, and doubtless a little mystified at how one small paw-paw tree could keep us burning leaves for days. It worked, tho, and in a few days they were more or less dry. On a chilly fall evening, with the crickets chirping in low gear, Davy and Anton came over for the harvest cleaning.

We got set up in the living room, spreading newspapers all over the floor. What had looked like a magnificent windfall when we trucked in those huge bundles now looked decidedly scrawny but, never mind, we dug in. Each flower bud, carefully picked, went into a pile on the papers and the leaves into three separate piles of top, middle and bottom leaves. No dope plants were ever so lovingly manicured and Zeke made sure we kept each variety in their own, labeled grocery bags — twenty of them, no less. We looked like a bunch of maiden aunts, dottily sorting out a year's supply of string, rubber bands and tinfoil. Halfway thru we discovered an unexpected bonus. Davy was the first to notice the black, sticky residue on our fingers. Hmmm, what could this be? Hashish!?

Among all the resinous smells of the dried flowers and leaves, this was the headiest of all — how on earth had we forgotten hashish? We'd read stories about how hash was made in the Middle East; you were supposed to wear a leather apron and run back and forth thru the fields. This seemed undignified (considering our patches were only three-by-twelve) and besides, we couldn't find any leather aprons. But this was a lovely turn of events. We rolled the black tar off onto a sheet of paper and when we finally finished we had about a gram. Not much, but . . . enough. We set this treasure alight in the pipe and after even one little hit we knew we'd hit the jackpot. We sat back and grinned at one another, wide-eyed, and let the powerful stone flow over us. Another hit . . . one more for luck . . . and then we cleared away the debris and leaned back to admire the mounds of dope. Ton or no, it was stupendous.

We argued about how much we had and finally got out the baggies and the scale and started weighing them into lids (full ounces, always). Every grade and type was carefully catalogued and it seemed to go on forever. We made idiotic, giggling remarks about the "Crops" and the "North 40" and "Harrow-Weeders" — Gentleman Dope Growers at last! It was official and I'd never been so ecstatic. We decided we should split it up according to the amount of work and risk involved. The grand total was about a dozen lids of flowers and another two dozen or so of various grades of *bhang*, some decent, some not; a little over two pounds in all. Zeke and I got a third each and

Anton and Davy split the other third. It was a miraculous harvest, an embarrassment of riches, however meager it may seem in retrospect.

Oct. 29, 1969 — The U.S. Supreme Court orders an end to school desegregation "at once."
Nov. 12, 1969 — The army formally charges Lt. William Calley with leading the My Lai massacre; over 400 civilians, mostly women and children, were murdered by U.S. troops on March 16, 1968.

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Ditch-deliver'd by a drab
Make the gruel thick and slab
Double, double, toil and trouble
Fire burn and cauldron bubble
—Wm. Shakespeare

Zeke had lucked out and been accepted into the Indiana Army Reserve. He was going into basic training early the next summer — normally they would have grabbed him right away but they were swamped with the sons of the influential, waiting in line like a row of baby quail. I had actually predicted that the army, with its flair for perverse logic, would make Zeke a cook but they did me one better by assigning him to small-arms repair. This was even more perceptive, since Zeke couldn't tell a screwdriver from a piledriver, and he ruined several rifles, three machine guns and a bazooka — *then* they made him a cook.

Zeke's attitude toward cooking was personified by his peculiar talent with coffee. A true caffeine freak, he made an enormous pot every day but had the odd notion that coffee needed "aging." He used an elaborate rotation system and strewn all around the apt were at least a dozen cups of coffee in various stages of ripeness. He would pour a cup but never drink it, hunting around instead for the oldest cup he could find from a previous batch, and then switch them. And if he was lucky enough to find one with a bit of mold on it, he knew he'd found that perfect cuppa java, one with some real "bite."

He used powdered coffee, powdered milk, powdered eggs — powdered everything. Naturally he never bothered to read the label on anything, for he believed in variety. His pancakes were burnt black on the outside but somehow remained doughy on the inside and if he ran out of pancake mix halfway thru a batch, he just grabbed whatever other powder was handy to finish the job — usually potato flakes. (Actually not bad, once you got past the Silly Putty texture — at least, it was better than the time he used Lime Jello.) When he baked a cake, he considered all ingredients optional — if he didn't have eggs, who needs eggs? If he didn't have milk, he used water. Of course, everything being powdered, the proportions were necessarily chancy

— even whimsical. Having heard about pudding cake, he decided to try making some, but instead of using a tablespoon or two, he used a whole box of pudding. That didn't "look right," so he added a little more water to "compensate" and when he baked it, found that he'd invented chocolate soup. That was no good so he salvaged it by freezing the entire mess and then breaking off chunks of "ice cake."

His cooking was nothing if not creative. He put cheese in his oatmeal and honey on bananas. He loved hot dogs to excess. Besides boiling, baking, broiling, roasting and frying them, he made hot dog stew (a gelatinous mess even I won't describe), hot dog "pie" (on the model of steak-and-kidney pie), and once even tried something he called "hot dog tacos." Erica, who should have known better, told him about using popcorn as a stuffing for turkey and he couldn't wait for Thanksgiving to come around so he could try it. At last the day came and she was invited over for the feast. For once he'd done everything right — the sweet potatoes were perfect, the corn was perfect and the turkey was cooked at just the right temperature for just the right amount of time — a delicious, juicy, golden-brown. Zeke was crestfallen, however, when he opened the thing up and found that the popcorn hadn't popped. Erica just managed to hold on to a polite smile but I could see her cheeks puffing out and her sides quivering.

But we had what we called "concoctions" and even Zeke had trouble ruining those. All you had to do was boil up some rice and lentils and then dump in a couple of cans of cream soup (mushroom, chicken, celery, whatever), toss in any kind of meat at all (except hot dogs, which I banished), mix in some carrots, peas or corn and there you were. And Zeke's creative juices could exert themselves with Tabasco sauce, grated cheese or curry powder. We lived on it as a staple and he got to love cans even more than powder.

Kim showed us how to make what became the sugar-hit mainstay: a mixture of honey and/or maple syrup, peanut butter, and powdered milk, and the only time Zeke ever managed to ruin that was the time he tried to add powdered (natch) lemonade.

Nov. 15, 1969 — 250,000 demonstrators march on Washington, D.C.
Nov. 19, 1969 — Apollo 12, 2nd moon landing; Pete Conrad and Alan Bean walk on the moon.
Nov. 21, 1969 — The Senate rejects Nixon Supreme Court nominee Clement Haynesworth, citing his record as a segregationist and numerous conflicts of interest.

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Refried confusion is a-makin' itself clear
Which way do I go to get on out of here
—Dr. John

Zeke and Anton collaborated on hash brownies one day. These had been the rage

ever since someone read about them in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (a hopeless bore by Stein full of nothing but references to Gertrude herself). The only trouble was, they didn't have any hash — so they used the big, yellow bottom leaves from the harvest. The experiment took place over at Anton's house and the smell was so bad that they kept it in the oven for an extra hour, hoping to "modify" it. The result was a hard brick with a taste like chocolate lawn clippings. They got me to try it ("Let's get Mikey . . . he'll try *anything*!") and, sure enough, after an hour or two I got a nice, mild buzz going. Not worth the ordeal of eating burnt/green brownies, but definitely a buzz.

The fact of the matter is, I *would* try almost anything. Since it was a patent falsehood that marijuana was a dangerous drug, I was curious to test anything else that was said to get you high. I had never stooped so low as to smoke catnip (well — maybe once, when I was young and foolish) but I got Zeke to join me in getting sick on Morning Glory seeds, banana peels, and anything else that purportedly contained some sort of hallucinogenic stuff. They never did but, what the hell, anything for science.

The acme of these little experiments came when a friend of Zeke's sent him something called Baby Woodrose seeds — which the "friend" said were guaranteed to get a person absolutely, righteously ripped. When Zeke took his annual trip home at Christmas, I found them lying around among a bunch of his letters (more boring stuff) and wondered why he hadn't tried them yet. I was in an experimental mood so I took a guess that four or five ought to do the job, mashed them up in some water, and swallowed the lot.

It takes a long time for something to come on when you ingest it so I wasn't surprised when nothing happened right away. After an hour or so I felt the first tinglings and soon the rush began — only it was an odd sort of "rush," I thought, for all I felt were these waves of giddiness coming over me. The room would spin slightly and I felt distinctly woozy when I tried to stand up. It reminded me of something but I couldn't remember what — my mind didn't seem to be able to focus on anything for long. Then with a surge the *real* rush hit and suddenly I was so sick I barely got into the kitchen in time. Wave after wave hit and I overshot the sink with the force of a five-inch howitzer. This went on for quite some time.

During a respite I reeled out into the backyard for some air and with my head below my knees, between dry heaves, I suddenly remembered what this stuff reminded me of — that time after the Jack Daniels when I'd been lurchingly sick in the apt at 425. This was far worse than being drunk, however, since it had all the dizziness and overwhelming nausea without any of the compensating numbness. In fact, every sense was alive and waiting for the next round of vomiting — the only thing missing was my mind, which refused to stay in one place for more than two seconds at a time. I drifted from one moment to the next in an eternal, pounding nausea — unable to stop it and with no idea even how long it had gone on. Hour after hour passed and still there was no relief — nothing in this hell ever changed, especially not the timeless retching.

Exhausted, I finally fell asleep on the floor of the living room and when Zeke returned a few days later I testily asked him why he hadn't warned me about that goddam poisonous stuff. All he had to say was, "My god, you didn't *take* any of those, did you? Jesus, Boo warned me that even one or two of those things would make a person violently ill." "Yeah, well, he got that right," I said, "Look, why in hell did you keep them around at all then?" "Well, I dunno," said Zeke, "I kinda wanted to know what a Baby Woodrose looked like and I thought maybe I'd plant 'em someday." Pause. "So, tell me," he said, "was it really that bad? Didn't you get off at all?" I smiled reassuringly. "Oh, well, hell, it wasn't really all that bad . . . say, why don't you try taking just one? Maybe just one or two? I probably took too many, that's all."

But something in my smile must have told him, for he slyly begged off.

Dec. 1, 1969 — First Selective Service draft lottery since 1942 (I draw number 64).
Dec. 17, 1969 — Tiny Tim weds Miss Vicki on the Tonight Show.

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Us . . . and them . . .
And after all, we're only ordinary men
—Pink Floyd

George had been an original member of the group from Willkie Co-op; he was a painter. His work from those days was dark and the colors ugly — I was told that he had been quite different back then. Whereas now he was serene and ethereal, during the dorm days he had been caustic and cynical. It was hard to imagine, watching him walk down the street as if he were drifting, his face lighting up in a transcendental smile when he saw you coming, and I wondered if the transition to his true sexual identity had created a hostility that, once resolved, had become instead an impetus to his art. Which is not to say his later work was angelic, but it was graceful, exuberant and alive — yet always with that touch of an inner, wrenching angst.

I suppose Calvin had been the catalyst for the change. He was thoroughly settled in his sexuality and, presumably, always had been. In ways they were like Kim and Anton, in that Calvin was down-to-earth and practical, fond of delving into words and their meanings as he was of people and their motivations. But George, like Anton, was absentminded and idealistic and as unbusinesslike as a snowflake. A real study in contrast was between Calvin, George and the other two gays I knew, Paul and Alfredo.

Calvin and George were thin to the point of being gaunt but Paul and Alfredo were on the heavy side and muscular. They were all clean-cut (except for Calvin's goat-like beard) but Alfredo and Paul were decidedly chic dressers. They were also, if I judged right, far from monogamous — indeed, they were not a "pair" at all, having

merely been thrown together at Murphy's and only occasional lovers.

Paul was an eclectic and loved taking courses just because they interested him, but he and Alfredo definitely liked money, whereas Calvin and George disdained the material. Alfredo had a strong sense of "society" and he cultivated the moneyed set, for he had come from an aristocratic family in Chile and went all out for parties. Which is not to say he couldn't be outrageous.

Every Halloween the gays held their annual Gay Ball — a truly baroque affair. Naturally it was a costume party and Alfredo got a real kick out of designing the most elaborate costume he could. In fact, he designed costumes for a number of people and was one of the principal organizers. They had a parade first, winding their way down Kirkwood to Alumni Hall in the Student Union. The first time I saw this parade I was standing outside the main entrance; next to me there stood an old geezer, a gap-toothed janitor from the Union, who clearly had no idea what this was all about.

He had come outside for a smoke and cheerfully came up beside me to watch, delighted at the diversion. He seemed to think it was just an ordinary costume parade and clapped and cheered with the rest of us as the gays and lesbians trooped by in their wildest creations — Louis XIV, Napoleon, Marie Antoinette, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, Dracula (an annual favorite), Frankenstein, the Marquis de Sade (no comment) and Rumpelstiltskin. All of this he cheered loudly until a long line of queens in drag swept by, each more outlandish and convincing than the last. The geezer grew a bit pensive for a while but then Snow White went past, along with all Seven Dwarfs, and Prince Charming; then Jack the Ripper, Dorothy and Toto, Mae West and a suspiciously fey George Washington. The geezer cheered again, but a touch dubiously, for even he could tell that Mae West was a man.

Near the end the theme became decidedly more risque as women in biker outfits strode past, women in male drag and men as famous "couples" — Abe Lincoln accompanied by a leather-queen and Bo Peep with a rather goatish sheep in tow. At the tail end came another line of drag queens but all of these were outrageous caricatures of women, with wild makeup and gaudy dresses. They were escorted by an elaborately detailed and gigantic penis. With eyes.

At this the old man simply goggled. He was stunned into silence as the last of the parade went by. It finally sank in as he stared numbly at the people around him and the retreating figures in costume. Finally he turned to me and in a heavy Indiana twang spat out, "Well, I been tuh two goat-fuckin's an' a World's Fair, but I ain't never seen *nuthin'* like *'at*," and stomped back inside.

Jan. 9, 1970 — President Thieu of Vietnam says that a withdrawal of American troops in 1970 is "impossible and impractical."

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A thunderhead of judgment
Was gathering in my gaze
—Joni Mitchell

Poor Erica had a crush on Paul that would have embarrassed a ten-year-old — which was remarkable, considering that she despised gays without reservation. She wasn't exactly mean about it but she saw them as competition and never failed to make a cutting remark whenever she got the chance. To her Paul was simply handsome, manly, witty, athletic and intelligent — she had not a clue that he was also as gay as a bird. In restaurants Erica made it a point to sit next to Paul, monopolizing his conversation and driving Zeke crazy. Paul knew about her attitude toward gays and humored her like an older brother — amused but neither offended nor patronizing. He seemed to genuinely like her banter but, needless to say, that was as far as it would ever go. There was not a chance in hell she was ever getting this fairy into bed. In time he tired of the routine and managed to sit with his other "friends" who, of course, were just the sort Erica wouldn't be caught dead with. She simply couldn't understand it.

There was an occasion when we were all gathered in one of those large, busy, "family" restaurants, the kind with lots of Early American frou-frou and packed full of middle-aged couples and their 2.4 kiddies. We were sitting at a long table smack in the middle of the place and Paul was sitting at the far end with George, Calvin, and Alfredo, while Erica sulked down at the other end with Zeke, Davy, Anton and me. Davy had brought along a girlfriend and was busily trying to impress her.

Zeke was doing his best to keep the love-flame going but Erica only had eyes for Paul — and she was fuming. Those faggots had corralled her Paulie and she strained as hard as she could to catch the conversation at the far end, despising every one of "those" types. Zeke unzipped the charm and poured it on but she ignored him utterly. It was pathetic.

I was closer to Paul's group and could hear them as they surreptitiously compared notes on the latest hot prospects on the cruising lanes. At some point Alfredo made a slightly loud remark about some Adonis he'd found recently and Erica happened to catch the reference. Her face went red — here were these awful teddy-boys, corrupting her poor, unwitting Paulie, and now she'd heard the name of a well-known, flaming "queer." She wasn't about to let *that* one go by.

Just at that moment, however, there was one of those eerie silences that occurs in a crowded place from time to time and Erica unwittingly picked that moment to leap into the void. In a voice dripping sarcasm she boomed out, "Well, I bet *that* made his vagina itch!"

The parents froze; the kiddies froze — you could see a question forming in their little minds. The waitresses were suspended in mid-flight, unsure that they'd heard

right. Paul gazed up in astonished delight, suppressing a sputtering laugh. Instantly, knives and forks clattered and the restaurant was bursting with loud coughs and too-sudden conversation. Erica sank quietly into the subsoil, hoping in vain for a pickup to come crashing thru the front window.

Jan. 19, 1970 — Nixon nominates G. Harrold Carswell of Florida to the Supreme Court. Carswell is immediately attacked for being "openly and blatantly segregationist" by NAACP leaders.

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An' there began a lang digression
About the lords o' the creation
—Robert Burns

On a snowy winter evening Anton, Zeke and I sat in the room at 140, a thick blanket over the doors to the kitchen and the hall to seal in as much as we could of the heat. The big, wet flakes of snow sifted down dreamily thru the failing gray light. From the window we could see the clothesline posts, topped with clumps of white, and inside there was the sweet scent of patchouli oil and the sharp tang from the pipe. We sat in silence, drinking in the hushed sense of timelessness.

It wasn't all that cold out but the Warm Morning stove was clicking on every few minutes, the gas flames dancing in a double row of blue and yellow. The motor hummed softly, fanning the warmth into the room and making us sleepy. Anton rolled up a smoke and leaned back, content, and quietly mentioned a book he'd been reading. Pulling myself out of a stupor, I asked what it was about.

"Well," he said, "it's hard to describe . . . it's written in this language from the late 1600s. All about this young innocent, from England, who travels to 'Mary-land' to recover his fortune. Early colonial."

"Hmmm," I said, "lots of 'thee's' and 'thou's' y'mean?"

"Well, no, not really. More like . . . 'I'God! Who are you, sir, that you speak our tongue?'"

"Yeah. Well. That certainly sounds . . ."

"No, no. It's great," he said, "this guy Barth is really funny — he's got these titles for the chapters like 'Ebenezer Returns to His Companions, Finds Them Fewer by One, Leaves Them Fewer by Another, and Reflects a Reflection'."

Zeke roused himself enough to say, "What's that?"

"A book Anton's reading."

"*The Sot-Weed Factor.* Another chapter is 'The Laureate Indites a Quatrain and Fouls His Breeches'."

"Who's the Laureate?" I said.

"Ebenezer. He goes to Maryland to recover the family estate. There's characters like The Whore Joan Toast and Burlingame, Ebenezer's tutor, and he brings up this 'diary' of Captain John Smith — which is just plain filthy."

"Oh, yeah, Barth" said Zeke. "He wrote, ahhh, *Giles Goat-Boy.* Randy sucker."

"Yeah. You should read this."

Anton usually gave good advice on books so I made a note to look this one up. He had gotten me into *The Lord of the Rings* a while back and I was still reading it, so we talked about Frodo and the Hobbits for a while. Everyone had been turned onto this and it was becoming a classic at campuses all over the country. It was an arcane fantasy as good as Lewis Carroll, full of rich imagery and bizarre characters — wise elves, talking trees, grumpy dwarfs, magical wizards and evil spirits from the land of Mordor.

Zeke languidly got up and went into the kitchen and brought back a big pan of water. We made tea on the hotplate as Anton loaded up the pipe with some of our best female flowers and passed it around. Between tokes, I brought up science fiction. Anton grimaced.

"How can you read that shit," he moaned, "it's nothing but a lot of crap written by cheap hacks."

"Well, not all," I said, "I didn't think much of it either, til I found out that Fred Hoyle wrote sci-fi and . . ."

"Fred Hoyle? Who's he? The guy who wrote that book on cards?"

"No, he's an astrophysicist. He wrote this thing called *The Black Cloud* — you should read it. It's about this big black cloud . . ."

"I shoulda guessed . . ."

". . . that moves in towards the earth and surrounds the sun. Only, it turns out . . . well, I shouldn't tell you. But the people in this thing are very real and the science is fantastic . . . you should read it."

"I read some good science fiction once," said Zeke, "by Arthur C. Clarke. *Rendezvous with Rama.* There's this huge, gigantic spaceship that comes in, aiming right at the sun. And they send up these guys to investigate and they go inside. Only it's huge — it's so enormous they have to rig up ways to get around; like this one guy who makes a lighter-than-air thing with wings, so he can fly to the other end."

The light had faded and I turned on a lamp. The view of the snow falling outside instantly disappeared and we settled in. Somehow we got from Arthur Clarke to Kafka and I brought up my favorite short story, *The Bucket-Rider* — which seemed especially appropriate with winter setting in. It's a story about a man who's cold and he has no coal left in his bucket. His bucket becomes so light that he rides it thru the town to the coal-seller, whose wife refuses to give him even a single lump of coal.

Zeke had a special fondness for Kafka and never missed a chance to recount his favorite passages from *The Castle* or *The Trial.* He had that same sense of being caught in

a web of incomprehensible authority and trapped in events that no one could control or understand. He had handled the cops outside the laundromat so well when we were on acid because he understood the absurdity perfectly.

Hermann Hesse was also a big deal on campus but none of us had found *Steppenwolf* all that revelatory or satisfying. It seemed to me like the drunken daydreams of a sinking man and I had found Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* a much more convincing odyssey. For that matter, *Cakes and Ale* and *The Moon and Sixpence* also seemed to hit a chord in us that we could relate to very strongly.

There were a number of books that had become fashionable with the college set, and none more than Castaneda's *Don Juan* books. Zeke loved the imagery of the old Spanish/Indian witch doctor initiating this young moron into the rites of passage. Anton was convinced it was a complete fake and I agreed — the descriptions of being on drugs struck me as completely phony. I took another toke from the pipe and my mind hitched a step over to Von Daniken.

"What gets me," I said, "is that these guys despise humanity. They think that the people who lived back at the time of the pyramids must have been too stupid to construct such things, so they figure it must have been space-men."

"What are you talking about?" said Zeke.

"Von Daniken. *Chariots of the Gods*. Isn't that what we were talking about?"

"No," said Anton, "and what you're talking about isn't Von Daniken, either. It's . . . it's . . . — well, I don't remember now, but it isn't him. He's the one . . ."

"Oh, right, right, right. Hydrocarbon manna. Venus coming out of Jupiter and swooping past the earth . . ."

"Twice . . ."

". . . and all that shit. Right."

The water took forever to boil on our crummy old hotplate but at last it was ready and we made the tea. Zeke used a positively disgusting wicker tea strainer to make his but Anton and I preferred to let the leaves, sticks, and flowers just float around in the cup. I don't say we liked it, we just preferred it to that strainer.

Since we seemed to have gotten onto books, we each brought up our favorite hardboiled detective stories — Chandler and Hammett and Stout. I had introduced them to Nero Wolfe, which they loved, and that had brought a connection full circle. Anton had turned me on to P.G. Wodehouse and it had been in a *Jeeves* story that I had found a reference to Stout. Mysteries then brought us to Dickens and Poe and I mentioned Dostoevsky.

"You know what the greatest mystery story of all time is, don't you?" I said.

"Edwin Drood," said Anton, "since it's still a mystery."

"Yeah, but only because he didn't finish it. No, the best one of all is *The Brothers Karamazov*."

"I think you just zoned out again. That isn't a mystery."

"Yes, it is. It's the greatest mystery ever written because you never find out who killed old man Karamazov . . ."

"Yeah!" said Zeke, "Ivan gets put on trial but you never really know if he killed him."

I went into my long theory of how I had "proven" that it was the oldest son, Dmitri, who had killed Fyodor. That got us onto Russian novels in general and how interminable they were. Zeke loved *War and Peace* but I couldn't stand any of Tolstoy except the short stories — arguing about the Russians brought us around to our *least* favorite writers.

"Much as I liked *The Old Man and the Sea*" said Anton, "I never could stand Hemingway."

"I read the perfect Hemingway graffiti in a bathroom once," said Zeke: "'A man and a boy walked by the sea. The man spit. The boy spit. It was a good day. — Papa.'"

"Or, as Chris would say, 'You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din. Or for that matter, Helen Hayes.'"

"What the hell has that got to do with it?" said Anton.

I admitted I didn't know and had another toke. Zeke said he didn't much like Faulkner, either, and I said the same about Steinbeck. Anton tossed in Sinclair Lewis and we added Henry Miller, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Henry James. It seemed to us that the "literary giants" of this century were much poorer writers than the "lesser" ones — Dorothy Parker, Thurber, E.B. White, Flannery O'Connor, Stanislaw Lem, Willa Cather, James Baldwin, Evelyn Waugh — even Isaac Asimov, Louis L'Amour, Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers. All of these, while not so given to monolithic themes, could write with a grace and quiet depth that eluded the heavy hitters.

"The worst thing about these overblown bigshots," said Anton, "is that they got no sense of humor. Now, Twain . . ."

And he was off on his favorite subject. Twain was our god and we read and reread everything of his we could get our hands on. The only thing Hemingway ever wrote that made any sense was when he said that all American literature stemmed from *Huckleberry Finn.* I had even come across an obscure volume in the Lilly Library that had been printed in a limited edition of 100 copies — a scatological little thing called *1601,* wherein Sir Walter Scott, Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth and others sit around trying to decide who cut that last fart. It was a gem.

Anton was such a big fan of Twain that he'd even read *Joan of Arc* and the long treatise on Christian Science. We had no disagreements about Twain, for we were convinced he was the greatest writer in English since Shakespeare. And it was incomprehensible to us that anyone could mistake the *least* racist man of his era for being a bigot simply because, in *Huck Finn,* he has a boy telling a lady how a boiler had blown up on a steamboat — the lady asks if anybody got hurt. "No'm," says the boy, "killed a nigger." Anybody who could miss the tragic irony of this exchange is a boob

and a fool and ought to be sent back to high school to learn how to read again. Mark Twain is the only author whose work should be absolutely required (and not just *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*) at every age level of school in the U.S. No others need apply.

As usual we couldn't resist reading some passages out loud — from *The Invalid's Tale* or *Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut* — and then took a break, walking out into the chill night air to look at the stars and crunch around in the snow. One of us took a leak around back and that reminded the other two and after a while we stood together looking for shooting stars. Some idiot remarked on how it really was pretty warm out and we all agreed on that and in thirty seconds we were freezing, of course, so we headed back inside. Zeke brought in a snowball and, having nothing else to do with it, put it in the pot of hot water. We ignored the dirt and made more tea; the discussion lasted far into the night.

Feb. 18, 1970 — "Chicago 7" found innocent of conspiracy but five are found guilty of crossing state lines to incite to riot. (Bobby Seale had been separated from the trial earlier and was serving time for contempt.)

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"If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
"That they could get it clear?"
—Lewis Carroll

Anton, like me, was very fond of cats and he had two of them — Sophie and Peter. Sophie was black and svelte and beautiful, but even as cats go she was stuck up. She had the arch demeanor of a French waiter calmly ignoring an American — she accepted her grace as a gift and expected you to be properly in awe.

Peter, on the other hand, was a burly Marciano-type with a piece missing from one ear and tufts of gray fur sticking out at odd angles. For all his rough tomcat looks, however, Peter had the voice (I hate to say it) of a sissy — which embarrassed him no end. He never said anything at all if he could help it but, Anton being more or less oblivious, he had to ask over and over again to be let out and it sounded like a mouse being stepped on. Sophie, always the princess, pretended not to notice but you could see just the trace of a tiny little sneer. Peter, poor cat, was miserable. When the time came he did his duty and fathered a handsome litter but, having proven his cathood, he bid Sophie adieu and split. I fancied that I saw him sometimes, wandering late at night on the cat Bowery, bleary-eyed and forever picking fights.

For a time I thought that Anton had learned The Glare from Sophie but one day

his mother came to town for a visit and there it was. I rather quickly discovered that she did not care in the least for the word "shit" — she didn't say a word but even Sophie cringed.

She reminded me a lot of Katherine Hepburn — a thin, tall, strikingly handsome Connecticut Yankee, utterly independent and outgoing but with a strong touch of Yankee angularity. Anton was a lot like her except in one thing: I could never figure out how a man with such a refined demeanor could live like such a pig. He gave the impression of someone so absorbed in the Muse that he could not be bothered with the mundane details of housekeeping. Zeke and I certainly weren't likely to be confused with blushing homemakers, but we were nowhere near Anton's class. This is not to say he was merely a slob, for with him it was an Art.

He had moved into an apartment just a couple of blocks from 140 after his separation from Kim and, like 140, it was a two-room place — just bigger and with a bathroom of its own. There the resemblance ended. When you walked in you saw an arabesque of casual squalor — a torn-up newspaper would have only improved things. It was a swirl, a cyclone, a cascade of debris . . . your eye traveled from one spot to another, trying to find some place to rest, trying to find anything that looked normal. In profusion, everywhere, there were books, coffee cups, old letters and manuscripts; there were car parts, pieces of musical instruments, shards of forgotten lunches (now petrified) and tangles of clothes; magazines, heaping ashtrays and long-dead houseplants. It had a Dali-esque quality that combined a seemingly straightforward landscape with grotesque incongruity. The mind boggled and pieces of one thing appeared to grow out of another. The bed, the chairs, and the floor were covered in a continuous melange of refuse from wall to wall. There was a *tie,* for god's sake, in the ceiling light fixture — possibly for effect.

It was impossible to find anywhere to sit — you just edged onto something and hoped that it held. Every now and then I found myself getting up to move, so as not to sink forever into the background and become One with the Mystery. Once I absentmindedly shifted a pile of flotsam with my foot and found, curiously enough, some *bones* underneath. I covered them back up and looked the other way.

People make a big deal about cats being finicky but they will gladly drink from a toilet and Sophie and Peter occasionally even slept on Anton's bed. But instead of coming on the run, they would actually *leave* if the refrigerator door were opened. There were things in that refrigerator that would alarm life at the bottom of the ocean. There were smells that . . . well, even I would rather not say. The kitchen cabinets harbored a peculiar variety of little gray moth that I have seen nowhere else — perhaps a new species evolved to feed on disintegrating Wonder Bread. The trash was composting nicely. You'd see dishes in the sink and think, "Aha! Now *there's* a good sign!" but it was a sham — they'd been in there since the day he moved in and had a fur on them that an otter would envy. The full bottle of soap on the windowsill was apparently intended as

sarcasm.

Mind you, it was a mistake to take friendly note of any of this. If you so much as hinted that, say, the catbox could stand changing (catbox, hell — they refused to use it and it had merely become another Presence) you would get that Glare of barely suppressed outrage from Anton and a few terse remarks about your manners. Zeke, in Zen-like stoicism, pretended to see nothing amiss and quietly took out the trash when Anton's back was turned. Once he even asked for the use of the place while Anton went out of town for a week. He hosed down the Augean stables but when Anton returned he took no notice, except to complain about the smell. Within a few days it was all back to normal, drifting quietly into Chaos.

I remained aloof, practicing The Glare in front of a mirror. Never did quite get it — tho I could make the odd six-year-old cry.

March 11, 1970 — Hawaii passes first law legalizing abortion.

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The snow is falling.
Strike the piercing chord.
—Wallace Stevens

The piano Zeke had gotten to compose on was an old upright — weatherbeaten but otherwise sound, except that he had to tune it constantly. He taught me how to tune it, too, since any change in the weather threw it off and it was no treat to listen to otherwise. Thus I was able to learn "tempering" and began to twiddle at the keys a bit, "noodling" single lines and making up simple tunes. Anton, of course, had rented a baby grand to practice on and it was the one thing in his house that wasn't covered in a hodgepodge of trash — only piles of manuscripts and sheet music and the odd ashtray or two. He worked that piano pretty hard and had to have a professional tuner come in . . . the guy damn near choked every time he saw the place but was gratefully amazed at how well-kept the piano was.

Anton was working toward his "juries" and practiced for several hours every day. Sometimes I would go over and just lie there, on a pile of rubble, and let the sounds wash all around me. He didn't seem to mind except when, during a pause, I'd ask him what such-and-such was and he'd have to snap out "Prokofiev" or "Grieg." I was beginning to piece together a progression of music, picking out styles and an evolution as I listened. Whenever he could, or when he wanted a break, Anton would discourse on the different periods or on the mechanics of composition. Since I couldn't read music, it was all but wasted on me but I picked up a smattering about counterpoint and theme.

Gregorian Chant I remembered from my days as an altar boy. "Modern" music, he said, began with the Renaissance period and its great masters, Palestrina, Gesualdo, Gibbons, Tallis, and Bird. (Modern or not, it all sounded a bit strange to me and Gesualdo was the strangest of the lot. It was no surprise when I learned that he'd had his wife and her lover murdered — judging from his music, it was just the way his humor ran.)

The period I really loved was the Baroque: Monteverdi, Buxtehude, Vivaldi, Telemann, Purcell and, the god of them all, Johann Sebastian Bach. I could understand why some people found Bach mechanical and cold but to me that was only because they could not hear, didn't see, the impossible richness of interconnections beneath the cool exterior. I'd lie there, immersed, and all the world would recede as I sank into the vast depths — when Anton would suddenly slap another book in its place and launch into Schubert or Brahms. It was always a shock but never totally inappropriate, since Bach made even the Romantics seem sensible. I preferred the clean, shimmering colors of Scarlatti to the leaden convolutions of Rachmaninoff. Haydn was gay and thrilling and I was immensely excited when I "discovered" his influence on the young Mozart. To me, only Mozart could rival the great J.S. in weaving an effortless fabric of textures and tunes. He could create music so highly evolved that the notes of one theme were carried thru an entire section, *suggesting* harmonies that weren't even there — a prismatic waterfall of sound.

Satie was sweet and De Falla exotic. In Sibelius you could hear the fjords and plains of Finland; in Ravel, the dance halls of Paris. No one had that feel for the piano like Beethoven (Anton said he may have been the finest improvisor ever), nor anyone more playful with it than Chopin. On and on Anton played, brilliantly. Rossini, Frescobaldi, Couperin and Dvorak. Each piece he chose *spoke* to the others — as paintings, properly placed, will refer to each other, communicating feelings and ideas. I listened, entranced, scratching the ear of the cat on my lap. (Anton had a tape recorder and I'll never know why I didn't tape those sessions; stupidity is a likely candidate.)

Sometimes, late at night, Zeke would come over and after Anton got thru the two of them would leap into a "funk" session. Zeke would grab some bongos and run a little riff past Anton, who would answer him on the piano and off they'd go. Things got a trifle wild when they got to smoking dope — Anton would open up the top of the piano and Zeke would get in front, holding down the sustain pedal, while Anton began plunking around — sometimes with his fingers, sometimes with mallets, sometimes even using the rosined strings from a violin bow and scraping at the open strings like a demented Cossack. Zeke would use the keys and counterpoint these meanderings or take off on a tear of his own. Occasionally I'd join in, on whatever was handy.

Zeke had an amazing collection of strange percussion instruments and would bring over some exotic African things — a slit-drum or a Calimba (a thumb-piano) or his clay bongos. Being totally ambidextrous, he could torture the piano and

simultaneously whang away on these things. It often went on until one or the other of them reached exhaustion, which was just about never. Oddly, the neighbors never complained — even tho it must have sounded like a troupe of frightened ferrets loose on a pile of garbage cans. Anton in particular would refuse to give it a rest, long after we'd given up, plunking just one note on the piano over and over as he made hopeful faces at Zeke, trying to entice him to further efforts. He could keep it up, making a thing of it, until you wanted to scream.

But then there were times when we got together at 140 for something a little more sedate — getting stoned and listening to Zeke's stereo. Anton hated any talking while something was playing but Zeke and I couldn't resist making comments from time to time, running thru a string of images that the music evoked. It was a sublime experience on grass, and one of my favorites was the Second Symphony of Sibelius.

It began slowly, just a twiddling of expectant strings, gradually evolving into something that was less of a tune than a *movement* — a pulsing, waddling restlessness. The image came of an enormous, extinct bird, lumbering slowly across a vast plain in the twilight, by increments gathering speed until at last, in a lurch of monumental exertion, it broke free and soared into the sky. Grandly, gracefully, it wheeled in broad arcs thru the primeval air — freedom personified, Prometheus unchained. Faster and faster it drove thru the heavens, reveling in power and daring the horizon. Soon gravity itself could not contain her and the majestic Roc went skimming above the clouds, beyond the earth, propelled by the raw fires of energy into space.

The stark, white moon loomed nearer and nearer, and just as quickly fled behind; the bird flew on, hunched shoulders with strain, hurtling ever faster, across the planets steep path — flashing past Mars, now the asteroid belt; nothing could slow its headlong rush — faster and faster, a grand sweep past Jupiter, a curving bank past the rings of broad Saturn. On and on, building more speed and more speed — the stars themselves spin past in the void. Constellations, like jewels, fly past in rich colors; the starkness of night swallows them all. Speed . . . more speed! and the bird is near-bursting — its scimitar-head bent, supreme flight exhausting. The climax is coming, the barrier at hand: a surge for that last bit of speed . . . the bird stretches out, form elongated by time — an explosion of light, stark and dazzling white — an abrupt silence . . . no sound.

March 17, 1970 — Fourteen army officers are charged in the cover-up of the My Lai massacre.
March 18, 1970 — A coup in Cambodia ousts Prince Norodom Sihanouk; Lon Nol seizes power.

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Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son
And where have you been my darling young one?
—Bob Dylan

Kim and I didn't talk much about philosophy at first but we hit on just about everything else. She was cool and considerate to talk to — poised and rational but also willing to consider other viewpoints (tho often a tad convoluted) and she introduced me to some poets that I'd never come across before — Wallace Stevens, e.e. cummings, Delmore Schwartz and Kenneth Patchen.

Kim managed somehow to be lofty and spiritual while never losing that matter-of-factness that made whatever she said seem all the more convincing, since it wasn't passionately thrust at you. We were more friends than lovers at times but the lovemaking was natural and free of possessiveness. I never quite got over my shyness, however, and it is no exaggeration to say that I remained an innocent. And largely because of that innocence, I imagined her to be one also. One day I waited for her in her room (Nellie had more or less gotten used to me by then) and when she got home she came in with a serious expression on her face that told me something was definitely up. I asked her what was the matter and, after some un-Kim-like shilly-shallying, she told me that she thought she had the clap.

Her? The ethereal Kim? Dream-like, other-worldly Kim? A clump of innocence hit the floor with a wet thud.

I spluttered for a while but she wouldn't say any more about it and, after a confused walk home, I remembered having heard about a free clinic. I asked around the next day and went over to get myself checked.

The forms were to the point, if a bit embarrassing, and soon I was shown into a room where the (female) doctor and her (likewise) assistant waited while I explained the problem. The doctor was middle-aged, competent, and more than a little surly. The trainee was not a day over eighteen. Once I had my pants down, the M.D. reached out and began yanking at my dick like a farm girl at a cow-tit — the trainee just stood there and grinned. After a few pulls and pokes, the trainee was staring so hard and breathing so loud that even the drill sergeant was getting distracted and found an excuse to send her out of the room — to my great relief for it was getting, uh, hard to stay decent.

When she'd finished with the highly personal poking, she started in with some even more personal questions — like, how many people had I been going to bed with, for how long, and who they were. I pretended to mull this over with difficulty (the great lover, donchaknow) and told her I'd get in touch with them and send them in as soon as possible. She gave me a sour look, took some blood and said "No sex until the results come back." (I got the distinct impression that she thought "never" would be better, but I let it go.)

Kim reacted quite calmly when I told her about all this and then coolly informed me that she hadn't actually been to a doctor yet at all — she was just going according to the "signs." To hell with that — I nagged at her until she agreed to come along and I waited for her in the clinic lobby. It turned out to be a very long wait. Was she taking

exception to the questions? Were they different questions for women? Little did I know that the Great Clap Flap was about to get underway.

Within a few days the volunteers at the clinic saw an influx that would have startled Louis Pasteur. Anton had to go, Zeke had to go, *Davy* had to go — damn it, even Calvin and George and all their *friends* had to go. Apparently there was some sort of ripple effect going on but this was only the beginning — within days that clinic was swamped and the University Health people got involved. Before long half the campus and a fourth of the town were lining up for a blood test and a crotch-poke. Everybody knew somebody who gave them the bad news. Within a week the repercussions went beyond Bloomington and threatened to go national. A hush fell over the town and everywhere you went people were walking around with a preoccupied air. In cafes and pizza joints all up and down Kirkwood there were worried souls with a pad and pencil in hand, staring up at the ceiling and mumbling, "How many people in the past year. . . ."

Even the Kinsey Institute got involved, trying to locate the epicenter and asking for volunteers to fill out questionnaires. "Free love" was debated in the local papers and walking around at night you could hear accusations being flung back and forth from open windows. What's more, *I* was being singled out as the No. 1 pariah, merely for having been the first to go get myself checked. They assumed that I was somehow at fault for the whole mess and obstinately ignored my protests, muttering phrases that seemed to always end in "knucklehead." Kim (of the from-underneath-smile) was, of course, serene.

After an interminable wait (the lab was inundated) the results came back at last and they were negative. Kim's "signs" had been nothing more than a yeast infection. There was an almost audible, collective sigh of relief and within a few days everything returned to normal — except that everyone still blamed me for initiating the Great Big Clap Flap.

I hardly noticed, tho, for somewhere along the line it had suddenly dawned on me that I was probably not Kim's only lover after all; I was heartbroken, devastated — an innocent still.

April 8, 1970 — Senate rejects Carswell nomination to the Supreme Court, citing racial bias and judicial incompetence. Nixon appoints his third choice, Harry A. Blackmun of Minnesota.

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What did mama saw,
It was against the law
—Paul Simon

We wanted to improve on our technique with growing window plants and by April we had several healthy young truckers in the south window. One of them was a plant we'd started in the fall and it was sort of our mascot — at least three feet tall and as bushy as a raccoon's tail. It was our pride and joy. Whenever we came down the alley it gladdened our hearts to see it but, perhaps inevitably, one day there came that brisk, loud, "Wham-Wham-Whamming" on the door that said "cops," and in they came. Fortunately, I wasn't home. Zeke, however, *was* home and they promptly grabbed him and the plants, frog-marched him over to the cop shop and put him thru the whole dreary routine.

When I got home late that night I sort of noticed that he wasn't there but I didn't think much of it, since it wasn't all that unusual. I *certainly* noticed that the plants were gone but somehow it didn't really sink in — I was merely puzzled. The next day I had things to do and left pretty early and when I got back to 140, again rather late, once more there was no Zeke. I sat down to think and after a bit I began to put two and two together — no Zeke, no plants; no Zeke, no plants; no Zeke . . . aha. Oh, dear.

Zeke, in the meanwhile, had remained in the custody of the Gulag-masters because when they offered him his one phone call it had suddenly dawned on him that he didn't know anybody who had a phone. Not in this state, anyway. So in the clink he remained until I bailed him out (this was now the second day) and he was pretty irate about it. He seemed to think it should have occurred to me where he must be but that was hardly logical — he could have been anywhere, and taken the plants along for company. He remained in high dudgeon, however, and when the hearing came around he was fined seventy-five bucks. He made me pay it.

We had all had the occasional run-in with the cops, of course, but Davy seemed to have this problem more than most. Perhaps there was something about his wispy blond hair and Germanic good looks that just set a cop's teeth on edge. At any rate, he had a new tale of woe about once a month and without a doubt, the Incident at Arbutus was impressive.

Davy's VW bus was his darling. It had beautiful wood paneling, a sink, icebox, fold-out bed — even a built-in canvas awning that could be rolled out to serve as a porch. It was truly magnificent and that spring he was living in it. He parked over on the campus, where it was relatively quiet and also handy to the showers in the gym. He found a secluded spot near some trees behind Arbutus Hall, the ancient, crumbling sculpture studio.

Arbutus was one of several, identical, barracks-like buildings that had been slapped up in that sector like erector sets during World War II. They were sturdy but dilapidated and had been turned into workshops for the messier Fine Arts — painting, sculpture, saxophone practice — and had begun to resemble something from an East European slum. The Fine Artists had done some landscaping with a few tons of iron

and steel (potential sculpture? finished sculpture?) which gave the whole complex a nice bohemian look. Davy had taken a few sculpture classes while finishing up his degree; he knew the routine around there and his bus fit right in since, for all its being grand on the inside, it was pitifully neglected on the outside. He had been camping out there for a month or so and was just getting himself settled in and comfy late one night — the curtains drawn and the teakettle a-boil — while in the process of finishing up a joint. Suddenly there came that intense pounding on the door: *Bam-Bam-**Bam-Bam-BAAMM**.* 'Twas The Law.

He sat bolt upright, wondering what he should do — he ate the roach but there was no rear exit so, naturally, he had to open the door. The first thing he saw when he poked his head out was a flashlight pointing straight into his eyes and a haze of blue smoke drifting out of the VW. A hard, cop-voice demands, "What's that smell?" — and Davy faces his first decision. He decides to stonewall it — innocently he says, "What smell?" and hopes for the best.

Now, with almost any other campus cop the stupid approach would probably have worked, for they were an easygoing bunch and not unknown to have the occasional toke themselves. But he had pulled the one Vietnam Vet on the whole force, a gung-ho Marine out to save the world for Nixon.

"Get out of the van," he says.

This is taking on the appearance of a major hassle. The cop is stern but Davy wisely sticks to his stonewall and after a few minutes it is clear that the young Turk is a little uncertain about just what he can or cannot do. He puts out the call for reinforcements and within minutes two squad cars pull up — lights flashing, sirens growling — and no less than seven cops pile out. Their nightsticks are at the ready and their eyes are gleaming with excitement — they haven't had this much fun in years.

In general the most action the Campus Police ever had was a fast run to the doughnut shop or a harrowing chase after a loose pooch — there used to be the occasional panty raid but that quaint little ritual was showing signs of dying out. But, now, a *dope* raid, *that* was more like it. An older cop with a fat paunch and a mean eye takes over as Davy staunchly continues to deny all. He is beginning to grow a little anxious, however, for right about then he remembers that there are three — count 'em, three — fat little ounces of prime homegrown hidden underneath the bed in a paper bag. Oops. The bull-cop senses fear and orders the troops to form a perimeter around the VW; he climbs in and begins his search.

Now, here things take a strange turn. A spaced-out couple appear out of nowhere and stand quietly staring at Davy and the squadron of cops. They are obviously stoned out of their gourds and at last the girl pipes up and plaintively whines at Davy, "Are you a *Leo*?"

Davy is confused by the question (since he *is* a Leo) and doesn't quite know how to answer. The van is rocking back and forth and he can hear dishes and boxes and

books being tossed around — but no one seems to be paying any attention to that. The cops stare hard back and forth between him and the couple, concerned about a possible conspiracy. Since he has decided on a stonewall, Davy looks the nymphet straight in the eye and gives her a flat "No." After another long moment she nasals out, "Well, y'know where the pharmacy is then?" Instantly, Davy answers with another flat "No" and the pair drift off, profoundly disappointed. One of the cops giggles. Suddenly there is a silence in the van and Davy's mouth goes dry: his mind begins to race — it's not his van, it's not his dope, he works for the CIA — but at last the fat cop emerges, a look of utter disgust on his face, and says, ". . . Nothing, not even a goddamn roach."

Gung-ho stutters, "B-but I *smelled* it, Cap, I kn-know that smell, d-dammit!" The regiment averts its collective gaze and the paunchy Bull ignores him. He tells them all to get back in the cars. Davy is every bit as stunned as the young Vet but for the sake of form he begins to protest his innocence and . . . this . . . outrageous invasion of . . . the lack of due process . . . the . . . the. . . . Mean-eye stops him with a glare.

The cops roar off and Davy hops into the bus and tears out of there. Finally he calms down enough to find a place to park on a dark side street and sits there for a long time, shaking and listening to his heart pound. He mulls over events . . . and there is a mystery here. At last he climbs into the back of the VW and takes a look under the bed — there it is, the bag of dope with . . . aha. *Two* ounces.

April 11, 1970 — Gov. Rockefeller signs law legalizing abortion in New York.

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Don't surround yourself with yourself
Move on back two squares
—Yes

It was a relief to Zeke, in a way, when Erica announced that she was going back home for good to marry an old sweetheart. He was unhappy for awhile and moped around inordinately, but he knew in his heart that the thing with her was going nowhere and now he would be free to roam a little wider afield. Not that he hadn't been roaming some already. His relationship with her had always been more or less platonic and Zeke had a particular fondness for nubile young violinists. So before long he was back to normal, with a new tale of disaster about twice a month.

Right on the heels of Erica's departure came the news that Davy was leaving also. His battle against the draft had taken him, like Ian, into the Peace Corps and he was off to Fiji for two years. Not, however, before getting kicked out of one last grocery store.

Davy, even more than Zeke and I, insisted on getting stoned for every little chore

— going out for tobacco or to get groceries. That was fine but he seemed to get into some hassle or other far too often for my taste. For instance, the "green stamps" they handed out in these places irked Davy no end and he began plastering them onto the glass doors each time as he left. When they got tired of scraping them off, they would watch for him and make an enormous scene out of it — I stood fidgeting nearby (often with something in my pockets that I'd forgotten to pay for) until they got tired of yelling at one another. What the hell, for all I knew his self-expression was at stake.

We gladly followed Davy's lead on getting stoned to do the laundry, however, since there was no other way to mitigate the hideous tedium of the chore. And, too, the laundromat near 140 was not at all like the clean, brightly lit place near Ma Ball's house — it was a grungy little affair of six or seven machines with a grimy concrete floor. Even the cockroaches seemed unhappy. It was dank and fetid and there was never a soul around. The sign out front said, simply, "Wash 'Em." Naturally, if you had to go there you might as well get stoned.

After a few months I finally broke down and bought a cheap wooden chess set and convinced Zeke to come along and play chess while we soaked the threads. I had organized a chess club in high school, at the beginning of Bobby Fischer's heyday, and I was not a bad player. Zeke and Anton knew the rudiments of the game and I got a kick out of teaching them openings, strategies, and the finer points of style and tactics — partly because it reversed the roles for a change and partly because it gave me a chance to purely destroy them on a regular basis.

At first we played only at "Wash 'Em" but soon we were setting up games wherever we could. We tried the Union but it was too noisy, we tried the doughnut shops but took up space for so long that they tossed us out, we tried playing outside but it was too distracting. Finally we settled on Rapp's Jewish Deli just a block off of Kirkwood, since it was the nearest thing we could find to a coffeehouse. The owner didn't seem to mind us sitting there for hours, buying only an occasional cup of coffee or a cookie, for he seemed to feel it added a bohemian touch to the place. Too, he had played the game back in New York and found it nostalgic to watch us go at it over in a corner.

We sat in a side room with tiny little tables and a dark, studious atmosphere — hunched over the board with cigarettes and a furrowed brow, launching fierce attacks and cunning defenses. Anton caught on the fastest and he was eager to absorb all he could. He lost game after game, tenacious as hell and never appearing to be in the slightest discouraged. Sometimes we'd stop the game after some outlandish faux-pas and go back to analyze things to that point — but he would never accept suggestions or advice, resigning with a sigh when the end came.

He was picking it up fast and his only real fault was that he played much too slowly, trying to dissect every position ad nauseam. Usually this only got him into a muddle and he wound up talking himself out of the only good move on the board. He

hated the obvious. When all he needed to do was push a pawn, he would spend half an hour looking for that one truly elegant *riposte,* the crushing blow. And, of course, overlook in the meantime that I could simply take his queen. Nevertheless, he was becoming dangerous, for once in a while one of his brilliancies would work.

Zeke, on the other hand, was much slower to learn but a much faster player. He was careful and crafty and unorthodox but, unlike Anton, he was a thorough learner and would seldom make the same mistake twice. Anton could never remember well enough what hadn't worked out before and tried to extricate himself with wild explorations and brilliant sacrifices (when they worked he would glow for days) while Zeke was developing a flair for strange shifts of mood. As time went on he developed a real genius for the positional type of play called "Hypermodern" — a bizarre style that the erratic and gifted Nimzovitch had originated long ago. Instead of developing his pieces in an orderly bid for more control of space, he would begin stacking them over into one corner, oddly interconnecting and apparently useless. But in fact they were often extraordinarily well placed for creative counterplay — if you knew how to use such an unwieldy tool. Zeke didn't, for the most part, but he slowly developed his instinct for outlandish positions, which often had a subtle, elegant point to them.

Hour after hour we sat in the deli, contemplating rooks and pawns and bishops, and sometimes I wonder how a snapshot of us would have looked. Zeke, off to one side, just getting ready to lick the paper of his cigarette and looking wise and bemused; tall Anton hunched forward, fingering his beard, concentrating intently as he went thru the permutations; and me, straight hair to my shoulders, leaning back with a smug, insufferable air — whether winning or losing.

April 13, 1970 — Apollo 13 capsule is damaged en route to the moon by a faulty valve on an oxygen tank; astronauts circle the moon and return safely to earth for a splashdown on April 17.
April 30, 1970 — Reneging on all promises to end the war, Nixon escalates by ordering the invasion of Cambodia (he terms it "an incursion") triggering huge antiwar demonstrations nationwide.
May 4, 1970 — At an antiwar protest at Kent State, Ohio, National Guard troops open fire, citing "a hail of rocks." Four unarmed students are killed and 11 wounded. Agnew says it was "predictable and preventable"; Nixon says "when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy." Both applaud the Guard and seem to suggest the students were responsible for their own deaths.

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Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'
We're finally on our own
—Crosby Stills Nash & Young

When I heard the news come in over the radio at Kim's place, at first I was so stunned I didn't know what to think. Had they been armed? No, the report said "unarmed students." It seemed impossible — and then, all of a sudden, it seemed not only highly possible but utterly in keeping with the mounting lies, deception, violence and posturing. The self-serving and inflammatory rhetoric of Agnew and Nixon was bearing fruit — and my first real reaction was, "If they want war, by fuck I'll *give* 'em war!"

I wanted, for the first time in my life, truly to go out and get a gun and get the damn thing started. I tore out of Kim's apt feeling sick, enraged, and engulfed in a profound sense of grief.

What if you knew her and
Found her dead on the ground

What was I going to do? All that night I sat with Zeke, talking about getting a gun and having at the bastards. He just listened and said very little. It was wise passive resistance.

The next day, on my way to work, I heard a commotion coming from the direction of Kirkwood and made a beeline toward it. It was a march — the first I'd seen in Bloomington — with hundreds of people walking solemnly up the street. Some were carrying banners saying "End This Now" or "War Is Death" or simply "Four Dead In Ohio," and many were carrying candles. I joined them and we marched to Dunn Meadow and lit the candles as a soft rain began to fall. We sat and cried, knowing nothing else we could do.

More joined us — freaks, blacks, young people, but also teachers from IU, old folk, and others who simply wanted to share in our bitter, confused grief. A politician-type got up on one of the bandstands and started to speechify but nobody paid any attention and after a while he quit.

More showed up, now with signs saying "Hell, No, We Won't Go!" and "We Don't Want Your Fucking WAR!" and "Death to the Masters of War" — and now a quite different march began. We started back up Kirkwood — shouting, giving cops the finger and, quite frankly, looking for trouble. Those who had leaned out of windows before to show support now shrank back, as did the cops, nervously, and by the time we got to the courthouse, we were ready to take it over and trash the place. But we didn't.

Something in us in that moment died. We looked around at one another — and we knew our anger was misplaced, however much right we had to feel it. The cops arrived now with reinforcements but they, too, sensed the shift of mood and after a few moments they backed off. The spirit of confrontation evaporated as a few of the girls began to sing "Amazing Grace" and we all joined in, tears again streaming down our

faces. What to do — what to do?

And so, that afternoon, we began to talk, and as we did a plan began to take shape. There was nothing we could do about the dead students — but there was a town nearby where they held still held a Klan rally and parade every year and at the moment, taking on racism seemed about the best we could do.

Despite all the promises and plans, however, few were so bold as to actually show up on the appointed day for the trip to Redneck Heaven. There had been four or five hundred on the square but no more than eighty showed up for the drive to the local center of sheetdom. Our caravan made its way slowly along the highway and when we got there, the town was completely silent. I have no idea if we had a permit but southern Indiana seldom cares about such things and we unfurled our banners in the tense quiet and began. Cautiously, tentatively, we made our way down the wide street solemnly singing "We Shall Overcome" — feebly at first but then with gathering defiance. No one around . . . not a soul on the streets; not a sound or a face anywhere. We came to a line of police forming . . . forming what? A gauntlet? A guard? We nervously passed between them, still singing, and they channeled us away from the main avenue and into a smaller side street. At the end of the block stood a double-row of sheeted, hooded figures, waiting grimly. We slowed down — the hooded figures had clubs and shotguns. We stopped.

In the spring of 1970 it was one thing to march with the cameras of national attention on you, quite another to march under the leafy elms of small-town malice. The cops disappeared, evaporating from the sleepy street, while the Klan stood silent. We turned and retreated the way we had come — the sheets followed.

Now the windows of Main Street opened up and the catcalls and rebel-yells began to descend. Soon the rocks and bottles followed, shattering in the street and hitting some of us as we hunched down, banners wilted, under the rain of missiles. We knew better than to run, however, for it would surely have set these dogs of hatred into a frenzy of violence. At last we reached the cars and as a few turned back to face the following throng (now about the size of our group) we jumped in and circled back to pick up the brave souls who had covered us, our cars pelted with anything the furious mob could lay their hands on.

The Greening of Nether Indiana would have to await the forces of evolution; slow-moving, to be sure, but much safer.

In the meantime, however, I had become acquainted with a small group of radicals who were quietly hiding out in Bloomington and who had been watching what we did. I went over to their house one day — there were two women and three men, two large Afghan hounds (as sleek and as elegant as cats) and a great many guns. They spoke softly and calmly about revolution and reform and for quite some time, as I went back again and again to talk, I became sorely tempted to join them. But then, as if in a dream-like haze, they also began to talk about bombs — real bombs and real mayhem. I

stopped to consider.

Was this what we were about, then? For all their reassuring, reasonable tone, for all the fact that I agreed with most of their goals and points of view, the fact is that they represented a kind of hatred that was anathema to all that I thought we stood for. Something deep within them burned for violence and I was no longer sure that the words weren't simply words to them — it could have been revolution or capitalism or fascism itself they were espousing. What they were really about was War.

I never went back. Two of them later died in a fiery shoot-out in Berkeley.

May, 1970 — Intense fighting in Cambodia; heavy civilian casualties reported.
May 9, 1970 — 200,000 antiwar demonstrators converge on Washington, D.C., for peaceful marches; thousands arrested.

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Clean this mess up
Else we'll all end up in jail
—Steely Dan

Mescaline and psilocybin were the other two hallucinogens I wanted to try the most, but they were rare in their natural forms. Mescaline comes from the peyote cactus, which is sacred to the Native Americans of Northern Mexico and the southwest U.S., for they regard its use as a religious experience. Psilocybin comes from the "magic mushroom," *Psilocybe mexicali,* and is just as highly revered by the Indians of southern Mexico and Central America.

The cactus "buttons" and mushrooms were all but impossible to get but people were synthesizing them in clandestine laboratories all over the country. Zeke mentioned having done mescaline before, so I asked him where we could find some. He got that wise smile on his face I always hated.

"Well," he said, "that ain't easy. Jörgen used to get mescaline for us — but he could get just about anything."

"Did you ever try psilocybin?"

"No, that was pretty rare. But he got peyote and synthetic mescaline. That was pretty nice, I like mescaline."

"Wasn't the natural stuff a lot better?"

"Actually I like the synthetic better. The cactus has a lot of other crap in it that makes you sick. For the first two hours I just laid there and groaned, wondering when it was ever going to get better. I got over it, but the synthetic stuff doesn't make you sick at all."

"What was it like?"

That was the question Zeke really hated. It is an intensely personal and subjective experience and he was not very keen on trying to describe it. All he would say was that mescaline was "kind of halfway between grass and acid." Whatever that meant.

We got lucky in late spring, tho, when Kim told us she'd met someone who just might have some synthetic psilo to sell. No sooner said than done — we scraped together all the money we had and trucked on over to see "Pete."

His house was over on the east side of town, in a kind of "no-man's land" that was half students and half locals. We knocked on the door but there was no answer. We could hear the stereo going, so we knocked again — still nothing. Zeke finally shrugged and went in, and I followed.

Pete glanced up from the couch, smiled, and said "Howdy." We said "Hi," and Zeke stumblingly asked if he was Kim's friend and explained that she had sent us over. Pete seemed totally uninterested and kept on with what he was doing.

Pete had longish, very "fashionable" blond hair, a discreet gold chain around his neck and perfectly manicured hands. He had a box of empty capsules beside him on the couch and he was "capping" doses of something from a large brown bag between his legs. It was a white powder and I asked what it was. He said "Psilo." A half-full *grocery* bag of psilo — my jaw involuntarily dropped. The stereo was playing the Stones at a polite volume and the record jacket was carefully propped up against the cabinet, displaying the current selection. Every time Pete capped a hit, he licked the white powder from his fingers. We heard a voice from the kitchen and in walked a stunningly tall blond woman . . . totally naked. She had one or two small, tasteful tatoos here and there and my jaw involuntarily closed again. I gulped. She glanced at us, utterly unconcerned, handed Pete a cup of coffee (or something) and walked back to the kitchen. In a quiet, friendly voice, Pete asked us if we'd come to buy some psilo.

For just a moment, I wondered if I'd done some acid and somehow forgotten all about it. The furnishings in this place were bizarrely normal — a couch, tables, chairs, even curtains, fer godssake. It was immaculate, not a coaster out of place, not a single stain on the carpet. This could have been my parents' place, if it wasn't for this guy calmly sitting there capping dope and licking his fingers. The girl added that piquant touch.

Zeke said, yeah, we'd come to buy some psilo and how much was it? Pete shrugged, looked us up and down *very* frankly and said, how about five bucks a hit? We pulled out every bill we had and handed it over. It seemed like the only thing to do, given the circumstances.

Pete carefully counted it out, smoothing the bills on his knee, and gave us back three ones and six of the little capsules. The girl made one more pass thru (still *au naturel*) heading to the bedroom, and as we edged our way to the door we mumbled "Thanks," and "See ya!" Pete glanced up with that all-white, glistening smile and said

"Bye!"

May 14, 1970 — Highway Patrolmen open fire on unarmed protestors at Jackson State College, Mississippi. Over 100 shots fired in less than a minute; 2 students killed, 9 injured.

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And you've just had some kind of mushroom
And your mind is movin' slow
—Jefferson Airplane

We carried our prize home and within a week or two we found a perfect chance to try it out. It was spring and the honeysuckle was out, the lilacs were just finishing and the days were a warm dream. This time we not only had the chamomile tea and honey at hand (just in case) but Davy had left us some Valium as well, which was said to do an even better job of bringing you down. I felt more confident having this safety net and in the early afternoon we each took a hit.

Within twenty minutes I began to feel the stirrings of that same restless, yet detached, excitement I'd felt on acid. True to what Zeke said, the rush, tho similar to acid, was much less intense — there was a gentleness to it, a feeling less of being swept irresistibly along than of being wafted upwards, outwards, and inwards. It was almost luxuriant — extremely intense, yes, but more comfortable and somehow more *manageable*.

For a long time we merely sat and let it come. Then, inevitably, the dreaded question came into my mind and, I knew, Zeke's, too. "What do you want to do?" Sitting there letting the cascade of sensations pour over us was one thing but, like it or not, as beings we are designed and programmed to *do* things. To take the pressure off, I suggested we sit outside for a bit.

Out on the steps I again encountered that transformed world — a quieter, starker world where my heightened senses could simultaneously discern wind and warmth and the smells of the earth and air; where vision was not a matter of looking but seeing — and immediately I could see that my color sense was far more acute than it had been on acid. Every shade, every nuance of color was brilliantly distinct, sharply in focus, with the stunning clarity that is only possible in Antarctica, where there are so few colors. I was enthralled as I sat, simply seeing.

Fully realizing it was Stupid Question #78, I asked Zeke how he thought this differed from mescaline. To my surprise he became thoughtful and said, "Well, I remember mescaline as being a lot more physical than this — I remember laying on Jörgen's bed and all I wanted to do was wallow in it. We went outside and I saw a pile of leaves and I couldn't help myself — I fell into it and rolled around, wallowing.

"But this is different. It's more . . . not really *intellectual,* y'know, but more . . . *mindful.*"

That seemed like a useful thing to say. Mindful. I could see that — I was inclined far more than on acid to observe and reflect; I wanted to talk more, tho talking was still such a shock that I held back. Suddenly I had an idea.

"What if . . ." I began, not sure I should say it, "what if we got the chessboard out . . ." I let it hang, not really knowing what I was saying — I couldn't picture it, it was just an idea.

Zeke said, "The park!" and that was it.

There was a little park up the street, a few blocks away, an out-of-the-way place that was seldom used. We took the board and walked over and there was not a soul around. We sat at a little stone table, a gentle, warm breeze blowing in the tree above, and set the pieces up to play.

Even tho there was a slight chill in the air, psilo raises your temperature a bit and we were perfectly comfortable. As we began it seemed strange to see the familiar pieces in such an unfamiliar pose — it seemed so odd to move them on the black and red squares, in "battle" against one another. The idea seemed alien and strained, yet we followed the preordained dance of move and countermove.

And then, a beautiful game unfolded. My opening followed the traditional strategy of gaining space, of controlling lines and diagonals. Zeke followed *his* usual tactic of arranging his moves so that he could reconsolidate them into the queenside corner (I had drawn white and he was playing black). Tho I knew full well what he was doing, I didn't attack, cautious about the dangers of rushing in too soon. His pieces presented no opening, no seam thru which I could disrupt his plans. I waited, and gained more space.

By the time we were fully into the middle game, having traded a few pieces but still only approaching the climax, by all rights it should have seemed like ages had gone past. Psilo, like acid, expanded time enormously — and yet, when at last I looked up, it was already late in the afternoon and the sun was low in the sky. It seemed like only minutes since we'd sat down to play — how extraordinary! I commented on this to Zeke as I rolled up another smoke but his nose was buried in the board and he hardly even glanced up. We hadn't seen anyone in all that time; we might have been the last two people on earth.

Returning to the game, I felt a tremendous satisfaction — the symmetry was astonishing, the pieces on both sides were subtly, totally engaged, tho perfectly in balance. I became engrossed in the black pieces, by their powerful yet complex interdependence. I saw millions of possibilities in such a dynamic position. The culmination had come . . . I moved. Zeke moved. I moved. Zeke moved — and all at once I found that I was playing the black pieces! I wanted to say something — but then Zeke made a move for white! Without thinking, I reached over and moved another

black piece, trying hard to remember how long this had gone on . . . *was* I playing black? Surely, I'd started as white . . . hadn't I? Dare I say anything? What if I'm wrong and . . . after taking another move, Zeke leaned back, rolled up a Three Caftles, and with an embarrassed little smile said, "Y'know, I think we got switched here, somehow."

There was nothing to do but laugh, but when we tried to remember who'd started it — and when — we didn't have a chance. What to do now — should we go on this way . . . or what?

The game was beautifully poised, right in the middle of an explosive climax, yet there was no way to get it back to where we'd been. But in another sense, if we kept going with it switched, neither one of us could lose! We turned the board around and played on — Zeke now white while I played black. Instantly the gloves came off. With our egos withdrawn from the field, we could give it all we had — the pieces engaged with an almost audible *clang* and Zeke launched a furious attack. I hardened the bulwarks of his bristling defense, found the right answer and parried — he faltered and I went in for the kill; he counterattacked, on the kingside! Back and forth it went, bishops and rooks being dashed from the board, pawns and knights flying everywhere. Every symmetry that had originally been woven into the design played itself out in stunning beauty, unfolding with an astonishing *rightness.* There was only one possible outcome. With the sun going down and but a few pieces left, we sat back and agreed to a draw. Even the last men on the board seemed to salute one another for this tapestry of perfectly intricate design.

There was nothing more to do or say and we agreed it was better to give one another some time alone. I wanted to savor what was left of the day, walking thru the blue shades of evening as they shifted imperceptibly from violet to purple, utterly content.

June 24, 1970 — Gulf of Tonkin Resolution "repealed" by Congress (funding for the war is unaffected).

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Love comes to you when you follow
Lose one, on to the heart of the sunrise
—Yes

Kim was so busy working on her master's degree that I could only see her intermittently, whenever she had a few spare hours. This was complicated by the fact that Zeke was also having an affair with her, tho we never talked about it.

Anton did a careful job of keeping his feelings cloaked in Yankee dignity. He showed no resentment toward either of us but, on the other hand, he declined to do

psilo with us, either — possibly because that could have led to an outpouring of feelings that none of us wanted. It was best to leave it alone and there was a four-way shroud of silence on the subject.

Making love to Kim was tender and glorious but there was something indefinable — a slight undercurrent of distance. After the Clap Flap I had become disillusioned for a while, but soon I saw that not only did she have a right to see whoever she wanted (in multiples if she wished) I had piled expectations onto her that were outright ridiculous. Even so, now, desperate as I was to get her to return my deepening love, I felt a mask, a pretense of frankness, that I could not get past. She would easily and honestly say that she loved me — but it was often coupled with some homily about "unfettered sharing" and "the freedom of the universal spirit"; she called me her "raven-hair" and spoke of how clearly she "saw" me. Her openness was artless, yet somehow *too* free. Love, I felt, does not spring to the lips like an offer of a favor.

When summer came and the semester was over she suddenly announced that she was leaving, going back home to Connecticut. This was as abrupt as it was offhanded — she tried to reassure me but my intuition told me she was leaving for good. Zeke, as usual, said nothing, but an immediate change came over Anton. He grew ever more sardonic and turned completely inward. Perhaps he had been hoping for some sort of reconciliation, simply giving Kim enough time to work it out and come back to him. But he felt as keenly as I did that this departure was a message, a final signal. He felt everything intensely and within days he all but abandoned the piano and turned to his other love, drawing — sketching darkly in charcoal. His portraits of Einstein and Jörgen, while on the surface "objective," and tender, were nonetheless tinged with a passionate, hidden anger.

Zeke still said nothing, showed nothing. At last I poured out my heart to Kim and she offered to take me along. I leaped at the chance but she quickly explained that she was only willing to take me as far as New London, to where she had done her undergraduate work at Connecticut College. There she would show me around and see that I got settled — but she didn't yet know where she was going or if she would ever return. She felt I would like New London and that it would be a good place for me to "begin" (whatever that meant) — but I could not go with her beyond that.

Naturally, I accepted, for I couldn't see anything else that offered even that much hope. I no longer wished to stay in Indiana. We loaded up her old Fairlane on a gray day in late June and drove eastward. Zeke saw us off and wished us well.

June 29, 1970 — U.S. troops withdrawn from Cambodia; Nixon terms the operation a "success." No apparent effect on the war.

PART IV
. . . To Someplace Where I Never Been Before

I still remember the dream there
I still remember the time you said goodbye
—Yes

We drove thru the night and into Connecticut the next day, going straight on to New London. Very tired, we stopped at an ice cream place to eat and map out a strategy. Kim was going on to her parents' home upstate but would help me try to find a room first.

Her senior year at Connecticut College, she had lived in a rooming house just a couple of blocks from the campus. We drove over to see if there were any rooms available and, as fate would have it, the vacancy was the same room that she had had. I wasn't too happy with the fat slob who ran the place but it was a clean room on the second floor, with a view of the Thames River. Kim promised to come back in a day or two to show me around and we unloaded my stuff and carried it upstairs. And then, suddenly, I was alone again, in a strange place and with no idea what I was doing there.

I slept well that night but woke up with that old fear in the pit of my stomach and took a walk around the neighborhood to begin finding myself. The rooming house was at the bottom of a steep hill, just a hundred yards or so from the river, and up the hill and across the highway was the campus. Since it was a private college I wasn't sure if I could just walk in and look around so I went the other way, toward town.

From the eastern point of the hill I could see the Coast Guard Academy and the road into New London. As in Bloomington, I had a hard time at first getting my directions straight but the first thing I noticed was that this town was so spread out that I was going to need a car. I sat down on a boulder, perched on a little mound at the triangle where the main road joined a smaller one that skirted the rear of the college. I did some mental arithmetic and realized that $64, with a rent of $20 a week to pay, wasn't going to last very long. Getting more and more depressed, I walked back to the house and waited for Kim to come back.

A couple of days later she showed up and we went over to see a friend of hers named Tara. They had been classmates but Tara had stayed at in New London to work on her Master's. She was small and dark and very shy but also quick to laugh. She and Kim had a long reunion talk, hardly noticing me, and after a bit we went out to eat.

Kim told Tara that I was going to enroll for the fall semester and that I might need some help learning the ins and outs of the "biddy system." (Which system ran on

the principle that if you remained a sour old virgin long enough, you were perfectly suited to ruin the hopes and dreams of young women.) Tara seemed eager to help and I said that the first thing I was going to need was a car, so she offered to drive me around looking for one.

I noticed that when Kim wasn't looking, Tara would give me the most intense, questioning glances, then cover up by asking innocuous little questions about where I was from and so forth. Suddenly Kim dropped her little bomb, remarking that she was off to Europe within a few days, and Tara's interest in me seemed to escalate a notch. I didn't know what to think about her at all — I was at sea, totally surprised by Kim's news.

When we were alone again she explained that she'd decided to go to Denmark, and then perhaps see the rest of Europe. Her folks would pay for it, as a kind of graduation present, but she was going alone. This was the second surprise in less than a month but, from the signals she had been giving out, it wasn't all that unexpected. Kim thought she was doing me a favor by introducing me to someone at Conn College — but to my mind it was just her way of dumping me and putting an end to all her associations with Bloomington in the bargain. She didn't offer any further help, I didn't ask for any, and she left.

July, 1970 — Congress holds hearings on domestic bombings, which totaled 4,330 from Jan. 1969 to April 1970.
July 12, 1970 — Thor Heyerdahl and 7 others reach Barbados after crossing the Atlantic on the ***Ra II*** *in 57 days.*

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You get no bread with one meatball
—Josh White

Tara came by the next day to take me car hunting and apparently Kim had found a way to tell her that it was my birthday, for she brought along a gift-wrapped book as a present. I was so startled I could only mumble out some thanks — this was taking a turn that I hadn't expected.

We got a paper and scanned the ads for cars and found an old group of row houses fronting the ocean, where they had just what I was looking for. It was a '59 Chevy — one of the largest ever made and the size of a small schooner. It was pretty run down but when I popped the hood, I saw wall-to-wall engine. My god, someone had shoehorned a 396 in there! The owner obviously wanted to get this thing away from his kid and he only wanted $75 for it. Since it ran, that was my price — the only thing I lacked was the $75.

Tara discreetly asked if I needed a small loan and I almost fell over myself thanking her. I got the title and drove Lulu away, following Tara to her favorite restaurant to celebrate. She had a quiet laugh and searching green eyes — she seemed to exude an intimacy and kindness that I needed very badly just then. And how badly I repaid her.

After helping me with the car, Tara took me over to the college and the Registrar's office — like it or not, I was enrolling. They asked what I was majoring in (!) and all I could think of was philosophy, so they put that down and set me up for an SAT test. My high school record was miserable but my chances were not that bad, since it had been a women's college only the year before — now they were coed and they needed men.

Tara's interest in me became more and more evident as the summer went along, but, much as I liked her, much as it would have been wise, I found that I simply couldn't respond. She was lovely, kind, and winning and I felt like a complete ass. I couldn't help it — I was hung up on Kim. I was more than a little bitter but mostly I was just mooning. I was lonely for one person and one person only; Tara had the sense to stop seeing me when it became obvious it was going nowhere but I could feel her hurt and anger . . . a mirror of my own.

I shoved all that aside; I had to get money coming in and had few skills, so I began applying for fry cook jobs. One of the first places I went to was in Groton, across the river. It was just a hole-in-the-wall joint but actually that was good, since they were more likely to hire a long hair.

The owner's name was Alice and she was another of those independent, kind-hearted, no-bullshit types that seem to flourish in New England. She was thin and wiry and she loved to pal around with "the boys." I could picture her tossing out the rowdier sorts you were bound to get around there, since it was right on the waterfront.

Her tiny place was more of a bar than a cafe, with a small kitchen that offered quick meals to the workers who came in on their lunch hour. Right next door was the huge Electric Boat plant, where they made nuclear submarines. For most of the day there were never more than three or four people around but during the lunch hour it was packed and she needed a get-it-done cook who could shove the eats out the window fast. From the look on her face I could tell that she thought I was a gamble, but I got the job.

The basic fare was a "grinder" ("hero," "submarine," "hoagie"), burgers and fries and spaghetti, which was fixed well ahead of time and warmed up by keeping hot water running over it. And, just like in the old song, "Ya Got No Bread With One Meat Ball."

Alice kept a sharp eye out but she soon realized she could count on me and spent her time cheerfully schmoozing with the rawboned workers and stopping the fights that broke out almost daily. It was a revelation for me to see that most of them came in,

not for the food, but for a quick shot-and-a-beer . . . or two or three. They were half-bagged by the time the boss yelled "Ready!" — these were the guys making nuclear submarines? My heart swelled with patriotic pride.

It was my second week on the job before I suddenly noticed that there was no sign in the window — the place didn't seem to have a name! I hadn't noticed that before, so I simply called it "Alice's."

I took the SAT in July and the registrar called me in to explain that, while my high school record was borderline yellow-matter-custard, my scores on the SAT were enough to get me in on a partial grant, so a student I became.

The grounds of Connecticut College were peaceful and artfully landscaped but the atmosphere was decidedly stern. The buildings were a uniform, granite monument to Puritan utility and reminded me of the community homes of the Shakers — well proportioned and solidly built, but dour and uncompromising. Dignity and the hard-work ethos were wrapped around the place like a bishop's chasuble.

I sought out Tara once more but she could feel in every movement that I was still thinking of Kim and she grew cold and brusque. I hated the rooming house where I was living and there was nary another freak in sight, no matter where I went in New London. I grew lonelier every day. In truth, no matter who I met and no matter how intense and languid our encounters may have seemed at the time, we were glancing off of one another like so many billiard balls; careening across the green baize fabric in unfathomable permutations — dreaming our dreams alone.

July 23, 1970 — Members of a special Nixon Commission on Kent State call the murders "completely unjustified." The FBI issues a report saying the shootings were "not necessary and not in order" and that there was no "hail of rocks"; most of the students had been shot in the back or the sides.

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Well you're built like a car
You got a hubcap, diamond-star halo
—T. Rex

While it would have been wise for me to redirect my love toward another human being, in fact that role went to Lulu.

Mechanically there was more than a little wrong with Lulu and she made such odd noises that I fussed over her like an old aunt with a favorite nephew. She hadn't been waxed in years and her original azure color had faded to baby-blue. The floorboards were so rusted that spouts of water shot up under my legs whenever I went over a puddle. The hood was so huge it was like driving behind a billiard table, and she

was so wide that there was often barely enough room to squeeze past the oncoming cars. Lulu was fat, faded and balky but I loved her — there was, after all, that humongous engine.

If I so much as tapped the accelerator she would spring forward like a startled deer and she passed cars with such alarming suddenness that the other drivers would jerk around in a snap of surprise, swerving slightly as we shooshed past. I didn't do that very often, tho, for she handled like a boat and I needed a good quarter-mile just to pull into another lane and then back again.

Keeping her running was another story. Lulu was not the first car I'd had and I thought I was fairly mechanical, but that turned out to be an illusion. In the first week of our getting acquainted, I came out of the rooming house to take a drive and she refused to start. What the hell. I checked this and I checked that and finally walked to a garage and brought the mechanic back to have a look. He had me sit behind the wheel and turn her over while he peered under the hood. With infinite patience he strolled back, leaned into the window, and in a confidential tone said, "Ahhh, cah won't staht without ya put gas into it."

He was tickled as hell but so amiable that I simply grinned stupidly and allowed as how that might be a good idea. That warmed him up and he put in some gas and then we went over her from stem to stern. He warned me that the starter was about to go and told me where there was a junkyard where I could pick one up cheap. He wasn't kidding, either, for the next day there was nothing but a clicking noise and I had no starter. Unfortunately, I also had no tools and no money, so this was going to be a problem. Lulu had a stick shift, however, so I coasted down the slight grade and popped the clutch and she started like a dream. From then on, I was simply careful to park her on a slope and that solved that, until. . . .

I finished work at Alice's one night and I came out to get her going — parked, as always, on a hill just around the corner. Down the hill we went — pop the clutch, chugga, chugga, chugga, ***whack*** . . . nothing. Oops. Fortunately, I hadn't gone all the way down the hill yet, so I tried it again — chugga, chugga, chugga . . . ***whomp.*** Nothing. Uh-oh.

There was nothing for it but to get out and push her back up that hill. I believe I mentioned that this was the biggest Chevy ever made, with the biggest engine that could possibly fit into it. Logically, pushing a two-ton car up a hill, single-handedly, should not be possible. But I got up in front of her, put my rear against the grill and pushed, straining as hard as I could. Like a galley slave, inch by inch, back up the hill we went, until I'd gotten her just far enough to give it another try. I stopped, straining to hold her in place — and it suddenly dawned on me that I hadn't left the door open. Shit. I gave a final heave and let her go, jumping out of the way and then racing around to the side.

Now, unless you've tried opening a car door while it is hurtling downhill,

gaining speed like an artillery piece, you have no idea how hard it is to overcome the combined forces of gravity and inertia. At last I yanked the door open and leaped inside, just in time to slam on the brakes before hitting the cars parked across the street at the bottom. Panting and swearing I got out, left the door *open* this time and tried again. In the evening dusk I could see people in a bar across the way gathering in a window to watch the show.

One step, another step, a few more . . . just one more — I'm not as far this time, but . . . *raaace* around to the side, jump in, pop the clutch — chugga, chugga, chugga . . . nothing. Aha. Shall we remember next time to *leave the goddam ignition on*?

Wearily I climbed out yet again, near the end of my rope but damned if I was going to give up — one tiny step at a time, now . . . *push, push.* In the bar across the way, they're all at the window, whistling and yelling, egging me on. Push, dammit, *push*! One more step, just one more little . . . I can't do any more, *raaace* around to the side, *leap* in the open door, *pop* the clutch and . . . ***Varooom,*** Lulu roared to life!

I drove back up the hill for a victory pass; the barflies were standing out in front now, waving their drinks and cheering. I waved back, exhausted but content, and roared away.

What a life.

Aug. 11, 1970 — Jesuit priest, Rev. Daniel Berrigan, is arrested; joins his brother, Rev. Philip Berrigan, in prison for burning draft records.
Aug. 26, 1970 — Nationwide demonstrations by NOW in support of the ERA on the 50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.

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Here it comes . . .
Your 19th nervous breakdown
—The Rolling Stones

A conflict arose at Alice's when classes started in the fall. I was taking two courses in ancient Greek philosophy and one of them met in the afternoon — I had been working both the noon and evening rush but I asked Alice if I could come in just for the lunch hour and, to my surprise, she agreed. This was going to leave me short of cash, however, so I got another job as a janitor at the tiny Groton Airport. I went in from 10:00 p.m. til 2:00 a.m. and had the place to myself, mopping the floors and cleaning out the bathrooms.

I got into the habit of staying up late and often drove down a rutted dirt road behind the rooming house to a place where I could park by the Thames. Upriver there were rusting hulks looming out of the shadows from some abandoned drydocks but to

the right, in a berth behind the Coast Guard Academy, an old four-masted sailing ship glittered primly. Night after night I drove down to watch the river, smoking dope and listening to Jean Shepherd on the radio. I came across him by chance — an excited, breathless voice from out of the darkness, talking endlessly about whatever came into his head and funnier than anything I'd ever heard. I could have sworn he was smoking grass, too, and it made me feel at home, for what I missed most was not having any other freaks around. The river slipped by in the darkness and the barges went up and down; I twiddled the dial and smoked and wondered what in the hell I was doing there.

I had two philosophy professors at school and both began their lectures so slowly I felt they were talking down to us. The entire class was made up of young girls and I soon realized from the questions they asked that, far from talking down to them, the profs were doing their best to get them thinking. One girl asked, quite seriously, whether the ancient Greeks had started the tradition of fraternities and sororities and instead of rolling his eyes to heaven, the prof patiently explained why this could not be — while the rest of the class carefully wrote it all down!

It was a mistake to make a joke in these classes, as even the teachers knew. One of them was running thru a short list of important people in classical philosophy: Thales, Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, Anaximenes, etc., and casually mentioned that *his* personal favorite was Impedimentes. Several hands shot up as they leafed wildly thru their books, looking for the name. (*My* favorite was Heraclitus "The Dark": "The going up and the going down are the same" and "The driest soul is the best." The incomprehensible pithiness was a wonder of elegant absurdity.)

You would think that with so few males around I would have had young women climbing all over me but this was not quite the case. Most of them were from the well-heeled set and went out of their way to make sure I understood I was "lower class." My long hair marked me as a "hippie" and they couldn't imagine how such trash could have been admitted to such a prestigious place. For the most part I was simply invisible and they went pointedly deaf if I so much as asked where the library was. (Standard joke — "Excuse me, ma'am, can you tell me where the library's at?" Answer: (archly) "Sir, at *this* college we *do not* end a sentence with a preposition." Question: "OK . . . uh, can you tell me where the library's at . . . *asshole*?")

I did try to make friends with one forlorn outcast and we often went for walks in the Arboretum together.

The Arboretum was a large stretch of woods behind campus, landscaped but left partly in the "wild" state and supposedly containing most of the species native to Connecticut. A broad stairway of timbers and dirt led down to a wide lawn with stone benches. There was a gorgeous view of a manicured and highly picturesque lily pond and a path led around the pond, fringed by stately old trees. A number of paths lead off into the wilder, more pristine areas and Amy and I went for walks there and talked

about life, etc.

I had a hard time figuring Amy out, tho. For such a shy and delicate girl she had a strangely morose outlook. Her favorite topic was suicide and she was fond of enumerating all the possibilities and giving them ratings as to their effectiveness. She took enormous pleasure in pointing out every single tree where a former student had hung herself — and there were a lot of them. (How or why she'd collected this data I'll never know, but I did note that the hangees seemed to prefer oak trees. Sturdiness, no doubt.)

She spoke of these things with a quiet passion but I found it somewhat less than romantic. When I finally realized that this was the only topic she was interested in I had one long, last talk with her. I said that as far as I was concerned there was no point in wondering which technique was best — a gun would work, a rope would work, and so would pills or gas. They were all effective, so long as you were determined; you could drown yourself in a toilet bowl if that was the way your humor ran. The method was irrelevant unless you had an artistic bent and wanted to invent a new one. In short, either shut up and do it or find someone to talk to about the motivation. I had nothing *against* suicide . . . I merely thought it was a chancy thing to base a friendship on.

After that I scanned the papers for a week, scared to death I'd pushed her over the edge, but nothing happened. It's true that she may have been on the verge of some sort of breakdown but perhaps she had only been searching for a career and, without knowing it, was a born embalmer.

Sept. 7, 1970 — The Vietnam Veterans Against the War stage Labor Day protests and rallies, calling for an end to the war.
Sept. 18, 1970 — Jimi Hendrix dies of a drug overdose at age 27.

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Sittin' on the dock of the bay
Watching the tide roll away
—Otis Redding

The rooming house on Oneida, no matter how convenient to the campus, was beginning to get me down. A chunky sleazeball of a sailor had moved in down the hall, waiting for a ship to sail on, and he got drunk every night, caterwauling his heart out to "Louise" and stealing everything he could from the communal kitchen. He and the fat slob landlord were old buddies, however, so it was time for me to move out.

I found a place on the other side of town where a young couple were renting out two basement rooms. They were decorated in the worst possible sixties "chic," with a hideous pole lamp that stretched from floor to ceiling with three conical lamps on it, a

bed that folded up into a couch, plastic end tables and a gaudy "clown" painting. But the house was a split-level and the basement opened up onto a porch and just beyond was the river. It was very near the mouth of the Thames, where it poured into Long Island Sound, and the view was delightful. I could walk out and sit on a small stone pier and watch the river.

Too, the guy who rented the other room was definitely a freak, a French-Canadian named Claude. He was a student at nearby Bartles & James College, which he described as a place for "retrogrades," kids who had flunked out everywhere else and were sent there as a last resort. It was the sort of college that would graduate an aardvark if it showed up for classes on time.

Claude had black, curly hair that stood out about half a foot and that grew down in a mane along his massive shoulders and arms. He was thickset and short, with one eyebrow — straight across his forehead. A Neanderthal, in short, but utterly affable and no more menacing than a teddybear.

Going to college was only a dodge for Claude, a way to get his parents to foot the bill while he pursued his real love, playing lead guitar in a band. They practiced every night until 2:00 a.m. but I could barely hear them, even in the next room, since they didn't sing or use amplifiers. The drummer patted away on little rubber pads and they couldn't have been more considerate — for more reasons than one, as I later discovered.

Sept. 26, 1970 — The Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest issues a report saying "an unparalleled crisis as deep as any since the Civil War" exists and calls on Nixon to end the war. Agnew says the report is "imprecise, contradictory and equivocal" and that it is "scapegoating" Nixon.
Sept. 28, 1970 — President Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt dies of a heart attack.

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Come, you Masters of War
Hey, they build the big guns
—Bob Dylan

Back in July, very soon after arriving in New London, the draft board requested that I visit them for another physical. I was again underweight, but this time by only half a pound and I saw that the surly underling in charge had rounded that half-pound up, not down. My number in the draft lottery was 64 — the time was at hand.

I immediately sat down and wrote a letter to my draft board, stating that in my view the war in Vietnam was immoral and the draft was illegal and, therefore, I would not serve in the Armed Forces under any circumstances. If they wanted to come and get me, they could. If they gave me warning I would move to Canada but otherwise I

would opt for prison.

I felt that the war was immoral since the interests of the United States were not directly involved and since the government we were attempting to prop up in Vietnam was corrupt, totalitarian and patently without the support of the people. Killing Vietnamese in their own country, in a civil war, was solely a matter of our need to influence global politics, vis-à-vis communism, by bolstering a government merely because it mouthed the slogans of anticommunism. And ideology, in my view, was a poor reason to be killing people.

Furthermore, the draft itself was unconstitutional, I pointed out, since war had not been declared. The powers of Congress, as spelled out by the Constitution, to "raise and support Armies" was qualified by the phrase "but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years" (Article I, Section 8) and in failing to declare war Congress had abrogated that duty. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, in effect, had conferred congressional authority upon the president illegally.

[Justice William O. Douglas later said that the greatest failure in his years on the Supreme Court was its refusal to hear the cases relating to the draft.]

For years, ever since McCarthy had unfurled his banner of sham patriotism, Americans had been convinced that the greatest menace to democracy and peace was communism. McCarthy had been discredited but that had not changed the fundamental belief that the enemy was communism. What was it based on, why did we fear and hate it so much?

Communism stood, not just for an ideology, but for the imposition of that ideology thru totalitarianism. Fine — we didn't like dictators and the communists invariably installed totalitarian systems, whether in the Soviet Union, Cuba, China or Poland. We stood for freedom and against dictators. So how did we go about fighting communism? By supporting every dictator in the world who pretended to fight communism! In Spain, the Philippines, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, in nearly every small and underdeveloped country of Africa, in South America, in Iran and the Mideast, in Southeast Asia — in short, everywhere but in Europe and North America (north of Mexico, anyway) we fought totalitarianism by supporting dictators!

The other issue, that of Congress granting powers to the president that the Constitution explicitly reserves for the legislative branch, was more serious still. First in Korea, then in Vietnam, Congress threw up its hands and said, "We don't want the responsibility — and our voters don't want us to *have* the responsibility — you do what you want, Mr. President." Thus the House and Senate had involved us in two wars without any authority of the American people behind it. In effect, the ability to wage war fell solely on the chief executive — making him, in some circumstances, a potential dictator. Who could stop a president, under the conditions of war, from declaring the well-known "state of emergency" and simply taking over the country? Not Congress,

not any longer, for once the precedent is set it inevitably expands to suit the needs of those who benefit from it. Instituting a draft *or* instituting a war had become the sole prerogative of the president — and this from a Constitution whose principal author, Thomas Jefferson, was opposed to any standing army, in any form whatsoever.

At any rate, those were my arguments and for six months I sweated it out, waiting for an answer. Apparently the draft board felt that I wasn't qualified to be a True American, for I finally received a notice saying that I was 4F. To say that I was relieved is to say the ocean is wet.

Oct. 4, 1970 — Janis Joplin dies of a drug overdose at age 27.

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Ain't it good to know
You've got a friend
—Carole King

Kim had flown to Denmark in late June and I learned from Zeke that Anton had followed a few weeks later. He had failed his piano juries just a few days before and was in something of a state when he left.

Anton was a brilliant pianist but he had a problem that had no doubt plagued many other brilliant performers — he suffered badly from stage fright. He was fine among friends but even then, if there were more than five or six he could be thrown off and lose his touch. With strangers listening, especially highly critical strangers, he seized up completely and at the juries he had lost his way more than once and been forced to start over. It is easy enough to understand what causes such a thing, since most of us have difficulty performing even in front of an audience that wishes us to succeed. But performing in front of a group that is there solely to judge every nuance and level of skill is terrifying and for a highly strung person like Anton it must have been agony.

What combination of personality traits allows a gifted and sensitive pianist to perform under those conditions? And how many have been lost to us simply because they hadn't been taught how to perform, not just the music, but to an audience. Why is it assumed that a highly gifted musician will be born with that particular ability, which is so different from the art of playing the piano itself?

Anton must have been devastated but this flight after Kim bothered me even more. His pent-up emotions were at last exploding and I knew Kim enough to know that she did not respond well to any outpouring, no matter how genuine. He kept his emotions concealed precisely because they were so volatile — but hers were managed like a well-tuned machine.

In November I got word that Anton had returned. He was not staying with his mother but was upstate, for some reason, at Kim's parents' home. I got hold of him and asked him to come down to New London, and in a couple of weeks he showed up, looking frazzled and haunted. It took awhile to get reacquainted; he seemed wary and on edge. We went to a small restaurant nearby and over the rice pudding and tea he finally told me what had happened.

He had followed Kim to Denmark but that fell flat within a few days — she was cold, distant, and unwilling even to talk. Having nowhere else to go, and being so near to Norway, he took a boat to Oslo and began to hunt for Jörgen.

Jörgen's father was quite prominent and Jörgen had been fairly easy to track down, but he had been having a rough time of it himself. The Norwegian Army had drafted him in late '69, soon after he returned, and it had been too much for him — within weeks he had a nervous breakdown. For all his sardonic wit and aristocratic bearing, Jörgen was extremely sensitive and as much of a romantic as Anton. They had an emotional reunion and Jörgen asked him to stay at his place — having at last joined the counterculture, he had a pad in the heart of Oslo.

But now it was Anton's turn to have a breakdown and his world came crashing down. He lay for days in Jörgen's room, smoking dope and alternately babbling whatever came into his head or withdrawing totally — watching the clouds and freaking out, quietly sobbing uncontrollably. To try and get him out of it, Jörgen got some friends of his together and booked them all passage on a tour boat going up the coast. They steamed leisurely up and down the fjörds, docking occasionally, and at one point they all got off and decided to have a picnic.

They made their way up to the top of a steep cliff and were having a wonderful time under the clear-blue Norwegian sky, eating cheese and bread and drinking wine. The view of the ocean and the deep waters of the fjörd was breathtaking and Anton felt that he was just beginning to get hold of himself. It was a happy group, laughing and talking, sensitively aware of Anton's state of mind and comfortable with him. One of the young men proposed climbing down the cliff a little way and Anton gladly joined in — apparently forgetting in the meantime that he was deathly afraid of heights. A few yards down they sat on a small ledge, tossing stones over the edge and watching them sail out of sight. They could hardly have known that Anton was silently freaking out again. His white face must have told them something, tho, for one of them looked at him and quietly suggested that they climb back up . . . now. The others noticed his look and two of them got beside Anton and gently urged him up the cliff — but it was too late and within a few feet he froze, in an utter panic.

They talked softly to him but it was no use, he was planted there for good, unable to look up or down, shivering with fear. Two of them worked their way up alongside him, trying to coax him up before he lost his strength and fell, but he simply couldn't move. They went back up to the top and waited and eventually he worked it

all out — there was no choice but to continue, and he did so. But I had a feeling, as I listened to him tell this story, that in fact what he was doing was making up his mind whether to let go — figuratively and literally. Deep down, he had something he had to decide and not until he faced it was he going to be able to make the climb back up to the top. He found the courage at last and, one foot up, one hand up, his eyes on the business at hand, he came back. What more can any of us do?

But it wasn't over yet. Back in Oslo he began to draw again and now all the pain and frustration poured out. He showed me some of those drawings and they are a howl of anguish and bitterness. Jörgen wisely left him alone and, in time, he worked his way thru the maze, finally reaching an accommodation, an acceptance — of himself, if not of Kim. Not quite of her . . . not yet. Nothing else was possible.

Oct. 13, 1970 — Angela Davis, black militant and former professor of philosophy at UCLA, arrested by the FBI in New York for complicity in the murder of a judge and three others during a botched kidnapping attempt in California.
Oct. 15, 1970 — Anwar Sadat elected president of Egypt.

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Surely chess is a sad waste of brains
—Sir Walter Scott

Anton was living with Kim's parents upstate because he was working at a factory near where they lived. When he came back to the States he'd gotten this job to put together some bucks and regroup before returning to Bloomington. There may have been more to it than that, but I didn't dare pry.

He came down regularly to New London and we played game after game of chess, seldom talking about anything else, and by degrees he grew more lively. He was getting *Chess Life and Review* and we had a number of books, so we went over them again and again, mystified and in awe by turns. This level of grandmaster play was well beyond us but there were times when we could peek behind the veil of obscurity and see some of the meaning behind brilliant moves.

Occasionally he stayed the night and one in particular stands out as a new low in the annals of depravity. Smoking grass inordinately, we played one ploddingly slow game after another. Anton was getting better but he still hated to lose, digging in for hours and wracking his brains to find the winning line. This particular night we kept at it until very late and were so exhausted when we finally decided to hang it up that we were down to making idiotic puns on chess.

Now, no matter what it is, Anton cannot give up — it's a religion with him and puns are his favorite method of inflicting pain. Naturally, he always has to have the last

word and I was equally determined, once and for all, to teach him a lesson. We had gone thru puns on all the simple words and were far into the names of famous players — not an easy subject for puns. We had done Tal and Benko, Morphy and Byrne — there was nothing left . . . I hoped. But, wearily, from the dim recesses, he managed another smeller: "What's a barricade of pawns against the front entrance called?"

"No, no, I don't want to hear about it . . ."

"What's it *called*?"

"Oh, my god . . . all right . . . what's it called?"

"(Pause) Philidor's Defense."

I could almost hear his smirk — he'd won. I waited a good five minutes, until he was just dropping off, and said,

"What did the Russian champion call Anton's disease?"

He groaned loudly and rolled over. For a long time he didn't answer but finally, thru the pillow, he said, "What?"

"(Pause) Korchnoi's Complaint."

I figured that would do it. I smiled smugly to myself as I turned to the wall to sleep. Minutes later I heard that dreaded voice, mumbling with fatigue, say,

"What . . . do . . . you . . . do (pause) to . . . a . . . chess . . . dunce (pause) . . . in . . . school?"

"Anton, . . . Anton, please . . ."

"Well?"

"I don't know, I don't know . . ."

"You . . . Capa . . . Blanca."

OK . . . fine. This time I thought for a good ten minutes, until he *had* to have dropped off once more. Quietly I said,

"What was Aladdin . . ." (long pause)

From the far side of the room, a tiny, testy: "Yes?"

". . . doing in Germany?"

An eternal pause.

Finally: "Please don't tell me . . ."

Another pause.

Me: "He was Rrrubbin' . . . Stein."

A muffled groan. Game, Set, and Match. Until I heard something, a long, long time later, murmuring in the dark thru the mists of sleep — and decided it was only the wind.

Oct. 16, 1970 — A special grand jury indicts 25 students from Kent St., exonerating the guardsmen and condemning the university administration for "an overemphasis on the right to dissent."

Oct. 29, 1970 — 2,000 demonstrators hurl eggs and rocks at Nixon in San Jose; he assails

"permissiveness" and says protestors are "hoodlums." Makes pronouncement that students must either "hit the books or hit the road."
Nov. 9, 1970 — Charles de Gaulle, hero of WWII and former French president, dies at age 80.

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All the way the paper bag was on my knees
Man, I had a dreadful flight
—The Beatles

The next time I did psilo was not quite as enchanting as before.

My boss at the airport was the quintessential nice guy — I rarely saw him but when he did come by he always had something good to say about the job I was doing. I'm sure he'd have been happy if I'd just shown up every night, but the fact that I actually did the job pleased and surprised him no end. One night he happened to mention that, as an employee of the airport, did I know that I could take a free flight from time to time?

No, I didn't, but I was delighted at the news. I had always been curious about New York so the very next weekend, just for the hell of it, I dropped a hit of psilo, drove out to the airport and hopped on a flight.

It was my first flight on what are called "commuter hops." The plane was a small twin-prop that held about 16 people and I began to rush just as we took off. Immediately I noticed that you can feel far more in a small plane than in a jet and for the first time I really experienced the sensation of flying — it was wonderful! For about five minutes. I was sitting in the back and I happened to glance over at the door and saw that it was flapping in the breeze. I looked up to the cockpit, wondering whether I should mention this, and saw the pilot and co-pilot passing something back and forth in a brown paper bag — and drinking from it. Perhaps the loose door was the least of our problems.

We climbed up over the Sound and then over Long Island and every slight bump of turbulence lifted or dropped us ten or twelve feet. I began to worry about being sick, then got my mind off of that by worrying about the door — quickly realized that wasn't such a good idea and watched the two up front in the cockpit, laughing and pointing at a centerfold as they passed the bottle around some more. I decided just to concentrate on not being sick. The flight droned on and on and I was wrenched this way and that, worrying now about the door, the pilots, and the waxing and waning sickness in the pit of my stomach. I tried to occupy myself by watching the tiny houses far below, so like a Monopoly game in progress, and wondering how long we had before plunging into them. And then, incredibly, we began to do so. In a single instant I went from total panic to a kind of serene resignation — dead we were and there's an end on't. Then I

sheepishly realized that we were merely coming for a landing. I raced out of the plane to the nearest bathroom and threw up.

It took but ten minutes to exhaust the charms of the airport, so I took a taxi into Manhattan. It was an even more harrowing ride than the airplane. I begged the driver to slow down and pretend that we weren't being chased by the Gestapo — he merely glanced at me like I was crazy, shrugged, and continued his monologue about something called the "Mets," whom he professed to find "amazin'." When he asked me where I wanted to be dropped the only thing I could think of to say was "Shea Stadium." He laughed and gave me another one of those looks and I said forget it, just drop me anywhere. Still rushing on the psilo, I got out at Times Square and began walking.

New York City is no place to be while tripping on psilo — in fact, I soon came to see that it is no place to be, period. Hordes of people came rushing straight at me and it was all I could do to stay out of their way and keep going. Horns blasted, whistles screamed and people shouted. Hawkers and beggars shoved fliers and tin cups at me from everywhere. I had never seen so many astonishingly ugly people in my life and it was so noisy that when I looked up and saw a plane going overhead, I couldn't even hear it. I withdrew, pretending to see nothing and hear nothing.

Finally I worked my way over to a quieter side street but the filth on the sidewalks and the massive, overgrown buildings looming above were even more depressing. There was no use trying to stop and get my bearings, since I had no idea which way to look — I felt compelled to just keep walking. On a dismal block, quieter than the others but still dizzy with people, I spotted an old bum lying off to one side on the concrete, sound asleep. Everyone ignored him as they hustled past, but when I came up next to him I looked down and saw that his face was covered with blood. I stopped. No one was taking any notice. I reached down to touch the old man — to see if I could help him — and his hand was cold. I felt his head and that was cold, too; he was dead.

In a near panic, I walked quickly, looking for a cop, and finally found one about three blocks away. I stammered out to him, "Th-there's a . . . a . . . (I stopped to regroup my thoughts for a second) . . . a d-dead guy . . . on the sidewalk back there . . . back over there." The cop barely glanced at me and said, "Yeah? OK. I'll check it out . . ." and then looked the other way, not moving. I marched a few feet away and turned and saw him leisurely strolling in the direction I'd pointed. It was like he could hardly be bothered. I kept on walking.

Eventually I came across a hole-in-the-wall bar called the Old Town and went in for a drink, hoping that might calm me down and provide some relief from the unrelenting rawness of the city. For a moment I thought this might be yet another mistake, for it was truly a dive, but I sat at the bar and asked for a beer and within a few minutes I began to feel better.

The beer settled me down and, miraculously, the bar transformed itself into a

quiet, cozy, old-time saloon. The pressed-tin ceiling, dark wooden booths and even the enormous chipped mirror behind the bar seemed comforting and warm. The bartender, far from being surly and coarse, was happy to have someone to talk to in the late-afternoon emptiness. He sensed my nervous tension (not all that hard to see) and talked calmly and with interest about whatever came up. We passed a nice hour or so until I felt like risking the street again and I left and caught a cab back to the airport.

By now the beer had done its work and I felt completely at ease. Even the flight back, watching the glittering, colored lights below, was peaceful, somehow exhilarating. But I'd had quite enough of New York and was never again so cavalier about doing psilo on a whim.

Nov. 12, 1970 — Trial of Lt. William Calley begins. The defense admits his involvement in the killings but says he was "only following orders" and that he "did not feel like he was killing humans . . . but rather that they were the enemy."
Nov. 13, 1970 — A cyclone and tidal wave hits East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) killing 168,000 and leaving a million homeless.

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Chestnut-brown canary, ruby-throated sparrow
Sing a song, don't be long, thrill me to the marrow
—Crosby, Stills & Nash

Anton invited me to come up and visit him one weekend and I drove up, following his directions, to a house set on a small hill in the countryside. He seemed to be on perfectly easy terms with Kim's parents and showed me around the house.

He had a large section of the basement pretty much to himself and there was an upright piano there for him to practice on. Kim had put thumbtacks on all the hammers (to make it sound like a harpsichord, Anton said) and it was hard to imagine he got much playing done on it but he did, ripping thru mazurkas and polonaises with as much éclat as ever. The basement was a warren of rooms and partitions, and I was impressed with the sheer number of childhood castaways that had been casually dumped there. Besides an astonishing assortment of toys and games there were huge piles of books, box after box of clothes, musical instruments, binoculars, a very nice telescope, some gas-powered model planes, and stereo sets, there were even some kid fantasy-items like stilts, unicycles, and a large folded-up doll's house. These, I thought to myself, were well-heeled kids.

I wondered what Anton made of all this, for he had been raised by his mother alone and they were far from well-to-do. *Their* basement (unfinished, with a dirt floor) contained a large coal stove and a coal bin — the sole source of heat in the winter — and

that was all. It was not a large house, in a beautiful setting in the woods with a pond that Thoreau would have loved. Anton had not grown up in abject poverty but he had become comfortable with frugality and his sense of thrift was deeply ingrained. The amazing largesse must have struck him, as it did me, as almost overwhelmingly extravagant.

But we ignored the mounds of goodies as he banged away on the piano and showed off all the new music he had bought with his gargantuan paychecks from the factory job. And he had a new toy — a chess clock.

This turned out to be an excellent investment. We began to play speed chess, allowing only ten minutes per game for each side, and it improved his game no end. All of the time he used to waste talking himself out of good moves was now rechanneled into an incisiveness of play that I'd never seen in him before. Speed chess does not suit my style but he took to it like a preacher to a truism and at last began to beat me regularly. I could still hold my own, even manage to win a good deal of the time, but I could see the writing on the wall. Within a month or two he was winning three out of five and while I never lost my advantage in regular play, he had at last found the confidence and poise that came from knowing he could play good chess.

I went up to visit from time to time but on one occasion Anton wasn't around, for some reason. Kim's younger brother, Brad, took me in hand since no one else was about, either.

The house had been designed by Kim's mother and the central livingroom had a high peaked roof with windows set far above to catch the light. Two large sliding-glass doors opened onto a porch and Brad took me out into the bright sunshine where, with a quiet, conspiratorial air, he pulled out a matchstick-thin joint rolled in black paper. He lit the tiny J and passed it to me — it was a toss-up whether to eat it or smoke it — but I did my best. We had just two tokes each. Nothing happened at all and he led me back into the living room, which had doors opening onto bedrooms on each side. He took me into his room and, saying not a word, sat me down on the bed, clapped a pair of headphones over my ears, turned on a tape, and left.

Just as the opening strains of Crosby, Stills & Nash poured out of the headset I began to rush — and what a rush! A surge of power lifted me up, floated my brain across eons of time and space, and I was wafted into the ether by stunningly alive music. I had never felt such euphoria, such an extraordinary stone, and I was glad he'd had the foresight to sit me down before it hit. Time vanished and I was swept away on a tide of ecstasy, pulsating with sound and magical images. CS&N's only album was absolute magic and I soared with it in a power-glide, totally unable to concentrate on anything but the sensation of being completely engulfed in joy.

By the time "Judy Blue Eyes" was over, however, I had come down enough to realize that this was no ordinary stone — what in hell *was* that stuff in the minuscule black joint? The album ended and I took off the headset to puzzle it out.

Now what was that peculiar sensation like — it was entirely new to me and yet . . . I seemed to remember something, vaguely. . . . Aha, that was it. I had only done cocaine once before, snorting a single line that Davy had come up with, but here was that same surge, that stunning sense of power. Only . . . it was not *just* coke — it was coke-grass! Coke-grass!

Jesus, what a mind-boggling stone, what a fantastic rush . . . *too* fantastic. There had been an eerily mind-less quality to it, a suffusion of thought unlike anything I'd yet experienced — neither coke nor grass alone could do such a thing, for my emotions had been neatly excised and exploded into a surge of pure exhilaration — true ecstasy.

This was more than a little attractive but I couldn't help feeling that there must be a price to pay. It was all too un-real — a sham. It would be fantastic to have such stuff for an occasional, absolute blast of rapture but . . . who could stop at that? Already I was yearning to return to that place, to never come back to the drab world pressing in on me . . . could I . . . what would happen if I . . . ?

I would become a simpering, drooling mass of uncontrolled greed in less time than it takes to say "Bowery bum," that's what. No mind — no thought — no *me.* Even so, it was a tempting trade-off . . . but I silently wished Brad well and went on my way, having glimpsed thru a window I could not afford to enter.

Nov. 18, 1970 — Linus Pauling releases a book proclaiming large doses of Vitamin C can prevent the common cold.
Nov. 21, 1970 — An army assault team attempts a rescue mission at Santay, a POW camp near Hanoi; the camp is empty.

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Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
—John Lennon

One night, when I was just coming in to work at the airport, the boss showed up and said that the entire place needed to be waxed that night and he had brought along another of his workers to give me a hand.

This guy was wearing green camouflage pants, a military jacket with faded insignia on it, and a cap with a 'Nam patch — in short, a Vietnam Vet. One look at my long hair and he almost walked out.

But we got to work, pretty much ignoring one another, and I got a better chance to look him over. Tho on the burly side, he didn't seem particularly gung-ho or belligerent. Perhaps even a certain sensitivity that I couldn't quite put my finger on. After a while the silence got a little silly and we talked about this and that, offhandedly

— about anything but the war. It was decidedly tense but when we finished it was still fairly early and as we were putting away the equipment, I asked him if he wanted to join me for a J. He gave me a hard look but after a second said, "Sure, why not? Lemme get a beer to wash it down," and he went off to the airport bar and brought back a six-pack.

His name was Jerry and we sat out on a loading dock as he handed me a beer. I lit up a J and passed it over. We sat smoking and drinking and then finally he broke the ice, in a manner of speaking.

"Spit on any Vets lately?" he said.

I smiled and asked if he really believed I'd be having a J and a brew with him if that was the way I felt.

"Maybe, maybe not." he said, "Your kind do that a lot."

"My kind?"

"You know what I'm talkin' about."

"OK, fine . . . my kind. Your kind kill any babies lately?"

He got pretty pissed about this, of course, but I had judged him right and he didn't go for my throat. When he took a breath after a few invectives about blaming all the military for one or two guys, I said,

"That's the point . . . your 'kind' aren't defined by what one or two guys did . . . and neither is my 'kind'."

He figured that was OK, shrugged and had another toke. He said,

"You people have no idea what it's like over there . . . no idea. Why the hell don't you just shut up and let us do our job?"

"Simple enough," I said, "but why don't you let *us* alone when we don't want to help you with that job?" He started to say something but I went on, "Look, you think that we don't support you over there . . . but what we're against is what *got* you over there, not you."

"Same thing. How you gonna separate what we are from what we're trying to accomplish . . . and what we *could* accomplish if you 'protesters' would let us."

"You mean you liked what you were doin' over there? You *wanted* to go over and kill Vietnamese?"

He stopped for a second, pulling on his beer. If his answer was "yes" then we had no more to talk about. But that wasn't his answer.

"That's just what you don't understand," he said, "*I* didn't want to be there and 99% of our guys in Nam don't want to be there. I could care less about . . . look, what you don't realize is that that war is a *civil* war. I don't give a damn which side wins. *But* . . . this government, *my* government, says it's what we're supposed to be doing — and if America wants me to fight, I damn well will. And I expect to win but *you* people holdin' us back don't help."

"And don't we have a right to disagree with that . . ."

"Oh, don't gimme that shit about 'right'. When our government says 'go', then you're supposed to *go.*"

"The entire point of America is *my right* to say 'This war is wrong and I'm not going.' What we're supposedly fighting is the kind of government that *doesn't* let you say that . . ."

"So you want them to win!"

"No. Like you, I don't care if they do or not."

"But you're losin' the war for us by keeping our army in handcuffs — and there are guys *dyin'* on account of that."

"Losing the war."

"That's right . . . losin' the war."

"Against who?"

"Against the goddam Viet Cong, the North . . . what the hell you think we're talking about?"

"I understand there are South Vietnamese — kids, even — who give the Cong food and who hide them . . ."

"You're damn right . . . and a lot worse than that — ten and twelve-year-old kids sticking grenades into tents at night, blowing up a whole . . ."

"So who's the enemy? It sounds like the people themselves don't want us there, so . . ." I could see that this line surprised him. Defining the "enemy" was new.

". . . if the people in the South are helping the . . ."

"They got no choice . . . the Cong kill 'em if they don't."

"And the ARVN and U.S. kill 'em if they do. So to them we're as much the enemy as the North. They didn't vote for that government in South Vietnam — there's never been an honest election there . . ."

"So what? What the hell's the *difference* fer Chrissake?"

"Well, who are we saving them *from*? They don't support the government. Most of them either actively or passively support the Cong. Their army is an army of conscripts — they could care less. So who are we trying to defeat? *All* the Vietnamese . . . to *save* the Vietnamese? We're fighting the whole country . . ."

"That's not the issue. Our government says to fight, so we do. You don't know all the reasons behind it and neither do I — but I know we'd win if you bastards just once let us do our job."

"Fine. Reasons aside, even from the military standpoint, we haven't got a chance of winning this war."

"Oh, come off it. How can you say that? The United States is the most powerful nation on earth — if you'd *let* us . . ."

"We're dropping more bombs on Vietnam than were dropped in all of World War II — far more."

"So?"

"Well — why isn't it working?"

"It *would* work if we . . ."

"There aren't enough bombs in the world to make it work. Look — what's the point of bombing? I mean, militarily — what's the point?"

"To kill the enemy — to force them to knuckle under."

"That's two things and neither one has ever worked. The purpose of bombing is not to kill the enemy, since unless you can get 'em all to huddle together under your bombs you can never kill enough of 'em; nor is it to destroy their will to fight — that didn't work in Germany or in England . . . it has never worked anywhere."

He was quoting now: "The purpose of bombing is to destroy the enemy's *ability* to fight."

"Right. That's it. Well, it can't be done in Vietnam. They're not an industrial nation and . . ."

"And the munitions and all their supplies are comin' from Russia and China — yeah, I know all that . . ."

"And so we're bombing the damn rice paddies while the *factories* are all thousands of miles away. And if we can't destroy their *ability* to fight, then . . ."

"So we just bomb the supply lines, that's all . . ."

"How? You gonna bomb *Russian* ships and *Chinese* trucks?"

"Well, those are the bastards who are supplyin' 'em, so . . ."

"So you risk starting World War III? Over goddamn *Vietnam* you want to take a *chance* on World War III?"

"Look, we can beat 'em on the ground, in the air, anyway and anywhere we want to, if . . ."

"But that's just it. They got an infinite supply of men — and if they ever run short, the Chinese will be glad to help out. They've got an infinite supply of guns and ammunition. They can fight a guerrilla war literally forever because the people of South Vietnam just don't give a damn or actively support them. *There is no way* . . ."

"Oh, Christ, this country is the strongest country in the world — we . . ."

"You keep saying that but it's all useless in Nam. We're the strongest in terms of nuclear bombs — and we can't use 'em. Set off a nuclear war over Vietnam?"

"So why don't we just invade goddamn *North* Vietnam?"

"Same thing. We invade and the Chinese come in, just like in Korea — and they fought us to a draw there. Only this time we risk nuclear war, which we didn't in Korea."

He thought this over for a bit, getting madder and madder, then said, "So you're sayin' some tiny little shit-ass place like Vietnam can . . ."

"Not just tiny little Vietnam — they're just the manpower for Russia and China."

"So you want the Communists to win, just like that damned traitor Jane Fonda . . ."

"I don't care who wins — we've got nothin' at stake in Vietnam and I don't care one little bit about Communism in some country halfway across the world. It's their business, not ours, and we *can't* win for the simple reason that their own damn people *don't care.* If they don't care who wins, why the hell should we? Are we gonna go everywhere in the world where there's somebody who believes in Communism and take the country over? That's what's wrong with this war. We're not fighting for our own interests or to save anybody else — because *they don't care* — and that's what makes our being there wrong."

"But why can't you just admit that once we *are* there, it is your *duty* to support those troops who're getting their *asses* shot off? *That's* the issue . . ."

"Or maybe the issue is that if enough of you had refused to go in the *first* place, *nobody* would be getting their asses shot off. . . ."

And that was the one thing almost guaranteed to start a fight. He could have snapped me in two like a stick . . . but instead he simply slowly rose to his feet, towering over me, and after a pause merely crushed his last beer can and stomped off into the night.

The guilt on both sides had made us vehement. He knew that in this country we do have the right, in fact the duty, to fight against bad government — but I was pointing my finger at him personally, and all the others who were only doing what they felt was right and patriotic. He felt that he was standing up for his government and his country ("right or wrong") and I felt that we *were* that government — and had the right, even the obligation, to say "no" to a bad war. But I had blamed him for the war, and that was wrong. Tragedy enough that thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese were being killed and maimed for nothing — we in this country had lost the sense of what being an American was, of who we were and what we stood for. That was a tragedy all it's own — and just as painful.

Nov. 27, 1970 — Alexander Solzhenitsyn (author of The Gulag Archipelago) *turns down the Nobel Prize, fearing the Soviets will not allow him to return home if he travels to Sweden.*

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Why, it's un-American . . . it's un-British!
It's French.
—Mark Twain

It was not going well at school. The lectures were on the level of "See Socrates Jump. Jump, Socrates, Jump!" and then a preposterous discussion would follow about whether or not his jumping would make a sound if he did it on a desert island. The philosophy profs seem to be inordinately fond of conundrums and perceptual

paradoxes, and hours were wasted on such nonsense. To top it all off, at the end of the semester they wanted us to write a paper on how the written thought of Plato contrasted with the implied thought of Socrates. Some segue from the riddles, I thought.

It was not that I hadn't learned anything (well, from the lectures I hadn't) but that I could take a theme like contrasting the thinking of Plato and Socrates and easily write a hundred pages on it (not necessarily coherent). But they wanted it all in three pages, no more, no less, and that I couldn't do. It was like fitting a large bag of pretzels into a shoe — you could *do* it, sure, but the pretzels would never be quite the same again.

The academic world seemed bent on reducing a beautiful and alive pursuit to a kind of "grammar" that could be parsed, catalogued, and nitpicked like lawyers haggling over an insurance policy. It gave me a headache. Even tho I knew that all he expected was a trite summation, just to prove we'd actually read a bit of the *Dialogues,* I wrote nothing but flip throw-aways — the prof called it an "incomplete" and he was absolutely right. Instead of going on with this, I decided to learn nothing from Anton's experience and chase Kim to Europe. She was still there, in London now, and she showed no signs of returning to the States. What the hell, I thought, it was about time I saw something of the world.

But for this I would need some money and my two part-time jobs wouldn't do it. I found an ad in the paper for a full-time cook in a French restaurant and figured that it must pay pretty well, so I drove up to Norwich to apply for the job.

It was a new place, just opening, that was going to be called something like Le Petit Ptomaine. The *patron* and most of the staff were French and I got the position of assistant chef largely because the chef didn't speak a word of English, while I had a smattering of high school French.

I had nothing but admiration for Pierre, the chef. He was a *saucier* and soon a whole new world of cooking opened up for me. Everything I thought I knew as a fry cook went out the window, and with a mixture of patience and impatience that is wholly French he schooled me not only in the mechanics of cooking but in the creativity that only great chefs achieve. He never worked from recipes but relied instead on a feel for balance and harmony — part experience and skill, part sheer intuition. He never ruined a dish, as I often did when experimenting, and yet he never made anything quite the same way twice. And as far as the simple mechanics were concerned, he amazed me time after time.

If he forgot to use a towel when picking up a red-hot pan he would calmly set it back down, merely remarking "c'est chaud" (it's hot) — for his fingers were almost impervious to burns. He detested "French" dressing and made his simply by combining mayonnaise with ketchup, lemon juice and a few herbs. The customers raved over it. What he could do even with french fries was a marvel and what he accomplished with souffles and quiches is indescribable.

Any little chore that took me half an hour would take him ten minutes. I would have to improve quickly if I wanted to keep this job and he appreciated how fast I caught on. My rudimentary grasp of French allowed us to communicate, more or less, and he took a special interest in teaching me as we went along. He refused to learn even a word of English, however, and this made for some difficulties with the American staff — particularly a very competent waiter from Brooklyn named Vinnie.

Vinnie was a wiry (almost weasly) little guy with a breezy attitude. Nothing could faze him and no one could intimidate him — not even the French. One day, just before opening time, he waltzed past the large kitchen window where we passed the dishes out and Pierre called to him, "Alors!" (pronounced something like Alloe and meaning simply, "Hey, you!"). Vinnie whizzed by without even a glance and shot back, "'Allo, tcheffie — 'ow's by you?"

Pierre couldn't quite make Vinnie out. He stopped him one time and handed him some money, saying (as slowly and distinctly as he could) "Tiens! Voulez-vous acheter un plat-à-tarte pour moi. Un plat-à-tarte *grand*." (Go buy me a pie-plate. A *big* one.) Vinnie stared blankly for a moment, completely at sea, so the chef pointed to the money and insisted, "Acheter! Acheter!" and then, just to make it crystal-clear, added, "Plat-à-tarte! (spreading his hands wide) *Grand*!"

Vinnie chewed this over for a bit and wandered off distractedly, returning some time later, beaming, with an enormous metal ashtray ("Asch-*tay!*") and rightly proud of himself for having gotten the "grand" part right. The chef regarded this gleaming gift somewhat dubiously but then, to my utter astonishment (for I was, of course, expecting an explosion), promptly demanded another! He had simply assumed that this was the largest pie-plate Vinnie could find and he would merely go ahead and use two of them — which he did!

Dec. 4, 1970 — Cesar Chavez is jailed on contempt charges for refusing to call off the nationwide boycott on lettuce.
Jan. 6, 1971 — An army study reports that over 65,000 G.I.'s in Vietnam were using drugs in 1970.

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I was in the right vein
But it musta been the wrong arm
—Dr. John

I sat on the dock behind the house, smoking grass and wondering what to do. It was a beautiful, crisp fall day — mid-December but still autumn-like, for it never got very cold in New London. There were three or four swans who had taken up residence

in the small backwater behind the house and I fed them often, bad tempered and greedy as they were.

On this particular clear, sunny day, there were a lot more sailboats than usual on the waters of the bay. I became mesmerized as I watched them glide silently in and out of the harbor. There were small sunboats and larger yachts with red and blue, green and yellow sails — each boat was a dazzling perfection of grace and color. As I sat and smoked, they seemed to be performing a dance, an intricate meeting and melting as they intertwined in the most remarkable ways — sliding past one another, dipping and bowing, creating an arabesque of swirling geometrics.

This *danse fantastique* had me spellbound. The silent perfection of it was enchanting and I don't know how long I'd been watching when I glanced down and noticed the swans — who, suddenly, were performing an intricate dance of their own, mirroring that of the boats in the harbor! They had never acted like this before and for a moment I couldn't believe it but it was true . . . somehow they seemed to have picked up the movements of the sailboats and were mimicking them — gliding past one another in an elaborate imitation of that distant sarabande. It went on for hours and when evening came I finally went back inside, having decided nothing about what I was going to do.

The semester was over and for the next few days Claude let loose with a major party-binge. There and then I decided that since Anton was making such great money working in a factory, I may as well try it, too, and thus get enough bread to get me to London. Claude gave me a farewell party.

That was when I found out why the band had been so considerate about keeping down the noise, considering that they were typical rockers and given to being more than a little wild. It turns out that they were all into doing 'stardust' — mainlining or snorting a mixture of cocaine and heroin. Naturally, they offered me some.

This was something new so I figured, what the hell, let's give it a go. I wasn't about to shoot it, since I knew heroin could made you sicker than hell the first time around but I snorted a big line — then another — and sat back to await results.

It took maybe three seconds. I felt a tingling sensation, my mind shuddered for a moment — then shattered like a plate-glass window. But it didn't feel bad . . . in fact, it felt terrific. As far as I was concerned I was perfectly sane and in control — but not one single thing made sense anymore. I was operating instant to instant on nothing but a kind of autopilot — the moment was all that mattered and, in a sense, was devoid of any "me." There was nothing to think about — no need to even recognize the difference of one moment from the next. Everything was equally fascinating and infinitely beautiful. I existed in a silken gauze, a pink haze, of dream-like images and powerful sensations. I began to feel sick — and that was fine. Then I didn't feel sick any more — and that was equally fine. I giggled extravagantly at nothing in particular and that was the finest of all.

The others were saying something and I vaguely recognized Claude thru a fog of shifting lights . . . I stood up. For a moment I stood there swaying, astonished and fascinated by the size of the room and the beautiful, beautiful blue paint on the walls. Then I threw up in a stream that shot across the room and square onto some newspapers (which they had thoughtfully spread out for me — seeing it coming, apparently). I felt wonderful about that, too, and thanked them with a great big grin. Sometime later, how much later I have no idea, I found myself staring at a piece of . . . something. Now, what was it? Ah, yes — it was a pencil. What a lovely thing it was! I had a cramp in my neck from staying in one position for — I don't know, possibly an hour, possibly a day or two. I didn't know and it didn't make the slightest difference in the world. I held that pencil in my fingers and gazed at it lovingly.

And then, rather quickly, I began to come down. I went and put some instant coffee into a cup and held it under the hot water in the shower (the bathroom was so small there wasn't really a shower — just a nozzle pointing at the john). I stuck my head under the water for a minute and just loved that sensation. Then I went back in the room and finished the coffee. They were all sitting around, listening to headphones plugged into the amplifiers and playing riffs to one another. I beamed at them.

I was still pretty goofy but the coffee perked me up and in no time I felt like I was getting back in touch with the world again. Claude mentioned that we had no booze and that a bottle of wine would be nice. I offered to go and get it but I wanted another snort first. Claude told me to be careful not to overdo it again and let me have just one tiny little line, then we left together to get the wine.

I didn't think that the small snort had done anything at all and fired up Lulu with aplomb. There was not a soul in sight and Claude and I were laughing at everything — the trees, the lawn, the moon — as we tooled off down the street. I was going extra slow (or so I thought) to avoid attracting attention but my sense of spatial relationships was just a tad off, I noticed, when I spotted the ocean and tried to take a broad turn around a corner to avoid it. I went wide and then, realizing my mistake, jerked the wheel back the other way. What I had thought was a perfectly reasonable speed turned out to be about 40 — and I hadn't slowed down for the turn. We plowed sideways thru something white, sending the remains of a picket fence high in the air before coming to a stop.

We sat giggling maniacally at this faux pas, then climbed out to remove the garbage cans, white sticks, and tree limbs that had somehow lodged on the hood — in no hurry at all, of course. I fired up Lulu and we headed down the road again.

We eventually came to a liquor store but, as the stores all closed at 10:00 and it was now 3:00 a.m., it was dark and empty. I shut off the engine and turned to Claude.

"It's closed," I said.

"Yep," said Claude.

I looked at the liquor store again and then back to Claude.

"Yep. It's closed."

He said, "Yep."

I got out, picked up a rock, and hurled it thru the plate-glass window. Claude calmly walked over, ignoring the alarms, picked out a bottle, started to walk back, turned around and grabbed another bottle and then sauntered over to the car. We roared off down the street, tickled pink and laughing mightily at our resourcefulness.

The rest of the evening was about the same. I awoke the next afternoon and fifty tons of guilt fell on top of me like a brick schoolhouse, along with enough aches and pains to keep me occupied for a week. I couldn't face anybody and buried my head in the pillow, hoping desperately that the police wouldn't come banging on the door — and simultaneously hoping that they would. Guilt is hardly the word . . . I felt putrescent.

Scratch "stardust" from the list.

Jan. 11, 1971 — The Supreme Court agrees to review Muhammed Ali's 1967 conviction for draft evasion.
Jan. 12, 1971 — Rev. Philip Berrigan & five other priests and nuns indicted on charges of conspiracy to kidnap Henry Kissinger.

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Gonna leave the city, got to get away
All this fussing and fighting, man, you know I sure can't stay
—Canned Heat

Around Christmas I applied for a job at the ceramics factory where Anton worked — I follow their custom of using the word "ceramics" since it sounds a lot better than "toilet bowl factory."

I got the job and was due to begin work after the New Year but just then Anton decided he'd had enough of real work and said he was moving back to Bloomington. He seemed to have recovered completely from the debacle in Norway and we said our goodbyes with one more round of chess and smoke.

I drove around the town nearest the plant but didn't see any "Room for Rent" signs — which was just as well, for it was depressingly grim. I went further afield, driving thru every small town I could find. Still nothing. I couldn't use my old method of merely walking around, trusting to luck, since the towns were so small and uniformly ugly. At last I took a turn onto the nearest country lane and let myself drift, keeping my eye out for a likely spot to land.

Within a few miles I was completely lost on the tiny Post Roads and I recalled Anton's definition: a Post Road is one that forever threatens to peter out completely, but

goes on forever.

Without any idea of how I'd gotten there, I found myself in the tiny hamlet of Eastford — pointing straight at something called the General Lyon Inn. Being hungry and seeing nothing else around, I pulled over and went in.

I walked into what seemed to be a living room, with a few old folks lounging around and several tables set up at the far end. I was introduced to a Mrs. Cranford, who ran the place, and asked if I could get some lunch. She said that they only served during the lunch and dinner hours (it was late afternoon) but that she would give me a sandwich if I liked. She invited me back into the kitchen while she made it and I followed her into the quaintest old-time New England kitchen I had ever seen. Everywhere I looked there were trivets and gleaming copper pans, embroidered towels and old-fashioned iron tools. The oven was set in a broad brick chimney and it was blazing away cozily. Mrs. Cranford deftly put together a sandwich and gently began asking me questions while I ate.

She obviously considered me something of a lost soul and I laid out the whole story for her — I was looking for a place to stay while I worked at a factory nearby, to get enough money for a trip to England. She laughed when I told her about the factory, for it was a good twenty-five miles away. Nevertheless, she asked me if I would care to take a room at the Inn. My mind lit up with a single, large exclamation point.

I wanted to shout "Yes!" but I glanced around warily, positive that I could never afford such a place. I casually asked what the rent would be and she considered it for a moment and said that normally a room went with board — two meals and a light breakfast each day. But . . . if I would be satisfied with one meal ("just a sandwich," she said), would $15 a week be too much? I almost fell off my chair. No, that wouldn't be too much at all — but didn't she . . . wasn't that . . . "Oh, and, of course, a dollar a day for the meal," she said. I wanted to grab her and give her a big, smacking kiss and a hug but the old hens in the background were already clucking away softly.

The General Lyon Inn was named after a Connecticut gentleman whose prime distinction was that he had been the first general killed in the Revolution. This had been his house, a venerable New England "saltbox." She took me over to a separate wing, where there were several guest rooms, and I solemnly counted out enough money for a month's rent plus a month's deposit. She quietly returned the deposit and said she hoped I would like it there. I moved in and the day after began work at American Standard.

Jan. 26, 1971 — Charles Manson and three of his "family" are convicted for the Tate-LaBianca murders. Witnesses testify that Manson had hoped to start a race war, which he felt the blacks would win, turning to him then as their leader.

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Twenty years of schoolin' an'
They put you on the day shift
—Bob Dylan

Walking past a factory one day, Rabbie Burns was inspired to write a poem in the grimy windowpane with his finger:

We came nae here to view yer warks
Nare mak' ourselves mare wise,
But only, if we gang to hell,
It may be nae surprise

Not much has changed since then. Upon entering the vast working space of the plant the first thing you saw was an enormous, hundred-yard-long kiln. Far to the left, out of sight, were the clay molds that formed the toilet bowls. They were trimmed, glazed, put on racks and trundled thru the roaring fires and after cooling under giant fans they emerged, far to the right. There they went thru a series of inspections, many of the flawed ones being repaired and then retested. As the new man on the job, I was given the easiest assignment, at a bench called the Epoxy Station.

Pallet after pallet of brightly colored toilet bowls were stacked high to the ceiling beside the kiln, all of them with tiny pinholes and cracks where the glaze was incomplete. It was my job to bring the pallets over with a hand-truck and, one by one, put the bowls on the bench, mix up the right color epoxy and fix the defects. It was a job you did alone and, if for no other reason than that, it suited me to a T.

I had the only window in the place; high above me, true, but at least I could see the sky, which was far more than the other drudges had. I had a lot of free time on my hands and occasionally took a stroll, watching as the others lifted the huge, seventy-five-pound, unfinished clay "blanks" onto benches, turning them over to trim them and then loading them onto racks. Doing this for eight hours a day was a bitch and it had been Anton's job. All I could think of was how fanatically anxious he was about his hands — it must have been agonizing for him.

Others repaired the larger cracks in the finished bowls or ran them thru the inspection stations — much tougher work than my job, with its delicate little cups of epoxy. Often I ran out of pinholes to fix and stood around smoking cigarettes until the tubby little foreman came by to tell me to "at least *look* busy" before disappearing again.

The days began to melt into one another in a numbing catatonia of repetition. I tried playing little games with the epoxy but even that grew tiresome. Once in a great while, however, there would be a sudden overload of work and someone would come to help clear out the backlog. Usually this was "Mike," a lean and practiced old hand

who had worked there for twenty years. Mike always wore a headband and he had long, graying hair. We talked a great deal and I soon discovered that he was a kindred spirit; and, unrecognized or at least ignored by the others, gay as well. How did he cope with the burly, obviously bigoted types all around us? I asked. He smiled sweetly, picked up a toilet bowl with one hand and snapped off a chunk of the rim with the other. Next question?

Mike was a true delight. We talked about anything and everything and once he accepted the fact that I simply wasn't gay, he took a fatherly interest in me. He even intervened with the foreman, apparently, for I stayed on the epoxy bench for most of my time at the plant. (Fatherly or not, however, on the occasions when we worked together he would stand swaying at the next bench, softly crooning "Close To You" and other little ditties.)

Often there were hints that there were stranger types inhabiting the nether regions, too. Less than a month after I started, a weasly little guy with coke-bottle glasses suddenly appeared out of nowhere, his hair wildly askew, shouting, "Fuck 'em, . . . fuck 'em! That's what *I* say, fuck 'em, fuck 'em, *fuck 'em*! Ha, ha, ha, ha! ***Fuck 'em, fuck 'em***!" and he went cackling off down the corridor of stacked bowls, ranting and raving.

I stayed away from the others as much as I could after that, going for days on end without seeing a soul.

Feb. 1, 1971 — HEW issues a report on marijuana saying that two-thirds of college students have used it; found no evidence that grass causes birth defects, inhibits motivation or that it leads to harder drugs.
Feb. 5, 1971 — Apollo 14 lands on the moon with Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell aboard.

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Cadillac goin' 'bout ninety-five, she's bumper to bumper, rollin' side by side
Maybelline . . . why can't you be true?
—Chuck Berry

Mrs. Cranford, true to her word, gave me a "sandwich" every day at dinnertime, which turned out to be exactly the same fare as the others got — with the meat portion hanging out between two huge slabs of homemade bread. Rare roast beef, lamb, enormous pork chops, seafood, chicken, turkey — she was a cook to rival Pierre. She made old-fashioned puddings, homemade bread, chowders, beautiful salads, fresh vegetables, and real mashed potatoes. I lived for that one meal a day and on the weekends she ignored her own rule and tossed in breakfast. What she could do with pancakes . . . well, it is too painful to remember.

My only other diversion, and my true love, was driving. Lulu and I saw every inch of eastern Connecticut, and then some. She was a pig for gas and I seldom got the chance to use all that power, but she had one terrific gadget I'd never seen before or since. Under the dashboard there was a small black box with a button — nothing more. When you opened the box from below there was a tray to put cigarettes in — you loaded it up, punched the button and, *voilá,* a lit cigarette would pop out, burning nicely. Naturally, I kept it loaded with joints. (I picked up hitchhikers and watched their faces sidelong when I asked them to push that button.)

Getting lost was part of the fun and I discovered one ancient little village after another, with names like Niantic, Old Lyme, Noank, Mystic, Putnam, Pomfret, Ashford and Grosvenor Dale. I usually headed out in the early evening and, thinking to make my way to the coast once, for a change, drove down one deserted lane after another, mile after mile. I had a good sense of direction but this time I began to get worried when, past midnight, I seemed to have lost the ocean. At last I came to a turnpike and stopped at a toll booth to ask the guy where I was. He said, "You don't know where you are?" I said, "Nope, not a clue. Is the ocean that way?" He said, "Well, eventually. Where do you *think* you are?" I said, hopefully, "southern Connecticut?" He said, "Ah-nope. Northern Massachusetts — you'll hit the Pacific Ocean in about three thousand miles."

I had to be careful to avoid the bigger roads, however, for when I bought Lulu I ran into a little problem with the registration. State law said that you had to have insurance and the insurance people wanted $400 — cash on the barrelhead. Since I didn't have $400, I couldn't get insurance, and since I couldn't get insurance, I couldn't get registration. Since I couldn't get registration, I had no current plates or stickers, and since I had no current plates or stickers, I couldn't get a license. This was getting bothersome.

Any fool could see that my stickers were expired, so I borrowed a sticker from another car (only taking one, so as not to get them in trouble) except that now, since I only had the one sticker (this gets complicated but state laws are like that) I could only put it on the back plate, where it was most likely to be seen, and hope for the best.

But then, while driving over the New London-Groton bridge one day, a State Police car pulled up beside me, went past, slowed down, and then dropped behind me again. He came up alongside and motioned for me to pull over — I had a hunch he had spotted a discrepancy. What he apparently *didn't* know, however, since he stayed right beside me, was that just across the bridge there was an exit ramp that turned sharply to the right. I sped up . . . he sped up. I hit the ramp going about 50 and, naturally, he couldn't make the turn.

Well, he had wanted me to pull over and I *had* . . . so where was he? Thoroughly disgusted, I floored it, hitting 95 by the time I reached the top of the next hill. I turned into a side street and turned again and finally pulled into an empty driveway and waited for the cop. Nowhere in sight. What the hell — whatever it was, I figured he

must have lost interest.

But I made the mistake of driving into a relatively large town once and learned that speed wouldn't always do the trick. I sensed trouble but before I could turn around and get out again, I wound up smack in the middle of the main intersection — where a cop was directing traffic. I put on a big grin and tried to drive thru. Damn . . . he waved for me to stop.

He stared curiously at the sticker on the front plate, walked around to the back and stared at that plate. Puzzled, he went around for a look at the front again — came back and motioned for me to roll down my window.

"What's the trouble, officer?" I said, in my goofiest southern-Indiana accent.

"License and registration, please."

"Waal, sure . . . here's muh li-cense. But, uh . . . I don' keep that 'ere reg'stration in the *car* — what if it got stolen?!"

He peered at my (expired) North Dakota permit, sighed and stared at the sky, looked Lulu up and down — then glared at the permit some more. By now the cars were backed up behind and beginning to honk — I could see him mentally adding up the number of citations this was going to take. He leaned in to the window and looked me right in the eye. Quite calmly he said, "Now, listen, son. I want you to drive this piece-a-shit outta here. Slowly. And I don't *ever* want to see you in this town . . . no, make that in this *state,* ever again. Do you understand me?"

This was no time to get cute. I dropped the accent and said, "I certainly do, officer . . . thanks," and got the hell outta there.

Feb. 8, 1971 — Nixon announces the invasion of Laos (calling it an "incursion"); he assures Congress it will "shorten the war."
Feb. 10, 1971 — Massive antiwar demonstrations nationwide.

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Here comes the sun
And I say, it's all right
—George Harrison

Eastford in the winter was like a postcard of New England. The village was so small that it didn't even have a bar or a grocery store, only a garage, an antique shop, and some places for the local farmers — a veterinarian, a feed store, and a small hardware store. With snow on the ground it could have been a scene from the last century. One morning in late winter, just at dawn, something — some primeval stillness — told me to get up early. I looked out my window and beheld a spectacular scene.

When the conditions are perfect, when the temperature is just right and a soft, misting rain falls just before sunrise, it will freeze lightly as it touches the ground, causing an "ice storm." It was astonishing. Even in that half-light the whole world sparkled — every tree, every tiniest branch and twig was covered with the merest film of translucent, glistening ice; the houses, the barns and each blade of grass had turned into the purest, shining white. I threw on some clothes and went outside, feeling that something magical had happened.

I could hardly walk, for the ice had glazed over the path. Gingerly I stepped out into a world of crystals — not a breath of wind stirred, and if it had the whole scintillating show would have come crashing down. It was as fragile as a centuries-old pressed rose, utterly breathtaking. I stood in the chill, enthralled.

And then, the sun peeked above the distant hills and caught the highest tips of the trees. From the top of each tree came a burst of flashing light, in all the colors of the rainbow — crimson, azure, golden yellow, jade green. I watched, transfixed, as the sun rose slowly higher and a glittering aurora reached ever lower . . . down and down until the topmost branches were aflame with a million clear, blazing prisms. Fantastic jewels burst from every feathery tree crown and no matter which way I turned each distinct, tiny twig sparkled with a brilliant fire — transformed into a tiara of diamonds.

The sun reached now fully into the branches and every tree was a glistening shower of tiny rubies, sapphires, and emeralds. The tops of the houses were bathed in a fiery blaze of silent, shimmering fireworks, cascading over the eaves in a waterfall of crystalline perfection. I don't know how long I stood there gazing, turning round and round — mesmerized — but within moments the full force of the sun's warmth descended and just as quickly as it had come, it was gone. The trees were a drab brown again, dripping softly in the early morning chill, and only a hint, here and there, still remained. Soon even that last glimpse vanished and I walked thru the village in a kind of daze, wondering if it had all been only a dream. I carry it in my mind like a favorite photograph, tucked away in the pages of a book, and pull it out from time to time just to look.

Zeke turned up in mid-February, bringing dope and tidings of Blooming-gulch. I had never been so glad to see someone (freaks were even rarer around Eastford than they had been in New London) and we sat in my room, grinning at one another, not quite knowing where to start. They had had a good year on the Ridge and I felt bad about not having been there to help out, but Calvin had given him a hand and they'd done a lot more hybridizing. We smoked a bowl or two and it was amazingly good dope — and not just for homegrown. This was getting to be high-quality stuff.

Anton had returned and, as luck would have it, had been just in time to get his old apt. back, near 140, so they were seeing a lot of one another. The stage fright problem had been simply too much, so he decided to study composition, taking it up with Zeke. They were enrolled in the master's program, under the same professor,

taking a part-time load of courses.

I told him that by the end of the month I would have enough cash to fly to London and that I was going there, not because I was chasing Kim, but simply to take the chance to see more of the world. He nodded and said he understood, not believing a word of it. He could only stay a few days so we did a lot of driving in Lulu and I introduced him to the few people I'd met in Eastford. First was the miserable old man across the hall.

He hadn't always been miserable — when I'd first moved into the Inn, old Hamish had been a pretty content fellow. Drunk 90% of the time, true, but happy and agreeable. I used to go into his room and listen to his story. He'd been a farmer up in the hills nearby and had inherited the place from his father, in the days when they used draft horses, oxen, and mules. He loved to sit there sipping bourbon and tell me all about the old days, before tractors and automobiles ruined everything, sometimes letting a tear fall as he remembered a favorite aunt or an old mule. Country life had been simple, hard work and he could go on about it for hours. Even when he kept pressing the bottle on me, insisting that I drink with him, I didn't mind, for his memories were touched with gold. And then his daughter got into the act.

She was upset at "Dad's" drinking and took every opportunity to dump all his liquor down the drain. Finally she put her foot down — she was tired of being embarrassed by the old sot and, furthermore, it was bad for his "health." She threatened to put him in an old-folks' home if he ever had another drop and that was the one thing guaranteed to scare Hamish half to death. That was the end — no more booze for him and he'd been a miserable, crotchety old bastard ever since, picking arguments day and night and hating everything and everyone around him. Well, he was "sober" and that's all darling daughter cared about.

On the second day I took Zeke to meet the old Swede who lived in a house up the hill behind the Inn. Max Johanssen was the gentlest man I had ever come across. He literally would not kill a fly and when he found a bug inside the house he would ever-so-carefully coax it onto his finger and take it outside to let it go. He and Zeke got along beautifully, for Max was a real fan of classical music. We talked for hours about composers and pieces and Max asked searching, gentle questions about Zeke's work.

In the late afternoon Max's friends from up the road came by. The two newcomers sailed in, sat primly on their favorite chairs, and gave Zeke their standard greeting: "Hi! I'm Bill . . ." ". . . and I'm Gil." (In unison) "We're Bill and Gil!" Then they giggled.

Bill and Gil were just a tad precious but they made a lot of money collecting antiques and rare books all over New England, then selling them down in New York. Their knowledge of anything old was vast and they often made a killing, knowing full well what something was really worth when the owner had not a clue. They had bought the house for Max. Bill and Gil were flaming old queens, of course, and had

known Max for decades. Max was gay, too, but far from flaming he had a quiet dignity and an aristocratic bearing. I never got all the details of his background but he was so frugal that he rarely kept more than a tiny fire going in the fireplace, the only source of heat. He was in his eighties (tho he looked about sixty) and always wore two ancient sweaters and two frayed pairs of pants, since the cold permeated the place in the winter. Bill and Gil bought him a huge load of firewood in the fall but his habits were deeply ingrained and he couldn't bring himself to use more than slivers of it, except when company came.

In the evening we went up to Bill and Gil's for dinner. It was a richly furnished Victorian place, stuffed to the rafters with incredible antiques — huge, hand-crafted tables and intricately carved cabinets filled with crystal and priceless silver; there were real Tiffany lamps and stained-glass panels from old churches, an enormous, ancient snooker table and dozens of Colonial chairs and clocks. From the outside the house was drab and tumbledown, but the inside would have dazzled Louis XIV.

Zeke had to leave the next day and we said goodbye at the train station, where he reminded me that I always had a place in Bloomington. I drove back to Eastford, wondering if I should have gone with him, but the fiddlefoot had its hold on me again. What the hell.

March 1, 1971 — Bomb explodes in the Senate wing of the Capitol in protest over the invasion of Laos; Nixon calls it "a shocking act of violence." (Civilian deaths in Laos exceed 30,000.)

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Won't you let me in,
Immigration man?
—Crosby & Nash

A week later the foreman at the factory decided that I'd had enough of the easy stuff and put me on the inspection line, hoisting toilet bowls onto a huge "flusher" to see if they leaked. This was beginning to devolve into work and I hated it, especially the forced "macho-ness" that the other two on the line paraded with trenchant persistence. I put in my two-weeks' notice, having saved up enough for the flight plus a couple of hundred in expense money.

I sold Lulu to a kid in a nearby town for the same $75 that I'd paid for her and asked Bill and Gil if I could store my things in their garage. In early March I said my goodbyes to them and Max and Mrs. Cranford, drove to the airport with the kid, and got on the flight to New York. The plane left Kennedy late at night — a cheap, "discount" flight on one of the newer airlines. The reek of heavily perfumed disinfectant failed to mask the smell of cognac-vomit that suffused the entire plane and for the first

hour or two I was pummeled by nausea. I hate cognac.

The sight of dawn coming up over the mountains and glaciers of Greenland almost made up for it and I felt at peace by the time we were passing over Ireland's green hills. That is . . . until I remembered something rather important.

I was rather proud of myself for having tucked away all of the grass Zeke had given me in the stuff I'd stored at Bill and Gil's — but that probably wouldn't help me when it came to explaining the 20-odd hits of psilocybin stashed in my bags. It was in a rolled-up sock, wrapped in aluminum foil, looking for all the world like a little wad of 20-odd hits of psilocybin — or worse. What on earth had I been thinking of, to leave the grass behind and then bring this load of dynamite along? I clearly remembered rolling it up and stashing it in the sock, happy as a clam that I was able to take it with me — utterly oblivious to the fact that somewhere along the line, someone might question whether my intentions were purely scientific.

I broke into a sweat that even the comatose Danish stewardess noticed and she asked me if I knew how to use the barf bag and "would you please perhaps want one bigger more?" I said no, thanks, I already was "one bigger more."

Before leaving the plane we had to fill out a form and have our papers ready — there was nothing I could do. I was carrying all my bags with me and as we made our way into Gatwick terminal I thought briefly about ditching the guilty one. Oh Jesus, maybe they won't look . . . I'll say they're pain pills . . . I'll explain that . . . oh, shit.

The man at the Immigration Desk looked skeptically at my long hair, bellbottom jeans, and tattered jacket, taking particular note of the macrame belt Claude had given me, but he stamped my passport without a word and sent me on to the room marked "Customs Authority." I tottered toward my doom.

There was no one there! Not a soul! I walked straight thru and out into the teeming lobby! My god, my luck had come thru again — I gave thanks and caught the first train into Victoria Station, burbling to myself and grinning at everyone in sight. They left me quite alone. On the train ride in, I overheard a beautiful young woman remark (in a shockingly British accent) "Oh, it's so good to be back in a civilized country again." They'd been in Italy.

I called Kim's number and when she came I wanted to fall into her arms — I'd almost forgotten those beautiful eyes and that husky, warm voice. As usual her greeting was a glad-to-see-you offhandedness and she took me straight to King's Road, explaining that she didn't have much time.

King's Road was a grimy street with a row of cheap hotels. The lady who rented the place was surly and the room was cold as hell, with a gadget that gave heat only if you put coins in it. I was nervous, exhausted, and nearly incoherent — nothing seemed familiar, not even the bed and chair. I felt awful, alone, and afraid but I was starting to get used to it by now. At least my radio worked and when I found a station with classical music, I settled back and finally went to sleep, 32 hours after leaving Eastford.

The next day I got Kim on the phone again and she gave me directions to Trafalgar Square. I took all my stuff along, not wanting to spend another £5 (about $12) on that hotel. Trafalgar was magnificent — on the north side was the National Gallery and off to the east loomed the dome of St. Paul's. In the middle of the spacious square a towering statue of Nelson and a huge fountain lured thousands of pigeons, swirling in frantic flight over the heads of the tourists. Off to the south I spotted a beautiful gothic tower with a big clock booming out the hours . . . it looked vaguely familiar, so I stopped a passing cop and asked him what it was called. His eyebrows arched up to the fourteenth floor and he said, over-distinctly, "Big Ben," and walked on.

Kim came and we found a pub nearby. She was bright and open, now that she'd gotten used to the fact that I was really here, and she had all kinds of useful information on how to get around. She couldn't put me up herself since she was working as a live-in for a doctor and his family in Kew Gardens, doing light work in exchange for a place to stay. But she knew all about the youth hostels in London and gave me a rundown on how they worked and where they were. She had to get back to work but promised to see me on the weekends and we went to an Underground station where I got a map of the system and went on my way, happy again. All my doubts and anxiety from the day before fell away and I wanted to dance — she was here, she was really here, and I loved her. I would tell her so and we would . . . we would . . . hell, I don't know, but we would, because I loved her.

I took the Tube up to Highgate Hill and went in search of the youth hostel there. I had only two carrying bags and a shoulder bag but they meant it when they said "Highgate Hill," for it looked like a small mountain. I was hoping I wouldn't have to go all the way to the top — I stopped an elderly woman with a kind face and asked her where the hostel was. She said, yes, to the top of the hill and then right and then around this bend, etc., etc. She was very nice about it and when I'd gone a good way up the hill here she came again, running after me and puffing like crazy. "No, no," she said, "I told you to go right at the top, dearie, but it's *left* . . . you want to go left!" I was astonished — she'd half-killed herself just to help a stranger and I figured that was good omen — that it would set the tone for my stay. Ah, youth!

The hostel was for foreigners only and they gave me a bed in a large dorm room with several others. They provided a place to keep your things but you had to be out by 7:00 a.m. and you could only stay for three nights at a time. I got a map of all the youth hostels and planned to spend a lot of time shunting around from one to another — Highgate, Blackfriars, King's Cross — and often would have to scramble if they were full.

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People try to put us down
Just because we g-g-g-get around

—The Who

I slept for almost twelve hours and awoke the next day ravenously hungry — what and where to eat? I soon found a nice little tea shop that served tea, pastry and scones (which turned out to be merely plain, uninteresting biscuits, for all the high-sounding name) and the waitress told me all about nearby Highgate cemetery and how to find the tomb of Karl Marx, so I spent the afternoon wandering around, peering at the ancient headstones.

After that, however, grabbing a bite was all downhill, for I soon discovered a truth as old as the pyramids, yet new to each who rediscovers it: eating, to an American, is really nothing more than a necessity; in France, it is a grand indulgence; in Italy, a passion; in Germany, a form of predation. In England it is best avoided altogether.

First of all, there are manners. Americans abroad often have the reputation of being arrogant simply because it's the only defense we have against European arrogance — sort of a protective coloration. But no one can be more rudely dismissive and unconcerned about your wishes than an English waiter or waitress. No matter how many times I asked for plain, black coffee (no cream, please, no sugar) I got it with cream *and* sugar — they were sure I couldn't have meant it, since absolutely *everyone* there takes it "with." If I stood in line at a cafeteria and repeated my request several times, the "tea" lady would shrug and give me white coffee anyway, quite sure that I simply didn't know what I was talking about. And god forbid you should ask for anything whatsoever that was in the slightest at variance with how everyone else ate it (toast instead of crackers with soup, for instance), for then you got a glare normally reserved for grandmother-rapists.

And the food! They boiled everything, absolutely everything, including the "roast" beef. Vegetables were never boiled less than three days and were indistinguishable from a form of softened fungus. Any kind of meat was burned to a crisp — except the pork, which was half raw. And, mind you, you dare not send anything back for then you got the stare that said "Oh, yes, you Americans — you're the arrogant lot, aren't you?" (It would come back unchanged, anyway, just colder.)

I tried the steak-and-kidney pie in a pub and that was a mistake. This "pie" consists of a gooey mass of gristle and fat tucked into a half-cooked dough that they manage to burn black on the outside. The English, it seems, do not believe in "done" — only half-done, over-done and done-but-ice-cold. Anything else, I suppose, would be effete and "French."

I wanted to drown everything in ketchup but their idea of ketchup is an oily soy sauce that had never seen a tomato and never would (apparently the English still believe they're poisonous). All in all, it was tough going. The fish-and-chips shops occasionally served something close to being food, but the rest could have taken cooking lessons from Zeke on one of his bad days. Most of the time I lived on bread and

cheese that I got in grocery stores (bring your own bag, dearie) and once or twice I splurged on a French place.

And, of course, there was the language barrier to contend with. I soon found out that "chips" are french fries (well — their version, anyway) and potato chips are "crisps." Cookies are "biscuits." Unaccountably, so are biscuits. The bathroom is the "loo" (the first word I learned) and "pants" mean underwear — if you mean pants you have to say "trousers" or you got a glassy, far-off stare (the English have perfected, by my count, 478 different types of stares, including cognates).

The vulgarities had totally different meanings. "Bugger" is decidedly nasty (a sodomite) and "fanny," instead of meaning a woman's behind, means her front. On the other hand, if you "knocked a girl up," you were only calling on her, and to get "pissed" meant to get drunk. The most famous of all, "bloody," I could never get an explanation of until an old charwoman giggled and told me that it "referred to me menses, sair" (no wonder they're so delicate about it).

Gasoline is "petrol" and the hood is the "bonnet." Every day there was some "cock-up" (not what you might think) over something I'd said. And since the English have an absolute mania for pointing out how inferior everyone else is, even simple transactions could be endlessly prolonged.

I had traveler's checks (cheques) which I tried to cash in banks (no big deal, right?) but even that was a chore. I'd hand one over to a cashier and he'd shove them back for me to sign — peering at the two signatures as he asked for identification. I'd fork over my passport and he'd peer at that for a while, then say, "Well, it's not the say-em."

"Excuse me?"

"It's not the say-em, sir . . . the signature. You can see for yourself . . . it's not the say-em."

"But it's *my* signature. Look, (grabbing a piece of paper) it's never *exactly* the say-em . . . I mean same; that's just the way I write it."

(Examining new one) "But, this isn't the say-em, either. You can see that, can't you? It's not the say-em at all. Carswell!" Another four-eyed prig with a constipation problem simpered over, peered at the signatures and the passport and pronounced, "Well, . . . it's not the say-em!"

"My very words, sir, it's just what I was tellin' 'im. It's not the say-em — it's just not the say-em."

This went on until they finally got fed up and cashed the checks but no matter where I went, it happened every time.

To be fair, tho, perhaps my clothes had something to do with it. I wore my usual bellbottoms with a macrame belt, an old blue shirt and a jeans jacket with patches of marijuana leaves, etc., and I had noticed in the first day or two that, no matter how poor they might be the English always looked as if God were surely about to descend for a

check on their attire. And, bless you, I just didn't fit in. I began to fear for the British national eyebrow, for whenever they saw me coming they shot them up high enough to merge with their carefully coiffed hair. They were definitely not shy about letting you know if you weren't precisely as they were — if you so much as sat on a park bench with your legs crossed under you, someone was bound to stop and ask if you were all right: "Legs cramping up, duckie?"

Not that it would do the slightest bit of good to try and shock them deliberately — they were as immune the French were to humor. Or, at least, it was very different. Their "eccentrics" are a kind of national institution, carefully cultivated, but more on that later.

On our first weekend together Kim took me out to a place called Portobello Road, on the west end. It was a sort of counterculture bazaar, stretching for several blocks, with people selling everything from tie-dye shirts and leather boots to incense and hash pipes. There were street musicians and outdoor food vendors (real food, for a change), mimes and panhandlers. We went to the Electric Cinema, which Kim said was the oldest movie house in the world, and watched Japanese films. We just walked around, getting to know one another again.

As usual, Kim somehow managed to be warm and distant at the same time and I kept playing the role of a mere tourist, grateful for even a part-time guide. I wanted to know how she felt about my being there but, inevitably, we slipped back into the old game — I fished for some sort of statement of love and she would freely give me something that was clearly becoming a formula, an expression of "kinship." She loved me like . . . like what? A brother . . . a friend . . . a pal? I let it go, afraid to pursue it any further.

During the week I explored on my own. It was easy to get around on the Tube and I wandered around Hyde Park, Green Park, Hampstead Heath and all the little strips of green along the Embankment of the Thames. Even tho it was early March the weather was beautiful, occasionally almost warm. Fellow freaks approached me in the parks, selling decent hash but never grass. I bought a cheap pipe and smoked away under the trees and on the broad hills overlooking the city — no one ever said a word except once when a passing bobby smelled it, gave me a stern look and said, "You want to watch that, mate," then walked the other way.

I went to all the tourist places — the Tower of London, Marble Arch, Piccadilly Circus (I was disappointed to find that it was not a circus at all, just a traffic circle), St. Paul's Cathedral, Baker Street (alas, there is no 221B), Madame Tussaud's, Parliament, and Westminster Abbey — I was having the time of my life. I had never realized how much fun tourists have. My first impression of London had been one of great antiquity and this sense deepened as I wandered thru the maze of rabbit warrens and cul-de-sacs that were everywhere — each filled with houses and courtyards and peculiar little shops. For all it was huge, it was somehow comfortable and I was falling under a spell

of ancient charm. I could bum around with other freaks and while we certainly weren't "accepted," the hassles were not particularly vehement, either. In fact, there was a concert in Hyde Park one night that was a dream of harmony and communal grace, a "love-in" that made me feel as if I'd been transported to San Francisco. I caught a glimpse of John Lennon whizzing by in the back of a white Rolls Royce.

Something should have told me that things were going much too well. On Saturday I was to meet Kim for a matinee and I took a stroll around St. James Park in the late morning. I sat down on the grass to eat my usual lunch of a hard roll and some cheese, but when I bit into the roll I split a molar on the left side, exposing the nerve. There is no description of the pain that is adequate — but picture an iron spike being jammed down the center of a tooth and you'll get the idea. I went in frantic search of a dentist.

Block after block I walked, in a growing panic. Past Westminster, Trafalgar, Piccadilly, and Leicester Square — nothing. At last I saw a pub and, desperate to try anything, stopped in and ordered a whiskey. The instant that cold liquid hit my tooth I sank to my knees in excruciating agony — I gasped and staggered out again (utterly ignored, of course) and there, across the street, I saw a sign above a Chemist's shop saying, "Dentist — All Hours, No Waiting." I was saved!

It sounds like a cliche but it is absolute fact — as I staggered up the stairs a man came *running* down past me, clutching his jaw and groaning loudly. What the hell, I had no choice. The nurse gave me Glare #326 and said she was sorry, it was the doctor's lunch hour and could I come back later? I said I'd pay twice what was usual, if that was the problem, and smiled the smile of the wicked witch in a fairy tale. I became insistent — the "Ugly American," donchaknow.

Disgusted, she showed me in to the (arched-eyebrows) dentist and explained the problem. He was disgusted, too, so that made a matching set. He reminded me of a racetrack tout — a weasly-looking sort who made some meant-to-be-withering remarks, then gave me a shot of novocaine. It did nothing at all (which was normal for me) and I told him to just go ahead — I could stand getting it pulled better than what I was going thru now. Fat chance. He simply couldn't bear the thought of not doing the job "properly" so he took out a syringe with a long, curved needle and calmly *shoved it down the middle of that tooth and straight into the nerve.* All that had gone before was as nothing — the pain was far beyond anything I'd ever experienced before and I involuntarily knocked his arm away. He repeated the jab and again I knocked it away. He did this *five times* before he was satisfied and could pull the offending tooth at his leisure. Auschwitz had nothing on this guy — he calmly remarked as I was leaving that he was glad I had taken it so well, for most of his patients were such "crybabies."

I wanted to kill him . . . I *should* have killed him. But my knees were shaking so badly I was afraid I would have botched the job and only maimed him for life. I have always regretted that squeamishness.

I met Kim at the theatre and told her all about it. She seemed quite unconcerned, merely tut-tutting when I mentioned the part about killing him. We watched the play in silence. It took me two days to recover but I got some nice pain pills from the chemist (no prescription!) that were a mixture of phenobarbital, codeine, and phenacetin. He told me to take no more than one every four hours — naturally I did a mental adjustment for the time change and took one every hour until they were gone and spent the rest of the weekend as happy as a donkey on a wagon, quietly grinning at nothing at all.

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Newspaper taxis appear on the shore
Waiting to take you away
—The Beatles

London was beginning to pall, however — Kim couldn't spare me much time and the whole town seemed to shut down at 10:00 p.m., so the next week I decided to see some more of the country and took a train up to Cambridge.

I found a youth hostel and that first night discovered a vine-covered old pub where I met several students, all about my age. There were two curly-haired identical twins from Wales, Fred and Geoff — a happy-go-lucky pair who loved a good time. By closing time we were old friends and we met again the next day. Like everyone else in England they had never heard of psilocybin, so I offered to turn them on to some. It was their equivalent of spring break and the town was relatively deserted — they gladly accepted and on a clear, bright morning we each dropped a hit.

As the psilo began to come on, Fred and Geoff showed me around the university. It was a place whose antiquity suffused the entire town — I had thought that IU was old but the latest additions to Cambridge were 200 years older. Every elegantly proportioned building harmonized perfectly with the whole and each quiet courtyard we entered opened onto a scene of stunning beauty — an archaic agelessness. It was a perfect morning, the first really warm day of the year, and we walked around in a timeless, dazed awe. They were seeing the place with new eyes, too, and at every turn we discovered something breathtaking. I felt completely safe and comfortable with them and we spent a long time just roaming thru the medieval hush of towering stone and ivy, of bizarre little arches and quaint-as-hell courtyards.

It was a day right out of *Alice in Wonderland,* sunny and fairy-like. The twins suggested we go down to the Cam and rent a rowboat for a little cruise, which sounded like a lot of fun. Too bad that everyone else from the college who hadn't gone home for the vacation had had the same idea, and when we got down to the "river," the rental place only had two boats left — a two-man and a single. We had our hearts set on a

ride, however, so Fred and Geoff took the two-man boat and I took the other, assuring them that I could certainly handle a little skiff like this.

When I got in, suddenly I wasn't quite so sure. The seat moved back and forth alarmingly and I thought it must be broken. The proprietor told me that that's how it worked and "didn't I know how to row a bloody scull?" So off I went, determined to prove my vaunted American "know-how."

The Cam is only a few yards wide but that only accented its charm — an ancient, lazy stream framed perfectly by dreamy willows, druidic old oaks and manicured grass banks. Alas, that first glimpse of heaven was also my last. Everything on that tiny boat went the exact opposite of what I expected. When the seat went back my arms shot out akimbo and when I tried to pull back, the seat shot forward. Within ten yards I was totally disoriented, unable to coordinate my hands, my feet, even my eyes. I whirled this way and that, now aiming for the shore, now straight upstream. The river was full of rowboats and punts, manned by students in straw hats out to coolly impress their girlfriends, and they eyed me with alarm. I began to panic but somehow, and very quickly, I caught on and mastered speed — unfortunately, direction was another matter.

There seemed to be some sort of rowboat etiquette going on — the boats were sticking to invisible "lanes" and a strict protocol of who went where. In my confusion I struggled to keep going as fast as I could but I had no more chance of sticking to those rules than I had of deciphering them. I shot upstream and then down — first toward the left bank and then to the right. Within five minutes I ran into several boats, mumbling apologies and sending the owners into a frenzy of shouting and oar-waving. In their mounting anxiety to get out of my way, they began bumping into one another — and that started a chain reaction.

There were so many boats crowding the tiny stream, rowing furiously to avoid collisions, that the effect magnified and rippled up and down the river like a shiver thru a snake. In no time the entire stream was a boiling uproar of outraged punters — there was a great deal of shouting and swearing and quite a lot of it seemed to be aimed in my direction. I was trying desperately to get out of the way when one deranged lunatic swung his punting-pole right at my head — I shot under a low, stone bridge and rammed the boat into the shore, splashing into the water to climb up the bank. I caught a last glimpse of Fred and Geoff, motionless upstream, stretched out in their boat and laughing helplessly.

Fearing it would turn into a riot, I raced back to the youth hostel and grabbed all my things — I could hear the shouts even from there so I beat it to the train station and caught the next train back to London. I would miss Cambridge, I was sure, but I doubted it would miss me.

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Runnin' in the shadows
Damn your love, damn your lies
—Fleetwood Mac

I had learned one important thing in Cambridge, however — Chinese and Indian restaurants had perfectly edible food and at last I could start eating again. I happily discovered that there were dozens such in London and when I got tired of Chinese, I simply switched to Indian, and when I got tired of Indian, switched back to Chinese. I don't know why the English had never discovered this — too confusing, I suppose.

Chinese cooking I had eaten before, but I had never tried Indian and when I saw something on the menu called "curried rice," somehow the image of currants came to mind. I ordered the lamb with curried rice and, notwithstanding that I didn't see any berries in there, dug in with gusto. Curry, sad to say, is nothing like currants. My eyes bugged out and, too late, my tongue said "Stop!" The waiter, sensing trouble, was at my side in an instant, urging me to take bread and butter, not water — he was right and when I settled down at last I found that I loved curry, being fond of Mexican food when I was a kid. This, however, had to be treated with a lot more respect, for they toss the stuff in by the tablespoon.

Kim and I met again that weekend and I told her all about the Unpleasantness at Cambridge. She seemed to perk up a bit and we smoked some hash and strolled along the Embankment, talking and laughing. In the evening we went to a movie.

Seeing movies in London was a very different experience. In the first place, the seats were not all the same price — the ones down front costing the least, the balcony much more. (The upper class like the balcony — someday the British will figure out a way to sort bellybuttons by class.) Smoking was not only allowed, it was positively encouraged — almost everyone in England seemed to smoke and they do so everywhere but in the shower. Every movie had an intermission, when a pathetic woman with a tray strapped around her neck walked up and down schlepping ice cream.

The movies *themselves* seemed different, too. My reaction when I saw the same ones later at home was completely unlike what it had been in London. Perhaps it was the audience, I don't know. At every film there was at least one "eccentric" in the audience who made loud comments about the movie, all the way thru. One poor old hag stood up and lectured us: "Yew think this is real, don'chew? Yew all bloody think this is really 'appnin', don'chew — well, yer all daft because it *ain't* . . . it's just a bunch of colored lights, in't it? . . . that's all it is . . . bloody colored lights, like a damn freak show . . ." and so forth, etc., completely ruining the picture. No one said a word, however, and seemed perfectly content to pretend that absolutely nothing unusual was

happening.

Perhaps that's why the British have such an incredible sense of humor and the French have none — the French are wedded 24 hours a day to their history and *soi-disant* self-importance, whereas the British have a daily, schizophrenic juxtaposition of their overwrought politeness poised against an accepted and pervasive insanity. An example: while walking in The City (the financial district) one day, I saw a bum in rags freaking out, blasting a harmonica not two inches from the nose of a business-type in a bowler hat. The latter was clutching his umbrella and newspaper, backed up against a wall and clearly terrified, unable to move or speak as the bum waved his arms and blared into his face — but all the other Hats merely strolled past, taking great pains to ignore them both. I stood there, amazed, unable to decide which was more ludicrous — the bum and his shaking victim or the chatting businessmen walking along with their eyes averted. Finally I couldn't take it any longer and tapped the bum on the shoulder, offering him a couple of coins. He stopped and stared straight up at the sky for a moment, then wandered off without a word. The Hat straightened his tie and strode off in the other direction — also without a word, also ignoring me, as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

I sighed — what could you expect from a country whose idea of toilet paper consisted of a scratchy emery-board on one side and waxpaper on the other? (Why two different sides? Which side did you use? It could drive you crazy.)

After a movie the next night, Kim and I went for a long bus ride thru the suburbs. She told me her mother was coming over for a visit and that she couldn't see me any more, since she'd have to show her mother around in her spare time. I was astonished by this lightly mentioned brush-off. Would her mother be offended by the very sight of me? Was even a dinner once in a while somehow repugnant? I knew that she had most of her evenings off and that her "job" was a largely symbolic one — a convenience for her and the family, who were providing her with the "green card" she needed.

What was this all about? Puzzled, I probed gently but all I could get were vague hints that I later tried to piece together. Kim was expert at creating a come-hither impression, only to stiff-arm a person at the last minute. She really seemed to enjoy this game, but there was more to it than that — all I could make out was that while she thought me a nice enough companion, there was no way she could take me seriously. To her, I had failed at Conn College, letting her down, and therefore I simply wasn't enough of a heavy hitter. There were those seemingly offhand remarks about Jung and Lang and all the other esoterics who were being woven into her grand tapestry of something-or-other and, clearly, I couldn't keep up.

She assured me that she continued to "love" me but that was nothing more than a slogan by now, the coin of the new-age consciousness. I swallowed my feelings and put on the stiff-upper-lip — this was Britain, after all, and I would treat it as a matter of no

great concern, nothing worth troubling about. I had a week or so left on my visa and, since I was apparently beginning to go British myself, decided to go about it thoroughly. I went back to Portobello Road and bought a bulky sweater and some tweedy trousers — doing all I could to start passing for a native. I began a long pub-crawl, listening carefully and imitating the accent as best I could. At first it was tough going — they can detect the slightest variations in accents — but eventually I began to get it and could just barely pass as a student from "the North." It was the only way to get them to talk to me, for the English are not only stupendously class-conscious, they don't really like "Yanks."

I spent night after night drinking and commiserating with the other unfortunates, listening to their life stories and making up one outrageous lie after another about myself. More than one, after very little prompting from me, revealed their secret "theory" about Americans — that they were really just a jealous lot, harboring a deep and possibly unconscious desire to be more like the English, with a Queen or King of their own and a class system to sort out all the "chaos." This was a quaint revelation and it came in many variations — that we lacked moral "fibre" because we had no Lords and Ladies to look up to; that we were overly wealth-conscious because we secretly longed to be as "refined" as they; that we were "arrogant" because our social system lacked the humility of knowing your "place." One after another, it was all the same in different guises — Americans really just couldn't stand not being English. The uniformity of the theme was extraordinary.

One night, tired of the usual song, I simply drank . . . and that meant drinking to impress. I ordered a double scotch with a Guiness chaser — a "boilermaker" with a vengeance. The barman raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Fifteen minutes later I ordered another and he took notice. After three of these, he and the others began to watch me with guarded admiration, winking at one another and wondering when I was going to pass out. I was going to get as pissed as possible and that, as they say, was that.

After another three or four the room was reeling and I couldn't make sense of what anyone around me was saying. At last I turned to go . . . and realized I couldn't possibly make it to the door. I grabbed the only thing that was handy — a slot machine next to the bar that ran on shilling tokens. The man behind me asked loudly whether I was going to play or give him a chance, so I got a load of tokens from the barmaid and began pulling the handle, wondering if the room would ever stop spinning in sync with the little dials.

I began to win. I yanked on that thing and the wheels spun round ("oh, please, stop that") and the coins dropped into the little basket below. I pulled and they came, more and more, clinking down; I hit a winner almost every time and they were spilling out of the basket, tumbling over my shoes and piling up on the floor. All I could do was to keep on working that lever, holding on for dear life, but I *couldn't bend over to pick them up*!

No one, of course, offered to help and at last I stumbled out of the pub and staggered off down the street (throwing up on every third car that I came to) and finally arrived at the hostel, going to sleep on the porch, curled up in a little ball.

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And he comes . . . and he stays
But he leaves the next day—So sad . . .
—Paul McCartney

After that I swore off the pubs and decided to reform. For two days I recovered by going on long walks and visiting all the museums and galleries I could find — the National Gallery, the Tate, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert. In the evenings I went to concerts at Albert Hall and Royal Festival Hall. And then, one night, crossing the bridge back from a concert, I found myself walking next to a girl. Somehow we started talking and she said that her name was Janet. One thing led to another and we found ourselves spending the night at her flat.

Janet was tiny and waif-like and terrified of everything beyond her rooms. I had managed to catch her on the one evening when she'd been so lonely she couldn't stand it any longer. She made love with surprising and beautiful ferocity and then just as tenderly melted in my arms. In the morning, crudely, brusquely, and for no reason at all I told her I was going back to America the next day and I would never see her again. In that one brief moment all my anger at Kim came welling up and burst its banks. Poor Janet was startled and shaken and her look of profound hurt will stay with me forever.

I stormed thru the streets all day, out of money, without even plane fare to get back home. I had spent it all — everything. Wandering into Hyde Park, I found a freak and offered to sell him my cache of psilo. An hour later he came back with two friends and agreed to buy it for £5 a hit. We did the deal and I spent the night on a park bench, fuming.

She had said that she "loved" me; that she could "see" me, oh so clearly; that I was "beautiful" and her "raven-hair," etc., etc. And yet, there had not been a single time that she hadn't shunted me aside on the merest excuse, refusing to take my love for what it was — yea or nay — or to even acknowledge that it was real. Face it, you idiot, to her you were a puppy, a plaything, and nothing more. How could I have fallen for this self-indulgent, coolly pompous, intellectual snob of a spoiled fucking brat? How. . .

I raged on and on, stomping around in the cold, dark night. Time after time, I shoved all the hurt and anger back inside, forcing it into the depths like so much unwanted baggage. But time after time, all my passion came surging back up: I loved

her, no matter what, no matter how grotesque it all seemed. There was nothing on this earth I could do about that — it whimpered and sang from the caverns of my soul and it would not be ignored.

By the time dawn came I was frightened and alone once more. I filched patience from frustration and forged a counterfeit of indifference . . . pretended "acceptance" and a stern outlook. But all I really felt was grief. That afternoon I signed up on a sleazy charter flight with my last few bucks, rode the train out to Gatwick and took the plane back to New York.

March 23, 1971 — Congress approves the 26th Amendment, giving 18-year-olds the right to vote; sent to the states for ratification.
March 24, 1971 — South Vietnamese troops leave Laos under heavy attack from North Vietnamese forces.
March 29, 1971 — Lt. Wm. Calley found guilty of the murders at My Lai; sentenced to life at hard labor. All of the others involved were either acquitted or had the charges dropped.
March 31, 1971 — House Democratic caucus calls for an end to the Vietnam war; the Democratic Policy Council votes to include an end-the-war plank in the platform.

PART V
The Comet to Brown County

It's life's illusions I recall
I really don't know life . . . at all
—Joni Mitchell

My instinct was to head straight back to Bloomington, but I didn't care to see anyone I knew just then. Instead I took the train from Grand Central to New Haven and hitchhiked over to Eastford to retrieve my stuff from Bill and Gil. I didn't want to stay at the Inn again so I borrowed enough money to get myself going and hitched on over to a town that I had scouted before.

The towns around there fell into two distinct categories — gray, depressing factory towns and picturesque (but jobless) villages. I had noticed a small settlement named Dayville that, while dominated by a large factory, wasn't quite as forlorn as the others; there were always places to rent in these little hamlets. I quickly found one — the top floor of a small house that had been converted into a one-bedroom apt. It was furnished as depressingly as the room in New London and, to boot, the landlord was the local sheriff. I didn't give a damn one way or the other. I cut my hair a little shorter and applied for a job at the factory the next day.

They said they weren't hiring just then (my hair wasn't all *that* short, and the personnel boss looked skeptical) so I ate beans for two weeks and kept going back every day, pestering them until they finally got sick of me coming around. Miraculously, there was an opening all of a sudden and I was assigned to the carton loft.

It was an enormous place where they made glass bottles (you could hear the tinkling clinks a block away) and the carton loft was where they assembled the boxes for them. I climbed a stairway to a high platform, well above the main floor, and far in the distance, across the conveyor belts of marching, hot bottles, I could see several lines of glass molds. For some reason that end was kept in total darkness and it was mesmerizing to watch the streams of molten glass flowing down like great rivers of fire. Huge metal arms reached from the sides in rapid staccato, cutting off chunks and ramming them into the molds. Sparks flew and the sharp, penetrating tang of immense heat reached all the way to the loft. On the main floor fourteen mesh conveyors moved the bottles along as they cooled — a million bottles a day and every one of them clanking infernally. The din was an overpowering presence, maddening. The distant, yellow-hot streamers and the constant noise made it truly a vision of hell, but there was a kind of poetry in it, too — a sense of controlled chaos and a graceful inexorability that somehow seemed almost soothing.

There were a variety of gluing machines in the loft and several stations with six-foot-tall staplers. Running one of those was tough, since you had to be very coordinated and very fast to keep the long, snaking lines filled. Once they were full you could take a break but I quickly learned that there were far more breaks when you worked on a gluer, since all you had to do was pop open the boxes and stuff them in place — tho you still had to be damn fast.

There was a strict but inscrutable rotation system on the lines, known only to the chubby little foreman (who bore an eerie resemblance to a bespectacled Lou Costello) and the work schedule was seven days on and four days off, changing shifts each time from the day to the evening and then to the graveyard shift. At first this looked to be an even worse setup than I'd had at the toilet bowl factory, where I could be on my own at a little work station set off to one side, but then I discovered something called "the baler."

A huge double door at the back of the carton loft opened out onto several enormous warehouses, all strung together. Piled high on pallets, as far as the eye could see, were hundreds of stacks of bottles in cartons, waiting to be shipped out. In the distance you could hear the occasional whirr of the forklifts as they roamed here and there, rearranging the pallets like so many worker bees. All the scrap cardboard — five or six tons a day — was trundled out to that platform to be baled in a tall compressor. As at the toilet bowl place, no "real" man wanted this job so, naturally, I asked for it every day, and usually got it. I was glad to get away from the noise on the main floor and doing little or no work in the bargain suited me just fine.

As for the reality of working in a factory, I needed the money but I was really less interested in that than just the space and time to get myself settled into something mindless. But soon I was past feeling sorry for myself and actually felt much worse for the poor bastards who were stuck there for the rest of their lives, day in and day out, year in and year out. It was hard to imagine that kind of life but now, for a time at least, it would be my life, too.

April 1, 1971 — Nixon orders Calley released from the stockade and returned to his base apartment, pending appeal.

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Old man, look at my life
I'm a lot like you were
—Neil Young

I was going to need a car again, so I began watching the ads and found one for a '65 Mercury Comet that looked promising. I hiked out of town about two miles and

found that it was being sold by a burly, laconic guy who ran a small garage out in the middle of nowhere. He showed me the car and said it had been owned by a customer of his who had died recently — a little old lady, no less. Somehow I believed him and it was love at first sight — she was a deep, metallic blue-green, a two-door with a sleek, angular profile that was the exact opposite of Lulu. '65 was a classic year for the Comet and this one had a small six-cylinder with a stick shift and no frills.

The garage owner was as concerned about my pedigree as I was about the car's and I liked that. He wanted $500 and I said I'd see the bank about it, not really expecting to get a loan. I was shocked when they agreed and the next day, the Comet was mine. Fortunately, the one thing I had saved from Lulu was the joint-lighter and I installed it the first thing, loading it up with joints from the grass Zeke had brought me. I began re-exploring the area and it felt like home, as if I'd lived there for years. It all seemed like a long time ago.

I drove over to Eastford and got the rest of my stuff out of Bill and Gil's garage, promising to pay off the money I owed them. They made dinner and seemed genuinely glad that I was getting back on my feet again — Bill said that I looked like a fugitive when I first got back, and he wasn't far wrong.

Max, the immensely gentle, tall old Swede, had died soon after I left and we sat there in the evening gloom, sharing a bottle of wine as Bill and Gil talked about his life. It was a somber and sweet moment and they roamed far afield, recalling tidbits about Max from whatever floated up. Max and I had often gone driving, just looking at the green hills and the neat hedgerows that ran up and down the fields. After a time he began, very quietly, to tell me about his childhood in Sweden. His fondest memory was of a little pond at the bottom of the garden, where he would sit for hours, wondering about the life in and around the pond and thinking of Mozart. There was a long pause and then he said that he felt he had been a "flower child" all his life. He said he was tremendously happy to have lived long enough to see so many young people sharing the dream of peace and love and freedom, his lifelong hope for a perfect society. He was a beautiful man.

April 6, 1971 — Composer Igor Stravinsky dies at age 89.

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Must be getting early
The clocks are running late
—The Grateful Dead

My main entertainment was the Comet. She was even more fun to drive than Lulu. I loved nothing better than to punch the button on the joint-machine and go for a

drive and tho I thought I knew almost all the roads in that area, they were never quite the same. Now that it was spring all the leaves were out and the roads were transformed into tightly hemmed-in lanes. Each road looked entirely new when driving over it in a different direction or at night, so it always seemed as if I were exploring entirely new country. The never-ending variety of hillside fields outlined in hedges and stone walls, the small villages and ancient farmhouses, made it a joy — each turn in the road brought something unexpected. And that peculiar cliche about the weather (if you don't like the weather, just wait a minute) seemed to me utterly ridiculous — except in that tiny little corner of Connecticut. In the space of one day there could be a recapitulation of the entire year — snow or sleet in the morning changing to bright sun by noon, with the birds singing their heads off, switching to a tropical heat by late afternoon. Come evening a fog would settle in and finally, after dark, a slow, chilly rain would begin to fall. Sometimes all of this would happen in reverse order and sometimes in no order at all — fog, then rain, then sun, and then, out of nowhere, snow would begin to fall. The sequence was often bizarre — there could be lightning in the middle of a snowstorm or a hot fog at night followed by cold sunshine the next day. It kept me constantly confused and unsure of quite where I was.

What I really missed, however, was Bloomington, where there had been freaks all over the place and you never felt entirely alone. Anywhere you went there was someone around you could relate to in a free and open environment: if you wanted spare change you could always get it from another freak; if you needed a meal, you could start up a conversation and wangle an invitation in no time. The feeling of community was ever-present and seldom abused. Zeke wrote that he had as many as a dozen people crashing at 140 and serious arguments were rare. They used the place in shifts and only once did someone get ripped off — everyone knew who'd done it and he was simply *persona non grata* from then on.

In New London there was no sense of community at all and in the factories there was nary a freak in sight. But I finally came across two happy-go-lucky wanna-be freaks named Charlie and Aubrey. They worked in the carton loft and within the first week or two, we were turning on during our shift.

Aubrey was a young shop steward with "fashionably" long hair and an outgoing, free-wheeling nature. He was a Vietnam vet but unlike the types I had known, he had spent all of his time in Nam getting high and avoiding anything to do with the army — both of which were relatively easy since he'd been an MP doing nothing but paperwork. Charlie was his sidekick — an amiable, chunky fellow with a touch of asthma that kept him out of the service. They had been friends all thru school and while they identified with the counterculture, their lack of contact with it kept them more or less on the fringes. Aubrey had recently gotten married, making Charlie acutely aware of his bachelor status, and their apts were a swirl of lava lamps, colored lights and "psychedelic" posters. They saw at once how ill-suited I was to the factory scene and we

formed a tiny circle, smoking a J in the carton loft whenever we got the chance. I introduced them to the grass Zeke had brought me and they were amazed when I told them it was "homegrown." It was far stronger than anything they'd had before, since all they could snag was the expensive, ratty, inferior stuff that came from Mexico and who-knows-where. Soon we were getting stoned every day; the baler was an unhurried job and we tossed scraps into the gaping bin and giggled at the scrunching machine; often they came out to help when it was time to unload a bale.

This was the only part of the job that even resembled work. The baler was a two-story thing — when it was filled you then went down and opened the huge, man-high steel doors on each side and, while the compressor held the bale in place, tied the whole thing off with wires. Then you'd kick and muscle the half-ton bale off to one side. It was an unhurried job, quiet in the vast warehouse, and with no insatiable line to keep filled — the foreman was glad at first to have someone who actually volunteered for such an unmanly chore, but it kept him scratching his head that I really did seem to enjoy it. That Charlie and Aubrey came out several times a day to join me did not ring a bell with him at all.

Smoking grass was just the beginning, tho. Aubrey had brought back an acute interest in drugs from Nam and that suited my doleful mood perfectly, so the three of us went on a rampage of exploration that put all my previous indulgences in the shade. I went down to see Claude in New London from time to time, who gladly provided me with an alphabet-soup of drugs. Before long we were getting into heavier and heavier things, popping Quaaludes, Seconal, speed and Demerol — first just one at a time and then in combinations, snorting coke and messing around with THC, MDA, PCP and DET. In no time at all, we were so fucked up on the job that we could barely keep track of what day it was.

April 19, 1971 — The Vietnam Veterans Against the War stage protests in Washington, D.C.; many turn in their medals.
April 20, 1971 — The Supreme Court unanimously upholds busing to achieve racial desegregation.
The Pentagon confirms that reports of "fragging" (using fragmentation grenades to kill fellow soldiers) had doubled in Vietnam in the last year.

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I've been mad for years
Absolutely fucking years . . .
—Pink Floyd

I had an old Sony reel-to-reel that Anton had given me, but just one tape — Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony. I played it over and over and over again — a

somber, towering thing with enough bitter sadness in it to break the heart of Winnie the Pooh, but with a billowing, soaring finale that would have gladdened the heart of the Grinch. I couldn't play it when Charlie and Aubrey came over, however, for they would listen to nothing but rock 'n' roll. We drank wine and smoked grass, but for some reason we never did the heavier stuff away from the job. (Strangely enough, they had never even tried real wine and always brought over some alcohol-laced Kool-Aid called Ripple. When I bought a bottle of good Beaujolais one evening, they each took a sip and stared around distractedly for a while . . . then Aubrey said, "Well, it's OK, I guess — but it tastes like rotten grapes.")

Occasionally we went over to Aubrey's place to listen to his new "quad" stereo while he impressed us with statistics about its "wattage" and such. We had to "ooh" and "ahh" and Charlie was jealous — he was the kind who bought eight-track tape players that ate tapes like a bear eating berries. He would pull them out by the yard, getting entangled in a flurry of brown tape and swearing furiously. Off the job we stayed fairly straight but in the plant we began to go crazy, doing anything we could lay our hands on. Neither Charlie nor I cared much for speed but Aubrey loved it, whirling around the loft and talking a mile a minute. It seemed strange but the laid-back types always hated speed, while the hyper ones, who needed it the least, just loved it.

We segued from speed to 'ludes and the foreman cocked an eye at Aubrey, who suddenly changed from a whirling dervish, happily spending an hour talking to a cardboard box, to a slow-motion mannequin who took thirty seconds to light a cigarette. Charlie giggled at everything and couldn't pay attention to what he was doing — at the end of the day his hands were covered with paper cuts, but he hardly even noticed. He giggled at the blood.

Both uppers and downers were the type of thing that left only the top veneer of your brain functioning and I hated them both. THC was better. Tetrahydrocannabinol is the active ingredient in grass and it was a lot like doing grass tea — the rush was mild and long-lasting and the stone went on for hours. I had expected to get paranoid as hell, working in a place like that, but I drew the baler day after day and passed the time in a warm trance — glad for the mild activity of baling, which became a soothing and absorbing mantra. It is the only time I ever felt the "euphoria" that is supposed to be what grass is all about, but that had less to do with the THC than just settling into a job I'd grown to love.

In due course we tried MDA, which was a quantum leap in the euphoria department. This stuff was called "ecstasy" and it was an apt name. We were on the graveyard shift when I scored some but, as luck would have it, I got stuck on one of the lines that night. The three of us dropped a hit each and by the time we got to the factory gates, it was just beginning to come on. Everything looked beautiful — the scrawny trees, the dented cars in the parking lot, even the gloomy, sterile factory itself. I gazed at the bins of recycling glass in the parking lot — "What a wonderful thing for them to

do!" I thought . . . until I noticed that one peculiarly placed bottle on top of the "green" pile looked suspiciously familiar and realized that it had been there for months — the whole thing was a nothing but a prop. It didn't bother me, for my heart was full of love . . . I loved the plant and the work and the machines and the bottles — loved everything and everybody. When the tubby little foreman put me on a "glue" line, I loved him for giving me the chance to work inside with my wonderful companions. I loved the smell of hot glue.

We floated around with beatific smiles on our faces and when our gazes met, there was a glow of blissful recognition. I wanted to stay in that place for ever and ever and never feel sad or angry again. And then I had a blinding flash of inspiration — this is the stuff we should give to all factory workers everywhere . . . it would keep them happy forever! They would love their jobs, their fellow workers, their lot in life . . . they would be happy at last!

A few hours later I came down with a crash and I re-thought the happiness bit. Yeah, right, as happy as the lint on a peach. All it did was envelop you in a pink gauze of cotton-candy make-believe — you never wanted to leave that place, sure, but nothing, absolutely nothing, ever happened there. And, worse, as I learned as I took more and more, you were never again as happy as you were that very first time, drifting slowly into a hell of eternal grins — with a burning little need for *more.*

Aubrey got some PCP and the consequences of doing *that* stuff were a lot more immediate. I don't know how to describe it but something *else* took over my mind: it wasn't me and it *certainly* wasn't happiness. The only word that comes to mind is "zonked" — neither here nor there nor anywhere else, neither in my mind nor out of it. Halfway thru my shift on the baler I suddenly began to panic, for I couldn't tell who or where I was. I knew I was around there somewhere, but I'd been mislaid somehow and I couldn't remember what I'd looked like or been like before, no matter how hard I tried. I was an alien in my own mind and I had never felt anything so hateful.

On and on it went, sampling paregoric (tincture of opium) soaked in joints, then Demerol, Nembutal, Seconal, Valium and codeine. We did reds with 'ludes and reds with coke and then coke with 'ludes — every combination we could think of, doing our best to stay fucked up for days on end. It was an orgy and I began to develop the shakes and a singleminded need to stay the hell out of whatever "normal" state I'd been in before. It became hard to look in the mirror, for it was a frenzied, angry soul who looked back. Finally I scored some Windowpane....

Charlie and Aubrey had never done LSD before and I wanted to turn them on to something that was the exact opposite of all the crazy stuff we'd been doing — and I knew that I had to break free of that down-the-toilet mindset. Claude had just one hit and I brought it home on a beautiful spring day. Cutting the tiny chip into quarters one afternoon (possibly a little weird on something else) a minuscule sliver flew off and landed on the carpet. Fresh Windowpane is completely colorless and a quarter of a hit is

very tiny — I groped around with my hands and finally felt something on the tip of my finger. I saw something glistening there, so I licked it off . . . and it was the acid. Within half an hour I was rushing like mad. I hadn't planned it this way but what the hell — I went out and got into the Comet and went for a drive. It was a glorious day and, having done acid before a few times, I felt completely at peace as the old, familiar tingling and hyper-sensitivity came flooding over me. I found that I could drive perfectly. The road moved smoothly beneath the wheels and the isolation felt wonderful. Now what did that remind me of, isolation? Hmmm . . . oh, yes. I had to be at work in, oh, . . . my god, I had to be at work in fifteen minutes!

This was less than wonderful. I could have called in sick but for some reason I felt I had to go in. I drove to the plant, willing myself to become invisible, but the fat little foreman sensed that he had me at last, speared me with a shout, and stuck me on the worst possible line.

This was a double line so long that it took three people to keep it filled. Flimsy cardboard "six-packs" had to be popped open and stuffed into trays and the line moved so fast there was never a break. One guy did the popping, one the stapling, and one the stuffing. I was so uncoordinated that I was hopelessly slow at popping or stapling and to the disdain of the two yahoos I was stuck with, all I could do was stuff. Within minutes I was doing a burlesque of a Charlie Chaplin movie as they shoved boxes at me faster and faster — I became frantic trying to stuff them into the trays sideways, backwards and upside-down. The conveyor grew emptier and emptier as trays and six-packs went flying all over the place and these gung-ho morons kept shouting "Keep the line filled, keep the line filled!" It was miserable.

The hours dragged on relentlessly and I went from utter confusion to sheer panic to stubborn desperation. Charlie and Aubrey came by to help out whenever they could but as soon as the foreman saw them, he'd yell at them to get back on their own lines. Worst of all were the snide little asides that the two gumballs kept tossing my way — my head was reeling and this vision of hell with the flaming streamers in the distance and the incessant din of a million bottles clinking became nearly unendurable.

Toward the end of the shift the acid was still pressing in on me — I wasn't coming down at all. The foreman came by and insisted that I do a "double" (work another shift) and the two storm troopers readily agreed to stay, too. It was absolute hell. Soon they began making comments, in a wry undertone just loud enough for me to hear . . . comments about "that girl who lives on the dead end road in Hanford." I couldn't believe my ears — Kim's family lived at the end of a dead end road in Hanford . . . but I had never mentioned her to anyone, not even to Charlie and Aubrey! What was going on here? They began making sly allusions to things they should have known nothing about — intimate things involving Kim, Anton, Zeke and me. It got spookier by the minute and I glared at them to try and get them to stop. They just smirked back evilly. Every New England ghost story I'd ever heard came flooding back and a new

kind of panic began to seize me. It was interminable — eerily unreal.

I don't even remember the end of the shift, but the next day I decided that I'd had enough. I was shaking as I wrote down everything the evil twins had said, just to make sure that I'd heard it right. Totally bummed out, really scared now, only one thing was clear to me and that was that acid was just plain too damn strong — you either did it with great care and in the right situation or you didn't fool with it at all. There were things that it was best not to mess with. I'd had enough and I put in my notice — I'd paid off Bill and Gil and saved up a few bucks besides, so it was time for me to hit the road. Instantly, the fiddlefoot had me in its grip again and I didn't even want to hang around for the end of the seven-day shift. By the following morning, I'd made up my mind and said my goodbyes to Charlie and Aubrey. They were shocked at how sudden it all was and made me promise to return someday. I said I would, loaded up the Comet and headed back west, back to Bloomington.

May 3-5, 1971 — *Hundreds of thousands gather in Washington for the Mayday demonstrations; 12,000 arrested, illegally — all charges eventually dropped. Attorney General Mitchell compares the protestors to Nazi Brown Shirts; hundreds of thousands participate in further protests nationwide.*

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Lost on a wave, then after
Dream on, on to the heart of the sunrise
—*Yes*

The exits off of the Interstate in western Pennsylvania began to count down into the small digits, but they grew further and further apart as the night wore on. A sliver of the moon rose just before dawn and then the red ball of the sun appeared over the tall, smoking towers of distant factories. Ohio seemed to be just one, long, dreary factory town but at last I cruised back into Indiana. I drove into familiar old Bloomington about noon and pulled up in front of 140. Zeke was just getting up (naturally) but he seemed surprised and glad to see me standing in the doorway.

140 hadn't changed a bit, except to have grown a little smaller than I'd remembered. The piano perched lumpily in the corner and the bookcases were getting a little fuller but the paintings from the library were still the same. Even tho it was late May, there was a blanket still covering the door to the kitchen. I was home.

There was a lot of news to tell and, tired as I was, we trucked on over to Anton's place to complete the reunion. He had come back to Bloomington just when his old apt. had become vacant and he was installed there once again. He was the soupy type so nothing would do but we had to have a big hug — which was all right. It was like

entering a time warp — a soft, warm breeze blew thru the screen door and Anton's place had not changed a bit. The grand piano was different but the swirl of disarray made me feel as if the past year (only a year?) had only been a dream. Sophie was there, too — sleek and black and stunning. For the first time in months I felt glad to be alive. More or less.

Within a few days I felt so completely at home that all of 1970 began to seem far, far away. We made the rounds and I got reacquainted with Calvin and George, who were now living in a farmhouse out in Brown County, and I met George's stunningly beautiful sister, Karen. Zeke had a new crush-of-the-month, of course — a sweet young Jewish violinist (he seemed to collect violinists) from New York, named Brenda.

Anton was remaining high-mindedly celibate and wore it like a shining badge of purity. There was nothing quite so priggish as Anton when he got his righteous gland going — whenever sex was mentioned he put on an insufferably arch look and sneered. But considering all that he'd been thru, I couldn't really blame him for taking the jaundiced view.

High on the agenda, naturally, was getting stoned. I was impressed with the stuff Zeke had brought out from last year's batch and they had already started the new crop up on the Ridge. They produced some toppings with a conspiratorial smile — I gave Zeke the pipe (*The* pipe) and he carefully tucked in the merest half-bowlful. I figured he was getting stingy in his old age and when they offered me the first honorary toke, I took a hit big enough to singe my toenails. I had been expecting something good (the tops are almost as potent as the best female flowers) but *this* . . . my eyes went wide and I sputtered out, "Je-jesus!" — unable to say another word. Anton and Zeke toked up with a smug air. It was the proverbial One Toke Stuff and they had every right to act superior — nothing like this was being done with homegrown anywhere except in California and Hawaii. It was Amazing.

A day or two later we drove out to Lampkins Ridge in the Comet to have a look. There were four patches, now — Matilda, Gertrude, Hilda, and Bertha. They were beautifully camouflaged, nicely hidden behind clumps of briar and heavily mulched with dried grass. All the plants were tremendous little bushes about a foot high but I noticed something peculiar tied to the tiny branches — little wax cylinders that looked for all the world like green suppositories. Zeke explained that these were the latest experiment to keep the deer, rabbits and bugs away — citronella pellets. Each of the patches had grown, too, and now measured about three feet by fifteen, in a serpentine pattern that looked quite natural. The plants were obviously all of the same variety, with serrated, fat leaves of a deep, rich green.

Zeke had settled on a single hybrid, a cross between Michoacan and Oaxacan. In that happy blend, after only two years of crossing, he had hit the jackpot. Each variety is adapted to its own particular region, after generations of cultivation. Soil and climate have a lot to do with how well the plant grows, too, but potency is strictly a matter of

genetics. The conditions that will bring out the greatest potency, however, is a variable that is hard to match to the genetic potential — and that is what Zeke had accomplished in a very short time.

"Supergrass" itself is something new — a gift of the United States Army. Marijuana has been cultivated for something like three thousand years, being used as a folk remedy by everyone from the ancient Indians to George Washington (who kept a patch growing on his plantation — he refers in his diary to removing the males in the fall and the only reason to remove males is to get a better quality dope). In its attempts to make hemp that had zero THC, the army, during WWII, did numerous experiments in the South to breed out the psychoactive ingredients in marijuana. But instead, they just happened to have created a new breed of grass that had *twice* the number of chromosomes for THC production — diploid instead of haploid. A new day had dawned.

Even so, no matter how potent the genes are it won't help if the weather and soil conditions don't allow the plant to grow well enough to *produce* all that THC. Jamaican won't do well in Thailand and Afghani doesn't do well in Mexico — and none of them are likely to do well in southern Indiana. Too much rain, too little sun, a too-short growing season and terrible soil (at least, where we could grow). But somehow Zeke had managed to hit upon just the right combination that would flourish under what would normally have been dismal conditions for any grass — no one else in the entire region was growing anything like this stuff. Zeke had become the Luther Burbank of the Indiana Chapter of the Association of Gentleman Dope Growers.

June 13, 1971 — The New York Times *begins publication of the Pentagon Papers, a secret study commissioned under the Johnson administration to review the decisions made during the Vietnam War; for several weeks the Nixon administration sought to forestall publication, enraged that the papers were stolen and leaked by a Pentagon employee, Daniel Ellsberg.*
June 28, 1971 — The Supreme Court reverses the conviction of Muhammed Ali for draft evasion, saying he had improperly been denied status as a conscientious objector in 1966.

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Here she comes . . . a truck
Not a fuck, but a truck—Jest a truck
—Harry Partch

Zeke had family in North Dakota and while he always went up for a long visit at Christmas, he had a sister who was getting married and he wanted to go up for that. The problem was that June was the leanest time of year, being so far from the harvest and not yet into the season where we could get decent pickings. He didn't care to ask

for the money to get up there and I was on the verge of offering to drive him up in the Comet when I ran into a snag.

On the trip down, just as I got into Indiana, she began to run a little rough and when I got around to getting it diagnosed, it turned out that she needed a valve job. This would just about wipe me out, nor could the garage do it in time to get Zeke up for the wedding. By this time it was too late to ask his folks for the money, so he decided there was nothing for it but to hitchhike. Well, I had done a fair amount of hitching but nothing like a 1,200-mile jaunt. This sounded like an adventure, so I asked to go along, just for the hell of it.

We made up small bedrolls of a blanket and a change of clothes and such and set off very early on a drizzly morning. Suddenly we were standing on the highway north of town, thumbs out, and it felt awfully lonesome and desolate out there. Cars whizzed past, most ignoring us but some swerving as if to hit us and then laughing uproariously at their tremendous wit. Southern Indiana was not what you'd call a hitcher's paradise. But finally, after about an hour, a jeep pulled over and the driver cheerfully offered us a ride.

It was a nice enough ride (tho rather bouncy) up to Martinsville and there a preacher picked us up and immediately launched into a spiel about Jesus and Being Saved and all the other hoopla. We just smiled. He got us past Indianapolis and from there to Chicago it was a series of short rides in quick succession — our luck was holding up nicely. Dumped out on the south side of Chicago around noon, it began to look grim again, as the overcast grew ever grayer and a light rain began to fall. The Interstate was a swirl of ramps and elevated highways and we weren't even sure which way we should go. Pretty soon, however, a girl in a brand new Buick stopped and said she was going to O'Hare — which would at least get us around the city. We were having a nice time chatting when, for no reason at all, she half-jokingly asked if we were going to kill her! We glanced sideways at her and all conversation from our side stopped — she seemed to be really paranoid about us and went off on a tangent about her "boyfriend" who was a "professional football player" that "nobody better mess with." This was taking quite a turn and we felt tremendously relieved when the airport loomed off to our left and she let us out, still kidding about how glad she was that we didn't turn out to be killers.

Zeke and I stood by the side of the road, still scratching our heads over this encounter, when all at once a white T-Bird came swooping down on us, jerking to a stop well up the road and then backing furiously our way. We didn't quite know what to make of this but a young kid popped his head out and said, "What it is, slick!" What the hell, a ride is a ride. We got in and he tore out of there at a good 90 miles an hour. We judged it was his daddy's car, for he couldn't have been more than 16. He prattled on about nothing and everything, nervous as hell and obviously out on an unauthorized joy-ride. Soon the sun came out and the kid pushed a button — the top

lifted up and folded down in the back and we roared into Wisconsin at about Warp 7.

This kid grew to be more and more of a puzzle. He was a wild one but every time he saw a car pulled over at the side of the road, he went skidding to a stop and roared on back to see what the trouble was. The afternoon wore on and it became quite hot and his long-distance spiel showed no signs of slowing down. He got onto a strange kick about selling us that car. It was damn near new and a helluva beautiful thing, but our skepticism must have been obvious for he grew more and more insistent. Here . . . here was the title . . . sure, it was his dad's car but he could sell it . . . how about five hundred bucks? Three hundred? Hell, he'd sell it to us for a hundred bucks.

Zeke and I just smiled — no thanks, not today. He pulled off of the Interstate all of a sudden and roared up to a little shopping center, got out and somehow conned the guy in the liquor store into selling him some bourbon. Off we went again, only now this speed-freak little twerp was getting a bellyful of booze to boot. We finally induced him to stop and let us out but not before he'd gone into another long con-job about whether we'd cash a second-party check for him (his dad's, again) and when that didn't work he at last dropped us off. It had almost begun to feel like a kidnapping — by a kid, yet! Lord only knows what kind of trouble he was in.

It was another long wait for a ride in western Wisconsin, but a chummy little Falcon pulled over and the driver said he'd take us as far as Minneapolis. We were making pretty good time, at that. Evening fell and we talked about this and that and it became clear that this guy was not only gay, but a flaming, hair-dresser queen. He loaded up the tape player with show tunes and crooned away at us but when it became evident that he'd have no takers, he shut it off and chatted amiably until we got to the city. It was well after dark by then and we took up our station near an overpass — thumbs out and hoping for a ride that would take us thru the night.

It is nearly impossible to get a ride at night, however, and at last we gave up and crawled up under the overpass, where we spread out the blankets and crashed. The cars thrummed by below, the sound magnified by the concrete roadway, just inches from our heads, but I slept like a log. In the morning we got up to try again but Minneapolis is just about the deadest place on earth to try and get a ride. One hour, two hours, finally a state cop pulled over and told us to get off the highway. And where were we supposed to go? He didn't care — just get off the highway.

We wandered off into a field and came back when he'd gone; within a minute or two a commuter took pity on us and stopped, saying he knew how bad it was to get a ride around there (the Nordic sense of order was apparently offended by such destitution) and he'd at least give us a ride to the turnoff for the road that went up to North Dakota. Sure enough, once we were away from the bypass we got a ride right away. A VW bus, decked out in peace signs and daisies pulled over and a half-dozen or so freaks joyously piled out, busily rearranging stuff to fit us in. This was more like it. All the way up to Fargo the tape player was blasting the Grateful Dead as we passed

around J's and got high. We traded hitching stories and stopped regularly to drop people off and pick up new ones. I could have sworn that the driver changed several times and that none of the original crew was left by the time we hit NoDak — the traveling bus to forever. The sorry plight of one of the last to get on really got to us — he'd been ripped off the night before at a YMCA, where somebody had made off with all his clothes and gear. They'd even taken his shoes and somehow he had to make it all the way to Seattle — Zeke gave him his blanket and I turned over my shoes. The rest pitched in and he was well equipped by the time Zeke and I got dropped off.

From there on it was pretty easy, but the day was hot and standing on the tarmac at the side of the road with no shoes on was no treat. North Dakota seemed vast — the flat plains rolled by forever as we got one short ride after another. The sky was enormous — the horizon seemed to stretch out *beyond* the curvature of the earth and the stillness sank into a person with a numbing, foreboding sense of immensity. We reached Bismarck at last, only 36 hours after setting out. I had no real reason to be there anyway, so after a day or two I hitched on back. Zeke would follow in a week or two with bus fare from his folks.

The hitch back was fairly routine — farmers, a Canuck politician (an extremely nice fellow, as it turns out), the odd salesman wanting some company on his endless drives. There was another speed-freak just before Chicago and I downed some white crosses with him as night came on. He suddenly asked me to drive and I took over, hassling thru the middle of Chicago after midnight and going fast enough to outrun an ambulance. He loved it.

Back in Bloomington, I took up residence at 140 and began casting around for something to do — meaning someplace to grow dope, for it was still only early June.

June 30, 1971 — Three Soviet Cosmonauts die during re-entry, returning from the Salyut space station.
The 26th Amendment is ratified, lowering the voting age to 18.

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I'm goin' up the country
Baby, don't you want to go
—Canned Heat

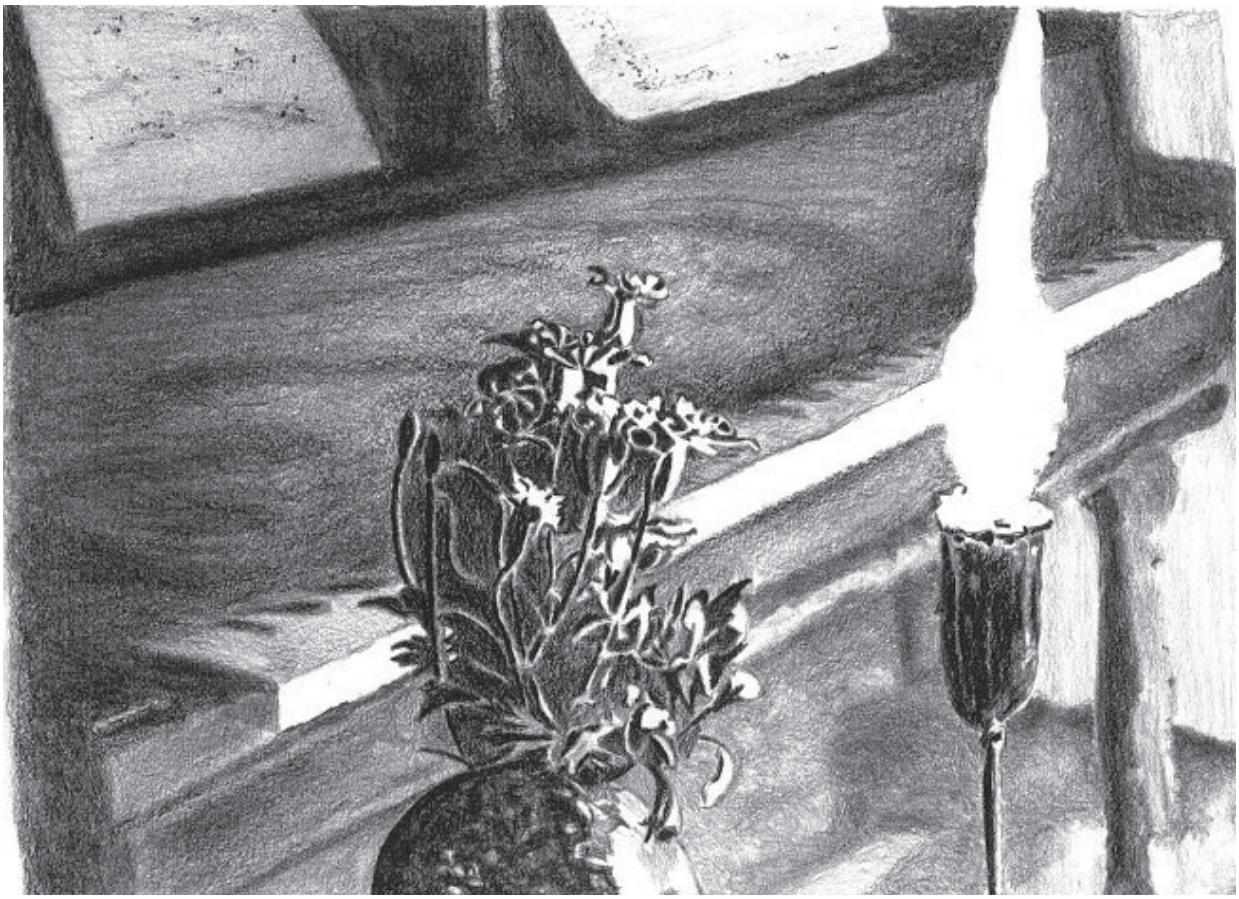
I needed to wash out all the alphabet-drugs I'd been doing at the factory and I thought some psilo might be nice to get my head back in order, so I made a trip over to Pete's — but Pete Lafite had been busted by the heat. Seems he'd had a falling-out with one of his hooker/girlfriends and she had turned him in to the *Federales.* Pete was on to her, tho, and had stashed the dope elsewhere; she got the last laugh by pretending to

make up with him and then yelling "Rape!" to the cops. They more or less had Pete on their list anyway, so they went along and he got three years in the state hoosegow. Alas, the course of true love. . . .

So all I had to fall back on was grass but the trouble was, I felt uneasy about horning in on Zeke and Anton's project — I needed to make my own contribution to the cause. I had an idea, so, the Comet now fixed, I made a trip out to Brown County to see Calvin and George.

Calvin had inherited a farmhouse from his grandmother. It was in the backwoods country of southern Indiana — a place where civilization (to say nothing of the law) hardly even penetrated. Anton gave me directions and I wound my way farther and farther into the hill country until at last I turned in at a dirt road. There was a small bridge over a little creek and high above, nestled among the trees on the ridge, was the farmhouse.

Calvin's beard had, if anything, gotten more goat-like and he wore only plaid shirts and old khaki pants held up by a rope belt. They were both barefoot and George floated over from out of nowhere, as ethereal and ascetic as ever. Their faces lit up with broad, quiet smiles. We sat on the porch, listening to the crickets, and I told them about my travels as we passed the pipe around. They were as impressed as I had been with the quality of Zeke's hybridizing and Calvin asked a lot of questions. George went off to start some tea and it was then that my idea began to really take shape. If I stayed out here for the summer with Calvin and George, maybe, just maybe, I'd find a place nearby to put in another crop. It was still early enough, tho barely — but I didn't want to say too much just yet. I didn't know how Calvin and George would feel about such a project and I knew better than to spring it on them, so I merely asked if they would mind my crashing there for awhile. They were surprised but said that would be fine. I went back to Bloomington that night, packed up my things, and moved out to Brown County. Anton didn't say a word but I could see the wheels turning and I knew he knew that I was up to something.



July 3, 1971 — Jim Morrison, lead singer for The Doors, is found dead in a Paris apartment, age 27.

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Slack your rope, hangman
Slack it for awhile
—Peter, Paul & Mary

The farmhouse dated back to the last century and there was electricity (which they almost never used) but no running water. The electric pump in the well had frozen long ago and no one had ever bothered to fix it. Calvin didn't trust the large, round, stone cistern just off of the front porch, so we hauled water from the creek in the meadow down below. Calvin gave me the cavernous upstairs room, almost totally barren of furniture, tho not lacking in spiders.

The house sat on a miniature version of Lampkins Ridge, tapering to a point on the north and south ends. To the east, down toward the road, was a meadow of weeds and wildflowers, and to the west there was a steep path leading down to a field. A

neighbor farmed this, paying them a small commission on the crop. Behind the house was a very large garden and an old barn; to the north there were several outbuildings — a tool shed, a huge chicken coop, an outhouse and, up on a little rise, an old, crumbling chicken yard and shed, falling apart and overgrown with weeds.

The house had very little furniture but that suited Calvin's Spartan sense of things — his room in Bloomington had been notable for its sparseness even to us. The best feature was an old woodstove in the kitchen that had seen long ages of use, with all kinds of iron lids and boxes and coiled handles sprouting from it.

There were porches on three sides of the house. The one in front was screened and had several rustic old benches and stools on it. Off of the kitchen, the "side" porch was draped in an overgrowth of vines that put forth strange "strobiles," which turned out to be hops. Possibly the old lady had been fond of brewing her own beer but hops made a fine, extremely bitter, sedative tea. There were rickety steps that led down to a root cellar, still holding a great many jars of unidentifiable home cannings. We didn't dare try them for they looked rather grim and, besides, Calvin had put in a huge garden.

He and George carted tons of old, rotted horse manure from the barn to the garden and Calvin had set up a system of frames that was unimaginably complex — tall tripods for the beans, a cat's-cradle of string for the peas, intricate cages for the tomatoes and tidy mounds and stakes for the squash and melons. There was corn, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, spinach, Jerusalem artichokes — a dizzying variety. It was all laid out with the meticulous care of a born gardener and, yet, it seemed somehow haphazard, too. Calvin planted and tended this vast domain with the help of the *Old Farmer's Almanac* — following the phases of the moon like an ancient alchemist. He was rather superstitious, too, and I think he secretly blamed me for the "varmint" that appeared just a few days after I arrived.

He came in with a puzzled look one morning and asked us to come out to the garden. There he showed us several plants that had been ripped to pieces and, in an ever-so-gentle, yet hurt tone, asked us (meaning me) if we'd been rooting among his babies. We hadn't, of course, so Calvin rose the next day before dawn and caught the miscreant in the act. It was a monstrously big groundhog who made a beeline under the fence as soon as he (she?) heard Calvin coming.

What to do? Poisoning was out of the question and traps were cruel. Worse, this could be a mama groundhog — who would soon be bringing the family in to dinner. Calvin, with the bitter regret of a family doctor bringing bad news, silently went to a side closet and brought out a small .22 rifle. I knew he hated the idea, for his kindest of spirit was much like old Max . . . but that groundhog was tearing up his beloved garden and I sensed that she was headed for a bad end.

I knew I could do the job with a lot less trauma to my soul than Calvin but he turned me down flat. It was his garden, his rifle and his groundhog — and that was all

there was to it. The next morning at dawn there was a sharp *crack* and Ms. Groundhog bit the dust. Calvin looked aggrieved and put-upon as he buried the poor thing — but as he put the rifle away I thought I caught just the hint of a tiny little self-righteous smile.

I was on the lookout for gardens of another sort, however, and I spent my days wandering around in the woods and fields. George enjoyed walking along sometimes, not knowing what I was up to, and he filled me in on some pieces of local history. One day he told me the story about the very large, very old sycamore tree that stood next to the small stream that ran thru the meadow, hard by the tiny little wooden bridge.

It seems that the family who had first farmed the place, back in the mid-1800s, had a daughter who was being courted by a young man from a nearby farm. They spent a lot of time together and it was assumed that they would get married someday. But at some point, for reasons unspecified, she jilted him — dumped the poor swain with nary a fare-thee-well. He didn't take kindly to the insult, and with that peculiar sense of revenge one often encounters in the backwoods country he tipped a large bag of poison into the cistern one chilly autumn night . . . killing the entire family. (Suddenly I understood why Calvin avoided that cistern.)

It was a large family and when the neighbors discovered the nine corpses, they were understandably outraged. They mulled the matter over and, after a lot of serious head-scratching, began putting two and two together. They hauled the young wag with the odd sense of humor over to the house and confronted him with the dead bodies — but he stoutly denied all, sullenly protesting his innocence. No one could really be *sure* he'd done it but, lacking any real evidence, the local elders decided to resolve their doubts by stringing him up from the old sycamore tree out front anyway. On the ancient principle, I suppose, dating from the witch-hunt days, that if he lived he was innocent.

So they strung him up, still protesting, and ever since the old sycamore had been called the "the Hangin' Tree." You could almost hear them saying, "Yup, he's daid! Musta been guilty!"

Now, whether the young lover actually had, in fact, done the deed was never really proven, but this quaint little story added a certain cachet to the place that was not lost on any who lived there. And it certainly made *me* sleep better — knowing that every clink, moan or rattle in the night could be a member of that long-dead family (or

the lover) dropping by to say "hello" and see how things were going.

July 6, 1971 — Louis Armstrong dies at age 71.
July 15, 1971 — Nixon announces he will visit Communist China.

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Jesus was a Capricorn, He ate organic foods
He believed in love 'n peace an' never wore no shoes
—Kris Kristofferson

Calvin was a Capricorn and it showed in many ways. He was not exactly stolid but there was a slow, inexorable determination to him — he was so down-to-earth that he seemed to have sprung from the soil itself. Thru George he was developing a Buddhist philosophy that made him even more dreamy, contemplative, and questioning.

A good part of George's equanimity sprang from his long involvement with Buddhism. Unlike so many who had adopted their "mysticism" from a quick grab at a few books or a weekend spent at a commune, George had found his way there not out of a need to be fashionable (or, indeed, out of *any* need) but simply because he felt a genuine kinship with the Buddhist world view. He was "centered" but quick to respond; considerate without being patronizing; calm but never aloof. You could see it in his paintings — a quiet, unjudgmental sense of grace and powerful observation. His only flaw was that he was a constant reminder of everything I would like to be and wasn't. He was insufferably tolerant.

Calvin had been absorbing this and he was a simple soul, a true innocent. He wanted to understand anything and everything and, out of his desire to truly understand this philosophy, he developed a mania for words and their meanings. He consulted a well-thumbed dictionary several times a day, seldom satisfied with the definitions and driving us crazy with endless questions. One day he dreamily asked what "ruthless" meant; I replied without hesitation, "without ruth." George broke into one of his long, loping laughs (he was a great audience) as Calvin glared at him sternly. He found the word "yataghan" in some book and wondered aloud what *that* might mean . . . I smoothly assured him that he was the great-nephew of the Mongol ruler, Genghis Ghan — and he bought it whole until he saw George struggling to hold it in. More glares. I kept this sort of thing up until he finally stopped asking altogether and consulted the dictionary in hurt silence.

Calvin had a trusting heart that was hard to resist — even the *I Ching* had its fun with him. Calvin took the *I Ching* quite seriously and sat around for most of the day once, tossing the coins and assiduously looking up the signs in his book — until he

finally tossed a combination that said: "You are importunate . . . give it a rest, willya?" (or words to that effect). He was crushed.

I kept touring the countryside but I wasn't finding a place to put in a new patch. Despite the remoteness, every spot of land seemed to be either planted in crops or densely wooded, with no clearings big enough for so much as a daisy. After a week, I was beginning to get discouraged when I happened to walk beyond the barn one day, to the south end of the ridge.

At that point the ridge rose sharply and as I climbed the hill the trail all at once opened out into a clearing at the top — exactly like Lampkins Ridge. My heart leapt into my throat . . . was this not an omen? The clearing was only a quarter the size of the Ridge, but it was plenty big enough to . . . to . . . and then my heart sank again. There were no weeds, no nothing up there — just hardpan clay, furrowed with hundreds of gullies and rivulets. I wandered back down and asked Calvin about it and he said that someone had farmed that field so intensively that the soil was utterly ruined — nothing could grow there. Worse, for my purposes, anything planted there (assuming you could get in enough compost to grow anything) would stand out like the Taj Mahal.

Frustrated and about to give up, I walked morosely the other way, past the outbuildings and up another little hill towards the north end of the ridge, chucking clods at the innumerable chickens. These disgusting animals roamed free over the farmyard and were truly obnoxious. Chickens spend their whole day squabbling, enforcing a rigid pecking order and scratching around in a constant frenzy of greed and antisocial behavior. I found myself following a little multicolored rooster, an outcast who was too small to compete with the two big white Leghorns, and he led me up the hill and into the old chickenyard at the top. It seemed to be his favorite hiding place and it was like an ancient ruin. The fence was falling apart, hidden by tall horseweeds, the sole remaining chicken coop was slowly disintegrating into the earth, a paradigm of decay, and the yard was a wasteland. The rooster began scratching and fluttering over the old henyard, kicking up clouds of noxious dust from the ages of chickenshit that had accumulated there. I stood by the gate, pensively rolling a cigarette and wondering what to do. There were very few weeds actually growing in the yard. I noticed that the soil was hard and nearly barren, not from overcropping but from years of being compacted by chickens and humans. The rooster continued his scratching, looking up questioningly at me from time to time. It was a space about twelve yards long and six yards wide . . . an open space . . . with nothing growing in it . . . with a fence and high weeds all around it . . . Jesus H. Christ in a basket!

I dropped the cigarette and raced down the hill, grabbed Calvin and dragged him up to the henyard. Would he . . . could they . . . would it be all right if. . . . At last I blurted out the whole idea to Calvin — what if Zeke and I planted dope up there? All we had to do was dig some holes, bring up some compost from the barn and maybe add a little of the chickenshit right there in the old henhouse . . . the horseweeds made a

beautiful camouflage and no one ever went *near* the place — could he and George put up with a dope patch right on the property?

He looked at me like I'd asked if I could pee in the stove — but I could see his mind tugging one way and then the other. The idea was truly appalling . . . but it did involve gardening, after all. To say nothing of getting a long-term supply of first-rate homegrown. He said he'd think about it. The next morning I sat silently in the kitchen as Calvin stoked up the stove. I said nothing and he was silent for a long time. Finally, without so much as a glance in my direction, he sighed and said, "Well . . . OK," and I tore out and went racing back to Bloomington.

July 26-Aug. 7, 1971 — Apollo 15 astronauts Scott and Irwin explore the moon on a moon-buggy; entire flight televised.

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And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden
—Joni Mitchell

Zeke had returned from NoDak the day before and when I got to 140, I found him and Anton sprawled out on chairs — moaning loudly and begging me to put them out of their misery. It seems Anton had discovered some new form of chocolate pudding (a longtime favorite) that came frozen in big plastic tubs. Apparently he and Zeke had gone on a binge — there were several empty tubs lying around on the floor, evidence of an orgy. Zeke croaked out that if they'd stopped "just a few spoonfuls sooner" they might have been saved . . . but, no, they'd done the whole schmear. I cackled for a while and then tore out to fetch some Pepto Bismol.

They could hardly even listen as I explained what I'd found but at last they recovered enough to get the idea and we started laying plans. Anton begged off — the Ridge was about all the excitement he could stand, he said — and we told him that was all right. We got the shovels together posthaste and drove out to Brown County that same evening.

We stayed the night, doing our best to reassure Calvin and George, and started in on the henhouse patch the next day. I wanted to get going before they could change their minds, so I hopped out of bed well before noon and got busy. I showed the place to Zeke and he agreed that it was absolutely perfect. A person could walk within five feet of the henhouse and see nothing at all but tall weeds. The gate itself was utterly inconspicuous and the small inner yard was the perfect size. Within an hour or two we had four nice-sized rectangles dug out, ready for the compost. Hauling it up from the barn was going to be tough, however, for there was no wheelbarrow handy and we

were stumped for a while. We wandered around the cavernous old, falling-down barn, gazingly longingly at the huge piles of ancient horse manure. The floor was three feet deep with the stuff and it thumped hollowly — pure black gold. At last we settled on tearing out some of the sheetmetal panels from between the stalls and tying ropes to them. We curved them into sleds, loaded them up with manure, and dragged them up to the henhouse.

Calvin took a farmer's interest in the proceedings but we didn't want his help — all responsibility should be ours so that if it were ever found, he and George could deny everything and I'd say that I'd done it all myself on the sly. Even so, he had plenty of advice to offer and he seemed delighted with the whole process. He made us a batch of lemonade to keep us going.

The bantam rooster followed us everywhere, pleased that I'd finally understood what he'd been trying to tell me. He became our mascot and took the role seriously, chasing the cats away from the henhouse and guarding it with his life. By nightfall we had four large beds prepared, liberally sprinkled with a topping of old chickenshit and waiting for the seeds. We'd had them soaking and put them in the next morning, mulching it all down with dried grass. It was still only mid-June and, with any luck, there'd be a handsome crop come October.

George seemed to take it all in stride and merely smiled his usual smile and kept on with his painting. I thought he might find the dope patch an interesting subject but he stayed well clear of the henhouse. I watered the patches every morning and evening and after a few days here they came, thousands of them! I thinned them out to about a hundred of the best truckers in each patch — still too many but I could always thin more later. Anton and Zeke came out in mid-July to have a look and they nearly fell over at the sight — the plants were shooting up out of the ground in a kind of frenzy, already as big as the ones on Lampkins Ridge. They were at least three feet tall, but somewhat gangly — Calvin said I should stop watering them to give the leaves a chance to catch up. He was beginning to get alarmed, however, so we thinned them down to about 50 plants per patch and did a heavy topping. This gave us a nice batch of fresh tops and we fired up the stove for a quick drying. Calvin put together a mountainous salad and tried to interest us in his latest discovery — something called "soyburgers." (Even George ignored these things and they sat in quiet readiness, in case a famine developed anywhere nearby.)

It was a warm summer evening and we sat on the porch, just after sunset, savoring the new pickings. They were incredibly strong and after just a couple of hits each, we let the pipe sit for a while as the talk drifted along from one topic to another. Zeke asked Anton some question about a composition he was working on and instantly Anton became totally immersed in describing the piece. He went on for a long time about it, until he realized that not even Zeke knew what the hell he was talking about anymore.

Calvin remarked that Anton didn't seem to have any trouble adjusting to composition from performance. "How do you do that," he said, "and still smoke dope all the time. I have even one toke during the day and I never get anything done — I get lost in being stoned."

"Yeah, me too," said Anton, "if I have a lot of chores around the house, I never seem to get around to them if I'm stoned (Zeke and I glanced at one another). But music is different. When I'm stoned I just *have* to sit down to play and I can't help but pull out whatever I'm working on. I get into seeing all sorts of ways to do things and before you know it, the whole day's gone."

"But do you really get anything *done*?" insisted Calvin, "Or do you just fiddle around, getting excited. Does it ever *go* anywhere?"

Zeke and Anton exchanged a look and Zeke said, "Well, it depends. Sometimes you just fuck around all afternoon looking at how neat everything is and getting into it . . ."

"Yeah, but sometimes," Anton said, "you get an amazing amount of work done, and . . ."

"Is it ever worth anything?" said Calvin.

George tactfully jumped in, "Well, how can you tell? Sometimes I think a painting turns out good and sometimes I look at it the next day and think, 'My god, did *I* do that crap?'"

"Right," said Anton, "but that's true no matter what. I don't think it's got anything to do with dope."

"What are you driving at?" I asked Calvin, "That dope is just a waste of time, that all you do is daydream on it?"

"Sometimes. I don't know, I'm just asking."

"Well," said Anton, "maybe it has to do with creative things — grass opens me up to things and . . ."

"Maybe dope really does rob people of motivation," said George.

"You don't really mean that," I said. "That's a cliche, it's got nothing to do with . . ."

"I dunno," said Zeke, "what about kids? Lose all their will to live, that sort of thing."

"Kids?" I said, wondering if I was going to regret this.

"Well, you know . . . what I think is that sometimes grass helps the creative process . . . and sometimes it doesn't . . ."

Calvin put in, ". . . daydreaming and all."

"Yeah," said Zeke, "sometimes it's just daydreaming,"

"Which can also be good," I said, "depending . . ."

"Right. But it helps to have something that you're working on already . . . I mean, if you have something like music, or writing or painting or gardening. If it gets you

sidetracked, that's not necessarily bad . . ."

"Yes. But . . ."

Anton exploded, "What in hell has this got to do with kids?" — getting a little fed up with the long digression.

"OK," said Zeke, "what I mean is, if you've got something you're involved in . . . that you've developed a little bit so that you're already . . ."

"Aha!" said George.

"You follow me?"

"I think so. It's makes a difference if you *start* doing grass before you've settled on your, uhhh, life's work or whatever. An inner direction."

Calvin thought this over for a second and said, "You know, I think that's it. I don't know what I'm . . . where I'm really . . . but there are those of us who don't *have* this 'life's work' thing . . . painting or whatever. And not everybody . . ."

"Well, maybe grass," I said, "*is* just more of a distraction for you — and maybe sometimes I get lost for a day or more, too . . . when I just drift around staying stoned — but, . . . where the hell was I?"

Anton cleared his throat, "That's hard to tell, even when you're *not* stoned. However, what I think you mean is that grass *can* get in the way, sometimes, but that what it can do to help the creative process . . ."

"Ah, well, . . ." I began, but Zeke interrupted. "Look," he said, "what I *meant* was if you start grass when you're too young, when you're a kid, before you've gotten settled into a . . . a . . ."

"Right." said George. "You get sidetracked into something that can keep you from . . ."

"You mean if you haven't really started on what you want to do, getting into grass will delay it . . . you'll miss it because you're high all the time?"

We let that sit for a minute and George drifted off and brought back the hot water, which had been sitting on the stove, and began making tea. Calvin fetched the honey and lemon and we were all glad for a break. I loaded up the pipe again and Anton let out a big sigh of relief when I passed it to him.

"Well, OK," I said, "It's obvious that you're all talking about me, here, and I don't say that just because I'm paranoid. All right, say I got started too young. You guys had all been in college for a couple of years before getting into it, I was just at the end of high school. Well, I think you're right — in a lot of ways it just added to the confusion I was already in. I didn't have any settled ideas — which as far as I'm concerned I probably never will — and I don't give a damn . . ."

"Confusion!" said Calvin.

"Game, set and match!" said Anton.

"But I don't think I'm 'stuck' in smoking grass and I . . ."

"We're not saying 'stuck'" said George, "it's got nothing to do with 'stuck' . . ."

"I remember reading *The Catcher in the Rye* in high school," said Anton, "and about halfway thru I was thinking how fucked-up this kid was and wondering why he was so manic. And then I realized that *I* was *just* as confused — only I hadn't known it until I saw it in Holden. When I saw that he was acting the same way I was . . .well, if I had started smoking grass back then, I don't know if I'd ever have gotten out of the, uh, . . ."

"Escapism?" said Calvin.

"Right, the escapism side."

"I hear it impairs memory, too," I pointed out.

He cheerfully flipped me a bird and went on, "But what gets me is how some kids are so naive about dope. They don't seem to be able to discriminate — and I'm thinking of someone in particular here — between grass and all the harder stuff."

"Well, I'm just a dabbler meself . . ."

"But," said Calvin, "all I wanted to know is, how do you keep grass from ruining the whole day?"

Anton had another toke on his way in to play the piano, Zeke went out into the yard to take a leak, and I sat back to listen to the crickets, who were screeching away mightily. The evening had passed into deep night and the only light was from the lantern on the porch, swinging lightly in the breeze.

Sept. 11, 1971 — Nikita Khrushchev (deposed in 1964) dies at age 77.
Sept. 9-13, 1971 — 1,500 prisoners riot and take over Attica state prison in upstate New York; an armed assault is launched on the fourth day, killing 43 inmates.

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I been walkin' Central Park
Singin' after dark, people think I'm . . . craaazzy
—Rolling Stones

One day, just for the hell of it, I decided to go on a fast and ate nothing at all for the rest of the day. That was easy and I felt duly virtuous, but when I awoke the second day I began to understand what hunger (something I had known only in the abstract before) was really all about. My stomach howled unrelentingly. My mind began to tell me that this was impossible and it came up with all kinds of excuses why I *had* to eat. But I got stubborn and dug in, wanting to see how far I could go.

The second day was a battle of wills but the third day, after an initial bout of fairly serious hunger, was like a wasteland — everything around me seemed to grow pale and distant and I was so on edge that I did nothing but take long, slow walks, to avoid seeing Calvin and George. The hunger intensified. Food was all I thought about

and I just knew I couldn't last much longer but then, suddenly, it began to change a little and I could sense a real possibility of keeping going. There were waves that came and went and hunger was becoming a tangible force that I could face and overcome — achieving small victories. I was becoming the master of that insistent ravening and the voices in my mind finally began to quiet down.

The first and second nights I hadn't slept well but the third night I went out like a light and slept for ten hours. I awoke on the fourth day and, for some reason, it seemed not only easy but positively natural not to eat. I felt light and giddy and I gabbled cheerfully at Calvin and George. The hunger still came but it was neither constant nor pervasive. It would pass, leaving me strong and clear-headed. My energy was down, of course, but I didn't really feel weak — just slower than normal. A lot slower.

The days passed by as if in a haze. Sometimes I wasn't hungry at all for most of the day and I roamed around the farm in a slow-motion dream of tranquility. Colors, light and sound, the feeling of the wind and the rain, all became as sharp and distinct as if on acid — more so, in fact, since there was nothing to get in the way, nothing between myself and the sensations all around. In some ways it was the exact opposite of being on dope, for I was calm and centered, not fevered and restless. There was that intensified sense of time that made each day seem like a self-contained eternity.

The pangs of hunger roared into me and then vanished — now deep and strong, now merely an annoyance. I felt buoyant, as if the merest wind would carry me aloft, floating serenely above the green fields. Mild hallucinations came and went but they didn't bother me in the slightest — they were like friends come to visit. The days drifted by.

At last, however, on the tenth day I awoke not just to hunger but to ***HUNGER.*** I was ravenous, aching, starving. I craved food as I have never craved anything before and it was no longer a matter of my stomach — my feet, hands, eyes, nails — my goddamn *hair* was hungry. I looked at the cat and saw *barbecue* — I would've eaten a lump of coal. This was it, enough for me. I jumped in the Comet and drove, light-headed and distracted, to the nearest grocery store. When I got there some invisible force took me straight to the sardines, crackers, and a large cylinder of Colby. I brought it back to the farm and ate half of it, very slowly, in an orgy of consumption.

Now I knew what heaven was. To feel still the lightness and clarity of fasting and yet to eat, eat, eat — I lolled around in an ecstasy of contentment. It had been hard at times but it felt like some grand accomplishment, as if I had seen the enemy and pushed him aside, even if only for a time. That evening I stayed up late, wandering around the farmyard, not wanting to let go of that wonderful *rightness.* Calvin and George went to bed early, as usual, but I often stayed up until well after midnight and that night I was up almost til dawn. I carried a lantern around, roaming thru the garden and the barn, savoring the night and its small secrets.

On the east side of the barn, high up on a pile of old manure, there were some

large plants that I hadn't really noticed before. They had big, multiple stalks and strange leaves, like a large poinsettia. I caught sight of something white and climbed up to find dozens of foul-smelling pure-white flowers, shaped like giant morning-glories. I'd never seen them in flower before and then remembered Calvin saying that it only flowered at night; it was called Jimsonweed. I remembered reading accounts of Jimsonweed from the Colonial days. The starving troops at Valley Forge had made a salad of the roots and leaves, but it drove them mad. It was a poisonous relative of the tomato and potato — also called Thornapple, Devil's-root and datura. I had heard, vaguely, that it contained some interesting things — scopolamine and belladonna, among others. Well, why not? I thought. There was a book in the house that supposedly told a person how to prepare the roots so that they were less poisonous so I yanked up a big one, cut off the roots and took them inside.

The next day I followed the directions from the book as Calvin watched me with a suspicious eye. I winked at him and said not a word but that night, long after they had gone to bed, I brewed some into a tea. By the light of a small candle I sat at the homemade table on the porch and sipped the foul concoction, holding my nose. Finally I downed it all in one big gulp. Nothing happened for a long time.

Suddenly, I was flying . . . the night became day and I was soaring in broad circles above the land — I was airborne above the hills and farms of Indiana, swooping low to skim the earth and then flying in a high arc to gather speed and momentum once again. Intoxicated with the joy of flight, I became more and more adept as I soared in wide circles across the landscape. Higher and higher I went, surging far above the quilted lattice-work of the farmbelt, circling my way west to the mountains.

I reached the foothills of the Rockies, now hovering, now diving low to buzz the cattle in the fields. I headed south, lazily riding the thermals to the deserts of Arizona. I was just about to pass the dotted line of the Mexican border when I spied an old Yaqui Indian, in a flowing serape, floating calmly along on the breeze to my left. We pulled up together and, seated as if in armchairs, chatted about the weather, how to make the best tortillas, and the properties and preparation of Devil's-root. His long braids blew wildly in the wind and he asked me to show him this place called Indiana, so we flew up north, back the way I had come.

I was throwing up all over the place but I hardly noticed and Don Juan certainly didn't care — we soared upwards in a towering arc until I spotted the blue outline of Indiana. We went plummeting down, pulling up just before we crashed into the ground — old Don Juan began to make swooping passes at the farmers in their cornfields, scaring them senseless, while I contented myself with doing pirouettes around the grain silos. Soon he'd had enough of his game and we made our way eastward, toward Washington, D.C. We came in to land right on the steps of the Capitol.

The entire Senate came out to welcome us and they solemnly led us to the seats of honor. Don Juan was hailed as a savior (for the first time I noticed that he was

wearing castanets, which he clacked in irritation whenever he wished to seem wise) and we gave speeches to a joint session of the Congress and demonstrated our strange ability to blow feathers into the air. Don Juan was appointed head of the DEA and I received a call from the president, a wizened and twisted little Republican with an evil smile, who saw my abilities and appointed me to the Supreme Court. I was whisked to the bench by a lisping duck and met my new colleagues — seven midgets with beards and a tall, beautiful young woman with black hair and deathly white skin.

I convinced them that they, too, could fly, if they wished, but they were worried about being seen by their colleagues, so I told them we could take the building with us and thus remain hidden. We drank the tea and launched ourselves aloft, carrying the Supreme Court by its pillars. Delighted by the sensation of flight, they soon became tired of carrying the marble building and left it perched on the Washington Monument. They flew off to the north, making love in the air and passing out leaflets to passing planes decrying the evils of pornography. I headed back west.

Within minutes I noticed that the whole sky was full of fellow fliers — pot-smoking freaks and peyote-chewing Indians, rock musicians and old ladies reeking of gin, Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal on a tandem bicycle, and a large green nose being toted by an army of Mad-Ave types. I couldn't seem to fly straight and realized that I was skimming along upside-down. It didn't bother me in the least and finally some guy named Carlos came along — typing away at his desk, wearing an enormous iron chain around his neck.

I gave myself a quick, sharp shake and suddenly I was back on the porch again. It was late, the moon had gone down, and the candle was just beginning to sputter out. I found a note in my pocket that Don Juan had given to me but when I opened it, it was written in some strange code. I could only make out every third letter and it seemed to spell out A**P**R**I**L**F**O**O**L, but that made no sense at all, since this was July, so I threw it away. I gathered together my long black robe and, still tightly clutching the tattered dollar bill that Carlos had given me, made my way slowly upstairs and to bed.

Sept. 23, 1971 — Supreme Court Justice John Harlan resigns.
Sept. 25, 1971 — Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black dies, having resigned the week before.

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O very young
What will you leave us this time?
—Cat Stevens

The days on the farm drifted by in a haze. George spent most of his time apart, painting or reading, and Calvin worked in the garden or puttered around the house. I

spent a lot of time reading or taking walks, ranging as far over the nearby hills as I could without exciting the local dogs. My favorite place was a little stretch along the stream down in the meadow, a sharp bend that was out of sight of the house or the road.

The near bank was a jumble of flat rocks, gravel and small boulders and there was one spot where I could nestle in as comfortably as if it were an armchair, shaded by the towering elms, sycamores and maples that lined the stream. The far bank was a steep, small cliff where the roots of the trees on top peeked out from the loose soil and the slowly decaying limestone. There were fossils in the rocks — indeed, the entire mass of stone *was* a fossil, made up of layer upon layer of small shells and calcite left over from the ancient seas. One shallow inland ocean after another had covered this area and in their imperceptible comings and goings they left behind sediments that turned to stone — and slowly crumbled back into soil again. I loved to sit and take in this scene, thinking about time and the rocks.

We think of the history of earth as being the history of life but perhaps a totally objective observer from outer space might think of it as the history of rocks and water, with life forming an almost negligible veneer. Certainly the riotous confusion of life on the surface is more obvious and more colorful — but it forms only the top skin, like a coat of paint, on the richer story below.

Since we see things from a human time scale, we think of volcanoes as rare events, briefly catastrophic but of little real impact. But even on our time scale, the level of volcanic activity is astonishing, not just in terms of the frequent eruptions on land but, more importantly, the constant outpourings from underneath the oceans — both from individual volcanoes scattered hither and yon and the continual, massive percolation from the deep mid-ocean ridges. Presumably, this has been going on for billions of years and in all that time the old exudations have been undergoing changes of their own: metamorphosing under varying pressures and temperatures into granite, schists, quartzites, and gneiss. Gems, flint, mica, hornblende and all the myriad other stones form and are thrust onto the surface where water and waves transform them yet again. How long did it take for the inner forces of the earth to split and reform Gaea, as the riot of life added rocks of its own in the shales, limestones, and chalk? Sediments miles deep encase each successive age of evolution along with deep slicks of oil from tiny marine animals and vast seams of coal from the innumerable generations of forest. Perhaps we cannot comprehend this vast stretch of time but we can see it in the folds and ripples of the earth's burnoose of rock. It tells a story of stone and sea and the lilting pedal-note of life and this little sliver of it, here opposite me along a tiny stream in Indiana, a crumbling weariness of ancient sediment, represented the whole in microcosm — the soft etching of life quivering atop an ocean of multi-forged rock, of petrified time.

I could sit there for hours, alternately reading the words of some grand thinker

or glib entertainer and then look up to peruse the stream and shore — manifest infinity — and the juxtaposition of the two was sweet and melancholy.

But there was work to be done, too, and I did my chores and tended the henhouse patch, which by mid-September was ten feet tall and peeking boldly over the tops of the horseweeds. Zeke and I decided to do a severe pruning, since Calvin and George were getting decidedly and understandably paranoid, and, tho it gave us great pain, we hacked them down to six feet and took the tops back to 140 to dry.

It would soon be harvest time and due to the prolonged drought, we were hauling water up to the Ridge once a week. I figured it would be better if I were closer to home, since the henhouse patch didn't need any more tending, so I moved back to Bloomington and settled in at 140. Anton was getting paranoid, too, since this was the time of year when the cops were out in full force, doing their bit to save the world from the evils of herbology. Worse, we ran the risk of running into scavengers, who were out looking for dope patches to rip off. These miserable parasites afflicted us year after year but so far we had managed to bamboozle them thru good camouflage and misdirection — making pathways that led into the thickest parts of the briars. Still, we often saw their tracks in the fall and toyed with the idea of setting snares — a skunk-spray contraption would have been wonderfully appropriate — but we never quite figured out how to do it.

The Comet had been developing ills for a long time and I didn't have the money to get her fixed. We needed Anton's car for the harvest, but nothing doing — he went back home for a visit and left strict instructions that we were not to touch it under any circumstances. We couldn't even get out to Brown County to borrow Calvin's pickup and the time was drawing nigh — there was no choice but to take the drastic step of renting a U-Haul van for the trip up to the Ridge.

Now, one thing a U-Haul van is not is inconspicuous. In fact, it was a kind of bright, day-glo orange. It was so festive that Zeke took to calling it the "Halloween Haywagon" and once we reached the south trail up to the Ridge, he got into the spirit of things by suggesting that I try and make it all the way up in that thing. Well, naturally, I thought that sounded sensible . . . so I did.

The ground had been dry for quite some time and, by god, that old van waltzed right straight up the hill. Zeke seemed to be a bit taken by surprise that I'd actually done it. He was bouncing around in the passenger's seat and hollering for me to stop, but it was too late by then. I gunned it and slowed, gunned it and slowed, and by the time we reached the top, he'd mashed his head against the roof three or four times. It enlarged his vocabulary considerably. I was downright astonished at some of the things he said (and not a little disappointed) but I kept right on going until we were opposite Matilda. I got out and walked around to the other side of the van and Zeke sort of slithered out of the passenger seat. He gazed around for a while at the landscape and the pumpkin-like van and said, "Well now, *that's* what I call being *discreet*."

"Well, you *said* we should . . ." "I didn't *mean* it, you dumb sunuvabitch! How in hell . . ."

"Well, if you didn't *mean* it, why did you *say* it! I thought it was a good idea and I . . ."

"Jesus Christ! *Look* at this thing! We're supposed to *sneeeak* up here, godammit, so nobody will *see* us, and then *quietly* go about pulling the plants out — then we . . ."

He went on like that the whole time, not letting up for one minute. There was nothing for it but to get on with the job, however, and when we'd got them all loaded up in the back and headed down the hill, he found a whole new set of colorful terms to describe his less than objective feelings on the ride down. I must say, he did seem to have a point but, all in all, it was undoubtedly the *easiest* harvest we'd ever done. If not absolutely the most circumspect.

His final suggestion was that we hang them out to dry on the clothesline, in the nude, while singing "Waltzing Matilda," but I wasn't taking him seriously any more.

Oct. 3, 1971 — President Thieu, the only candidate on the ballot, "wins" reelection in South Vietnam.
Oct. 21, 1971 — Nixon nominates Lewis Powell and William Rehnquist to the Supreme Court.

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Speak roughly to your little boy
And beat him when he sneezes
He only does it to annoy
Because he knows it teases
—Lewis Carroll

With Calvin and George growing ever more nervous about the henhouse patch, getting the harvest in from Brown County was going to require a bit more in the way of discretion. Unfortunately, we had few other options and our "window of opportunity" for harvesting was rather narrow. It was now mid-October — we'd already had one light frost and while the days were still warm, that wasn't going to last. We had to do something.

Anton had lost the keys to his car so many times that the mechanic finally put in a permanent hot-wire — a person could start the thing just by connecting one wire under the dash and then pushing a little white button. And while Anton had been rather emphatic that under no circumstances were we to use his car to go up to the Ridge, obviously that meant he didn't care one way or the other if we used it to go out to Brown County. That's the way *I* interpreted it, anyway, so we fired her up one day and drove out to see Calvin and George.

Despite the heavy pruning we'd done only a month before, the henhouse plants were nearly nine feet tall. Calvin was so jumpy that we hadn't even risked going up to take out the males, letting the entire patch subside into a quiet, solemn desuetude. It agreed with them, not having us futzing over them constantly, and they looked content and peaceful. The males were long past flowering and almost dead but the females were heavy with seeds and flowers, towering over the assorted grasses and dainty little wildflowers. In the evening we pulled them out and loaded them onto big plastic sheets. We piled bale after bale into the trunk and stuffed the overflow into the back seat. It was by far the largest harvest we'd ever had and after having tea and a toke with a mischievously smiling George and an immensely relieved-looking Calvin, we drove back to Bloomington.

Sneakily carting the bales (looking, no doubt, like so many wrapped-up bodies) into 140, there was no doubt about it, we'd hit the jackpot. There was far too much to stuff into the closet and the wardrobe — it was hanging in great bunches from the ceiling, the walls, and even from the doorway to the kitchen. There was no place else to do it and we suppressed a mounting panic with our delight at such an abundance — tho it did help that the Ridge harvest was already past the most fragrant stage. Even so, the smell was all but overpowering. There was one saving grace, however — the new people in the apt next door were not at all the types to go running to the cops.

We burned incense night and day and kept a fan blowing out the back door, using our old trick of keeping a pile of leaves smoldering nearby. To keep down the pollen dust, we put the males in the closet and carefully collected the yellow powder, hoping to find some use for it. I happened to mention to Zeke one day that it almost looked like snuff — it was finer than the finest flour and he could see that I was forming an idea. He gave me that sick look he reserved for my better ideas and said,

"You . . . don't really . . . want to . . ."

"Well, why not?" I said. "It *looks* like snuff . . . maybe it'd be a great stone. Hell, ya never know til ya *try*."

He groaned but said what the hell, why not? So that night we made a big ceremony out of it and took turns snorting up a nice big load of pollen, sneezing daintily at each enormous whack. Which was OK, since you were *supposed* to sneeze when you took snuff, except that pretty soon we realized that we couldn't stop sneezing. Actually, we did get a bit of a mild buzz going but it was totally swamped in the miasma of awful hay fever that settled in and refused to let go. For two days we walked around snuffling and wheezing, our noses running constantly and our eyes red and raw. My sinuses felt like Mammoth Cave on a particularly nasty day and I was covered from head to toe in a splotchy, virulent rash. Zeke could hardly talk thru the incessant, hacking cough and he whined constantly, ending all his comments with a ". . . *you* said," until I began to get genuinely peeved. "After all," I said, "you never hear about Galileo's *failures* — you never hear about him dropping that iron ball he lugged

up to the Tower of Pisa on his big toe, or poking himself in the eye with his telescope — but it musta happened *once* in a while. And what about Tycho Brahe's nose? Huh? Got shot off in a duel and he went around for the rest of his life wearing a stupid gold nose tied to his face." Zeke just harrumphed and muttered something about *my* nose and began a string of meandering asides that invariably ended with "chucklehead." He never got the grasp of the larger scope of things.

At any rate, in a few days Anton returned and was duly impressed with the massive harvest strung up all over the apt. He asked us why we both had colds and Zeke took what seemed to me an unkind pleasure in filling him in on all the lurid details, but at least it kept Anton's mind off of asking how we'd managed to bring it in without a car. And, now that the worst part was over, naturally he was all for helping us with the manicuring job.

Compared to that first harvest, which now seemed like ages ago, it was a monumental task. At least there was no need to separate the different strains, since it was all the Oaxacan-Michoacan hybrid that Zeke had perfected. But gone, too, was the dainty plucking of each bud from the stem. We yanked the leaves off impatiently and then stripped the buds off of each small branch in one quick motion, dropping the little pile into a grocery sack. Hour after hour it went, first the Lampkins Ridge harvest, then Brown County. It took us three nights (we could only work after dark, in deference to Anton's paranoia) with numerous breaks for tea and to roll off the hashish. Bag after bag filled up and then came the long task of weighing it all into lids. I always preferred Ziplok bags (which seemed to me to have a bit more class) but the standard was the regular, fold-over "baggie" and, I must say, a lid seemed quite impressive in one of those. It bulged out very nicely and the clear plastic gave a good view of the fat, resinous buds.

When all was said and done, we had amassed a fortune in dope — over sixteen pounds of prime, extremely potent female flowers and nearly eight pounds of males, leaves, and shake. Three hundred and eighty-four lids of two basic grades. We were willing to split it more or less evenly, but Anton insisted that he hadn't done enough to earn that, so he took just forty lids. We set aside forty each for Calvin and George and that left Zeke and me with 132 lids apiece — a bonanza, an epic harvest.

We figured we'd need a pound each to last us until next June (we kept only primo stuff for ourselves, of course) and Anton turned over his excess for us to sell on commission. That gave us over ten pounds of flowers to unload and five of the lower grade. This was going to be no small problem. So far we had only shared and sold our grass to friends, who knew full well how potent it was. The going rate for decent grass was $15 a lid and we kept to that, even when it became obvious that our stuff was a far cut above decent. It just didn't seem like the kind of thing to get mercenary about.

But, in fact, that only added to the problem, for homegrown was universally scorned as being the lowest of the low — to be used only as a last resort when there was

no other grass around. We put out the word thru the people we knew that we had good stuff to sell but every time someone came over to ask what we had, we'd say it was homegrown and they'd just stand there and laugh. Half the time they didn't even bother to try it and, moreover, even when they *did* smoke a few hits the psychological effect of knowing it was homegrown, plus the fact that it was so cheap, made them assume that it just *had* to be garbage. They'd act so blase about it that we'd get pissed and wind up pretending that we were all out just then. Halfway home they'd suddenly stop and realize that they were zonked totally out of their gourds and come back, begging to buy a few lids.

We got so tired of this routine that we decided to start calling it Pakistani Pookah. We upped the flowers to $20 a lid and the shake to $15. In no time, freaks were stopping by daily for a sample and raving about its exotic qualities. They were amazed we'd scored this wonder-dope so cheap and nodded wisely, recalling the last time they'd had "Pookah." If we'd called it Nepalese Nirvana and charged $50 a lid, they'd have passed out with delight over how fortunate they were. What the hell — "consumerism," even in dope.

Oct. 25, 1971 — Communist China admitted to the UN; Taiwan ousted.
Nov. 13, 1971 — Mariner 9 enters Mars orbit.
Nov. 25, 1971 — "D.B. Cooper" hijacks plane over Washington State; parachutes into forest with $200,000.

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The answer, my friend,
Is blowin' in the wind
—Bob Dylan

One thing that had always disappointed us, tho, was our failure to come up with any genuine "sensimilla" — female flowers that hadn't been pollinated. Thus they had no seeds, making them even more potent. There was just no way, tending two sets of patches forty miles apart (with unreliable transportation), we could have controlled things that well. Getting unpollinated females requires daily attention to get the males out, since even one male flower can fertilize an entire patch. It made us feel bad to be selling grass for twenty bucks a lid with that many seeds in it but, on the other hand, we needed as much seed as we could get, so that if we had the chance to grow sensimilla some day, we'd have plenty of seed left to keep us going. It would help if we could get the bulk of the seeds out and we were mulling it over one day when I said,

"Listen, Zeke, how about if we . . ."

He gave me a funny look and said, "This isn't another winner like the pollen idea,

is it?"

"It's a good one, believe me . . ."

"Snort the pollen, you said."

"Well, but . . ."

"Gets you high, you said."

"Yeah, but . . ."

"We could sell it as snuff, you said."

"Will you . . .maybe it didn't *work* but that doesn't mean it was a bad *idea* . . ."

"What do you *mean,* not a bad idea — I can still feel that shit in my throat! You sit there and . . ."

"Oh, Christ, if you're gonna be a *crybaby* about it, then I won't tell you — but have you got a better idea . . . *any* idea?"

"Well, sure, we just mash up the flowers some to loosen the seeds and then shake the bags til they collect on the bottom — then we take out the . . ."

"Yeah, but this'll be *much* faster. Listen. We just dump out all the bags onto a newspaper, OK? And then we get this great big plastic garbage bag — Anton's got lots of 'em and he never uses 'em anyway — and then we get this fan, see . . ."

"This *what*?"

"This fan. And then we winnow the stuff, just like in the old days."

"*Winnow*?"

"Sure. Look, we mash up the buds a bit, like you said, and then we poke some holes in the back of the bag to let the air thru. Then we lay it down on its side, OK?"

"And?"

"Well, then we have this fan blowing into the bag and we *gently* drop the buds and all in front of the fan — sifting 'em like — and the seeds will drop straight down. But the buds will be blown into the bag . . . only they won't go *thru* the bag, 'cause they're too big for the holes. See?"

He gave me one of those looks again but he thought it over for a while and began to see the merits of the plan. Finally he said OK, let's give it a try — but we'd better get Anton to help, so we could control the bag better. That seemed like a sensible suggestion so we went to fetch him and he got real excited about the idea. He even had a better bag — a great big clear thing that was maybe a little on the flimsy side, but it would do the trick just perfectly.

We had a few tokes to get us started and then began poking holes in the bottom of the bag. We made a trial run with the fan and it took a little adjustment to keep the bag steady — we put some more holes in and at last we were ready. We dumped out fifteen or twenty lids, rubbed them to loosen the seeds, and while Anton and Zeke held the bag open I began to sift the buds thru my hands. I was rubbing like mad but they just fell straight down to the newspaper — still too heavy. There were encouraging signs, tho, since some of the buds did go a little way into the bag. We turned off the fan

and got more diligent about rubbing up the buds, pushing the seeds out with our fingers. When we had a big pile ready, we started up the fan again (this time on "high") and Anton and Zeke held open the bag. It was billowing nicely in the breeze and I began my "winnowing" — they seemed to be shouting encouragement and I kept grabbing big handfuls and sifting like mad but, unfortunately (perhaps we'd smoked a bit too much), what they had actually been shouting was "Stop! . . . *Stooopp*!" When at last I caught on and looked up, they were getting decidedly agitated.

Apparently, what we hadn't taken into account was that the wind coming *out* of the bag was every bit as strong as the wind going *in* — and by the time I finally realized what was happening there were flower buds and shake strewn all over the floor behind me. There were bits of leaves clinging to my clothes and hair and Anton had buds sticking out of his beard and eyebrows. I switched off the fan and stood there for a moment, picking dope from my shirt thoughtfully and taking stock. Indeed, the seeds *had* dropped straight down — but the bag was as clean as a whistle. Something like six or seven lids were strewn across the floor, the beds, and the bookcases like so much flotsam from a hurricane. Zeke dropped his corner of the bag and stood there, glaring at me. Anton cleared his throat and made a beeline into the kitchen. I waited a bit and said, "Well, you know, . . . maybe if we . . ."

I let it go. Zeke just glared. He gazed at the dope scattered all over the apt like a green blanket of snow and sort of half-groaned and whimpered. I pushed some of the seeds around with my toe, hoping that he'd see it wasn't a *total* failure, but from the look on his face I decided to use the better part of valor and followed Anton into the kitchen. I said maybe this would be a good time to go out and get a big ol' sloppy pizza and Anton instantly agreed, so we snuck out the back. Once we had the pizza we decided to leave Zeke alone for a few days and I went to crash with Anton at his place.

He, at least, was enough of a gentlemen never to bring up the unfortunate incident again. But from time to time over the years, Zeke seemed to find ample opportunity to refer to it over and over again, quite often at the most inconvenient moments, thus revealing a crass side of himself that I'd never really noticed before.

Dec. 3, 1971 — Full-scale war erupts between India and Pakistan.
Dec. 17, 1971 — The Indian/Pakistani war ends, resulting in East Pakistan becoming a new country, Bangladesh.

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Like Judas of old, you lie and deceive
A war can be won, you want me to believe
—Bob Dylan

I had been doing some reading on the roots of the war — the Pentagon Papers, among others — and it was interesting to note that the hated Communist Ho Chi Minh had, in fact, tried to divest himself of the Russians after World War II and enlist the aid of the Americans in getting rid of the French. He had even gone so far as to model their constitution directly on our own, using much of the same language in an obviously sincere wish to form an American-style democracy. Truman had rebuffed him out of hand, and in the end, in order to free their country of the oppressive French (FDR and his entire Cabinet despised what they were doing in Vietnam) they finally turned to the Russians for military help.

This was a pattern seen again and again around the world — none of the people of these countries really gave a damn about the "conflict" between capitalism and communism, but when they saw what *we* did in supporting the "capitalist" structure of dictators and the moneyed overlords, they went whole hog for communism. It was their only way out — we *drove* them to communism as the only means they saw available to get rid of the corrupt system that we invariably propped up. This happened in the Philippines, Korea, El Salvador, Cuba, Iran, Rhodesia, Chile, South Africa, Argentina, Nicaragua, Haiti, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic — we supported oppressive, corrupt regimes simply because they spewed the right rhetoric . . . which then, of course, let American businesses operate with a free hand.

Many in this country knew that communism was a bankrupt economic and political philosophy — that given enough time it would prove impractical and demagogic and fall of its own weight. But there was a vested interest in America in "fighting" communism because it was a way of allowing our business interests in the smaller countries to operate under the old, colonial rules of business — with anti-union slave-wages, child labor and all the other ills of 19th-century American and European business practice. *But* — we had to pretend that we were supporting "democracy" and in order to do that, without anyone taking too close a look at what we were doing, it was handy to have an "enemy" to fight — one that was "worse" than our patrician-overlord "buddy" system. So we pumped in millions in economic aid to pacify the poor of these countries (and the liberals back home) while at the same time pumping in even more millions in military aid to bolster the corrupt politicians we had fostered. And in so doing, invented the war against communism, taking a page, worldwide, from McCarthy. The prime catchword was "credibility" — making sure that the Soviets were aware that we would, if necessary, go all the way in the defense of "freedom." That was what Vietnam was all about — theoreticians fighting a war of nerves.

If only we bombed Vietnam enough, we surmised, the Soviets and Chinese would eventually cut their losses and the guerrillas could be induced to go home for a lack of supplies and weapons. The only point of bombing, as the Vietnam vet had told me, is to destroy an enemy's *ability* to fight — no one had ever succeeded in destroying their *will* to fight. In the meanwhile, we would be demonstrating to the Commies just

how "tough" we were, so that they would never think we were so "soft" that they could launch a preemptive strike against us. Trouble was, we took into account the toughness of the Vietnamese not at all. They had the most extensive system of tunnels in the world and moved whole industries, supply networks, and populations underground. They dug in and relied on their one invincible weapon — time. The supplies would still get thru (we could not, after all, afford to take the risk of actually bombing Chinese and Russian supply lines) and in time the American people would tire of an endless, pointless war. And they were right.

Dec. 23, 1971 — Nixon commutes the prison term of Jimmy Hoffa.

Dec. 26-30, 1971 — Massive bombing strikes against North Vietnam by U.S. forces.

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The mug of cider simmered slow
The apples sputtered in a row
And close at hand the basket stood
With nuts from brown October's wood

—John Greenleaf Whittier

We almost never had any contact with the people who lived in the front apartments at 140, not even old Gramps. He'd disappear for long periods of time, until we assumed that he'd died, but then there'd he be again, smiling gummily away and puttering around in the yard. He could have cared less about dope and we were pretty sure we could rely on the new people next door not to call the cops on us either. We rarely saw them, except when one set moved out and another moved in, which happened fairly often. It was a beautiful, sunny, late-summer day when Ma and Pa Kaintuck arrived in a faded red pickup, piled ten feet high with beds, chairs, lamps, boxes, and what may have been a still. The only thing missing was an old tick-hound named Blue.

The whole thing swayed dangerously, tied down with a cat's-cradle of rope, and when it finally came to a rest, pouring out brown smoke, old Pa climbed out creakily. He did a huge, lazy stretch and then slowly walked around to the tailgate, fetching out a large plastic jug from under the pile. He hoisted it on his elbow, took an enormous swig, gave a tiny little satisfied shudder, then recorked the jug. He and Ma took a leisurely two days to unload the pickup and when I went out and offered to help, Pa glared at my long hair, stiffened up a yard or two, and said, "No thankee."

We didn't expect to seem much of them after that but we had to walk past their hallway door every time we went to the bathroom and, since they didn't believe in drapes we could see thru the window in the kitchen door. Ma was perpetually at the stove, frying up something quite indescribable, while Pa sat rooted to the kitchen table

with that jug at his elbow. He was eternally at work on a jigsaw puzzle and I could see the framed results on the walls — innumerable waterfalls, castles, and desert scenes. Aside from the piles of clothes, a few tools and some tatty old furniture, it was the only decor. Old Pa didn't appear to have a job, which seemed amiable enough, but I got a bad feeling about that jug. It never strayed more than an inch from his elbow — yet never seemed to get any emptier.

Ma came around to our door one day and in a broad Kentucky drawl asked politely if we cared if she did the laundry out back. We said no, of course not, go right ahead. She carted out an old washtub and a handcrank mangle, strung up a clothesline and, by god, did their laundry in the yard with a washboard. I had never seen such a thing before and wasn't sure I cared for the look of it — it seemed too much like work. Pa set up a little fireplace of bricks and hoisted a thirty-five gallon drum onto it and Ma built a fire. This was intriguing — for she not only boiled their clothes in that thing but actually *made her own soap* in it. I don't know what went into that stuff but it smelled like dead cats boiling; I refrained from asking for details.

I saw Pa out working on his truck one sunny afternoon and decided it was time to get better acquainted. He only nodded when I said hello, how's it going, but I sat down on a stump to wait him out and after a while he began to relax. It took some time to get him going but he liked to talk, as it turned out, and it didn't take long to get their story.

He and Ma had been born and bred in the hills of eastern "Kain-tuck," never straying more than twenty miles from their homestead, growing their own food in a big vegetable garden and putting in a few acres of tobacco for cash. They had been married when he was sixteen and she fifteen. (They looked to be in their sixties, but by my calculation they couldn't have been more than fifty.) After the kids had grown up and moved away, a city feller from a big oil company came by one day and offered them good money for the mineral rights to the place. They took it, of course, rented out the farm, loaded up the truck, and simply started driving.

They drove thru one town after another, each bigger than the one before, until they hit Louisville. He said they had stayed there, briefly (an image came to mind of them camped out under the stands of Churchill Downs) but had then moved on again. It was too loud and raucous for them. They tried "Innynapolis," too, but that was even worse — the big cities "warn't their style" so they drove back south and eventually came to rest in Bloomington. They could just tell that it was more to their liking and, besides, the people didn't "talk funny."

Getting all this took the better part of an hour and while listening I watched what he was doing to that pickup. He was actually taking apart the brakes and *building his own brake pads* — using some nasty, disgusting-looking truck made out of asbestos chimney-repair paste and old gunnysacks, cutting it to size with a pocketknife and pressing it onto the shoes with rivets and a homemade wooden clamp. When I finally

asked him about it he said, "Shee-it, ain't nuthin' I cain't fix with a screwdriver an' a pliers." I would purely love to have seen him do a valve job. Every few minutes he would lean over and let fly a brown stream of tobacco juice. He aimed at any old target — a rock or a squirrel, whatever — but he never once hit the mark. He seemed to hit his own shoes more often than not and I kept my sandals tucked out of sight. Every so often he'd grab that jug and take a pull and each time he did that, he'd sneak a peek over at my hair. At last he seemed to have made up his mind about it and held out the jug, offering me a drink. I had to accept the honor, of course, and tried to hold it over one shoulder like he did while I took a careful sip.

It was the shock of my life. I never *dreamed* that moonshine whisky could be that bad. Perhaps I had some romantic notion of "corn likker," I don't know, but that stuff tasted like watered-down gasoline and burned like black pepper going down. My gut said "No way!" and tried to shove it back out but my mouth didn't want it, either, so I sort of humphed and snorted at the same time, a spout of it being forced up into my nose. My eyes bugged out and at last I made a sort of choking swallow and managed to get it back down, burning a hole in my stomach the size of a quarter. Pa just smiled and turned back to his work.

I handed the evil thing back to him but I couldn't get my breath and when I tried to say "Thanks," all that came out was a spluttering "Thwwwpft." I could see his shoulders heaving up and down . . . Pa was enjoying the hell out of this. Since I couldn't talk, he politely went on with his recital and after a while, when he figured I'd recovered enough to answer, asked me if I knew anything about "this-shere merry-wanna stuff." My head was reeling . . . I was in a foul mood and, just for a minute, the Notorious Opiated Hash came to mind. But I decided to let it go. I said grudgingly that I might know a little about it and, rather sheepishly, he said, "Dew yew think maybe Ah could try some sometime?" What the hell; I shrugged and said, "Why not?"

The next night we asked Pa over for a toke and he brought his jug along. He seemed nervous and went on about how he had never smoked anything before (preferred his chaw) and was there another way to do it? We assured him that it was very mild and broke out the hookah. We began slow but before long the pipe was burbling like a mountain stream and Pa's head was wreathed in a halo of blue smoke — looking for all the world like Alice's Caterpillar.

Some people don't get off at first but in no time Pa was higher than a Georgia pine. He loved it. We weren't sure how he'd react to classical music but we put some on and he tilted back in his chair, wagging one foot in the air while he tugged away on the hookah. He even seemed to forget about the jug for a while. After some Bach he remarked that he "liked 'at pretty-well fine, all right, but that Mozzer' fella, I kin live without." He suddenly remembered his jug and, grinning from ear to ear, leaned over and offered us a pull. I politely passed it over to Zeke, carefully taking note of his reaction. He seemed to go thru pretty much the same sequence I had and it was

interesting to watch his eyes bug out and the spurt come up his nose.

After a bit we put on the Beatles and *then* did Pa's face light up! His foot got to whanging up and down and he tried (more or less) to sing along. We followed that with Dylan and, after a second or two, his face began to take on a look of something like rapture. All of a sudden he jumped up, slapped his knee, shouted "By Gawd!" and tore out of the room. He was back in a flash and damned if he didn't have a harmonica with him! He sat down and began to blow and he ripped away lick for lick with Dylan — he was great! He was *born* to play the harmonica. We toked up some more and then the party got lively — the moonshine seemed to have gotten to Zeke, for all at once he stood on his head, hands on hips, and began to beat time in the air with his feet:

I want you —da-di-di-da—
I want yoouuu —da-di-di—Soooo bad.

Suddenly one of Zeke's girlfriends, Bobbi, walked in and stopped cold in the doorway. I suppose from her side it must have looked a little odd — this old hillbilly with a scratchy beard and a jug blowing harmonica while an upside-down Zeke flailed away with his feet in the air; me on the floor with the drumsticks and some pots and pans between my legs. She was absolutely stunned; Bobbi was used to our scenes but this one had her stumped. She stood there for a bit (we were frozen in mid-stride) and finally said, "I don't know what you're smoking, but I believe I better have some." Pa didn't leave until dawn. We went thru every record with a harmonica part we had and Bobbi and me played the drums.

A couple of days later Pa showed up (nearly sober) and asked us to dinner. Ma had made a wonderful barbecued rabbit and we had a grand time. Later on she disappeared and, after a lot of hemming and hawing, Pa finally asked if he could maybe trade a jug of his moonshine for a "bag o' that-there merry-wanna." We said, sure, no problem. We tried to *give* it to him but he took offense so we had to accept the awful jug. The next spring there was a sad day when he and Ma loaded up the truck and said they were heading back to Kentucky. "City life" just wasn't for them, they said. We were sorry to see them go — but quite some time later we got news thru the grapevine that "some old hillbilly" was growing absolutely first-rate dope out in the hills of eastern Kentucky. Yep. A real hick, that feller.

The Hideous Jug, I must say, took a long time to empty. Zeke gave a little start every time I pulled it out but we got a kick out of passing it around to friends, watching their eyes bug out and their nose spurt. It never varied one iota, but we could only get away with it once, of course.

Feb. 2, 1972 — Sen. Edmund Muskie offers a proposal for ending the war in Vietnam, calling Nixon's plan "a course which attaches so many conditions to our leaving that it can only leave

us where we are now, watching our sons fight and die not for a cause, but for a mistake."
Feb. 7, 1972 — White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman says that critics of the Vietnam war are "consciously aiding and abetting the enemy of the U.S." Nixon calls on the Democratic candidates to stop criticizing his Vietnam policy lest they "prolong the war."

PART VI
NoDak Summer

We come on the ship that sailed the moon
We come in the ages most uncertain hour
—Paul Simon

All that fall and winter, holed up at 140, I was happily oblivious to The Imp of the Perverse, Richard M., and his unholy brood. There had been many more marches, protests, deaths, and lies, but in a way I had retreated from all that. In the spring of '72 I began to feel the heat of my own conscience as a new election campaign reared its bizarre head.

In conversations wreathed in grass smoke, amid the tie-dyed lamp shades, beaded curtains and thumping strains of the Grateful Dead, I had become convinced that Tricky Dick could not survive another election. Surely his belligerent duplicity was obvious now to all but the most pigheaded pseudo-patriots. He had not put an end to the war; he had trivialized and misrepresented an entire generation; he had manipulated the Press; abused the powers of the CIA, the FBI, and the IRS; and his instinct for double-dealing had driven a wedge into the heart of the nation. Surely he could be defeated.

Muskie was on the rise but McGovern, with impeccable antiwar credentials, was beginning to have an effect. Humphrey, the "Happy Warrior," was continuing to mutter Establishment inanities but "Clean Gene" McCarthy was hard at work, tho for some reason no one was taking him seriously. I sensed that things were going our way at last — the tide was turning.

Naturally, all this *Wunderjahr* stuff gave me the fiddlefoot and I had to be on the road again. I wanted to wind up at the Democratic Convention in June but, just for the hell of it, I headed out West first. In early April, having made enough money from selling dope to last me a while, I laid in a store of groceries, stashed a couple of pounds of homegrown in the trunk of the Comet, and headed out of town. I felt free and buoyant and young.

I dawdled over small roads, headed south thru Missouri and spent a chilly night in a small park before pushing on to Little Rock. Across Arkansas and Oklahoma, picking up hitchhikers along the way, I skirted Amarillo in the Texas panhandle and slowed down again when I hit New Mexico. There I took to the smaller roads, finding plenty of hikers for company. The mood of adventure was infecting everyone with giggling, soaring optimism. After a few miles (checking them out to see if they were narcs) I punched the button on the joint machine and out would pop a lit doobie,

impressing the guests no end. By the time I got to Alamagordo there were five of us toking up and singing along with the songs on the radio as the broad mesas swept past in the fierce sunlight:

I'm goin', I'm goin'
Where the water tastes like wine
(Canned Heat)

There was a protest planned for the White Sands Missile Range and they invited me to join in — but I took a pass.

Just this side of the Arizona border the road began a long, slow climb upwards and soon it began a much steeper ascent, up into a mountain pass. The poor old Comet was chugging along slower and slower and finally I had to pull over and give her a chance to rest. I sat on the hood, gazing out at the vast, flat plain to the southeast and watching the sunset as the tourists whizzed by — they gave me quick, wondering glances but, tho I needed no help, my long hair deterred them from stopping to ask. It was the perfect metaphor for the age.

The Comet fired up nicely after an hour or so and I charged over the mountain, crossing into Arizona soon after dark. I pulled into a rest area and again spent the night shivering under my thin blankets — but at least I was in the land of sunshine.

Feb. 11, 1972 — A report by the NIMH says the marijuana laws are "much too severe and much out of keeping with knowledge about its harmfulness" and recommends decriminalization.
Feb. 21-28, 1972 — Nixon visits China; at the Great Wall he says, "I think that you would have to conclude that this is a great wall . . ."; on his return, says his trip "changed the world."

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I want to fly like an eagle
To the sea
—Steve Miller Band

I was in the mood for exploring and early the next day I saw a dirty roadside sign that caught my eye — "Cochise Stronghold State Park, Next Left." I turned off the highway, heading into the steel-blue Dragoon Mountains, and drove over a primitive dirt road until at last I came to a small box canyon. It seemed utterly deserted and I came to rest under a bower of strange trees with tiny leaves and long, pointy thorns. It seemed the perfect spot and after cautiously exploring a little, I made a small camp and ate lunch in the splendid stillness.

Almost out of water, I was getting ready to walk over to the base of the nearest

cliff to see if I could find a stream when I heard someone coming. My first, panicky instinct was to find someplace to hide but in a split-second, a smiling old man appeared. He had obviously been going out of his way to make some noise, so as not to startle me. He had on faded bluejeans and a pair of ancient, cracked cowboy boots and he wore a western-style shirt with pearl buttons and a stringy tie. He stopped several feet away and softly, cheerfully, wished me good morning. Instantly he struck me as a wonderfully gentle, capable, calm person whom I knew I could trust completely — in a few minutes we were chatting away like we'd known one another since Ike died.

His name was Simon and he'd lived in the canyon since long before it had been made into a park. He had a trailer a few hundred yards away and he offered to show me around. We reached the trailer and his wife, Nora, took me in like a long-lost pup, feeding me lunch and offering me the use of their shower. No one ever came to the park and they were tickled to have some company; my long hair didn't bother them a bit — in fact, I got the feeling that they rather approved, being highly independent types themselves.

I offered to help Simon tear down an old shed he said he'd been meaning to demolish for a long time. His arthritis hampered him but between the two of us we had it stacked into a tidy pile of boards by the end of the second day. He told me that the canyon really had been the last holdout of Cochise and his band of Apaches before the soldiers finally "convinced" them to move to the Chiracahua reservation.

It was, of course, an arid place with a number of scraggly-looking thorn trees, a lot of cactus and a ring of deeply pleated, light-brown, corrugated cliff walls. There were myriad shrubs and birds, a fantastic array of colorful insects. I spent several afternoons exploring, hunting up lizards and rattlesnakes and trying to catch glimpses of the coatimundis as they slipped in and out of the brush like wraiths. My favorite spot was at the bottom of a wide notch in a dusty beige cliff, watching the brown eagles soar above their nests. The real show began in late afternoon — first just one or two distant brown specks, then others eerily appeared out of nowhere. Finally there were dozens and they stayed aloft for hours, gliding effortlessly above the rim — darting down to skim the cliff face and then lightly catching an updraft to sail skywards again. Every so often one would aim straight at the cliff and feather to a stop at a nest.

They seemed to be forming groups and engaging in an intricate aerial ballet — two, sometimes three groups that would respond to each other's movements, back and forth, meshing and breaking apart in complex, unfathomable patterns. After a time they would all blend together again, becoming individuals, a geometric unit creating languid arabesques against the pale blue sky.

Simon and Nora were dropping hints that I was welcome to stay more or less permanently if I wanted to. I got the feeling that they almost wanted to adopt me — their children had long since grown up and moved away. But the fiddlefoot had me and soon I told them I had to be on my way. I fired up the Comet and headed west again.

Feb. 26, 1972 — Muskie responds to attacks from the Manchester Union Leader; in a heavy snowstorm he denounces the personal attacks on his wife, breaking down in tears three times. March 7, 1972 — Sen. Muskie wins the New Hampshire primary but George McGovern (an even stronger critic of the war) is a surprisingly close second.

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I've stumbled on the side
Of twelve misty mountains
—Bob Dylan

I wandered around southern Arizona, stopping off at state parks around Tucson, visiting a ghost town or two, then found myself in a park just above the Mexican border called Organ Pipe. It was huge and all desert; dry as an empty paint can and 100% cactus. The nights, tho it was still early spring, were only mildly chilly.

There were occasional side roads that looked inviting and I picked one at random and drove in. Off to the right there was an endless desert but on the left a chain of small hills and mini-mountains rolled past — I pulled up near a craggy peak that had the dramatic air of a miniature Matterhorn.

I pushed the button on the joint machine and took the J with me as I walked over to the pile of rubble at its base. It was a quick scramble up the fallen scree to the first slope of bare rock, where I found a little alcove underneath a broad overhang. I was halfway up this transistorized Alp and most of Arizona seemed to be at my feet. I sat down out of the sun to rest and keep an eye on the astonishing view.

The deep-blue sky contrasted starkly with the earth tones and vague touches of green in the desert. There was nothing stirring, not so much as a bird; the sleepy, warm breeze swept silently over the brown land, as if in a dream, and as I finished the roach a sense of timelessness crept into me; the desert seemed to shush the mind and blank out the world.

Gazing across the sand there was a rough vastness where epicratonic seas had lapped against a primeval shore for seamless millennia. Another sea would come some day and blanket the sands with a layer of silt. And then, perhaps, in another hour or day or week of ancientness the sand would turn to stone and the sea recede again. Looking up at the folds in the high rock I could almost count the eternities that had come and gone. What did I know of time? All that is visible to us is the ticking of the icy milliseconds, counting out a frugal and frantic scramble. We do not really partake of time. Man scrawls his graffiti upon the face of Gaea and confidently proclaims the "conquering" of Nature — a buffoon tracing speeches in the air — but we don't *know* time. We barely glimpse events as ephemeral as the morning mist.

But the rocks *are* time.

Each crystal of quartz, sliver of mica or pebble of calcified limestone, by its grain and color and texture, reveals how old it is, what temperature and pressure formed it, from what mineral it developed — each stone is a snapshot of a moment in real time. Every drop of rain that had ever fallen in this dry place was only a day in the drowsy procession of seasons and the seas were the dominant chord to the tonic of the stones. The oldest sound on earth, a *continuous* sound thruout all those ages, has been the sound of the surf — the seas incessantly lapping against the crumbling aprons of rock. I could feel in my bones the thin skin of the present riding atop this deep ocean of desert eternity; the breadth of time suffused me. My mind half-slumbered: life is a rainbow, fashioning itself into pretty arcs after a morning shower. The whorls and racemes of evolution fold in upon the rock, recording the smoke-like passage and the fantastic colors, dancing in the sunlight.

And then, I don't know why, pumas came to mind. Pumas in the crevices. Oh, lord.

I began to feel awfully alone up there — why in hell did I finish that joint? Soon I began to think about scorpions and rattlesnakes and. . . .oh, shit. The car looked very small and far away. Were pumas really dangerous? I craned my neck to look up at the top of the mountain — oh, hell, what if I went ahead and climbed the rest of the way up? At least it would get my mind off of pumas and . . . damn, I had to do *some*thing.

I got up, afraid to go back down to the car, afraid I'd begin to run in sheer panic, so I began to climb. And rather quickly I discovered something I had never really noticed before — hard as it is to go *up* a mountain, it is a whole hell of a lot easier than trying to go back *down* again. Ten feet up, I no longer had any choice.

This was not good. I moved slowly up the side of the cliff and swore over and over that I'd never, ever, try such a ridiculous thing again. *I* was no mountain-climber . . . what did I think I was doing? The image of Anton on the side of that fjord came to mind — I had to make sure I didn't freeze and wind up plastered on the side of that cliff like a bat skewered in the light of an arc lamp.

A foothold on a small piece of ledge, then a handhold in a tiny crack . . . inch by inch I sidled up and over, straining as much as I could towards a low saddle near the crest. That last little bit was the worst, but finally I made it — just a few feet to go, at last! Panting and sweating, utterly exhausted and nearly out of my mind with fear, I hauled myself up and stood on the crest, trembling but triumphant. By god, I've done it! I actually climbed all the way up this . . . er, . . . um, . . . what's this? On the other side . . . on the other side . . . there were *kids* up there! *Kids*! What in the hell are they doing up here? They're looking at me like I'm stark staring mad and there . . . are . . . *Stairs!* Actual stairs going up the other side of the mountain! *Stairs?!?*

The parents of the kiddies hove into view and we exchanged dumbfounded looks. Nobody said a word.

I looked at it from their point of view. Ragged-looking long-haired freak, covered with dust and sweat, appears over the rim of a scenic view. Mountain goat? Lunatic refugee from a desert commune? I have to think fast.

What is called for is insouciance — lighting up a cigarette (calmly, a mountaineer on a jaunt) I saunter down the stairs. There is a chorus of sniggers from behind — a kid-voice saying, "Hey, mister! Hey! Hey mister!" I ignored him, lost in contemplation, and walked faster. Go away kid, ya bother me.

March 9, 1972 — Allegations surface that ITT had received a favorable Justice Department ruling on an antitrust case in return for underwriting the Republican Convention in August. March 13, 1972 — Clifford Irving pleads guilty to swindling McGraw-Hill with a fake autobiography of Howard Hughes.

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"Badges? We don't need no stinking badges!"
—The Treasure of the Sierra Madre

It was a long walk back to the Comet and I sheepishly drove along until I came to a track that was just two ruts in the sand and turned off. After a bit I noticed that there were a lot of little side-branches running off into the desert. It occurred to me that if I went too far I might have trouble finding my way back, but when I stopped and looked I could see the tire marks of the Comet plainly in the sand. It rained so rarely in the desert that there was no danger they'd get wiped out, so I drove on.

By sunset I'd gone several miles and was into some pretty wild country, bouncing along and feeling more and more like I was discovering the real desert. I pulled over and made camp and the night came down softly, wistfully, on the heels of a brilliant, pastel sunset. The stars sprang into view and the sky was breathtaking — the Milky Way looked like a bright band of clouds stretching across the horizon. I had a quiet dinner by a campfire and then turned in, utterly at peace. Until the coyotes started up.

Now, your ordinary TV-western coyote howl sounds fairly romantic — nothing threatening about it at all. In a movie theater it's definitely a little more chilling — but heard out in the actual, real desert, it's a whole 'nuther animal altogether. The sharp, yipping howls came from a long way off at first and then, ever so gradually, got nearer. I suppose they had seen or smelled the fire — they were moving by degrees straight toward me and that wild moan was all business. I felt not at all suave as I picked up my blankets and moved into the car. For a moment I had a picture of coyotes trying all the handles; I locked the doors.

I could hear them getting louder and closer and things got rather tense for a

while as I lay there in the much-too-dark dark. I could hear them making a wide circle around the Comet tho I never actually saw them. I imagine they came near enough to realize that they hadn't brought the right kind of can-opener and finally wandered back off into the desert.

I woke up soon after dawn and after sniffing around for coyotes and pumas, spent the morning taking an inspection tour. It was a splendid day and the closer I looked the more life I found. It was just spaced out a lot more than in an ordinary forest. Everything at first seemed to be on a reduced, economic scale but then, suddenly, towering over me would be an immense cathedral of a cactus. A saguaro or an organpipe can take a hundred years to grow a foot — they were so old that they could almost be called living rocks.

I puttered around all day, trudging up little hills and wandering down into deep ravines and washes and finding all kinds of animal bones; but one enormous specimen had me stumped. It was a lattice-work of something round, massive and very long. At first I thought it was a dinosaur's tail but then I realized that it was the skeletal remains of a saguaro — those things actually left *bones.*

I went back to the car for lunch and a siesta and then struck out again, exploring until evening. I found a bee impaled on a cactus (the stinger had got stung) and I wondered what the hell that was all about. That night I made another campfire and listened for the coyotes, making like an old hand on a cowboy drive, but they were far off and had apparently given up on freak-in-a-can. I collected a fence of tumbleweeds and slept outside, next to the fire.

The next morning I fired up the Comet and headed back the way I'd come. Everything was going fine and I could follow the tire tracks easily — but then all of a sudden there were no more tracks. Strange, I thought, there hadn't been any rain. I kept going, confident I was headed in the right direction, but I couldn't understand what had happened to those damned tracks. Finally I came to a turn I wasn't sure of and got out to investigate.

It didn't take long to figure out that there were wild cattle in there and they had obliterated all traces in the sand ruts. Apparently they preferred walking on the nice, soft track to making their way thru the cactus and they had erased my trail. I wasn't particularly concerned, since I could always rely on my excellent sense of direction — now let's see . . . the sun is, uh . . . well, it's over there, so, uh . . . no, that must be north. Well, hell, I needed to go east but . . . uh, the road wouldn't let me go that way. Hmm. Maybe this was a little tougher than I thought.

After a couple of hours of wandering I came across some tire tracks — mine. Well, great, now I was going in circles. My mind raced, calculating how far my gas would take me. For some reason I remembered the old chestnut about Dan'l Boone: someone asked him once if he'd ever been lost out in the wilderness. After a minute he said, "Nope — never been lost. (Pause) Tho I was a mite bewildered once for three

days."

I was getting way off course by this time and it's funny how perplexed you can get when you realize there are no phone booths in the desert. I had just about decided to turn back and do some panic retracing when I came across a fence — right there in the middle of this endless desert there was a barbwire fence! And on the other side of the fence was a road! A genuine, asphalt, going-somewhere road! Halleluja.

I got out, found a post that was loose and tore it down; knocked over another with the bumper of the car, drove over the fence (replacing my divot) and headed due east, giving thanks with a lit joint. I actually began to sing. After only about a mile I saw a pickup truck in the distance, headed in the opposite direction. I thought, "Well! Civilization at last!" But then I noticed something odd about that pickup — how come there was a guy standing over the cab with a rifle? "Rifle?" I thought, "What does he need a rifle for?" Then it hit me.

That fence was the Mexican goddam border and this was the Mexican goddam border patrol! *Federales*! Somberly, it sank in that I had almost two pounds of prime homegrown in the trunk. Oh, shit. "Badges? We don't need no stinking badges!"

My mind took a hard gulp but I had to keep going — pulling a U-turn and heading for the hills would doubtless excite comment. I could see the scene when they opened the trunk and I began to panic. How do you say "Twenty-dollar bribe" in Spanish? Would it help, I wondered, if I explained that it was homegrown and not Mexican at all? Probably not. All of a sudden they were near enough to see me. I slunk down lower and lower in the seat — Oh, Christ, here they come! They were passing . . . and . . . and they . . . waved! And kept going! I couldn't believe it. I looked down at their plates as they slid past . . . they were blue plates with white lettering — two letters, four numbers, and a little "Sonora" underneath. The Comet still had Connecticut plates . . . blue with white lettering — two letters, four numbers and a little "Connecticut" underneath. Jesus H. Christ on a teeter-totter! My incredible luck had come thru again!

I beat it back fast to that hole in the fence and got myself into the U.S. of A. without further ado. I have no recollection whatever of finding my way back over those sand tracks — but I suppose the rifle provided inspiration. When civilization finally reappeared it occurred to me that my Guardian Angel was overworked and underpaid.

I remembered, however, that I had waved back at the oncoming Federales with a lit joint in my hand. Class, class all the way.

March 14, 1972 — Segregationist George Wallace wins the Florida primary; Humphrey second; Muskie and McGovern far back.
March 17, 1972 — Nixon asks Congress for law to prevent busing.

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Dream on, on to the heart
Of the sunrise
—Yes

Heading back north, the Comet was humming along, getting bang on 25 miles to the gallon. I could cruise for 500 miles and refused to pay more than 30¢ a gallon, regarding anything more as highway robbery.

Avoiding Phoenix, I took a turn thru Flagstaff and made a quick detour to some mountains to the north. I wanted to see the Grand Canyon and then head into southern Utah to have a look around Bryce Canyon and Zion, but the weather turned cold and snowy all of a sudden. All I could do was to keep plugging on, afraid to stop and get caught in a storm.

It was slow going in the mountains around Salt Lake City as the weather got worse and I spent a cold and miserable night in a southern Wyoming truck stop. From then on I made a beeline for North Dakota on an impulse. My parents had both been born there and the trip with Zeke had intrigued me. My only stop was in the Black Hills.

It was undoubtedly the most beautiful place I had ever seen, a place of sharp peaks and intimate valleys; a kind of Yosemite or Yellowstone on an accessible scale. Like a long-forgotten photograph, I felt I had known these mountains always. It was a small Eden of shining lakes, mirroring slopes covered in dark green pines, of hidden crevices sheltering waterfalls of delicate solemnity. Around another sharp bend in the road there would be a rock cliff, framed in black trees, that must have dazzled Muir and Ansel Adams. It was not hard to see why the Indians held it sacred — and a matter for profound shame that we had never found the moral courage to give it back. But the weather was warming up and I had to move on, so I made my way up to western North Dakota. It seemed even emptier than the desert — the sky was an unfocused blue, too vast to take in, and the grassy plains drifted on forever. The sunset behind me stretched across the entire horizon and then, with a swiftness that left me bewildered, night dropped like a curtain on a stage. Soon the moon rose, at first golden but then stark white, and it was so bright I found that I could drive without my headlights on, humming along the Interstate at 70 mph.

At one point I found myself rolling a cigarette while still holding a roach and simultaneously twirling the knob on the radio as an enormous semi went schussing past on the left. He blared his horn and I decided to take stock, pulling over to rethink my priorities. But except for the rare truck or two, there was a stillness to the place that was overwhelming — no sound of a bird or train or even the wind to crowd into my suddenly empty mind. I climbed out of the car to look up at the sky and found that I couldn't. It was exactly like the feeling I'd had on acid, where the depth of the stars seemed to pull me upwards, sucking me off of the face of the earth.

The moon was friendly and familiar, tho. As once or twice before, when my mind was somehow prepared just right for it, I could suddenly see the distance between the earth and the moon. With no effort at all, I could *see* the size of the earth — then of the moon — and then the distance between was apparent; a vivid, startling vision. Whenever this happened it was unnerving, yet oddly comforting at the same time. I got back in and drove, following the moon and heedless of anything but the hum of the tires.

I held tight to that growing sensation of lightness — a sensation that I had become so weightless and transparent that I might at any moment expand outwards and join the meandering, luminous-blue threads of the interstellar night. I let it carry me aloft.

March 22, 1972 — Senate approves the ERA; six states ratify.
The National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse recommends that marijuana be legalized.
March 23, 1972 — U.S. suspends the Paris Peace Talks; the bombing escalates to intense levels.

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The pump don't work
'Cause the vandals took the handles
—Bob Dylan

The next day I sat on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River, listening to the melancholy song of a meadowlark. It seemed to personify the Plains — a sweet, hopeful trill cascading downwards to a note of infinite sadness. The sky was a presence so overpowering that even the meadowlark seemed to struggle against the enormity of space. I was mulling this over when I heard the sound of a pickup coming down the dirt road from the north. It pulled to a stop and a weatherbeaten cowboy of about fifty or so climbed out slowly. He came over to stand beside me, calmly resting his foot on a strand of barbwire tacked into the fencepost, and said "Howdy." Slowly, tentatively, almost as if dancing, we began to talk.

After a few pleasantries, and with exquisite politeness, he asked me what I was doing there. I told him what little I knew about the subject — that I was on the road and wanted to stay in NoDak for awhile. I said I was hoping to find some place to pitch a tent for the summer and he seemed to appreciate my dilemma. It was not until then that I noticed a grungy-looking cabin in the wash down below, half-hidden by a tree. It sat next to an overgrown track leading into the river-woods just beyond — no romantic log cabin, just a square plank affair with a crude siding of greenish masonite. He saw me looking and said, yes, that was an old hunting cabin he and his dad had built years ago. This was his land, he said, and would I care to have the use of it for the summer?

My jaw must have dropped open, for he went on, "I been havin' trouble with vandals lately — they come around here shootin' up things. I don't use that cabin much anymore an' you're welcome to it, but, you know, it hasn't got any runnin' water or toilet or nothin'. There's an old generator in that shed — I don't know if it still works."

His name was Joshua and I told him I'd be tickled to death if he'd let me stay there. I could hardly believe my luck — once again fate had dropped into my lap just the thing I needed. On a handshake we sealed the deal and Joshua unlocked the gate and took me down to show me around.

The cabin was, to say the least, on the Spartan side. The floor was a cold concrete slab and the walls were made of rough planks. Joshua said they had put the thing together from the remains of an old riverboat that had washed up on the shore back in the '30s. Off to one side there was an ancient iron bedstead with a mattress that had

probably been around since WWII. There were a few chairs and a table and a beautiful old wood-burning stove, a Sears model from a long-forgotten catalog. It was not exactly picturesque but it was well-designed — it had a temperature gauge on the door of the oven, four burners, and a hot-water tank next to the firebox.

He took me out to the shed and showed me the old flathead Chevy engine that he used for a generator and, after a fair amount of tinkering, got the cobwebs out and had it running. It made such a racket that, simply for lighting the one bare bulb in the cabin, I didn't think it was much use. Joshua said that was how he felt, and when I went into town for supplies I bought a propane lantern and a cheap radio.

I spent the whole next day cleaning the place up and moving in. In no time it took on the look of a comfortable (if rather primitive) home and my only real problem was hauling water in from town once a week. The nights were very cold (it was just the beginning of April) and I would often wake up to find ice forming on my water jug. I spent a lot of time with the stove, messing with the dampers until I got it working right. It would hold its heat almost all the way thru the long night and for cooking it was a pure delight. Once I got the hang of it, I could bake bread (or even a cake) and with the numerous inlets and outlets I could keep that thing in perfect balance for hours at a time. Over the next several months that stove and I became best friends.

The lack of electricity was no problem, since I'd long ago gotten used to not having a TV and, aside from lights, I couldn't think of anything else I needed it for. I loved listening to the radio but out there in the country even my little portable seemed out of place and rather jarring, so I turned it on mainly for the news. I became obsessed with listening to the news, for there were big things doing that summer and it was my only link to the outside.

And then, suddenly, it occurred to me that I was not going to the Convention — I was staying there. This was the setting for me — the quiet introspection of the sky and the land; the home of the buffalo and the Indians.

March 24, 1972 — Life *magazine accuses the Nixon Administration of "tampering with justice" by interfering with IRS, FBI and Justice Dept. investigations.*
March 30, 1972 — North Vietnam launches a series of massive attacks across the DMZ.

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You may see me tonight
With an illegal smile
—John Prine

Since Zeke had family in NoDak I got hold of him on the phone by leaving messages around. We talked it over and he said he'd always wanted to try some big-

time planting out on the prairie. That sounded good to me, since I was set for the summer anyway, so he finagled a deal with the Reserves to transfer to the unit up there. He put in a crop up on the Ridge with Anton and Davy (who had just returned from Fiji) and in mid-April he came up to stay with his folks.

Zeke approved of the cabin and thought it was a perfect base of operations to work from. It sat in a little swale, nestled between the bluffs along the river. Directly in front there was a single elm tree and just beyond a small wheat field that Joshua put in every other year. He made his living mostly with crop-dusting (he was a nut on planes) but he hated to see the land go to waste. The trail beside the cabin ran down to a grove of cottonwoods that lined the river and there were two or three clearings that looked enticing for dope-growing. One had been a field that Joshua had planted years ago but given up on, due to the mud, and the other was a small clearing that was well hidden from prying eyes, simply begging to be planted in some exotic herb.

We chewed it around and figured a small patch or two wouldn't hurt (coulda been wild, right?) but for bigger plots we'd have to look elsewhere, since we didn't want to get old Joshua in any trouble. And that was where Curt came in.

Within the first day or two Zeke took me along to meet his friend, Curt — another native Nor'Dakotan that he'd known since they were kids. We drove down to his farm, a few miles below Bismarck, and since I'd gotten used to seeing nothing but straights up there it was refreshing to find a true freak at last. In fact, at first I thought he was a mad Amish Brother, on the run from the law.

By the standards of NoDak, his wild, longish hair was definitely suspect. He had a bushy black beard, already beginning to streak with gray, a plaid farmer's shirt and floppy, wide jeans held up with suspenders. He greeted us with a shy grin as his dogs leaped over us in paroxysms of joy and he had the deepest tan, even in mid-spring, that I had ever seen.

His nickname, which I soon came to use exclusively, was Boo. It was easy to see where he'd gotten it, for he really did look like Boo Radley in *To Kill a Mockingbird.* He had the air of a recluse and a look in his steel-blue eyes that was a trifle disturbing — a combination of startled paranoia and grand mischief that kept me guessing every minute just what in the hell he was up to. He lived with a girl named MoonStar (!) who had simply moved in with him a year or so before. She had the same look in her eyes — like she'd just stepped out of the shower to find Norman Bates there. They were a perfect match.

Boo had big, flat, farmer's hands and spent a lot of time in his garden, tho he didn't really farm the place. He worked for the Game and Fish Department and it gave him the freedom to roam all over the countryside, filling out reports on wildlife, soil conditions, habitats and the stray hunters and fishers he came across. Moreover, it was the perfect cover for his real occupation — tending to the dozens of dope patches he had sprinkled all over the southern part of the state. Now here, I thought, was a true

compadre.

Over the next few days Boo took us around to spots that he said might be useful — tho it was obvious that he was fobbing us off on the leftovers. And mighty slim pickings at that. The land was so exposed that you couldn't hide a petunia without some farmer asking you what you were up to. But he finally gave us a tip that panned out.

He said there was a spot down next to the Cannonball River and we drove for more than an hour to get to the place. We left the Comet by a gate and walked along the fringe of an abandoned field, down thru some woods to the river. Lo and behold, it was a dream come true. There was a clearing — a big one — not ten yards from the stream, aligned perfectly on an east-west axis that gave it maximum sunlight. We dug into the soil with our fingers and it was a rich, loamy sand, bursting with black till from the stream. The weeds were a riot of exuberant growth; there was water by the mega-gallons just a few steps away and not a farmer in sight for miles.

On the spot, we christened it Eldorado.

April 4, 1972 — McGovern wins the Wisconsin primary; Wallace, Humphrey 2nd & 3rd; Muskie a distant 4th.
April 6, 1972 — Severe fighting in northern South Vietnam; massive bombing strikes deep into North Vietnam.

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Keep a clean nose
Watch the plain-clothes
—Bob Dylan

By now it was late April and since the growing season was so short up there, we got to work posthaste with small machetes, hacking at the weeds like Samurai warriors. The clearing was shaped like a trapezoid, about forty yards long and fifteen yards wide, tapering down to a point at the west end. After an entire afternoon we had cleared off most of the weeds but, as loose as the soil was, getting those roots out was going to be an impossible job. Zeke and I were totally wasted, panting and groaning with exhaustion. We decided to bring in the big guns.

We drove back down to the Cannonball the next morning at dawn, with a big, shiny, bright-red Rototiller, half-sticking out of the back seat. We had a couple of fishing poles poking out of the window as camouflage. We hauled that thing to the barbwire gate and paused for a second, puzzled. Well, now, . . . what was that sound?

Damn . . . a tractor! On land that had obviously not been farmed for at least a decade there was a farmer out in that field, running back and forth with a tractor at 5:00

a.m.!

Now what? There was nothing for it but to go ahead and hope he didn't spot us, so we hauled the Rototiller over the fence, hoisted it between us and lugged it as fast as we could thru the tall weeds. We kept ducking down every few steps, swinging that vermilion behemoth between us and trying to look inconspicuous. We were panting like goldfish on a plate and the bamboo poles bobbed up and down from our belts like long batons — waving fetchingly above the tall weeds. It is possible, just possible, that we looked like two escapees from the wide-eyed-stare emporium.

There was the problem of noise but we were so pissed by then that we didn't give a damn. We fired that monster up and it sounded like the Charge of the Light Brigade, riding thru the Valley of Death. What the hell, we figured the tractor was making so much noise no one could hear us anyway, so we went ahead.

Now, of course, neither one of us had ever tried to run a Rototiller before and we quickly discovered that it had a mind of its own. The one way they are guaranteed not to go is the direction you point them in and instantly it took off like a ruptured duck in a hailstorm. Not even the two of us together could hold it — it ripped out the roots with no problem at all, but in a perfectly haywire fashion, born of a malignant spirit and an evil disposition. The roots wrapped around the tines so tight that we had to stop and spend ten minutes out of every fifteen untangling the mess before we could get it going again. (All those cute ads in the country journals came to mind — the ones where some smiling granny is walking next to her garden tiller among the neat furrows, resting one hand lightly on the handle. I laughed bitterly.)

To turn that wildly gyrating dervish, all we could do was heave it over to one side and let nature take its course. To stop, we simply pushed down on it until it dug itself into the ground and we could shut it off. After half an hour with Galloping Gertie we turned off the motor to listen — but the tractor was still roaring away out in the field. We fired her up again and went on.

Doubtless someone listening from afar would have heard a strange duet — the farmer and his Juggernaut tractor, playing the brass section *fortissimo,* while we provided *mezzo-forte* accompaniment on a single trumpet. Aria for bassoon and John Deere? Leitmotif on runaway chainsaws? The sweat was streaking down our faces but we didn't dare stop.

Finally the job was done and we collapsed onto a small hummock to admire our handiwork. It didn't look that bad, all in all, if you ignored the crazy-quilt design. Smug and satisfied, we rolled up a Three Caftles and happily listened to the tractor . . . until we looked up and saw we had company.

He stood silently on the far side of the patch, gazing our way with a slight, bemused smile on his face. Two longhairs, a Rototiller, a plowed patch hidden in the woods — now what could we be up to? He sauntered over and said "Howdy."

We managed to stammer out something and he squatted down in front of us, as

comfortable as could be. His smile turned to a grin and he said his name was George — George Twofeathers. All of a sudden I remembered that across the river there was a Sioux reservation. Well, well, what was this?

He rambled on softly, letting us know he meant no harm, and we sized him up. George not only meant us no ill, he was tickled pink at what we were doing. We gave him a cigarette to roll and he took a quick drag . . . then another, slowly and with definite appreciation. For a while we danced around the main point but then Zeke came out with it.

"Y'know," he said, "I don't suppose it matters to you what we're aiming to do here . . . does it?"

"Hmm. And what would that be?" said George, quietly.

"Well, you might say we're farmers," said Zeke, "Only . . . we don't grow wheat."

"Never liked wheat," said George.

"Ahh . . . so how do you feel about herbs?" said Zeke.

"Like 'em fine," said George and his grin grew wider.

He fetched out a pint bottle of something brown and we all had a pull. Pretty soon we settled on a deal — we would be happy to give him a small share of our crop if he would leave us alone and see to it that no one on the other side of the river got too curious. He was glad to oblige but then he filled us in on a detail we hadn't really anticipated.

"Do you know," he said, "whose land this is you're 'farming' on?" We said no, but we assumed it was the inconsiderate slob who was out there making all that noise and tearing up the countryside.

"Yes," he said, "and he hasn't worked this place in, oh, maybe seven or eight years. He isn't around much anymore — don't know why he's here now."

"Oh?"

"Should be in Washington."

"(Gulp) Washington?"

"Mm-hmm. Name's Fenton Gates. With the Treasury Department. Secret Service. Well, thanks for the smoke, boys. I guess I should be going. Be seein' you." And with that he ambled off the way he had come.

Secret Service. Ha ha. Wasn't that nice? Suddenly I felt about as inconspicuous as a snapping turtle dangling from the mayor's nose, one eye on the sheriff.

The tractor roared nearby.

April 16, 1972 — Massive bombing raids against Hanoi and Haiphong harbor; antiwar protests nationwide.
April 25, 1972 — Humphrey wins in Pennsylvania; McGovern wins in Massachusetts; Muskie withdraws from the race.
May 2, 1972 — J. Edgar Hoover dies; L. Patrick Gray is nominated to head the FBI.

Humphrey wins the Ohio and Indiana primaries; Wallace wins Tennessee and Alabama.
May 8, 1972 — Nixon orders the mining of North Vietnamese harbors; the bombing escalates; the antiwar movement intensifies.

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Yes, there are two paths you can go by
But in the long run there's still time to change
The road you're on . . .
—Led Zeppelin

And then, it was summer. Just like that, on the northern plains, it went from freezing nights and long evenings still with that lift of coolness in them to an unending string of hot, blindingly bright days and warm, sage-scented nights.

I followed the primaries as best I could on my radio and, tho I was far more emotionally drawn to Clean Gene, it soon became a much more real possibility that McGovern was going to win at the convention, so I went into town and found the Democratic headquarters and volunteered to work on the campaign. All across the country people were burning their draft cards and marching against the war — it could no longer be explained away as a "generation gap" or the fanaticism of a few radicals. Parents were talking to their kids again and many, including Vietnam Vets, were now convinced (as McNamara himself was) that it was wrong, simply wrong, to kill people who were no threat to us except on some obscure ideological grounds — and the expression of ideology, while sacred in this country, should be no less so elsewhere.

Nixon had adopted the tactics of the Soviet Union: wrapping himself in the cloak of "national security" and pretending that any attack on him was an attack on the entire country; issuing denials of events and then issuing "disclaimers" of the denials, casting suspicion on the sanity of opponents; using the FBI and the IRS to harass his "enemies" and using "dirty tricks." These he had brought to a high art form in his early California days — "leaking" false stories to the papers, hiring prostitutes to claim they'd had sex with politicians, blacklisting and smear campaigns, etc., etc. — always using well-distanced minions for the dirty work so he could claim that he knew nothing about their "pranks." The press was helpless and the public didn't seem to care, buying his excuse that "everyone does it" — so why pick on poor Nixon? Meanwhile, the war ground on and on, the political toy of "patriots."

So I stuffed envelopes and went in to headquarters once a week to make phone calls. Sometimes I ventured out on canvassing trips — the farmers were invariably polite and we were convinced that nearly everyone we talked to was being won over to our side. All that summer I was in a kind of euphoric haze, spreading the word, blasting

rock music on the car radio as I drove over hill and dale, relishing every new misstep of the Nixon faction. We couldn't lose.

Somewhere along the line I acquired Ruth, a skinny little calico barn cat with eclectic tastes. She never refused anything edible tossed her way — a plate of beans, potato chips (which she particularly liked), raisins, dates, a banana, and once an entire can of corn. She was a great hunter, too, sitting by the wheat field with her ears pointing straight out, swiveling them from side to side like radar. After a bit she'd dive into the field and re-emerge with a mouse, a bird, sometimes even a gopher. She snagged a snake once, but it was five times her size and she finally let it go. Ruth was also a true watch-cat, on the alert a good ten seconds before I heard anyone coming — which made her very valuable indeed.

In mid-June I was on one of my farm jaunts when I spied an old pontoon boat, sitting forlornly in the yard with a "For Sale" sign propped up on one corner. I pulled in to the yard and the farmer came out of the barn to palaver. We did the slow dance of small-talk for a while and, just to have something to say I took note of the shotgun he was toting around. In a heavy German brogue he said,

"Oh, ya, dat dere, y'know. Vell, de odder day I comb home an dere vas dat fox, y'know, chust a-sittin' in the middle o' my yard, sassy like a young tart lookin'. An I vent into da house — Chune, dat's my vife, vas gone — an I got my gun, see. But ven I comb out he vasn't vere he vas no more — so . . . you see dat little hill over dere? I go a-sneakin' up dat hill, an vus quiet, you know, an I creep an I crawl an I chuss get up to the top . . . an ofer the top I'm lookin' — an *dere* she vas . . . gone!"

Well, I took this in for a minute and damn near exploded. I couldn't tell whether he *meant* this to be funny or not — he had the smoothest deadpan I had ever seen. But finally I saw just the gleam of something mischievous in his eyes and we both burst out laughing.

I got around to the business at hand and asked him what he wanted for that boat. He thought about it for a minute or so before finally saying, "Oh, vat da hell, I'm supposin' fifty tallers oughta do it." I had never even thought about buying a boat before but who could refuse? Zeke and I had sold some grass thru Boo and fifty bucks just happened to be what I had in my pocket.

It was a beaut — a homemade thing with pontoons made of thirty-five gallon drums painted a bright blue, a deck that was fire-engine red, and pure-white railings. Fred loaned me a trailer to haul it back to the river and I eased her down to the bank and got to work the next day fixing her up.

Zeke came by just as I was applying the finishing touches, having scraped off the worst of the old weeds and flaking paint and putting on a new coat. He was suitably impressed and asked me what her name was. I mulled that over for a bit and said that in honor of my kidhood days in Southern California (and her rather dilapidated condition) she would be known as the "*Leaky Tiki II*." Zeke asked me where I got the

name so I settled back to tell him a story.

For a few years when I was a kid, we lived in a small town in Southern California, a few miles in from the coast. It was a time of endless summer—the soft embrace of lavender evenings and golden mornings; quiet hush and a never-ending, deep-rooted warmth. We rode bikes with gooseneck handlebars, played 2-square and 4-square, marbles, mumblety-peg, and baseball. The Dodgers had arrived in '58, sending us into a frenzy of baseball-mania; with only two or three, we set up "home-run derbys" and with more, played street ball until it was too dark to see. Late in the evening we would arrange a game of kick-the-can, hiding in backyards and hearing the plaintive call of "Olley-Olley-Oxen, Free-Free-Free" when someone made it home.

Of necessity, we were very inventive—making our own skateboards from smoothed-out planks and dismantled rollerskates; building "forts" in the backyard or in trees from cardboard and two-by-fours; devising all kinds of kites—once we managed to put together a seven-foot-tall monster. We took it to a field far away and set it aloft, three or four of us grappling with the heavy twine. It had a huge, long tail and when it receded to nothing but a tiny speck in the sky, the twine broke and it disappeared from view.

We fashioned a boat, of sorts, from scrap lumber and tar, but when we tried to float it in the little stream nearby, it sank like a stone. We christened it the "Leaky Tiki" and tried again. We had all followed the story of Thor Heyerdahl crossing the Pacific on the Kon Tiki. The stream was just beyond an orange orchard, grandly styled the Santa Clara River—tho it was only six feet wide and would have been proud to be called a drainage ditch. It became a torrent in the winter rains, overflowing its banks all the way to South Mountain—an imposing cliff that loomed ever in the background.

There were wild kittens under our house and a neighbor kid patiently lay in wait for them one day and tried to grab one—he let go a lot faster than the kitten did and that's when we found out about stitches. This kid had a thing for animals and kept pigeons, mice, a snake and a suicidal tortoise—which was forever breaking free of its chain and heading for the nearest pile of burning leaves. After several tries, it finally succeeded.

We went to the beach, where we tried to surf on flimsy styrofoam boards, and at one certain time of the year our dads would take us out, very late at night, for the grunion run. A small, silver fish, grunion came up on the beach only in the spring during a full moon, at low tide, to lay their eggs. All up and down the beach, huge fires were kept going with driftwood. We sat quietly until it seemed like the night and the surf were all eternity, and we were now only spectators in the chill salt air—then a flash of silver in the dim white surf and the whole expanse of wet sand was suddenly writhing with thousands of furiously wriggling fish. We ran up and down the beach, tossing them into buckets (*after* they laid their eggs), near wild with excitement.

Just behind the house was an orange grove (reputed to be patrolled by planes—

when we snuck in to steal oranges we were extra careful to avoid the Eye in the Sky). On the far side of the grove there was a line of tall cypress trees, a windbreak, immensely slim and graceful. I was an expert tree climber and I tried for a long time to climb one but the lowest branches were far too far over my head. At last I got a rope and made it up, alone, and climbed, higher and higher.

It was spectacular. The wind blew strong and I swayed with the branches, looking out on infinity from a vantage point I had not dreamed could be so alarming. I had reached very near to the top, clinging for dear life to the reedy trunk, when something extraordinary happened. Just at that moment, I saw a tall black column forming in the distance, and then, still rising, to become a black mushroom cloud. In far-off Fillmore, a gas station had just blown up.

Only I didn't know it was a gas station. I heard an enormous explosion and a few seconds later felt the slight blow from the blast. The black mushroom cloud rose quickly on the horizon and I froze. We had all heard about The Bomb and this, as far as I could tell, was it. The hackles rose on my neck and I almost panicked—for a second I was overcome with a wild urge to get down, to scramble to the ground as fast as I could. And then I thought, "What for? We're all dead—we shall all be dead in a few moments. Why not watch it from here?"

A sudden calm came over me and a perspective as if from the depths of a great well—or of a great height—came creeping into me. I saw the world in a way that I had never seen it before—frightened, excited, elated, and sad, all at once. But I could *see* this Earth and all its inhabitants with an awareness as profound as a religious awakening.

At last I made my way down. A lot of my youth stayed up in that tree—but then, a lot more came back down with me.

Zeke thought that over and liked the name *Leaky Tiki II* and I painted it on the stern — then he asked what I was going to do for a motor.

"Motor?"

"Motor — the thing that pushes it thru the water, stupid."

"Ah, yes, well . . . motor. Hmmm. Y'mean . . . it needs a motor?"

This, frankly, had not occurred to me. I had imagined that she was some sort of grand, floating raft. Instantly I saw the folly of this, with only a little prompting from Zeke ("*Float?* You wanna *float*? And whattya gonna do then, get off and sell it in New Orleans?") so I said that a motor, actually, would be pretty nice. But I had already blown, what with the paint and all, about a hundred bucks on her so far and had no idea how I was going to get a motor.

"Well," says Zeke, "you happen to be in luck." Turns out that his Uncle Ernie had a boat, or rather an ex-boat, that had gone belly-up just the previous year. He still had the motor and Zeke would see if he could borrow it for the summer. The next day he drove up with a Johnson 35-HP in the trunk and we muscled it onto the stern.

She was an official boat then and without further ado we wetted down the bank and slid the *Tiki* into the brown water of the Missouri. She rode the water like a duck (an apt phrase, since she *looked* like a duck) and we tied her off to a log. I used an old door that I'd found for a gangplank and we strode on board like a pair of Italian admirals.

Zeke did the honors with the motor, tinkering with the thing awhile and then ceremoniously opening the little door on the front and yanking with all his might at the cord. Nothing, of course, happened and he went thru the whole rigmarole again, tinkering, yanking and swearing for all he was worth. I asked if this was part of the "maiden voyage" ritual and he glared. Did I want to try? he asked. So I did exactly what he had done, pressing the bulb on the gas line a time or two, fiddling with the knobs (pretty much at random) and rather half-heartedly pulled on the cord. It sputtered and roared to life, then quickly settled down into an ugly mutter. I said, "Like that?" and Zeke muttered something childish that I won't bother to repeat.

We cast off and the transformation was astonishing. The land slid away and the water took us with a gurgle onto its gently bobbing back and the whole world, in that one moment, became a different place. We kicked the motor in gear and the *Tiki*, at first sluggishly, then majestically, pushed straight out into the current and plowed thru the water — free at last and in her element.

The river was a different realm now that we were on it; no longer merely a broad, brown stream; there were whorls and eddies and rippling currents, snags and sandbars everywhere. It seemed to have grown to an immensity I could not grasp on shore. We took turns steering and lazily zig-zagged back and forth — but suddenly the engine kicked up and made an angry whine. We lurched to a full stop, beached on a sandbar.

This was new. We were perched surreally in the middle of the river like a fat sheik on a broad carpet. What to do? Reversing the engine did nothing. We shut it off and stood there, mulling it over. Thoughtfully, we rolled cigarettes and gazed out at the muddy stream, wondering what kind of tow-truck we should call. Zeke went up front and stared down at the sandbar, shrugged — and then stepped off the boat.

I yelled, he jumped, and the front of the pontoon went up and began to float downstream. Zeke made a grab for a railing and hauled it back. I yelled "Hey!" and Zeke said, "That's it! We just get out and push the damn thing!" So we did — as easy as that.

After that we began to get the hang of the thing and were soon going on forays up and down the river. Inside of a week we were confirmed "river rats" and took to the nautical lingo like we'd been born on a New Bedford whaler. We got most of it wrong, of course, but it seldom mattered since by mutual agreement "port" meant upriver and "starboard" meant downriver; the "halyards" were the ropes (we may have gotten that right by accident) and the "goddam" meant the little box that held the motor — as in

"There's water comin' in the goddam!" We got along fine.

One day Zeke brought along a friend of his, an activist by the name of Archie who was constantly embroiled in all sorts of radical causes. Archie was impressed as hell with the *Tiki* and we zipped downstream, buzzing around sandbars (which we called the "mizzen" as in, "There's a mizzen to lee'ard [left]!"). We'd learned to recognize them from the peculiar roiling of the water they made. About three miles to starboard we beached her on a grassy mizzen and got out the dope to officially inaugurate the *Tiki* with a celebratory toke — not the first such inauguration, of course, but this was a new occasion. Archie toked on the J with relish and we got mightily, righteously stoned.

After fooling around on the sandbar for a bit we toked up again and I headed the *Tiki* back upstream. Archie, who had been gassing a mile a minute up until then grew suddenly, ominously quiet. I was having a grand time, the wind in my face, just watching the river slide by when another boat came up from the rear (the fo'c'sle) and briefly pulled alongside. To Zeke and I it appeared to be just a couple of fisherman, who waved and zoomed on past. Apparently Archie had other thoughts. We looked over at just the moment when his face contorted into a paroxysm of anguish and doubt — then all hell broke loose.

"Jesus Christ, it's them!" he hissed.

"What?" said Zeke, "Them who?"

"In that boat," said Archie, "it's them!"

"Who them?" said Zeke.

"The Coast Guard! They saw the dope!"

"Archie, hang on a minute. . . ."

"No, they *saw* it . . . we gotta get rid of it . . . *NOW*!"

"Wait a minute, Arch, you're getting paranoid and . . ."

"*NO*! We gotta toss the dope!" and he made a move for the bag, which was sitting innocently on the railing.

Zeke intervened firmly and finally got him settled down a bit, earnestly reassuring him that all was well — nothing to worry about. But within five minutes we could see the anxiety creeping over his face again and at last he could stand it no longer.

"I see them!" he wailed.

"See who?" asked Zeke warily.

"Christ Almighty, can't you see those guys?" Sitting bolt upright he added, "Don't look at 'em!"

"Uhh, what guys?" said Zeke.

"Over on the shore! *Don't look at 'em!*" he hissed.

Things were definitely taking a turn for the worse. Archie began raving about the "agents" on the shore who were "following" us. He said they were after the dope and had seen us smoking it — all at once he sprang up, grabbed the bag and started to toss it over the side. I have never seen Zeke move so fast.

"What are you *doing*?" he yelled and clung to the dope for dear life. Archie kept bellowing that "they" were going to get us and we had to get rid of the dope or we'd all get busted, or worse. It took longer this time but Zeke finally managed to calm him down. I was beginning to get paranoid myself by then — and not about the "Coast Guard," either.

Archie stood alone up near the front (bos'n's chair), not moving for several minutes. Then he calmly made an about-face, marched stiff-legged straight to the fo'c'sle and, still bolt upright, vomited explosively over the back, sending a stream about ten yards long into the rushing wake of the boat. His comment complete, he marched back to his post up front and said not another word. I just kept steering for home.

May 10, 1972 — Thieu declares martial law in South Vietnam.
May 15, 1972 — Gov. George Wallace is shot while campaigning, leaving him permanently paralyzed; he wins both the Maryland and Michigan primaries.

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Sharp . . . Distance
How can the wind with its arms around me
—*Yes*

Being alone most of the time soon settled into a routine. I understood Simon and Nora from Arizona a little better, for whenever someone came out to visit I fell into an unadulterated joy that you can't get when constantly surrounded by people. I read *Alone* by Richard Byrd and it came vividly alive on the lonely prairie. In 1934 Admiral Byrd decided to spend an entire Antarctic winter far out on the ice, taking meteorological measurements just 700 miles from pole, the coldest place on earth. He would be utterly cut off from humanity for several months and it would be an extraordinary challenge just to stay alive, with no means of sustaining himself if things went wrong. They carved out a shelter for him in the ice and then left him there, in the total darkness, with his gear and supplies. He describes the routine he developed, spending each day going from one task to another in a rigid schedule of forced concentration. The temperature plunged to minus 50 . . . minus 60 . . . minus 70 degrees. Getting out every day to chip the ice from the anemometer and tend to the other instruments kept him alert but disaster struck when the exhaust pipe on the generator (which he used to run the radio) clogged up. Slowly the fumes began to poison him and he records his disintegration in frank detail, side by side with the weather data. In late July the temperature reached 83 below and stayed there for almost a week.

Even tho he had long since stopped using the generator, his mind became

concentrated down to a tiny diamond of sanity, embedded in a matrix of despair and confusion.

I liked to imagine what I would do in such conditions but things in the cabin were considerably more amiable. The sense of aloneness, however, was similar. It was not as intense or irrevocable but it was a nice image when things got lonesome to remember Byrd in his ice-hut under the snow. For all the world, I could never stick to any real routine and in time it began to show; there were days when I would meander from one distraction to another and then nearly come unglued when I realized I hadn't done a single thing that I set out to do.

One day I realized that I had had a predecessor on that very spot. I had mistaken an old, tiny cabin hidden among the brush and young trees for an abandoned shed, but finally I looked inside. It had been a home! I asked Joshua about it and he said that an old hermit had lived there, long ago. I had seen the innumerable pits and trenches, dotted about on the sides of the hills, and Joshua told me the hermit had dug them — nobody knew why. He had lived for a long time out there alone and never let anyone come near — cantankerous as hell and with a rifle to back it up.

His cabin was a strange thing. I measured it carefully and it was just 6½ feet long and 4½ feet wide. He must have been rather short, too, for it was under six feet tall. The whole thing looked like a large crate; but with no insulation and plank walls, it had to be small. A Dakota winter will get down to 30 or 40 below, with fierce winds and blizzards — not unlike the Antarctic. There was one four-paned window, facing the river, and below it a long plank table that ran to within two feet of the door. The stove (carted off long ago) had been just inside the door, at the end of the table, so all he had to do to stoke it was open the door and grab a couple of pieces of wood. There was a narrow iron bedstead, rusted and springless, which came to within a few inches of the end wall. Everywhere there were pegs, shelves and little crannies made from square tin cans. In the far corner, where the head of the bed had been, was a small triangular shelf with candle-wax on it. The overall effect was that of a well-thought-out room in a rabbit hole — a paradigm of economy and utility, where every item had its exact place and no other. It was the tidiest place I had ever seen and Admiral Byrd would have solemnly nodded in approval.

But the mystery was all those holes in the hillsides — some of them large enough to hold a Buick. What were they for? Maybe the old feller had gone bonkers, alone for all those years. Maybe he'd been digging for gold — in a part of the country where you'd have to go down a long way just to hit bedrock. Joshua couldn't remember his name.

May 19, 1972 — "Weathermen" explode a large bomb in the Pentagon.
May 22, 1972 — Nixon visits the Soviet Union.

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It's a-hard, it's a-hard
It's a-hard rain's a-gonna fall
—Bob Dylan

What impressed me the most was that the day up there, while very short when I first arrived, was now nearly an hour longer than in Bloomington. The sun didn't set until almost 10:00 p.m. and it didn't get really dark until after 11:00. Dawn began just five hours later.

In Bloomington I was used to frequent rain showers and hot, humid summers. It was so humid that most people kept a little rice in their salt shakers, to keep it from turning into solid rock. In NoDak, however, it was so dry you could mummify a bowl of Jello by leaving it out overnight and an umbrella was considered an affectation. The sun was like the sun in the desert — piercing and unremitting. In July and August the temperature was often in the 90s and occasionally went up to a sauna-like 100+. Even so, it was dry enough to be quite tolerable, if you didn't move around too much. And tho I thought I had seen some monster thunderstorms in Bloomington, they were just stomach-rumblings compared to what a NoDak storm could do.

I had a fine view of the entire sweep of the river to the south until a large bend, a long ways away, took it out of sight. Cottonwoods lined both shores and there was another series of bluffs on the other side. I could see for many miles in any direction. When the wind picked up (above its usual hard, steady blow) I knew we were in for a boomer and got up on the bluff behind the cabin to watch the show.

Invariably the storms came from the west but when they reached the Missouri, they veered to move straight up the river. I could plot the course of the thick, dark clouds, watching them roll toward me — the white thunderheads bulging ever higher above the flat, jet-black rainclouds below. The torrents of rain were slanting pencil-lines beneath the clouds. Suddenly, as if the river had touched them off at last, the lightning-bolts would begin to arc toward the bluffs — huge electric discharges would pound into the earth and the sound would roll up the narrow valley like distant cannon-fire. First on the left bank, now on the right, the sizzling bolts of Zeus lit up the underside of the purple clouds, outlining their roiling shapes and sending an almost visible shudder thru the sheets of rain. I went up to the top of the bluff by the cabin. They came straight at me.

Then a sharp gust of cold, damp air would reach me with the dusty smell of far-off rain. The noise of the thunder would come closer, louder, portending a controlled, menacing violence. Left, **WHAM-rrolll**, right, **WHAM-rrolll**; on and on the lightning

clove the sky, marching straight for my perch like alternating flashes of doom. And then, as the raven-black clouds grew nearer, the first big spatters of drops would begin to smack into the parched ground. And no matter how well I was prepared for it, that first ***Crraacckk*** of a close hit always caught me by surprise — I would half-turn, instinctively wanting to run. I forced myself to stand and watch, knowing that the real show was just beginning.

The immense violence of the full storm hit like a blow — all hell broke loose. The rain came down in cascading torrents of shivering coldness — instantly it went from the dry heat of the desert to the tundra-like chill of the North. Driven by insane winds, it lashed so hard that I staggered to stay upright. Day turned to night and the wind swung around the compass, whuffing you first from behind, now from the side. The thunderbolts were white-hot, splaying out into fingers that found every inch of the sky. The sound was a nightmare of deafening blasts, sometimes piled on top of each other like 200-decibel castanets. ***WHAM-SMASH***, ***CRAACK-ka-POW*** . . . the answering booms would reverberate deeply along the quaking earth. The blinding lightning had the force of doom. Streaks of incredible force. I stood my ground for a long time, watching the phenomenal violence of the storm, straight over me, first left, then right. Oblivious to my own death, I stood on the bluff, entranced. I didn't care.

When I could stand it no more I made a run for the cabin, shedding my soaking clothes as I went. I stood shivering inside, wondering what in hell I'd done that for . . . again. From the safety (?) of the cabin I waited out the barrage, limp with astonishment and a strange satisfaction.

In another half-hour the sun would be smiling sweetly, as if to say, "What, . . . you didn't think I was serious, did you?"

May 23, 1972 — McGovern wins in Oregon & Rhode Island, draws even with Humphrey in the polls.

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I read the news today, oh boy
Four thousand holes in Blackburn, Lancashire
—The Beatles

We'd put in several experimental patches here and there but all except the Cannonball patch and a couple of small ones down in the river clearings had succumbed to critters and bugs. We left them strictly alone for almost a month but now it was time to do a quick check on their progress and see what needed to be done.

First on the agenda was Eldorado and before dawn, on a Sunday this time to try and avoid the SS agent, I drove down to pick up Zeke. In the softly growing light we

made it to the Cannonball — our route took us south of Mandan and past St. Anthony, Flasher and Raleigh: towns so small that they were really just clusters of houses which happened to have a name. We passed the large farm that was our marker, telling us we were near the river, pulled up outside of the barbwire gate, grabbed our by-now standard fishing poles and followed the woods over to the small path that led to the patch. When we reached our clearing, the fishing poles simultaneously, silently, dropped to the ground.

All up and down that wide, open space were extraordinarily sturdy marijuana plants poking up above the dried-grass mulch — it was absolutely stunning. Speechless, we wandered among the rows, unable to believe our eyes. They were enormous — almost two feet tall already, with fat leaves that were a profound, penetrating shade of green. The stems looked big enough to support small trees. And, god almighty, this was just the beginning of what was obviously going to be a monster truck!

We hadn't expected anything like this. It was almost frightening — they had burst from the ground ready to take over the entire clearing . . . the woods, the whole riverbank. They were unlike any plants I'd ever seen before . . . and they meant business. *We* were not in charge anymore — these were the dinosaurs, come to reclaim the planet. In a daze, with stunned grins on our faces, we stumbled among these dazzling beauties, calling to one another to point out yet another particularly huge example.

When at last we settled down enough to discuss it we realized that, left entirely alone, these colossi would reach fifteen, maybe twenty feet by the end of October. Which, to say the least, would be immodest. Such a thunderous growth would attract attention from even the most casual observer, tho we were confident that they were out of the way enough to avoid discovery if kept to a proper, weedy height. We got out our bags out and topped them heavily — ruthlessly — to keep them from swallowing up the entire region. It took almost an hour and we filled four baggies to the bursting point, packing them so tightly that they felt like sun-dried bricks. We gave them a token sprinkling of water from the river, as a blessing, and then skedaddled. On the way back we would check on Xanadu, the last of the experimentals, south of Bismarck. This turned out to be a whole 'nuther story.

With some difficulty we found the spot on the dirt road where we'd parked the time before and hiked into the woods. It took quite a while to retrace the path — things had grown up considerably in a month and nothing looked the same anymore. But then we saw the white trunk of the old, dead tree we'd used as a marker and soon found the two odd-shaped patches, right on the bank above the river. They were there all right, thank Zeus, but it was hardly what you could call a bonanza. They had come up about six inches (about normal, actually, for having been dumped in haphazardly) but they were definitely on the scrawny side and some had been nibbled by deer or bugs. All in

all, tho, it was a respectable little planting and they seemed happy enough. It was no disaster, as the others had been, but Eldorado was clearly going to be the only true goldmine.

Walking out we decided to explore a bit, so instead of going toward the road we struck out due east. We found nothing unusual and that was a good sign — nothing to indicate that people had been around there much. When we got to the road, however, there was a driveway off to our left and a mailbox. The name on it read "Bauer," and Zeke paused for a minute — either deep in thought or getting ready to unload a fart (always hard to tell which). After posing for a while he muttered "Bauer . . . Bauer . . . oh, yeah," and mildly added, ". . . the Police Commissioner." He jauntily started back to the car.

"He's the *what*?" I yelled, running to catch up with him. "Oh," he said, "He's the . . ." and stopped dead, the light just beginning to dawn. We stood there for a minute, suspended in time, thinking dour thoughts. The Police Commissioner's land. The omens were turning decidedly ugly — first the SS and now this. We stood staring around for a long time, chewing this over. To hell with it, this was getting too far afield — for the first time, this was one patch we were going to abandon completely, and no regrets. As Twain had said, "put all your eggs in one basket and *watch that basket*!"

June 4, 1972 — Angela Davis is acquitted of murder charges.
June 6, 1972 — McGovern wins California, New Jersey, South Dakota and New Mexico.
June 17, 1972 — Five "burglars" seized inside the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate hotel complex, Washington D.C.
July 10-13, 1972 — George McGovern wins the nomination at the Convention and names Thomas Eagleton as his running-mate.

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Come to me now and rest your head
For just five minutes, everything is good
—Crosby Stills Nash & Young

The intense heat of summer was beginning to settle in and I made up my mind to enclose the main deck on the *Leaky Tiki*. The foredeck was four feet by eight and the main deck, with a frame already in place, was a good eight by eight. In just a few days the *Tiki* underwent a complete transformation. Hauling out plywood and paint, I aligned the doors so I could see thru them while steering and cut out diamond-shaped windows, covered with clear plastic. There was no sense in trying to lay down any kind of flooring but I made a raised platform for the bed and installed all kinds of shelves and pegs, à la the hermit's cabin. I broke up the red-white-and-blue color scheme by

painting the walls an electric aquamarine, with some paisley swirls thrown in to give it character. The *Tiki* was even more boxy-looking than before, all angles and lumpy corners, but she rode over the water like a duchess sailing across a dance-room floor, completely in her element and confident of her purpose. I moved in with some blankets and sundries and felt thoroughly at home — until the Curious Incident of the Catalytic Heater.

The nights were cool on the river and Zeke brought out a genuine contraption from his Uncle Ernie. It had a large tank, a round top with a wire mesh enclosing an asbestos dome, and several cute little levers. You put some stuff called white gas in the tank and obviously you turned it over for a bit (to soak the asbestos), then light it — whereupon it was supposed to burn off the excess gas and begin to glow warmly and serenely thru the long, dreary nights. Of course, I never cared much for directions and I figured I knew how to work it right off, so in the balmy, sylvan twilight I simply dumped it on its head for a while (say, 5 seconds), stood it upright again and tried to light it. Nothing, nada, nowhere's-ville. I held it on its head again for a while, set it back up and lit it. Zilch . . . zero . . . zip-eroo. I turned it over until the damn fluid was *dripping* off the asbestos (was this stuff really flammable at all?), turned it over, lit it — well, now, damn, that's strange, it *still* won't light . . . hmmm. I decided to read the instructions. It said I should close the wire mesh thingey first . . . and ***WHOOOMP***.

The flames went straight up in the air about seven or eight feet, knocking me ass-over-toenails and singeing my eyebrows. The wind picked up and began pushing the flames into a side-ways fan . . . *licking straight across the bright-red gas tank*! Oh, shit. I made a wild grab for the rubber hose from the tank and yanked it out of the way — and the flames followed it! I kicked it back to where it was — and they followed again! This was . . . this was . . .

Any further observations I made from behind a tree on the bank. I had no idea how I'd gotten there; it is possible I simply transported myself thru astral projection in the space of a nanosecond. At any rate, the long tongue of bright-orange flame continued to billow in a seven-foot arc over the gas tank. I watched in utter fascination for what seemed like a long time. Curiously, tho, it never did blow up (which somehow seemed the tiniest bit disappointing). When at last it died down I crept back slowly, ready to materialize next to that tree at any moment, but by the time I got on board the heater was glowing serenely and the blackened sides of the tank were almost cool to the touch.

Zeke had been pretty much preoccupied with his job but on a hot day in mid-July I heard his car rumbling down the dirt road. A rooster-tail of dust followed as he pulled onto the turnoff for the cabin and came skittering down the hill. When the rusting hulk came to a stop, a passenger got out. It was Kim.

In that first split-second I went thru more emotions than I knew I had: elation, surprise, chagrin, boiling anger, joy, embarrassment, love, shyness, and a flood of

sexual awareness. I shoved them all aside and settled on a kind of muffled exultation. At last!

She breezed an offhanded "Hi!" and I could manage no more than an awkward "Hi" . . . an abashed grin spreading across my silly face. I waited and she caught my eyes and held them; she laughed and kissed me, then looked up at the cabin. "Nice place," she said, as if she'd seen me just yesterday and had come around to see the new digs.

Zeke stood off to one side, looking a little left out, but pleased too. I got to blathering away and herded them into the cabin, fussing about, making coffee and letting the words pour out in a fountain of disbelief and frantic happiness. Zeke, of course, took out the dope pipe and filled it as I fluttered and bounced and chortled at them. Kim sat on the bed, one leg tucked up under her, with a playful look in her eyes that I'd never seen before. That and her long brown hair cascading around her face gave the impression of a blue-jeaned elf who could hardly contain her delight in these odd creatures. Her eyes laughed at me with that from-underneath look that I knew so well — she took a sip of coffee and a toke on the pipe.

She was, as always, casual but intensely attuned to the moment and perfectly oblivious to all that had gone before. Her unconcern was as maddening and beguiling as ever. After London she had gone back to Connecticut to stay with her parents, taking odd jobs now and then. As it happens, she'd even worked for a time in the very bottle factory I'd done time in. That had only lasted a month and we shuddered together. Now she was living in Rhode Island and back in school to finish her Master's. Having heard from Zeke, she decided to come out to NoDak to see what we were up to.

That laser-like intensity was undiminished but she had a new calmness, too, contrasting sharply with my own mounting anxiety. Mere moments before I was tranquil and assured — now I was in a froth of conflicting feelings. Zeke, playing the Buddha, seemed removed and slightly amused. Kim said she had no idea how long she could stay and in the late afternoon we took a walk around the cabin. I showed her the old shed and the fields and we stood atop the bluff overlooking the river, smelling the sage and the tall grass. We walked down to the riverbank and when she spotted the *Tiki,* I suggested that she stay with me on the boat. She was charmed by its clumsy, jerry-built look and cackled gleefully over my pathetic attempts to make it seem home-like. She accepted at once, tho she warned me that she wanted to spend some time with Zeke, too. I said I'd be glad to stay on the boat and let them use the cabin whenever they wanted — since Zeke was staying with his folks, they liked that idea. Zeke cast off the lines and we took the *Tiki* out for a spin on the river. Kim's hair flew every which way in the early-evening breeze; I had never seen her so beautiful.

Zeke left us alone that first night but what sex there was was almost perfunctory. Instead, I exhausted her with talk, with the task of meeting anew. There was an old familiarity and finally I could simply respond to her, without some internal program,

and it was exhilarating — a comfortable un-need to rehash old expectations, leaving the simple eroticism of touching minds.

July 25, 1972 — Sen. Eagleton reveals his past treatment for depression; McGovern says he backs him "1,000 percent."
Aug. 1, 1972 — Despite polls showing support for Eagleton, McGovern asks him to withdraw and names Sargent Shriver.

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There was silence supreme!
Not a shriek, not a scream
Scarcely even a howl or a groan
As the man they called "Ho!"
Told his story of woe
In an antediluvian tone
—Lewis Carroll

It was almost as if I'd foreseen Kim's arrival by getting the boat ready. Zeke had a job with the Highway Department, driving all over the countryside and parking for days at a time to count cars. Kim and I often stayed up late into the night, talking and making love until we dropped off to sleep with the waters of the river lapping at the pontoons and the gentle waves rolling under us in the dark. There was no routine, no demands and no jealousy whatsoever. It was as if we knew that this was a golden time, never to come again. When Kim wanted to spend the night with Zeke, they used the cabin and it was OK — not that I didn't think about it, but the old bitterness seemed to have dropped away thru the dim, swirling waters.

At first the two of us only ran out to the nearby sandbars, spending the day in the sun swimming, reading, and making small fires to cook over. But soon we began to venture further afield.

The Missouri is a fast-moving river but, for all of that, not very deep, for it carries so much sediment that it is constantly creating and erasing a cross-braiding of sandbars. The currents eat away at the banks in a series of bends and curves, adding even more soil to the water — which is so muddy that it's been called liquid farmland. If the Missouri were a little slower it would form a broad alluvial plain of interlacing streams, like the lower Mississippi or parts of the Amazon. If it were a little faster it would cut a deep canyon like the Colorado, using the gritty sediment like sandpaper to slice thru the rock. But it's a young river and has trouble making up its mind what kind of river to be.

When it cuts into the banks, trees fall into the stream and become snags, building

sandbars around them until they rot away. Given the shallowness and the hazards of horrendously fast currents, it is all but unnavigable to large boats — tho they tried a hundred years ago. (The old riverboats on the Missouri were called "grasshoppers" because they had huge spars sticking up from the sides for levering them over sandbars. A riverboat pilot heading upstream once spotted a woodcutter on the banks in the early morning light, filling his water-buckets. The captain roared out, "Hey, you! Put that back! I need it!")

I had come to know about six miles of the river downstream, learning the points and the currents. Sandbars formed in fairly predictable spots, like at the head of a point, but they could also develop anywhere else on the Missouri they had a mind to. I discovered the truth of what Mark Twain had said in *Life on the Mississippi,* that the river looked completely different going upstream than it did going down. Not that I had his problems, for a pontoon draws only a few inches, skimming the surface, whereas Twain had been a true pilot on steamboats with a six to nine foot draft. The only way it could be done, since they also ran the Mississippi *at night,* was to learn the entire 1,200-mile length of the river by heart, forwards and backwards. And not just the points, islands, and shapes of the river, but also the snags, sandbars, "chutes," shoals, currents, depths, "crossings," and banks. All of this they had to commit to memory and then *revise* that memory each trip, up or down, for the river is constantly changing.

The feats of memory he describes are positively astonishing — the equivalent of the great epic-reciters from the days of preliterate Greece or the Middle Ages — poem-masters who learned lays that were 17,000 lines long. In my puny way I had become aware, tho I had hardly mastered, the techniques of "reading" the river — what kind of ripples were the tell-tales of bars and which were produced by the wind; whether currents showed deep water or races thru narrow chutes and how to tell if that little swirl or dimple was a sunken snag, an eddy, or a hole. I began to see just a tiny corner of what Twain and the other pilots had had to learn, and it was amazing.

And so we roamed and the days melted into one another until I lost track of them entirely. Time had stopped and we sank into the endless summer. Zeke didn't show up until the weekends, because of the job, but one day, with a sly grin, he showed up and produced a stash of psilo from out of nowhere. The sky was intensely bright and there was not a cloud to be seen anywhere in all that miraculous blue — no time like the present. We popped a hit and cast off, chasing the White Rabbit.

We headed downstream, me steering while Zeke stood on the foredeck, keeping an eye out for trouble and calling out warnings. After we began to rush on the psilo, it got rather hectic. My bearings were skewed and Zeke frantically yelled, "Larboard, no . . . starboard, *starboard*!" as I steered us straight onto a sandbar. Lurching to a sudden stop, the motor zooming to a high whine, then idling down, Zeke casually stepped off to stand in the middle of the river, calmly pushing us back into the current. Kim shrieked with delight, then jumped off to help. I seemed to have lost all sense of the

river and couldn't remember where anything was.

There were parts of the river that were fairly clear, tho, and we could simply drift, shutting off the motor and relying on the currents to keep us moving south. But, inevitably, just as we were relaxing and letting ourselves get into the stone, there would come a shout of panic as some impending disaster loomed and a flurry of overturned chairs and feverish activity to get the motor going again. It became a comedy routine. We wanted to do nothing but give ourselves over to the flood of sensations but the *Tiki* would not cooperate, drifting single-mindedly toward shore time after time. There was one final crash into the tree-snarled banks — I was still pulling mightily at the Johnson when I looked up and saw Zeke, forlorn and long-suffering, snared in the embrace of a tree. He was hanging motionless in mid-air like Pinocchio tangled in a cat's-cradle of string — after a slight pause he calmly and distinctly growled, "*Enough* of this shit." So we began hunting for a place to land.

A bit farther down we spotted a place where the river made a deep loop to the right and then came back around, cradling a small peninsula. It looked like a good place to explore, so I brought the *Tiki* in for a three-point landing and dropped the gangplank. It was idyllic. This point of land broadened to an expanse of short grass dotted with a myriad of ancient, tall cottonwoods. It was neither a forest nor a grassland, but a primeval blending of both, suggesting a timeless era when the dappled light of the sun sifted in broad patterns over a rippling, silent lawn. The quiet sank into us and we wandered into this fairyland of ancient dreams, so like the primordial oak groves that had spawned tales of leprechauns, elves, and giants.

And then there came a problem of logistics. Zeke and I were each (unconsciously) vying a bit for Kim's attention. Doing psilo is a very physical, not infrequently sexual, experience — grass tends to be more of an aural-mind-oral thing but now the sexual triangle finally came to the fore, unbidden but definitely a presence. We shifted around uncertainly. Like it or not, we two males were feeling competition for this female — who most emphatically did not like this state of affairs (or the sensation of being "the female") one little bit. Damn. Now what?

Finally I simply wandered off on my own, leaving them to work out the rest of it for themselves. At once the tension drained away and I was drawn into this ageless woodland, utterly alone in the mists of time. What had at first seemed like a complete silence now became populated with subtle, hidden sounds. The leaves above rustled softly, fitfully, and there was the occasional creak of an enormous branch, shifting in the wind high above. The grass whispered and a bug here and there whirred shyly. I began to see things that were invisible to the eye when it swept over the general view . . . phosphorescent moss climbing in serried streaks up the trees, the fallen hulks of long-dead giants, bleached white or crumbling into rotted earth. There were vines hanging like spectral drapes from some of the bigger trees and when my eye followed them up I could see the fine tendrils of twigs and leaf-fans, a canopy of perfect agelessness. The

sun caught them in shifting, enigmatic moods — disturbing and unfathomable.

Underfoot there was a network of old, dry grass, a spongy support for the fantastic abundance of emerald-green shoots. And near the trees there were mushrooms — suddenly I became aware of the most astonishing variety of multi-colored mushrooms, leaping out of the grass like so many Disneyesque dancers. Silken whites and grays, vague blues, wild reds; they poked up from the ground everywhere — mottled, deformed, in impossible poses. I began to pick them, a bizarre bouquet, marveling at their weird strangeness.

Feeling that half the day must have gone by (tho it couldn't have been more than half an hour) I went to find Kim and Zeke. As soon as I thought of them, a strong twinge of jealousy shot thru me — maybe they wanted me to leave them alone. Maybe . . . to hell with it, that wasn't like them.

I spotted Kim, alone, near a large fallen tree, and I cautiously approached with my treasure. She turned around, startled, and at first there was a definite, inexpertly masked tinge of irritation in her voice. But I showed her my treasure of mushrooms and she was delighted; she pointed out an enormous granddaddy of a tree. She had been looking up at the huge clumps of bark that were being slowly shed from this venerable Ent and she said she could *see* its entire history, condensed into a few moments. Suddenly, from off to our left, Zeke appeared.

It was a vision from another time. He did not so much walk toward us as loom. He looked much larger than normal and somehow primitive, with an expression on his face that was at once fear, determination, and belligerence. It was like a Neanderthal, stepping out of the Ice Age . . . and he was carrying a very large club. He lurched up and stopped short of us, several feet away. "Saw a bull," he said, tersely.

"Oh?" I said, not knowing where this was going.

He seemed to notice the club for the first time and propped it up under one arm.

"Over in that meadow," he said, pointing. He seemed to shrink a little but, still every inch the cave man, he leaned up against the trunk of a dead tree. We said nothing and rolled cigarettes.

"Big son-of-a-bitch," he said, "Scared the shit outta me."

"A bull?" said Kim.

"Yeah." He looked at the club and propped it against the tree, keeping it within reach.

"Didn't know what to do. Thought if I tried to move away, the bastard would come after me. So I picked this up and he saw me — and moved."

"He . . . charged you?"

"Well, not exactly. He just moved. So I started smashing this thing around, to show him I meant business."

"How close was he?" I said.

"I dunno. Close. Twenty yards. I didn't see him til I was right on top of him.

Well, maybe it wasn't *that* close — maybe a hundred yards. But he was a *big* son-of-a-bitch and . . . I don't know, I just wanted to show him I wasn't takin' no shit."

"So you were . . . ?" prompted Kim, on the verge of exploding.

"Well, yeah," said Zeke, a little chagrined, "I was pounding away on the ground and smashing against the trees and stuff . . . to scare him off."

"Well why didn't you get the hell outta there?" I said.

"He mighta chased me!"

"OK, but if he was a hundr . . ."

"You shoulda seen him!" he protested, sensing skepticism, "He was huge! And he had horns . . . like this!"

Twinkling, Kim said, "So you were . . . beating up the shrubbery . . ."

We couldn't help it — the image of Zeke going Tarzan was just too much and we were giggling like crazy. I said, "Uh, Zeke, . . . this bull's name . . . it wasn't maybe Ferdinand, was it?" Kim giggled some more.

"Well, shit . . . you wanna come and *see* him?"

"NO!" we said, together, and then he finally began to see it the way *we'd* been seeing it and he started to laugh, too.

For all of that, it could've been ever-so-slightly dangerous — tho it's also possible

that the "bull" was in fact a fat, castrated steer, placidly munching away on his dandelions while Zeke thrashed at the rhododendrons. But it made for an eerie note in an eerie place.

At last we could relax. We got back on board the *Tiki* and fired her up, still kidding Zeke. We let him exaggerate the bull into a Minotaur on the rampage, getting bigger each time and not ten steps from where he'd stood fast, holding it off with manly determination. We plowed upriver in the sweet, late afternoon warmth and the sexual tension faded. The triangle became just three friends again and in time we found a way to talk about it. At least Zeke and I did. Kim was not in the slightest interested.

Aug. 4, 1972 — Arthur Bremer found guilty of shooting George Wallace.

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Such a cozy room, the windows are illuminated
By the evening, sun-shine thru them
—Crosby Stills Nash & Young

Kim never lived in any moment but the one at hand and if she was with you, she was totally with you — with no regard whatsoever for any other moment or person. She got irritated even at the suggestion that we had conflicting feelings about the varying permutations and what pissed her off most, she said, was that it got in the way of the experience — if there was a triangle, fine, but why let it destroy whatever else was there? She had a point, of course.

I was thinking about this in the evening as I sat on the banks of the river near the boat. Kim was inside, wanting to spend some time by herself, and while I usually drifted off to the cabin when she felt that way (needing time alone, too) I wanted to think it out — to ponder what had caused so many moments of grief between us. I sat for a long time.

In the dying light of the day, Kim finally came out and climbed onto the top of the *Tiki's* cabin; her slight, compact sailor's-gait perfectly attuned to the gentle rolling of the boat. She stretched out, aware of me but content with the stillness, watching the clouds. Her brown hair seemed almost black in the gathering twilight and we drank in the evening in silence.

The wide, orange sun made a prismatic fan of light spreading across the far horizon, encircling the clouds with fingers of pink, crimson, and gold. It reached above our heads to the zenith, infusing the deepening purple with touches of copper and scarlet. The high wisps of cirrus clouds were caught in the shifting light, dancing as if alive in the dusky azure sky.

The river had turned the dark sienna of cafe creme and the woods on the

opposite bank were but a hulking shadow. An enveloping dampness rose from the waters, curling around us with a sweet chill. From far away came the last, fussy calls of birds as they settled in the trees against the night. And then, as if from nowhere, there began the plaintive shrieks of evening I knew so well, rising slowly from a soft cry to a muffled scream — a primeval ***Krieeee. . . ..Krieeee***, echoing thru the woods, eerily impossible to locate. It was a cry so mournful it seemed to say "*Why?. . . ..Why?*" — the cry of a babe lost in the chasms of time, the reincarnation of a longing so deep that it could find no name for its ancient grief. Kim was a bit rattled by this spine-chilling dirge, coming from everywhere, up and down the river. She turned to ask me what it was and I told her they were treefrogs. In the gathering dusk I could see her expression grow wistful.

The sun disappeared and the last rosy fingers faded into night, sifting down to meet the musty air rising from the wide river. The stars appeared, one by one, as if to console us for our loss, and a pale moon rose quietly behind us, casting a silky glow over the river. It was a new world and the river came alive — swirling currents emerged from the shadows, sweeping past in serene, silver ribbons. In the moonlight the river's power was revealed, details invisible by day. In the wide stream I caught the outline of sinister snags, dragons lurking in the deeps. Near the shore, broad meanderings of current made calm ripples in the lazy water but where they met the fast, mid-river flow it was as if the tails of giant lizards swished and darted, sending eddies careening downstream. The river had a magic at night, an alive tension under the bright moon that was moody, electric, and mysterious. And it made different sounds: there were murmurs, questions, and rumors, indefinable and ghostly.

The treefrogs gave up their keening and dimly, thru the strange quiet, came the yowling of distant coyotes. Somehow they seemed different than the ones I had encountered out in the desert. They weren't always around and at first when I'd heard them it had been disturbing. Soon it became a comic performance — a show put on by cowards. It was easy to detect the false note, just the hint of a grin attached to the tag-end of their mock-fierceness: a landlord wailing over his rent receipts. Kim's dark form tensed, but then relaxed — she sensed the sham behind their menace. She turned to look at me and we laughed. I got up and slid down to the boat; she climbed down from her perch and went inside and lit the lamp.

Saying nothing at all, we shed our clothes and touched, shyly, then with glittering, playful eyes we began to savor each other's sensations. We laid down in the enfolding dimness, cradled by the arms of the *Tiki* on the gently rocking river. Entwined in our reciprocal forms, by turns feverish and languid, we spent hour after hour brushing together and exploring one another's eyes and movements. Caressing and patting, fingers meeting and melting, we formed and fell apart to re-form. The hours disappeared and lost their meaning.

We'd never given in to such total abandon and our love, for that night, was as

complete as it could ever be — a diamond waterfall in the amber recesses of memory. Many years ago she had begun my education. What she had taught me, that I was finally beginning to understand, was that all that great sex depended on was the man paying attention to the woman. I had taken this for just more self-centeredness, but had come to realize how right she was. Men by their nature seem to be focused just on one thing, on one place, and when that was taken care, that was that. To really experience a woman's sexuality — that was a bit frightening. Once past the initial fear, however, the differences and similarities became an explosion of investigation and learning; an intense experience that took hours and, while the orgasms were far more incredible than anything before, they somehow no longer seemed to be the point.

Many hours later, I sat alone on the foredeck as the rosy fingers of dawn crept into the sky. There was a hint of wood smoke in the dank air, foretelling autumn, and on the opposite shore the woods brightened to a holly-green, each tree re-emerging in the imperceptibly growing light. The river paused in that infinite moment between night and day and became as smooth and still as glass. Tendrils of mist wove their skein across its broad back; the stars winked out, the bright sun began its intrusion, and the magic vanished quite suddenly — it was a river once again possessed of a name.

Aug. 21-23, 1972 — Highly orchestrated Republican Convention nominates Richard Nixon; Agnew again his running mate.

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The cracked bells and washed-out horns
Blow into my face with scorn
—Bob Dylan

One morning while Kim was still asleep Zeke and I quietly stole off and drove down to the Cannonball to check on Eldorado. The mists were just clearing off of the fields when we gingerly stepped thru the barbwire fence and there, out of nowhere, was another fence! We found the path in, hurrying along with a sense of foreboding, but we found the clearing and there they were — hundreds of them, and *simply humongous*! We could hardly believe our eyes, they were . . . wait . . . what on earth is this? A plant had been trampled here — by something large. And there was another that . . . that had an enormous *cow-turd,* right on top of it! What the hell?? Its branches were sticking out from around the edges and . . . my god, what was that? There it was again . . . a *Mooo*! And there were . . . Oh, Christ, was that a *cow* over there?

It was.

Suddenly we could see the tracks of cattle everywhere, cutting broad swaths thru the mutilated patch — *cow-turds* littering the ground all over the place! They had . . .

they had . . . there were the unmistakable marks where they had *lain down,* squashing dozens of plants! I spotted a brown form in the woods and grabbed a nearby branch, storming thru the trees in a rage. The lumbering heifers scattered for dear life, racing down the banks of the river in a panic, me chasing after them. I wanted cow-blood.

I returned, panting, as Zeke was carefully going over them. I calmed down enough to really look and, for all the devastation, they were almost frightening in their enormity. They were four feet tall, with stalks the size of chair legs and leaf fans bigger than my hand — they had been growing, despite a heavy topping, at the rate of a foot a week! They were a deeper green than I had ever seen and, tho widely spaced, they formed a broad, dense thicket. A few were completely squashed by cow-shit but, all in all, there wasn't that much real damage. We did another topping and then sat down to figure out what to do about the marauding herd.

Putting up a fence of our own seemed a bit much, all things considered, so we decided to give blood-meal a try — the theory being that cattle would be scared off by the scent of blood. We had two large bags of the raunchy stuff and hauled it in, dumping it liberally around the perimeter of the patch. It was all we could do and we left them to weather the storm as best they could. Kim just smiled a quiet smile at our tale of woe. Over the next few days she became more and more detached, pulling into herself, so I was not surprised when she announced that it was time for her to head back east.

Only a few months before my reaction would have been to cajole and finagle, to put the pressure on for her to stay. But now I could understand and accept that there was no other way it could be. She would flit like a meadow butterfly from one to another — with my own fiddlefoot, we were much really the same and that was a good part of why I loved her. It didn't make it any less hard, but something in me had grown up and I could finally see that all that anger and resentment from years ago had been misdirected. We had a long, last talk and she seemed glad that I could, with grace now, just accept her for what she was; she gave me some of her poems and on a hot, sunny afternoon Zeke came to give her a ride back to town. He betrayed no emotion whatsoever and they drove off down the dusty road, just as they had come.

Aug. 22, 1972 — Pres. Thieu outlaws elections and bans free press.

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There's a bad moon on the rise

—Creedence Clearwater Revival

August was very hot — every day was in the 90s and it was hard to use the stove even for cooking. I slept on the boat and the days were so long I often took a siesta in

the afternoon, spending most of my time reading, working on the boat or the Comet and doing little chores for Joshua. Often I simply sat on a chair in front of the cabin, watching the hawks circle high above. Mere dots in the deep blue sky, if I remained still for a long time, then suddenly made a darting motion with my foot, one of them was sure to make a brief, faltering swoop in my direction.

Ruth often sat near the cabin door, her radar scanning for rodents. She was small and trim but lately inclining to the pudgy. I thought it was just because she was such a good hunter (plus all the leftovers I fed her) but one night she dropped a load of kittens on me, clearing up that little mystery. She was transformed.

Ruth had always been aloof, as befits a barn cat, and after becoming a mother I expected her to become even more distant and regal, but actually she became much more affectionate. For some reason she seemed to have decided that I was one of her kittens — or perhaps the father. When she wasn't with her brood or out hunting, she spent as much time on my lap as she could, kneading away blissfully and purring. She even took to following me on my rambles along the river bottom. She would box my legs if I wandered too far from the cabin, warning me that I was looking for trouble. Not that Ruth was becoming a house kitty — far from it. She would let no one but me anywhere near her litter and she became absolutely fierce in defending the cabin. She tolerated Zeke, more or less, but that was about it.

One cool night, very late, I was lying in bed when something woke me up — I wasn't sure what. And then, outlined in the moonlight, I could barely make out the form of something large and furry on the kitchen table. At first I thought it was Ruth but it was much too large — and it was quietly taking apart a loaf of bread with dainty little hands. Ms. Raccoon. Out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of Ruth, creeping stealthily toward the intruder in the moonlight, her tail lashing silently. I wanted to intervene, for I had heard stories of raccoons tearing dogs to pieces — but Ruth had those kittens and I'd seen what she could do before. I waited as she slowly got near enough to the table to leap and in a split-second she was all over that sadly misinformed raccoon.

It was an explosion. Amid the snarls and screams I could see what seemed to be a single form, spinning in the air, apparently an entire foot above the table. In an instant Ms. Raccoon was tearing at the window and madly trying to find an exit . . . *any* exit. At last she found the opening and shot out with all the devils of hell on her hindquarters, disappearing into the moonlight and howling like an inmate of Bedlam.

I got up to light the lamp and Ruth calmly reappeared in the window, walked onto the table, and sat looking around. She began licking herself, as if to say, ". . . mess with *me,* will she . . . idiot don't know a *thing* about cats . . . fool around with *my* kittens, will she . . ." and so forth. She wasn't hurt a bit — just mightily put out. There were big tufts of fur all over the table . . . raccoon fur.

Her kittens, of course, were as beautiful as ducks on a twilight pond. I pretty

much left them alone, aside from a little toilet-training, figuring that I'd have to give them to a farm eventually and not wanting them to become too tame. From what I'd heard, farmers were always either grossly overstocked with cats — or in need of some more. They did a bang-up job of keeping the vermin down and no farmer would dream of not having nine or ten around. When they were six weeks old, Ruth began bringing them live mice to hunt. They weren't terribly adept at it, of course, so a number of the critters got loose and I was often roused in the middle of the night as Ruth tore thru the bedding or the dishes to get at them. She was (ahem) ruthless.

Zeke and I came back to the cabin one balmy summer evening, after roaming around the countryside all day doing mescaline, and we were still pretty high and in that super-sensitive state of intense awareness. I opened the cabin door and there were kittens all over the place — Ruth had brought their education to the point where she was half-killing big gophers and depositing them in front of her scurrying brood. They took to the game with zest and on this particular evening we arrived just in time to see a half-dozen perfectly precious kittens capering around the cabin with gopher-guts hanging in long trails from their grinning jaws. It seemed to give Zeke a shock. He uttered an expressive, "Oh, *Jesus* . . . !" and beat a hasty retreat — Ruth took it for a sign of approval and positively beamed.

The long, silent days began to take their toll, however, and things began to happen that I have no explanation for whatsoever. In mid-summer, Joshua had asked me to tear down the old hermit's shed for him, as it was something he'd been meaning to do for a long time. Naturally I was glad to oblige with any little chore he had — I helped out with a little haying and even gave him a hand with some chainsaw work when he wanted to cut a new road down to the river. I had some misgivings about that cabin but I said nothing and it only took an afternoon's work to raze the little shack and pile the wood next to the cabin. I hated to do it and I secretly wondered if Joshua simply hadn't had the nerve himself. Two nights later I awoke in the middle of the night and lay there for a moment, trying to pinpoint what had roused me. And then I heard it. Very plainly, from the direction of the window (from the exact spot where I had torn down that shed) came the sound of a low, distinct, steady . . . breathing.

It continued. As I stared at the window I could clearly see the outline of *something there.* I forced myself to get up and go look, assuming that it must be a deer that had smelled the food inside . . . but as I drew closer I could see the dark shadow — not of a deer — but of a man.

My heart stopped and the hair rose on the back of my neck. I finally called out, shakily, "Who's there!?" . . . and the breathing stopped! But the Shadow did not move.

It is hard to describe that kind of fear — I was truly petrified, trembling from head to toe. And yet I *had* to see what was there. I picked up the flashlight and advanced — there had been no sound for several seconds but the figure had not moved at all. It took all the strength I had but I turned on the light — and pointed it straight at

the outlined form.

There was nothing there, nothing at all. I turned the light back out . . . and the shadow was gone! In the moonlight I could clearly see the grass and the hill beyond — it had vanished but *something had been there*! I grabbed the axe and tore outside, madder than hell, and went tearing around the cabin in a rage. There was nothing there, not a single mark on the dewy grass.

I was well and truly spooked. I abandoned Ruth and her kittens and slept on the boat for the next few nights — and none too well at that.

A few weeks later the second occurrence took place.

I had gotten into the habit, while living with Calvin and George, of following the *Old Farmer's Almanac* religiously. It contained a vast amount of information and its country wit was simple and straightforward. I learned to follow the comings and goings of the moon, the sun, and the planets and I knew on just about any given day where things were and how to find them. I kept diligent track of the sun and moonrises, the length of the day and all the other arcana of almanac astronomy. Living out in the country was made to order for that sort of thing and I loved it — until the next full moon after the old hermit had made himself known.

Now, when the moon reaches full it is axiomatic that it will rise on that evening just before or just after sunset — since in order for it to *be* full, it must be on the opposite side of the sun in the sky. (Thus, as you have doubtless noticed, an eclipse of the sun can only take place during a new moon.) As always, I sat up waiting for the full moon to rise, for I knew exactly when it would do so (having observed and taken into account the local horizon, adjusted for the time difference, etc.). Every month since I had lived in Brown County I had been marking the arrival of the full moon . . . only this time, the moon did not rise.

I waited until long after sundown . . . after midnight . . . and it was pitch black, no moon! I checked the date carefully but that was superfluous, since I'd been watching the moon rise for several days now and I knew *exactly*, better than I knew what date it was, when it was due to rise. An eerie sensation enveloped me but at last I went to bed, not knowing what else to do.

Eventually I dropped off but in the middle of the night I woke up, still wondering about the moon and trying to figure out what had happened. I checked the pocket watch that I kept next to the bed and it was just after 3:00 a.m. — and I suddenly realized that I was reading it by moonlight! I sprang up and went to the east window — sure enough, there it was — only that full moon had *just then risen* . . . at 3:00 a.m.!

Not only that, it was rising *in the north* ("riding high," as the almanac called it) whereas it had been riding low for several nights in a row. I got out my flashlight and checked the almanac again . . . yes, the moon was supposed to ride low but I looked outside and there was no doubt about it . . . it was a full moon, rising where it had no place to be — more than five hours late!

Now, you may think I was dreaming but was I dreaming when I went to bed after midnight and there was no moon in sight? Can you dream making a note of this in your almanac and then finding that note still there the next morning? I was getting seriously spooked now, no doubt about it, but there wasn't a damn thing I could do. Except wait.

When the third creepy instance came along, I was not alone. Zeke had come out one day with Boo and MoonStar and a couple of his other friends from school — Ben, a blond gnome with an all-knowing grin, who lived most of the year in New Mexico, and Stony, a tall, somber, dark-faced longhair who looked and acted like an Indian — reserved, dignified and carrying a deep anger.

We were standing outside the cabin chatting (Ben was discussing the possibility of putting up a teepee near the cabin and we were all pitching in with advice) when I looked up and saw a large, round object, high in the sky. It was pure white and a little to the east — I pointed it out and we were all a little stunned by this apparition. It was utterly impossible to tell how big or how far away it was and we stood there speculating on what it could be. It didn't look like a UFO (not the traditional kind anyway) and at last Boo suggested that it must be a weather balloon. That seemed reasonable enough, but we sighted it against a branch of the tree in front of the cabin and it *was not moving.* We watched for a long time and a spooky air descended over all of us — it did not move one iota. At last I went into the cabin and turned on the radio. The others soon followed and I spun the dial around, finally tuning in just as an announcer was saying that a number of people had sighted a low-flying weather balloon. Stony looked outside and said that it had disappeared and at that very moment, the announcer was saying that the balloon was now about twelve miles *south* of Bismarck.

We were twelve miles *north* of town and that thing had been under our constant observation for at least fifteen minutes. Now, within the space of fifteen seconds, it was twenty-four miles to the south! It did not compute and a kind of chill went around, but very quickly the others seemed to simply dismiss the whole thing. It was incomprehensible — so to hell with it. But I knew what was going on and enough was enough.

The next day I sat just above the barren patch of ground where the old hermit's cabin had been, burning incense, droning out a chant and drumming on the top of an oatmeal carton. I poured out libations of wine from time to time to the spirit of that ornery old coot and his ghost. I don't say I didn't feel a tad foolish but, what the hell, I wanted nothing more to do with restless spirits. So I told him it was all right, that the cabin was being blessed and the ground that he had lived upon would never be forgotten as his. He could rest in peace and why didn't he go digging for his gold somewhere the hell else for a while? It wasn't my fault, etc., etc.

After a while, unmistakably, there was a long, nearly inaudible sigh that rose and

fell . . . seeming to come from all around me. Nothing else happened — but that was enough. I knew it was over and there were no further incidents for the rest of the summer, so laugh if you want to.

July 11-Sept. 1, 1972 — Bobby Fischer defeats Boris Spassky in Reykjavik, 12½-8½, to become world chess champion.

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If it keeps on rainin'
Levee's gonna break
—*Led Zeppelin*

It'd been weeks since we'd seen Eldorado and we had to find out how they were faring against the moo-cows. As usual we set out well before dawn for the drive down but halfway there Zeke pulled over and we got out, standing staring up in the wet grass, astonished. There had been some aurora borealis before but nothing like this. That far north the sky was so clear that the Milky Way looked like the lights of a broad city stretched across the heavens and there were times when you could almost read a book by the light of Venus. This, however, was spectacular.

When the aurora's went to work in that infinity of clear sky, the night became a baroque cathedral, an unfathomable tapestry. They spread across the entire horizon, lifting broad, looping sheets and tendrils toward the zenith and seemed, at times, to cover almost half the sky. There were filaments, curtains and long electric plumes of absinthe green and salmon pink, lavender blue and honey yellow; a thousand shades of delicate pastels. They seemed as stationary as a watercolor and yet at every moment they were shifting, evolving, interweaving patterns so complex that the eye could never quite catch what the overall picture was doing. It was as captivating as trying to watch nudes thru panes of rippling, colored glass.

By the time we got down to the Cannonball, dawn was sifting into sunrise. We were hurrying to the patch (still no sign of the SS man) when we heard a distinct, solitary *Baaaa.* We stopped. *Baaaa*? Advancing slowly, I caught sight of a white, wooly form scampering off and when we reached the patch there were ugly, bag-swaying, verminous sheep all over the place . . . and they were *eating our dope plants*! And they were almost entirely gone! Sheep! *Baaaa,* yer ass!

This time I simply went berserk and took off after those marauding vandals with pure murder in my heart. I was yelling and raving as I took up the chase but they ran just fast enough to escape with their miserable hides. I stood panting by the riverbank, cursing with incredible fury.

I walked back to the patch and Zeke was standing there, silent and stunned.

Sheep eat dope. We surveyed the scene but there was nothing whatever to be done. The bloodmeal had apparently worked on the cattle but the Nazi bastard SS man had simply taken them out and put in sheep — he must have known all along, the rotten, miserable. . . .

There was nothing left but stumps, none more than an inch or two high. No leaves, no buds, nothing. That was the end of that. After a few moments of moping we couldn't stand it any longer and left, neither of us saying a word.

Sept. 5, 1972 — Arab terrorists kill 17 in an attack on Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich.
Sept. 15, 1972 — Seven are indicted in the Watergate break-in, including James McCord (who led the burglars) and CREEP aides G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt.

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Anybody here
Seen my old friend Bobby?
—Dion

August slowly wound down and I put all my efforts into the pitiful little patches by the river. It was all I had. Zeke and I didn't feel much like seeing one another. In early September he had to get back to Bloomington to renew his vows to the Reserves and we went out for one last visit to Boo's place. The evenings were already growing cool and the days were much shorter. We drove into the farmyard just as the sun was setting over the hills — a white form streaked around the corner of the house and disappeared up the porch and ducked inside. I caught a glimpse of a very nice bottom and realized it was MoonStar, running naked for the house like a white-tailed deer.

She was all embarrassment when we went inside but we waved it away with slight grins, assuring her we hadn't seen a thing. Such modesty was a bit strange (especially since she'd been skinny-dipping with all of us in the river) but we humored her, figuring she must have been taking a leak or something and felt meek about it.

Boo took us out to a small shed where he kept the feed for the animals and proudly showed us the first of his harvest. He had so many patches that he needed to start getting them in before the first frost, which often came in late September. They were hanging upside down in a long row along one wall, a feast for the eyes. None of the plants were very tall, only about three or four feet, but they were bunched up in big clumps and as fat as sheaves of corn. Boo was grinning from ear to ear as he went slowly down the row, carefully picking only the very best tops and stuffing them into a rolling-paper the size of a small sheet. They were only half-dry but just far enough along to smoke.

Boo picked and stuffed, picked and stuffed, alternately humming and doing a running monologue the whole time. He knew about the disasters and didn't say a word about dope, rambling on instead about whatever came to mind. He picked on and on, for what seemed like twenty minutes, and when he was finally satisfied he began rolling the humongous J.

Boo lovingly tucked and patted at it, fingering it up and down until he got it just right, then licked the sides lavishly and closed it up tight. It looked like a torpedo for a Lilliputian submarine — about five inches long and fatter than my thumb. We followed him inside as another car pulled up and I was glad to see that we weren't going to have to smoke that behemoth by ourselves.

Stony had brought along an Indian-looking girlfriend named Amy and Ben was carrying a bottle of French wine. We sipped it sparingly (except for Boo) to keep it from ruining the grass-stone. MoonStar had the honor of applying the first match to the J and we settled down on cushions around a circle of candles, passing around this big, black log.

The talk, in time, turned to the miserable election campaign, of course. I was filled with bitterness about it, for by now it was obvious that McGovern couldn't win. They all knew I'd worked on the campaign and they tried to say nice things about him, for once they dropped the cynical comments about what a lightweight he was and how he didn't have a chance against the malignant juggernaut that the Nixon coven had put together. The pungent, blue spirals from the J intermingled with the sweet smoke of incense and I said,

"Yeah, well, McGovern screwed the pooch on the Eagleton thing, so . . ."

"I can't believe," I said, "that that bastard is going to be elected again. How is it *possible*?"

"He's won the hearts and minds of the people," said Zeke.

"But the murdering S.O.B. has let the war go on for four years just so he could announce that he'd put an end to it! Twenty thousand Americans died, and a lot more Vietnamese, so he could use it as an election ploy!"

I was about to blow a cork when Boo said, very calmly, "He'll be impeached."

"Impeached? For what? They haven't got the guts to . . ."

"Watergate," he said.

"Watergate!?"

Ben said, "Nobody even remembers that now. They'll never get him on that, it's all been covered up."

"They'll get him," said Boo, perfectly unconcerned, "he's broken too many laws. He'll be impeached."

Something in me stirred, suspecting he was right, tho I wasn't really convinced.

Sept. 23, 1972 — President Ferdinand Marcos declares martial law in the Philippines.

Oct. 17, 1972 — President Park declares martial law in Korea.

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My pappy said, son you're gonna drive me to drinkin'
If you don't stop drivin' that hot . . . rod . . . lincoln
—Johnny Bond

After Zeke left I had almost nothing to do. I made one more trip down to Eldorado, mostly out of a morbid curiosity, as usual at dawn. I made my way alone along the fence that led to the riverbank woods. I hurried along the path, sorry that I'd come and dreading the inevitable confrontation with the demon sheep. But they weren't there.

What *was* there I couldn't even have imagined was possible. From the nubbin of each stalk they were sprouting not one but two, three or four new stalks — nearly two feet tall! It was a miniature forest of dope! I almost dropped to my knees from sheer astonishment.

True, they were scraggly and not the thick bushes that they'd been before. And when I looked closely, I could see that a number of plants had been uprooted completely — they looked less like dope plants than bizarre, misshapen, upside-down christmas trees. But they were right back to their foot-a-week truck. It was a bonanza, a Resurrection!

The SS man must've taken out the sheep soon after we'd been down there last, figuring that they'd done the job. He hadn't put them in since — but now I was in a dilemma. Did I grab what was left and run or hope that he didn't spot them again and leave them for as long as I could? What the hell, if he thought he'd done 'em in, chances were he'd leave them alone — I didn't touch them and got out of there as fast as I could. I wouldn't go near them again until after the first frost, hoping that they'd flower by then.

Well, this was a nice turn of events. I was back in business. True, the island patch was still flooded, the slug patch was still slugged and the river patch was still missing — but Eldorado was back and the two patches down by the river were beginning to revive a little. They were only about four feet tall and pretty gawky but the leaves were at least looking like marijuana leaves again and less like the arthritic fingers of one of the hags in *Macbeth.*

My mood improved and I grew industrious. I began taking an interest in my surroundings again and, casting around for something to do, discovered some bushes that produced wonderful berries in the fall — buffalo berries, gooseberries and chokecherries. Rooting around the countryside, I found roadside caches and brought back enough to make salads and pies. I never could get the hang of making jam but

then I had the idea of making some berry wine.

There were some farm kids down the road who sometimes dropped by to offer me stuff from their garden — corn, tomatoes, beans and potatoes — and I asked them if they had any berries around. They said sure, they had tons of chokecherries but they weren't much good for anything. They were far too astringent for eating raw or putting into pies — pretty much considered a weed. So I asked them to bring me a load and two days later I had two large pails-full.

It was all guesswork for me but I picked out the best and mashed them up, soaked them for a few days and strained out the juice. I went into town for some wine yeast and a couple of five-gallon jugs, then I boiled the juice, added some water, dumped it into the jugs with yeast and honey (and, for no reason at all, some lemon) then corked it off with homemade fermentation locks and let 'er rip. They bubbled away happily for more than two weeks.

When they seemed to have finished I bought several boxes of bottles and corks (this was beginning to be an expensive hobby) and siphoned the wine in, winding up with three dozen bottles of a beautiful, deep-red wine. I only tried one little sip, figuring it had to age awhile yet, but that sip tasted pretty good. Most of the astringency seemed to have fermented out and the touch that was left was rather pleasant, tho it was still pretty raw.

Summer was definitely on its way out and the nights were getting chilly again. I was spending a lot of time fussing with the stove and going out on drives more and more. It was the fiddlefoot tuning up, I could feel it. The last of last year's dope was almost gone and so was my money.

Driving was a different experience entirely than it'd been in New England, where the roads were so narrow and twisty that they forced you to keep to a scenic pace. But in NoDak people drove sixty miles an hour even on the dirt roads and I discovered that this called for some special skills.

Heading into town one day, by a different route than I normally took, I was buzzing along at a good clip when I came around a bend and saw an ancient, red tractor coming the other way. This bucolic picture was absolutely charming and I murmured to myself, "Ah, the rustic swain is a-travelin' home at dusk" — until I noticed that the hay-cutting arm on the tractor was down and it was taking up the entire road.

The "rustic swain" left off steering altogether as he scrambled to pull the arm back up, his face contorted with panic. On this dirt road I would've needed a quarter of a mile to stop and there was no way around him on either side — a barbwire fence to the left and a steep bank on my right. There was nothing for it but to go as far up the right-hand side as I could and in a split-second, I was driving sideways along the bank, looking up at the iron bar (the teeth still sawing back and forth) as it passed within six inches of my head. I got upright again and when I looked in the mirror, the swain did not seem to be amused. He was riding backwards on the tractor, shaking his fist and

calling on the gods to let him have another crack at me. I waved, of course — perhaps more cheerfully than he would've liked.

The roads were as straight as a surveyor's rod and, combined with the flatness, you could see for miles all around. Coming back from Boo's one night, very late, I saw the lights of a train, off in the distance. It was still a long way off and I made a quick calculation of the distance to the crossing. This was a senseless game, I knew, but I gunned the motor and began racing the train to the crossing.

It was mesmerizing, watching our two lines of travel converge — apparently the engineer was watching, too, and he began blowing on his horn. I topped the last hill and there I got a little surprise.

It was a dirt road, of course, and the last stretch was all downhill — and I was not going to win the race. I jammed on the brakes and slid toward the oncoming juggernaut like an otter down a mud bank. This was getting a little more interesting than I cared for. The engineer was really blasting that horn, now, and all I could do was slew the Comet sideways and hope for the best — in a cloud of dust, I came to rest perhaps a foot short of the train as the second engine was passing. I sat there, frozen, as the wind from the train rocked the car back and forth. I wondered what in hell had gone wrong with the wiring in my brain.

Living where the distances were so vast seemed to have an effect on a person's sense of proportion and I began to see risk-taking in a completely different light — one that the natives took for granted.

One such native was a friend of Boo's named Bruce. He came by the cabin one afternoon in late September and I was more than a little glad to see him. The Comet had conked out on me a few days before and I was just beginning to think I'd have to walk all the way into town for help.

Bruce was a cheerful, outgoing, cowboyish sort, rather fond of showing off his truly amazing strength. I had once watched as he and his brother, Allen, carried an engine block into a car-parts store between the two of them. I held the door for them and as they maneuvered it around and Allen's hands slipped — Bruce grabbed hold of the engine and waited patiently while Allen regained his hold. They waltzed it over and set it down next to a table and the boys behind the counter stood with their eyes glazed over and cow-like.

I explained the problem to Bruce and with obvious glee he set to work trying to fix the thing. Nothing in his life mattered so much as cars (he still kept a picture in his wallet of the "Midnight Special" — a '59 Chevy convertible that he had shoe-horned a 409 into) and nothing pleased him more than a car that needed fixing. It stirred a kind of religious fervor in him.

But after tinkering with it for an hour or so, he could find nothing wrong and we sat down to think it thru. As usual, Bruce had brought a case of beer along, just in case a thirsty troupe of circus performers came by. When they failed to show up he gave

thanks and had at it himself. I stuck pretty much to my grass and after he'd downed four or five, we decided to try and kick-start the thing. He had me sit inside while he shoved it up the hill with his big, fat Ford (it had a 387 roaring thru glass-pack mufflers) and then got out of the way while I rolled it downhill, popping the clutch at the bottom. This got to be something of a game and the more he drank — and the more I smoked — the more we got into it as we pushed the Comet up the hill time after time. We fell into fits of giggling and it no longer mattered that there wasn't a chance in hell of getting it started, it was the game that counted.

Evening turned to night and the moon came up. At last we gave in, conceding that it'd got the better of us that day. Bruce promised to return tomorrow with some parts, vowing he would get her going or die, and he hopped in the Ford. As he tore off up to the road back to town another can of beer flew out the window and I could hear that engine roaring thru the gears long after his lights disappeared over the horizon. I was just turning to go back inside when, across the stillness of the prairie, came a peculiar series of noises . . .

I heard something go whump, . . .bump-bump-bump, WHAM! Silence. Oh, shit, now what? The stillness was utterly unbroken . . . the engine had died and I stood there, paralyzed, wondering what to do. What the hell, I started to walk.

I'd just made it to the top of the hill and was getting ready to start jogging as fast as I could toward the sound, sure that I would find some dreadful scene of mangled steel and scattered foam dice, when I heard a tentative little Rurrr . . . rurr . . . Kachunk! Nothing. I stopped. Rurrr . . . rurr . . . *Kapow!* Silence. Rurr . . . rurr . . . *Wha-whooom* . . . Ba-da, Ba-da . . . *Roaarrr!* And he was apparently back in business again.

The sounds of that Ford bouncing over the prairie came clearly thru the night air, then a screeching *Frie-scheesh* . . . Wham! split the air and then he took off again down the dirt road again, missing on one cylinder and making a strange clanking noise. I went back down to the cabin and to bed.

The next day Bruce turned up, grinning like a dog with a blind man's cane, and filled me in on what had happened. He'd been reaching for another beer when the Ford (he said) unaccountably took a wild turn to the left. It hit a big rock, bounced several dozen yards thru a cow pasture and come to rest half-sideways on an anthill. He puzzled all this out after waking up, he said, because apparently he'd been knocked out briefly. He fired up the Ford and then slewed his way back out to the road — but he'd forgotten about the fence (which, naturally, he'd failed to notice going thru) and when he hit it the second time, he simply whomped on the gas and kept going.

Well, near town there came a flashing red light from somewhere behind him and a cop pulled him over. Bruce tactfully hid the beer under the seat and had his license ready when the cop sauntered up to the window. The cop didn't seem interested in the license. What he wanted to know was, why was there thirty-seven feet of barbwire and two fence posts trailing along behind his car? Bruce professed utter amazement.

They were just getting down to cases when the cop's radio started blaring: "Robbery in progress . . . 416 at Ralph's Piggly-Wiggly, Third and Main . . . All units . . ." The cop jumps to it and roars off — Bruce gingerly makes his way back home, taking side streets and listening to the clunk-clunk-clunk of the trailing fence behind him.

He had another beer and we got the Comet started. Life in the northland, as I say, had a rhythm of its own and a rather peculiar fix on reality.

Oct. 26, 1972 — Kissinger announces "peace is at hand" in Vietnam, 12 days before the election.

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I don't care, It's where I'm from
I'm on the road again
—Traffic

By late September there were frost warnings and, tho our stuff would usually withstand a light frost pretty well, it wouldn't grow any more and the flowering stops. It was time to get the harvest in and be done with it so on another bright, early morning, I headed back down to Eldorado for the last time. And I just made it.

As I climbed over the fence there was the unmistakable feral bleat of a sheep and with murder in my heart I ran to the patch, fearing the worst. There were Marks of the Beast all over the place but they were as yet untouched — I heaved a huge sigh of relief and got to work.

What with the cool nights, they hadn't grown as riotously as before but they were four feet tall and just beginning to flower. There were some very nice buds here and there — some of the males were in full flower and nearly ready to open. After my initial optimism at how many had survived, I could see now that perhaps only a fourth of the original planting had made it but I was grateful beyond belief even so. I went down the rows, methodically pulling them out by their roots and stuffing them into big canvas bags. Then I took one last look and got the hell out of there, hoping I'd never see that place again. Never did see the SS demon.

Where to dry them was another problem. Stringing them up around the cabin might have been OK, but it was a little tricky since Joshua could come by at any time. However, I'd made a discovery a few weeks before that was heaven-sent.

Coming back to the cabin one day, I went inside and suddenly a thought hit me — I went back out and took another look and then went back in again. No doubt about it, it was bigger outside than it was inside! Now what was this? Then I saw something I'd never really noticed before — a ladder, on the inside, going up the side wall. Ladder? Going nowhere? I had assumed that it was for getting at the bare rafters overhead but . . . I climbed up and there, on the other side of the wall, was a narrow

little room! How strange!

I have no idea what it was for but the way the rafters and the wall and the roof joined, it was nearly impossible to see that hidden addition. Had it been some sort of bootlegger's stash? (Which, come to think of it, was probably exactly right.) At any rate, it was made to order as a drying-room and I strung the plants up by their stalks and in a week they were dry enough to pick clean.

The lower patches contributed their little bit but what they lacked in bulk they made up for in flowers. The entire crop was certainly less than spectacular and the combination of bad growing conditions and a short season had cut down on the potency by quite a lot. But, never mind, it was a decent harvest, after all, yielding nearly two pounds when we had expected next to nothing.

I had had enough of NoDak, however, for all the sweet scent of sage and the melancholy voice of the meadowlark — I packed up my stuff in early October, when the nights were getting very cold, said my goodbyes and thanks to Boo and Joshua and headed on down the road, back to Bloomington & Co. and the Warm Morning stove at 140.

Nov. 7, 1972 — Richard Nixon wins a landslide victory, carrying every state but Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.
Nov. 9, 1972 — Bombing strikes against North Vietnam intensify.

PART VII
Truckin' . . . Got My Chips Cashed In . . .

Where you've got a home as
Long as I've got mine
—Canned Heat

Standing at the edge of the field on top of Lampkins Ridge was a strange, wonderful feeling. Up north it had been stark and uncompromising; winter had already begun to settle in. But here it was still mid-fall and the fingers of chill in the air were tinged with warmth. The emptiness and harsh sun of the northern plains were forgotten.

It was dawn and a light mist slept on the broad meadow, cloaking all but the tallest weeds and briars in a dream of soft down. Most of the trees were still a dark green but some were a blaze of flaming yellow. They felt close and familiar; the scent on the air was of living things.

Zeke and Davy had done a bang-up job in May, deepening the compost in each bed, but Davy had neglected them ever since. Zeke said the weeds had all but taken over and the plants were short and reedy — it was disheartening to see how poorly they did when not tended. But the survivors seemed healthy enough and he'd set to work weeding and watering.

They weren't ready to flower and there had been enough warm weather left to hope for a good crop still. He culled the first few who showed signs of being males and now, in late October, they were coming back with amazing vitality.

In each of the four patches, except Gertrude, they were thick with female flowers and a good six feet tall. Gertrude had always been the stumpy one and apparently no amount of compost or tending would ever make any difference. They were short and anemic but hardly a total loss.

The rest were wreathed in that heady scent of marijuana plants in full flower — the fat, resinous buds exuberant with a satisfied air of culmination. There were only twenty or so plants in each patch but they were masterpieces of dope-dom.

Zeke had been duly astonished when I laid out the nice pile of baggies from Eldorado. I spun the story for them in a drawn-out series of vignettes which actually approximated the truth, in places. It was a happy tale but the grass, given the promise of Lampkins Ridge, was still decidedly on the skimpy side.

Davy, despite two years in Fiji, was as offhanded as ever. He seemed to live in a kind of perpetual shrug, at the tail end of a what-the-hell grin. His wispy blond hair had grown even blonder and there were stories of the South Seas to tell — tho for some reason, we had to draw him out with a few pipes of dope each time.

After a little prompting (the nostalgia for the islands seem to sit on him rather heavily) he told us about the islanders and how they lived. They were completely unafraid of the sea, he said, and even little kids would go out spear-fishing on the reefs, thinking nothing of it if the trailing blood attracted sharks. Fijians believe in a "Shark God" and while they would occasionally lose a fish, grabbed right off of their belts, they were unconcerned. Davy said they were seldom actually attacked.

His admiration for them showed in a genuine fondness and a sorrow at having had to leave them. Their attitude toward life was a thoroughgoing *laissez-faire* that he could appreciate more than most. They were utterly tolerant of anything that didn't violate their taboos, whether it was drugs, homosexuals, "crazy people" (including whites), or that strange obsession with making money. They did nothing until a complete consensus of the entire group had been reached and could sit around for days, thrashing over some issue until an agreement was finally reached. Time imposed no constraints on them and they did not care to think in terms of "schedules." If someone said he would come visit tomorrow, he was just as likely to show up next week — for "tomorrow" and "next week" meant pretty much the same thing to them.

Not that they were utterly benevolent, for they had a list of running feuds that would have baffled the Hatfields and the McCoys. They tended to be very big and fierce-looking but they were normally very gentle, so there was seldom any real damage done. One evening Davy ruefully described one of their "Yangôna" sessions — a little ritual he'd taken part in just once and avoided ever after.

Yangôna was a drink they made from some foul root. In small doses it was nicely soothing but, supposedly, when you drank a lot, it had quasi-hallucinogenic properties. All it really did, he said, was to make people sicker than dogs.

There were a few Yangôna-freaks who were forever getting up little powwows so they could drink the stuff — reluctant to go on a toot by themselves, they got everybody hooked in, for everything that the Fijians did, they did in a group. These affairs started in the evening and the men (only men) would sit around the fire until late into the night, drinking the fetid, snot-green liquid and getting up fairly often to go and vomit in the bushes. From Davy's description it sounded pretty much like my experience with the Baby Woodrose Seeds — only you weren't allowed to stop. It seemed to be one of those "manhood" things and the trick was seeing who could get the sickest and not care.

On his third trip into the bushes to take a leak and throw up, Davy spied a guy standing nearby, doing the same. They were both pretty miserable. He looked at Davy, Davy looked at him — one of those "I will if you will" looks — and they held onto one another as they snuck off into the shrubbery. After that he always found some excuse to beg off and they didn't seem to take too much offense, since he was a "crazy white" anyway and a mere schoolteacher at that.

Davy had always had a slight streak of the macho in him but when he returned

there was a curious blending of that, even stronger than before, with a new-found gentleness. He had taken to wearing a blue, flowered sarong around the apt and 140 was transformed by grass mats and garlands of shells, sharks' teeth and beads. He had taken over when Zeke went up to NoDak but had no real claim to it — 140 was always shared by whoever needed it, the home we could always return to. Sometimes one or the other of us lived there alone but more often two or three were living there. Zeke said that once there were no less than twelve people using it as a crashpad, sleeping in shifts. He seldom even knew all their names.

We made several trips up to the Ridge, tending the plants in a race against the sun, and by early November the nights had turned really cold. There was a light frost or two and during the last warm spell we decided it was harvest time. The three of us drove up in the early evening and made the long trek up to the top.

By now most of them had recovered fully — they were over six feet and the branches were thick with huge flower buds. We pulled them out carefully and shook off the dirt. The air filled with their heady green aroma — we filled bag after bag as the sun slowly sank beyond the treetops.

Anton had not helped with the crop at all, since he'd been in Connecticut visiting his mother that summer, but he pitched in yet again with the cleaning, in order to earn a few lids. He was still in the same place, just a block or so from 140, in the side apartment of an old house with some other freaks living next door. Sophie was as sleek and as arrogant as ever, with a new batch of kittens — which Anton had managed to "lose" for day or two in the baroque mess of his (what better word for it?) digs. When it came to housekeeping, of course, he was as useless as a nun running a whorehouse. He sat amid the rubble, bashing away on the piano (strewn with music and overflowing ashtrays), his eyes bright with excitement and as intense as ever. The beard and crooked overbite made him more than ever the perfect Yankee. He was still too paranoid to grow his hair long — but at least he was finally taking an interest in women again, having more or less gotten over Kim. We never talked about her at all.

Before long I realized I was rediscovering Bloomington and that here was a place, a sense of community, that suited me to a T. Everywhere I looked there was something quietly wonderful. There was the health-food store, the Clear Moment, in a beat-up old house near Kirkwood, just around the corner from old Ma Balls' place; Dunn Meadow was more than ever a hangout for freaks; People's Park, a new rendezvous for panhandling and guitar playing in an abandoned lot near the Von Lee — an old movie house that now ran foreign films and counterculture stuff; the Ashram and the New-Age Deli, the vegetarian cafe they ran; Rapp's, the Jewish Deli, still a prime spot for coffee and pastry and chess-playing; there was the little Chinese grocery store that had fresh fish and incredibly good Chinese soy sauce; the pizzeria on Kirkwood, next to all the bars and pool halls; the head shops and record stores that sent powerful wafts of incense along the streets and the sounds of sitars and electric guitars;

used book shops, always with people on the streets in front selling home-made jewelry and tie-died clothes — people in long hair and beads, tattered jeans and granny dresses, stoned and smiling and happy; little shops that sold bead curtains, chimes and Indian bedspreads; ice-cream shops and coffee houses.

When you walked past the old, frame houses with the decrepit porches and little turreted front rooms, there was the smell of grass drifting along, blending with the pungent scent of patchouli oil and the strains of Jefferson Airplane, Carol King, Cream and Yes. The freaks no longer had to walk down the alleyways late at night, to avoid the "grits" in their pickup trucks . . . but we did anyway, out of habit and a sense of camaraderie, sharing a J with whoever came along. There were rain showers and sunshine and soft breezes and, above all, there was time. Infinite, eternal time, for this *was,* for us, a new age — one where we could be unashamed of our love and in tune with the rhythms of the earth.

I soaked it all in in a happy daze. Grungy, tiny, inconvenient-as-hell 140 felt like home.

Nov. 21, 1972 — The convictions of the "Chicago 7" are overturned by the Court of Appeals, citing improper conduct on the part of the judge, Julius Hoffman, during the trial.
Dec. 7-19, 1972 — Apollo 17, last flight to the moon; astronauts Cernan, Schmitt and Evans return with 'orange soil.'

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I know the rent is in arrears
The dog has not been fed in years
—The Grateful Dead

The rent was still $37 a month — it had not gone up since Ian had first taken the place in 1966. Zeke, George and Davy had lived there part of that first summer and since then many others had come and gone. Occasionally Zeke would bring one of his "strays" by and hint that they needed a place to stay (not infrequently they were refugees from the mental-health system) but Davy, being temporary head of household, put his foot down and would take in no more loungers, three being quite enough for him. He wasn't all that happy with my being there, to tell the truth, but he accepted it with more or less good grace. In any case, he had enrolled again at IU and was taking courses in sculpture, so he was gone most of the day. Invariably he would come home in the early evening to find me and Zeke sprawled around the room in a fog of tobacco smoke, reading books and listening to the stereo.

Every so often he would incite us to a frenzy of cleaning the place up but by and large it had that homey "lived-in" look, assuming you're a Cro-Magnon and live in a

cave. Not that he had anything to complain about. When I moved in I insisted on a complete hosing down of the kitchen and we found a bag of dripping, black something-or-other behind the refrigerator. (After careful consideration we figured it may have been a bag of potatoes at some point.) There were cans in the cupboard that were so old the labels could no longer be read. We couldn't get the sink unstopped so we dismantled the entire thing, not realizing until it was too late that one of the thingees we were unscrewing was the cold-water pipe. The fine spray of water shooting out under pressure should have tipped us off, but it didn't. It came apart and the water shot out like an uncorked geyser and we couldn't find the shut-off valve. It was an unhappy twenty minutes trying to get the pipe back together ("Well if you think you can do better, *go right ahead* . . .") but we finally succeeded in capping the thing. We looked around woefully at the three-inch pond on the kitchen floor but at least it was the best mopping it'd ever had. (Or ever would have, come to think of it.) We eventually got the kitchen into shape and it took almost a month to get it back to normal.

The rent had remained low because of a special arrangement Ian had worked out long ago with the landlord. It was a fascinating little dance that we went thru once or twice a year. Waking up in the morning (or thereabouts), a little puzzled at how dark it still was, I'd look out the window and see the landlord's big, fat Winnebago parked not two feet away, blocking all the light. It was time to start the quadrille.

Harley was a slovenly, beer-bellied, red-necked S.O.B. who never missed a chance to kick a dog or yell crude things at any passing female under the age of fifty. He lived to party. He and his pre-Stone Age buddies would spend the night out in the Winnebago swilling booze and playing poker — blasting Tammy Wynette and Waylon Jennings at full volume. About four in the morning they'd start getting sentimental, singing along with Tammy and crying their poor little eyes out. Then somebody would start a fight and they'd spill out into the yard, hollering death threats and trying to stab each other with steak knives. We just loved it when they came to visit.

This was Harley's little way of letting us know it was time to settle things up but it was never a straightforward affair and could drag on for a week or more. The first day one of us would gingerly approach Harley and shmooze him up: "How's it goin', how's the wife . . ." etc. He'd grumble and grouse like we were asking if he'd mind if we paid for his daughter's abortion — so much for that. After another day or two a couple of us would be sitting out on the steps and here he'd come, that beer-gut barely held in place by a torn T-shirt, and he'd start bitching about things around the house — the bills were too high, we were using too much water, etc., etc. We'd work the conversation around until we could make some veiled references to grass and ever-so-gently suggest that we could maybe part with a couple of lids, as a token of good will. He'd stomp off muttering threats about "fuckin' hippies" and what he'd like to do to the whole lot of 'em.

This was not to be taken seriously.

We'd continue to hang around on the front porch and when the fat bastard came around to start in on how he couldn't afford to rent this place out any more and he had this "girlfriend" he wanted to put into our apt (he actually did install hookers from time to time in the front apt — taking his share of the cut in "visits") we'd go along with it for a while and then pull out a J. In no time he'd be taking a hit or two — just to be sociable, donchaknow — and again we'd offer him a bag. He'd angrily refuse once more . . . but this time there'd be just the hint of a tiny little smile on his face. He'd go into his "good 'ol boy" routine as he walked off — chuckling indulgently, shaking his head and going on about "them fuckin' hippies and their fuckin' dope . . ."

After a couple more days (and sleepless nights — often I'd just go someplace else at night during the siege) one of us would stand behind the house, next to the shed, nervously waiting for a chance to snag old Harley as he puttered around the yard. This was a delicate stage. We'd have to find a way to proffer a nice fat lid to him without setting him off. I usually began by explaining that the latest studies showed how good grass was for arthritis. "Oh?" he'd say, wistfully, and finally stop to consider it.

The old goat would pretend to have a hard time making up his mind over this "new" slant on things. He was torn with awful doubts and deeply disturbed by the moral implications. The fat goof played it perfectly — the coy maiden who could no longer resist these persistent temptations; patting the air with his hands before demurely succumbing at last as he took the proffered lid. Well, two, . . . if you insist. The Winnebago would be gone inside of an hour.

Why he bothered with this elaborate waltz I'll never know but it never varied, year in and year out, and the rent never went up over a period of at least ten years.

Dec. 15, 1972 — Eighty-one pounds of heroin seized in the "French Connection" case is reported missing from NYPD property room.
Dec. 18, 1972 — After secret talks in Paris fail, U.S. starts massive bombing of North Vietnam. Heavy civilian casualties.
Dec. 26, 1972 — Former president Harry S Truman dies at age 88.

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His clothes are dirty but his hands are clean
And you're the best thing that he's ever seen
—Bob Dylan

Anton and Davy held an uneasy truce but Davy still liked to poke at Anton, finding him all-too-serious about everything. Anton retaliated with sarcasm just abstruse enough to go over Davy's head for a minute. When all else failed, he would do The Glare and that was the end of that.

One evening the four of us were at Anton's place, loading up the pipe. Davy took a long time getting it tamped down just right and when he finally got it fixed just to his liking, he reached over to Anton and held it out with an exaggerated, leering, grin and said, "How's about a big old *suck*?" Anton raised one eyebrow, gave him a Grade II stare and said, "I *beg* your pardon . . . ?" then quietly took the pipe, carefully emptied it out onto a cigarette paper, took infinite care in rolling it up into a J and silently handed it back to Davy. Zeke and I damn near exploded as they solemnly passed the J back and forth, glaring at one another like two Sumo wrestlers over the last piece of pie.

Davy baited Anton whenever he could but sometimes it didn't even take any effort — his instinct for trouble would do the job nicely. One of his favorite tricks was to drive around the parking lot of the main library at IU, ostensibly looking for a place to park. But he would pass up this one and he would pass up that one — neither Anton or I saying a word — and at last he'd see one that someone else was just getting ready to pull into. Then he'd gun the motor of the VW bus and pretend to shoot into that spot just inches ahead of them. There were various reactions to this but the one Davy liked the most was when the other guy would race to pull in first — at which point Davy would back off and sit there, pounding the steering wheel in a convulsion of hilarity. The guy in the other car would roar in outrage and Anton would quietly turn to Davy and, in all seriousness, intone, "Y'know, Davy . . . you really are a *pig*." Which, of course, would send Davy into another frenzy of howls.

The end of this game came when a frat-rat with an attitude raced him into a spot once and wound up banging into the parking meter so hard it sent his head into the steering wheel, giving him a monstrous bloody nose. Davy was quiet for a moment and then sheepishly drove out of the parking lot, slinking away like a sweet young thing caught picking her nose at a dedication ceremony.

Anton was even more ignorant of mechanical things than Zeke was (who had once asked me, while we were changing a tire, if we used the same wrench to put the lug-bolts back on as we did to take them off) and Davy knew this full well. He was enthusiastically describing some new wonder-car to Anton and he was getting more and more caught up in it — especially as Anton merely nodded in obvious skepticism at each new revelation, using that patient "Yeah, right" expression of his. Finally Davy says, "No, no — it's really a very *intelligent* car . . ." To which Anton thoughtfully answered, "Hmm. Monitors all the essential functions and reports on their status, eh?" And Davy said, "Right! Right! There's this little computer in there that . . ." "And it engages a feedback-loop," went on Anton, "to properly assess cognitive simulations?" A bit more doubtfully, Davy began to enthuse some more. Anton cut in, "And thus achieve a cybernetic interface with the occupant?" This stopped Davy cold and he said, "Huh?" Anton took a short beat, carefully trying to arrange his thoughts — so as to be *absolutely* clear. "Does the car," he said, "*speak* to you?" "Uh, well, no . . . I mean . . . I suppose *some* day . . ." "Well, then, exactly what is your criterion for intelligence?"

"Huh?" "You said it was an intelligent car . . . if it does not actually converse with you, then . . ." "No, no, what I *meant* was that it . . . it . . . it's an intelligent *car* — it has this computer chip that . . ."

"Well, by intelligent — I would just like to understand this — do you mean that it . . ."

This went on for fifteen minutes or so, until Davy finally banged out of the door in disgust, having caught on but having no means of retaliation left. Anton settled back with an insufferably smug air, saying not another word.

(Surprisingly enough, for one who became outraged over the slightest criticism anent housekeeping, Anton was not at all thin-skinned about his mechanical deficiencies. Once he came by in the middle of the night and forlornly described how his car was "pulling to the right, real hard, making these awful *clumping* noises . . ." I said, "Why, you idiot — you've got a flat tire! I heard you halfway down the block!" He ruefully said, "Oh," and we went out to change the tire. After a bit I said, "Uh, look. I didn't mean to . . . I mean, I'm sorry I called you an idiot, y'know, and I . . ." "Not at all!" he said, "In fact, I personally would've added '*village*'!" — and we happily finished the job.)

After having cast around for a while, not sure what he wanted to do, Davy applied to the sculpture department at IU and now, along with the South Seas theme, 140 had become cluttered with chisels, hammers, chunks of limestone, bags of clay, armature rods, a hotplate, pots of congealed wax and numerous half-finished figures, some quite straightforward and others that could only be called semi-realistic. Before long this got out of hand and he found a studio in Arbutus Hall, site of the Campus Cops Atrocity of long ago.

He was particularly fond of the sessions with nude models and I found myself wandering in on those nights — sculpture was becoming quite fascinating. Before long I was being recruited to help out with the plaster-work, for Davy was getting into casting techniques.

He worked feverishly on his models in clay and wax but for some reason, the nudes never came out quite right. The proportions were never really true, somehow — they were always slightly off. In frustration he finally convinced a model to let him make a *direct* cast of her leg. He plastered her down, took off the cast and then set it up in Bondo (the stuff used as a body-filler on cars) and carefully trimmed it down. It looked awful. He painted it. No better. At last he made a crucial discovery when he realized (it was probably in some book somewhere, but he always had to figure these things out for himself) that exact proportions do not translate to a sculptured object. The proportions have to be slightly off, in this direction or that direction, in order to *look* right — I have no idea why. Armed with this insight he stopped casting altogether and began experimenting with wax alone, trying this or that proportion or line, always seeking that inner sight that would make it look right for him. And in the course of this

practice he came up with more and more fanciful figures — alien forms out of some science-fiction fantasy (he read a lot of the pulp-magazine stuff), as if his imagination had also been set free.

One evening a young woman of about twenty walked into the casting room of Arbutus — a place so littered with chunks of plaster, clay and metal that it looked like the inside of a junk-yard cement mixer — and Davy and I saw her at the same instant. She was stunning — not "beautiful" or "gorgeous" . . . just stunning. There was a quiet innocence and yet a feral, bold intensity to her; it gave you the feeling that she was completely at ease with herself and her ambitions — an open self-assurance and poise that was wonderful.

We fixed our eyes on her like a pair of foxes glancing up as the only vixen in three hundred miles sashayed over the horizon. It was electric. I hesitated for just an instant and that millisecond was enough — Davy got there first. He was getting her name and complete biography before I had a chance to get my feet working, much less my mouth. I thought to myself how unseemly this unwholesome eagerness was — she actually giggled in amusement at his blathering attentions and I could've strangled the both of them.

Her name was Sara and when Davy fobbed me off with a casual introduction, I was permanently stuck in the status of a friendly also-ran. From that moment on, he hovered over her like a trout-fisherman over a favorite stretch of a cold stream. There is something to be said for speed.

Jan. 11, 1973 — E. Howard Hunt pleads guilty to all charges and says there are "no higher-ups involved."
Jan. 15, 1973 — Barker, Sturgis, Martinez and Gonzales plead guilty; defense attorney says there was "no criminal intent" and "no evil motive." McCord & Liddy plead innocent.

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And just keep truckin' . . . on
—The Grateful Dead

Zeke and Anton were into another composing jag and Zeke had a piano piece he wanted Anton to learn. It was a real head-kicker called "Nascension" (I had suggested the title) which was far too difficult for Zeke to play, since he'd written it as a kind of showpiece — meaning Horowitz himself would have had a tough time with it. Anton took up the challenge and would sit for hours, going over one knotty sequence after another and stopping now and then to contemplate the next bit of outrage — stroking his beard with a puzzled, hurt air before diving in again. It drove them both crazy, for when Anton asked Zeke how a particular passage was supposed to go, Zeke had to

struggle with "normal" language to make himself understood. They looked and sounded like a pair of alchemists pondering over a formula from the Book of the Dead.

It was midwinter but the weather, even for Bloomington, was unusually mild. Zeke had bought a van the previous spring, while I was loafing around down in the desert, and it had been completely neglected, naturally, so I decided to take it in hand.

It was a white '65 Ford that had side panels emblazoned with Day-Glo daisies, paisley swirls and starbursts. There were "Nuke the White House" bumper stickers, plenty of rust and dents, and a muffler in name only. All in all, not exactly low-profile. It seemed to me that it might invite comment on runs up to Lampkins Ridge.

It didn't run worth a damn, either, so I nagged Zeke into helping me fix it up. We used the carport behind Anton's place as a base of operations while he, of course, remained benignly aloof to the entire project, convinced that it was a fool's errand. (No comments from the audience, please.)

Zeke was hardly what you'd call handy with tools but we set to work on the motor. It was missing badly and I asked around a few garages and finally found an amiable mechanic who loaned me his compression checker. His name was Armand and he seemed rather amused by my questions but he was full of cheerful advice — probably figuring that I would soon be bringing the whole thing in in pieces.

Zeke-of-little-faith wanted to get a manual and read it first but that wasn't my style. He got one anyway and sat to one side, reading aloud all sorts of arcane nonsense while I did the compression check. It was low in one cylinder (probably a bad valve) so I tore off the carburetor and all the other junk while Zeke read from the Tome of Ptolemy. Stuff like, ". . . the intake manifold has a reverse heat-induction flange connected to the quasi-heterodyne filter. Care should be taken, *blah, blah, blah* . . ." All this I ignored but he intoned every word like it was the Sermon on the Mount — placing special emphasis on the passages marked "WARNING." He was having a ball, naturally, but I was doing all the work.

Parts were strewn all over the back by the time we got to tearing the head off and Zeke casually mentioned that maybe we should label where everything went. I told him that was a splendid idea and why didn't he get right on it. He picked up a chunk of something important-looking and said, "OK, . . . so what's this?" I said I hadn't the faintest idea and he looked disappointed.

"Wait a minute — you don't know what this is?"

"Nope."

"Well, what's this one, then?"

"Beats me." He seemed perturbed about something. "Well, how are we going to get this thing back together again if you don't know what any of this stuff is?"

"Look, when we come to a place where it looks like that goes, we put it there and if it fits, that's where it goes."

"But . . . but . . . what's it called?"

"I don't know."

"But . . . but . . . I've been reading this manual to you all this time and (he's leafing thru it madly) . . . and what the hell is it *called*?"

"How should I know? You're the one reading the book."

"Yes, but . . . goddam it, if you don't know what it *is* . . ."

"I know what it *is* . . . it's the thingee that you put over this thingee here — see, it's got oil all over it. I suppose it keeps the oil from running out all over the engine."

"Yes, but . . . you mean I've been reading this thing all along and you haven't been paying any attention *at all*?"

"That's right. Seems to keep you amused, tho."

"Yeah, but . . . yeah, but . . ."

"Look, you take something off and when you're finished, you put it back on — there's only one place it'll fit, right?"

"Well, . . ."

"And when you've got it all back on, it'll run — because it's *supposed* to run."

"So you haven't understood *any* of what I've been reading?"

"No. Have you?"

"Well . . . no, but . . . how do you know what's wrong?"

"I don't. But when I come to it, I'll know — 'cause it'll *look* wrong. OK?"

He looked at me for a while and then he looked at the manual, spread open on his knees. He looked at me, looked at the manual . . . me . . . the manual . . . me, the manual. Apparently he was stumped. He got the idea at last, shrugged, tossed the thing in the back and we got on with it.

The headbolts were harder than hell to get off and we twisted a wrench trying to do it. We had to go out and buy a complete socket set but it was worth it. (We'd been trying to use a set of pot-metal junk we'd inherited from the closet.) So we tried again to loosen the headbolts — still nothing. Finally we took a pipe and put it on the handle of the wrench and then they came off nicely — tho I omit several verses of scraped knuckles and greasy epithets, of course.

When at last the head was lying on the ground we could easily see that one of the valves was chipped and Zeke asked what we did next. I said that that was as far as we could go and we had take it in to Armand for the rest.

We carted it down to the garage and Armand soaked the head in acid and replaced the valve, checking all the springs and giving me a cheerful rundown all the while. He showed me how to tighten the headbolts back on with a torsion bar and even loaned me his — he seemed genuinely pleased that we'd done the job without having to pester him about it.

It took another whole day to get it back together but things went a lot smoother with Zeke actually helping instead of reciting. She ran pretty rough when we fired her back up but before long she settled down and with a little tinkering, she purred like a

race-car. (Well, perhaps roared is the better word.) Anyway, when we took her out for a road-test the difference was positively amazing — I felt as if we'd done something magical. Better than magic, in fact.

I smiled dreamily to myself, like a wizard, as Zeke roared up and down the side streets in triumph.

Jan. 20, 1973 — R. M. Nixon inaugurated for second term.
Jan. 22, 1973 — Lyndon Baines Johnson dies at 64.
Supreme Court legalizes abortion in Roe v. Wade *decision.*
Jan. 23, 1973 — Nixon announces peace treaty with Vietnam and the withdrawal of all U.S. forces; proclaims "peace with honor."
Jan. 30, 1973 — McCord & Liddy found guilty on all counts.

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Semolina Pilchard
Climbin' up the Eiffel Tower
—The Beatles

By this time, Davy was seeing Sara every day and she didn't seem to be tiring of the attention at all. It was hard to get to know her, for Davy didn't even want us around when they were together. He either went over to her place or met her over at Arbutus.

She was a painter, a year or two younger than myself, and for all that she was rather wholesomely cute she had a strong streak of independence and a powerful instinct for mischief. Davy fell for her like a Republican for a tax loophole.

Every evening, like clockwork, we'd be sitting around talking and getting high and just when the conversation was reaching a climax (usually with him and Anton at loggerheads over something) Davy would jump up all of a sudden and announce that he had to "go and talk to Sara."

This was beginning to annoy even Anton, for it was obvious that Davy was running over to Sara to discuss whatever the topic was with her — and then bringing back her verdict the next day, disguised as his own opinions.

One night, just as Davy was on his way out the door to "go and talk to Sara," Anton said, very quietly, "Give her my regards." He said this so calmly, yet with such a tiny twist to it, that Davy stopped cold halfway out the door. He struggled with himself for a moment — this hadda be some ploy of Anton's to get his goat. And yet, he *was* doing quite a bit of catting around lately . . . was it possible that . . . ? Naah — he started to go.

He stopped again and slowly turned around, staring at Anton, who was oh-so-calmly tamping dope into the pipe. Davy started to say something and stopped again,

almost certain that Anton was giving him the business. He made one last try to get out the door as Anton said, ever-so-softly, ". . . and my kisses." Davy whirled around, furious, glaring at Anton like he would kill him and snarled, "What did you say?" Anton looked up, startled, and innocently replied, "I said 'Hand me the matches'." Zeke had his face buried in his chest and I was concentrating on the ceiling, silently handing Anton a match. Davy whirled around to go again, madder than hell — he stopped once more and then banged thru the door and on out. Anton calmly took the match and lit the pipe as Zeke and I howled with glee.

But Davy got over it and soon even began to feel a little more secure about his relationship with Sara. He brought her over one night (when he knew Anton wasn't there) as Zeke and I were smoking a J and she suggested we go out for a drive.

We took the Comet and drove down toward Lake Monroe — a new lake that was still filling up and was supposed to attract hordes of tourists. We didn't quite get to the lake, however, for as we drove along Sara spotted a big, blue water tower, looming up out of the moonlight.

Nothing would do but that we pull in to check it out. I was greatly relieved to note, however, that there was a nice big fence around it. I hadn't much of a taste for heights and I could see where this was going. But Davy, the goof, would have none of it and scaled over the fence, one-two-three, showing off for his lady-love. She, of course, was delighted and followed. Zeke and I reluctantly went over.

We had to climb the damn thing then, for there was a ladder around to the side. Up we went, to a landing that circled the fat behemoth and I was perfectly content to gaze at the view in the bright moonlight from there, glad after all that I'd come along (not that I had any choice in the matter). Unfortunately, Davy had yet begun to show off and he promptly found yet another set of rungs leading straight up to the top. This did not bode well.

Davy just had to climb right on up, with Sara at his heels. I looked at Zeke, Zeke looked at me — then he shrugged and followed them up. I peered at their receding forms as they seemed to be crawling up an enormous precipice. What the hell. I *had* to go, too.

The ladder fell away beneath me as I reached the wide, sloping curve of the dome and Davy was already at the top, sitting there on a square, flat box. Not to be outdone, Sara was calmly perched on the dome itself, next to the box. Rather too brightly for my taste, she said, "Hey, how's about a J?" I looked down at the tops of the distant trees and almost whimpered, clinging to that ladder for dear life. Zeke was nonchalant but clearly going no further — he had one foot crammed into the ladder and his hand clamped to the metal bar in a death-grip.

I had the dope. I had to roll the J.

I twined my legs thru the ladder-rungs, afraid to look down. Shakily, I began to roll the J and then I heard Davy up above — very, very calmly saying, "Sara . . . Sara."

When I looked up, I damn near died — she was standing upright and *walking out onto the curving dome!*

She giggled and continued inching out as Zeke said, "Uh . . . Sara . . ." but she ignored him completely, edging out further and further towards the brink of oblivion. Davy's voice was pleading, now, and his face was white in the soft moonlight: "Sara . . . Sara, please . . . don't go out any more . . . Sara?" She giggled again.

The J slipped out of my fingers and dropped to the landing below. As evenly as I could I said, "Oops! Dropped the J," and quietly began climbing back down to retrieve it. Zeke followed without a word and right after him came Davy. We stood on the landing, trying to light the damn thing and look unconcerned while we recovered and at last she came scrambling back down the ladder, all-too-openly having a good laugh at our expense. But at least that was the end of Davy's attempts to show off — for a long, *long* time.

Feb. 7, 1973 — The Senate votes 70-0 to establish a seven-man committee to look into Watergate. Judge Sirica sets bail at $100,000 for Liddy and McCord.
Feb. 27, 1973 — 200 armed supporters of the American Indian Movement (AIM) seize the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota.

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Make the White Queen run so fast
She hasn't got time to make you a wife
—Yes

With three of us there, it was definitely getting a bit cramped at 140 and we were beginning to feel the strain. Now that Zeke's van was running well enough I did a quick job on fixing up the inside, putting a curtain across the front and using some old pallets from Arbutus to make a sleeping platform. I put in a rug and used a bunch of old blankets and sleeping bags for bedding and Davy helped put in some paneling. Since Zeke didn't need it, I could take off from time to time to live in it for awhile.

One of my favorite places to camp was down by Lake Monroe, on a little side road by a small inlet. It was a well-hidden spot and I could pretend I was a sort of Robinson Crusoe, wandering around the woods looking for signs of life. To keep the illusion going I had to live completely on my own, so I took the fishing poles, which we still had from the NoDak campaign. I'd done a little serious fishing up at the cabin, taking walleyes and Northern pike, and in time I found I could catch smallmouth bass, perch and bluegill often enough to live on. I ran a pole all day and read books under the shade of a tree on the banks. I had a stockpile of canned stuff and between that and the fish I ate pretty well.

It was early spring and chilly much of the time, but I kept a good fire going and collected a huge pile of firewood on my walks. There was a pretty impressive little library in the van gleaned from the stocks at 140, where every previous resident seemed to have left a pile of books behind. I still had the Coleman lantern from the cabin, so I could read in the van well into the night. It provided a fair amount of heat, too. The cold nights added to the sense of survival and tho I still had the catalytic heater, I seldom used it.

All in all it was the life of Riley but after a couple of weeks I'd start to get lonesome and by the time I found myself talking to an imaginary "Friday," I figured I was ready to head to town for a spell. Back from one of these jaunts one day, I found Zeke sitting in his favorite chair, wreathed in a cloud of Three Caftles smoke and hard at work on *War and Peace.* Davy was nowhere to be seen and after I'd gotten warmed up and settled in with a cup of tea, he told me about his latest adventure with acid.

We rarely did acid any more (it was just too damn strong) but Zeke still did some every now and then just to stir things up a bit.

"So you dropped a hit. And then?"

"Well, I had planned this — a day completely away from everything. Nothing was happening, Davy was over at the campus . . . it was just a beautiful day. It seemed perfect so I dug some Windowpane out of the freezer and when the rush started to come, I grabbed some Froberger — the Suite in E Minor — and I was just getting into this really sensual thing with it . . ."

"Yeah, and?"

"And then there came this pounding on the door, like the cops or the landlord or something."

"Oh, shit."

"It was just Davy. I'd locked the door and he was yelling why was the door locked, so I let him in."

"Only sensible thing to do."

"I suppose. Anyway, it turns out he doesn't have any classes that day after all and he's got this hot idea — he wants to build a 3-D chess set."

"Aha."

"Yeah. So, well . . . I listened for awhile; I mean, he was really on fire for this thing but I said I didn't really think I was up for it at the time because, y'know, I was doing acid."

"Uh-huh."

"Well, I said did he mind, 'cause I just didn't think I could handle it, so he's nodding and he says, 'Yeah, right, I understand . . . I don't mind. But the first thing we'll have to do is go to the hardware store and then to that hobby shop on Walnut where we can get some plexiglas . . . '"

"Oh, dear."

"So what could I do?"

"Hit him with a brick?"

"On acid?"

"Well, maybe not . . ."

"So we go around to these stores, see, and we get glue and these sticks of wood and this thin plexiglas . . . all the stuff for a 3-D chess set. Right?"

"OK. Sounds like fun . . . if you ain't doin' acid."

"If you ain't doin' acid. Right. But we bring everything back, these magic markers and an X-acto knife and all. So we use *my* board for the base and it's taking *hours* to do all this — I mean, the whole fucking *day.* And it's a real bitch, mounting these posts on the edges and making chessboards out of the plexiglas — marking the squares, y'know — and Davy decides to make it an *eight-level* 3-D chess board."

"Eight? Why . . ."

"I dunno, he wanted a cube, right? So by then I'm getting into it, see, and Davy says how this is gonna be a revolutionary new design . . . change the whole game of chess and . . . and I'm really getting into it, except that it takes *all day* and I'm doing acid. Before you know it, the day is shot and it's already evening and I'm comin' down."

"Hmm. Not good."

"So then we smoke some dope and we finally get it done and set in to try and play a game on this thing."

"With just one chess set?"

"Right. One set."

"But . . . how did the pieces move?"

"Oh, like normal — the knight could move two up and one to a side and the queen could go anywhere. Same as always."

"Yeah, but . . ."

"It worked fine. We really got into it — all the various ways things could go . . . it was easy, no kidding."

"Yeah? Sounds like a real bitch . . ."

"But then, we played, I dunno, three or four games, and it was great, 'cause there were all these like . . . tunnels and things. You could see down long files and diagonals and it really was 3-D. You could make moves along all these different ranks and columns and it was just a mind-fuck. But we always kept getting things screwed up, because we'd try to take back a move . . . we were both pretty stoned by then . . ."

"I suppose."

"And when we'd try to take back a move, the whole thing would just get totally messed up. But the real problem was, there wasn't any way to get a checkmate — there was always some place for the king to move. So it just went on and on, with queens coming back into play and it just never quit."

"Never-Never-Land Chess."

"Right. And it's 3:00 a.m. before we finally quit and I dream all night about armies chasing me thru these cavernous mazes that keep turning into chess boards. And I never did get to get into the acid." (Long, sad pause.)

"So where is it now?"

"Well, the next day, he says, 'Y'know, if we could just get the bugs outta this thing, we could make a whole bunch of 'em and sell 'em for twenty bucks.' But I put the kibosh on that posthaste so he carried it over to Sara's place."

"But, Zeke, you guys could make *millions* on this! First you make these things, see, and then you market 'em as Acid Chess — it's a kit, y'know, comes with a hit of Windowpane — and when they finish, they have to figure out who's playing black and who's playing white, so, *then* . . ." But the look in his eye told me I better not go on, so I gave it a rest.

Davy was not really a sound player but he was a real bulldog and aggressive as hell. What he lacked in technique and opening knowledge he made up for in sheer tenacity. It drove Anton nuts because he would take forever even to make the simplest moves — Anton was hardly fast himself but at least he stayed in the same time zone. In a way, tho, it improved his game, for when he'd try one of his outrageous schemes it would, as usual, blow up on him — but then he'd bear down to justify that line, for there was just no way he was going to let Davy beat him. Davy refused to study openings and there was always a flaw that could be ridden down eventually. Even so, he could beat me or Anton occasionally and he could wear down Zeke sometimes by the sheer weight of his kamikaze tactics.

The previous summer had been the time of the great Fischer/Spassky match and chess was undergoing a tremendous revival. All of a sudden there were people playing everywhere — in the Union, the Deli, sitting on the little stone walls here and there along Kirkwood. I hadn't been able to follow much of the match, being *incommunicado* out at the cabin, but Zeke brought out a game from the paper sometimes and we'd pore over the damn thing, trying to make sense of it. Anton got into it far more and he had the complete record, so we inched our way thru the games, reading the nearly incomprehensible analysis and doing our best to understand the moves. That level of chess (despite the wise noddings of the head by all the duffers) is really beyond the comprehension of any but the experts and masters but it fired the hearts of thousands with Chess Mania and we began to get caught up in it, too.

Zeke and Anton got into it heavily and wanted to enter The Great Big, First-Ever IU Chess Tournament. They tried to make it a group effort but Davy demurred and so did I. I'd had quite enough of these characters over at the IU Chess Club. I went over there to play from time to time just to see how I really stacked up against other players. It was pretty grim.

In the first place, it seemed to be de rigueur among that set to reach out and grab pieces with a sort of nonchalant aggressiveness — holding it *just so,* in a sort of

negligent three-fingered grip. Then they'd slap it down with an air of arrogant complacency and lean back to absentmindedly whap the time-clock, still glaring at the board like they were irritated beyond belief to have to play against such a moron. Every one of them was a short-haired nerd of the first rank and this whole act was performed for every move of every game, without letup. And when I won (which I often did) they'd go into paroxysms of grief about how they'd lost track of the game — the light was bad . . . they'd left their glasses at home . . . you just got lucky, pulling a Reuben Sandwich Gambit at move 27 without knowing it, etc., etc. This happened *every single time* and, of course, if you lost you were *really* in for it. They dripped savoir faire — Miss Piggy sweeping every category of the Academy Awards. Play in an eight-hour tournament with these incredible goofs? No thank you. Anton and Zeke, however, were oblivious to all this, having never played there themselves — they only knew that I usually beat these cretins and by now the two of them were as good as I was; Zeke was probably better.

And so the great day came. I drove them over to the campus and as they chatted nervously about their strategies and chances, I offered a little encouragement. I said, "Yeah, after all — the worst that could happen is you get beat by a snot-nosed twelve-year-old with a mouth like Muhammed Ali." They fell silent and pensive, aiming glares my way.

Play began in a high-ceilinged, dark-paneled room with an Olde English atmosphere. Zeke and Anton got their entries and sat at their tables as several others ran thru quick little speed chess games, slapping their clocks and being generally obnoxious. Finally the tournament began and I went outside to wander around. It was going to be a long day and I didn't want to overload on kibitzing.

When I came back, things were pretty well in hand for Zeke. He'd had the misfortune to draw one of the better players but he was already well into the middle game and had his opponent on the run. He was a greasy-looking, overweight, Class-A player with thick, horn-rimmed glasses and a pimply face. Zeke had suckered him in beautifully with one of his hyper-complicated lines, bringing piece after piece into his queenside corner before finally unleashing them in a maelstrom of mind-boggling intricacies. Old Pimply was floundering, doing his best to untangle this Chinese knot of possibilities, but he was clearly out of his depth. Zeke sat back and rolled one cigarette after another, not even bothering to fake concentration, since he had no idea himself where this was all going. He was just waiting for the other guy to blow it and Pimply knew it; he was furious.

Well, he did blow it, about thirty moves into the game. Zeke opened up a winning line and there was a blitz of exchanged pieces. When the dust settled, Zeke was obviously in control. He lolled back complacently and Mr. Acne tried one last swindle — which Zeke promptly fell for. It looked like he still might have a winning game but the geek quickly offered a draw (offhandedly, as if there really was no doubt about it)

and Zeke graciously accepted. His lack of a killer instinct had done him in again — he was simply too chagrined at having fallen for the swindle to go on.

Anton was doing a little better, for his first opponent had tried to sucker him into a speed-game — not knowing that that was exactly the briar patch *this* Brer Rabbit wanted to be in. He blitzed the goof easily and was well into the second game. He wasn't having much trouble, from what I could see, so I went out for another stroll and when I returned, things were looking better than ever.

For his second match Zeke had drawn an old duffer who had apparently been some sort of checkers king, for he kept trying to jump Zeke's pieces. Zeke was gracious, of course, but the old geezer was getting more and more petulant, trying to blame one egregious faux-pas after another on Zeke. I wandered over to Anton's table and he was destroying a nervous young woman-player, stroking his beard and acting so *gallant* that I wanted to strangle him myself (no telling what she would have done, given a pair of pinking shears).

At the break they were doing quite well and we went thru the games together. They were having the time of their lives and giving me the business for not having had the nerve to enter. I just smiled and waited, pretty sure the glee would not last thru the night. In the evening session Zeke drew one of the most obnoxious players in the club — a tall, mangy fellow with wild black hair and wilder black eyes. He never missed a chance for a "coffee house" win and spotted Zeke for a prime victim right off the bat. He leaned across the table, almost to the point of touching some of Zeke's pieces, tapping his foot and humming. He began to show increasing irritation at Zeke's imagined slowness and would thrum the table in frustration until Zeke moved, sighing at last as if to say, "Well, God, it's about time." Then he, of course, would promptly get up and wander off to get a cup of coffee, leaving Zeke to ponder his last move as if it were the most hideous mistake he'd ever made. And after seeing how fond Zeke was of his Three Caftles, the miserable sneak began to insist that he was "allergic" to cigarette smoke — and would Zeke have the decency to refrain? (I had seen this joker on several occasions, holding forth in a room so smoke-filled that it hurt *my* eyes.) Zeke was infinitely obliging and took this charlatan at his word, slipping out for a quick one every now and then and hurrying back when he saw the faker glancing around impatiently. I *told* him the guy was a liar and a fraud but he wouldn't listen to me. Being obliging to a fault was a kind of Quest for the Holy Grail with him.

The result was inevitable. Zeke finally got rattled when this shyster insisted he had touched a bishop and so must move it. The referee came and Zeke, as usual, caved in and moved the damn thing. It was all over and he was soon forced to resign — he even shook hands with the bastard, who grandly complimented him on his "gutsy defense, perhaps just slightly mistimed."

Anton was faring much better but he had drawn by far the most obnoxious little twerp in the whole place — an incredibly irritating twelve-year-old (!) whose snide

whine we had been hearing all day. Before play had begun this butterball had been playing a game of speed chess with some poor victim and the little shit had rocked the whole place when he burst out into a high-pitched squeal of laughter, shouting at the guy, "You can't do *thaa-aat*! You're in *chee-eeck*, you're in *chee-eeck*! Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a *dummy*!" With each match he won, his grating soprano cackle echoed thru the hall as he gleefully skewered another victim.

A too-indulgent world had allowed this fat, bespectacled little toad to survive for far too long — but now it was Anton's turn and he had the little monster totally up the creek, pressing in steadily until he was ready, barely ten moves into the middle game, to mate the slithery dwarf in three. It was obvious — a child of six could have seen it and Anton was in total control. The putrid kid was miserable, hunched over his pieces like Sammy Reshevsky and whining about the light, the chair, the pieces — driving the tournament director crazy with his constant objections. Anton had had enough . . . but he hesitated. I saw a light gleam in his eye and I silently pleaded, "No! Anton . . . NO! Don't get cute — just *nail* the little fucker . . ." but it was too late. He'd seen a brilliant rook sacrifice that would only delay the mate a move or two (he thought) but that would *twist* the knife in on the fetid juvenile. Alas, the kid sat and pondered — and found a way out!

Anton couldn't believe his eyes. The game was still well in hand but now he just *had* to redeem his "brilliancy" — and the longer he thought, the more I screamed internally, "No, you incredible goof — just grind the little bastard down and gut him . . . *don't get cute* . . . !"

Anton reached out — and sacrificed another piece!

On and on it went, Anton desperately hurling piece after piece at the loathsome kid — who gladly gobbled up each one, sinking back more and more into his chair and grinning evilly. At last, as time began to run out on Anton's clock, so did his pieces. The demon midget had survived after all and Anton quietly reached out . . . and tipped over his king.

He sat there, stunned, as the kid screeched at the room in general, "Fish! What a fish! He had me! He had me, and the fish threw it away! Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a *fish*!" and he raced off happily to register the result with the director. Anton tried a Grade-I Glare but the kid was long gone. He aimed it at me, but I wasn't buying. He looked morosely at Zeke for comfort but even Zeke didn't know what to say. We stumbled off into the night, each in our own kind of shellshock.

We analyzed Anton's game and found yet *another* winning line that would've worked. Devastated, he couldn't face another day and retired from the tournament. Zeke went on, however, and was doing rather well . . . until he slipped into the hall at the break to smoke a J. When he returned, he promptly hallucinated a knight sacrifice. His opponent was a little geek in coke-bottle glasses who gazed up at him in outrage, mowed him down in short order, then stomped off in disgust.

I (saint that I am) never brought any of it up again. Until now.

March 22, 1973 — Nixon, citing "executive privilege," says none of his aides will testify before the Senate Committee; L. Patrick Gray admits that John Dean III, counsel to the president, "probably lied" to FBI investigators.
March 23, 1973 — Judge Sirica "provisionally" (pending cooperation with the investigation) sentences E. Howard Hunt to 35 years; Barker, Sturgis, Martinez and Gonzales to 40 years; Liddy to 6-20 years. Sirica reads a letter from James McCord stating that there has been "perjury" and citing "political pressure to plead guilty and remain silent." McCord meets with special counsel Sam Dash.
March 28, 1973 — McCord tells committee investigators that John Mitchell, director of CREEP (the Committee to Re-elect the President) and former attorney general, was the "overall boss" of a broad internal espionage operation and that John Dean was head of the cover-up.

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Marie, the dawn is breaking
Marie, you'll soon be waking
—Leon Redbone

Davy and Sara were getting pretty serious by the time spring rolled around and Davy found a room of his own, over near the campus, to make trysting more convenient. Zeke and I heaved a sigh of relief, for three of us in that tiny apt was definitely getting old. Besides, Davy was starting to get paranoid about the seedlings we had all over the place.

We always wanted to get a jump on spring planting and by April we had a few dope plants going in the window — which, of course, created some problems from time to time. Keeping them small was the main thing since a three-footer tended to attract the attention of passing cops (who had already nailed Zeke once) to say nothing of the occasional visits by wandering, evidently homeless, Pentecostals and Mormons. These jokers liked to drop in about dawn for a heart-to-heart about the state of our souls.

They were an utterly humorless bunch, dripping sincerity, whom we took to kidding by pretending to take them seriously. We'd invite them in with a big grin (knowing it was perfectly useless to try and get rid of them) and kid them along about Jesus and Being Saved and all that, but after a while we'd get fed up with the hokum. One of us would solemnly roll up a J and light it (preferably in the middle of a prayer) and then start passing it around, jumping up every now and then to shout "Hallelujah" and "Amen" and in general behaving like idiots. Davy mooned some Moonies once, proclaiming himself a true Fundament-alist.

At any rate, getting seedlings going was a good way to test hybrids and we were

always on the hunt to grow that one humongous dope-tree, just once — like the pictures in *High Times* of some monster dwarfing six hombres in sombreros. Somehow, nothing ever went right. We couldn't risk having a really big plant in the main patches, so our tries at growing a granddaddy had to be placed in some fairly odd locations. This was never ideal since it made tending them much harder — people found them, farmers mowed them down, etc. Every year it got to be more and more of a disappointment.

We kept at it, tho, and usually started fifteen or twenty plants in small pots in February or March. We became fairly adept at keeping them bonsai-sized to foil the gendarmes. This year there was an early warm spell (the whole winter was mild) and we wanted to take advantage of it by transplanting five or six of these toddlers nearby, where they could get full sun and we could keep an eye on them.

On account of the constabulary we were loath to plant them near 140, so we mulled it over and decided to set them out underneath Anton's bathroom window. We figured what you don't know can't hurt you but he caught us putting them in. He got pretty vehement about it but at last Zeke talked him into letting them stay. We showed him what a meticulous job of camouflage we could do and by the time we were finished, they were in a warm, sunny corner surrounded by nice little ferns and flowers all around. Within a couple of weeks their leaves perked up and their stems began to thicken, gathering strength for what promised to be a prodigious growth spurt. This finally seemed to be our year — everything was falling into place.

We visited them nearly every day, standing nonchalantly by the corner of the house, pretending to discuss the architecture of bathroom windows and sneaking quick peeks at the lovelies. I suppose we thought we were being discreet but no doubt we looked like complete idiots. Just a month after setting them out, however, the crisis came. Anton showed up one morning at the crack of noon, dripping wet and mighty upset. It took a long time to settle him down and even then he was nearly incoherent with panic.

Seems he'd been lolling in the bathtub for an hour or so, perfectly content with life in general and idly tossing soap chips at the ceiling, when he heard voices coming from outside the bathroom window — somewhat hard and authoritative voices. They were discussing whether there was anyone at home and trying to decide which door they should knock on first. Anton froze. The bathwater becomes as still as Walden Pond and he is trying to decide what to do. Soon he hears a knock at the back door: "You know the one I mean?" he says, "Tap, tap, tap, tap — Bam-Bam . . . Wham-WHAM-*WHAM-WHAM.*" He wiped his brow. "You know?" We said we did.

"So I answered it . . ."

"You *answered* it?" we said, in unison.

"Well I had to, they were . . ."

"Never mind . . . get on with it."

"So I forgot to put on a towel . . ."

"Nice touch."

". . . And they wanted to know who lived there." (Pause)

"Well?"

"I said I didn't know."

"Ahh, perhaps . . ."

". . . Well, they didn't like that so I said it was some friends of a friend and I was just staying for the night."

"Good, good . . ."

"And then they asked me some more stuff and I think I said I was from Connecticut and I gave them your name . . ."

"What!"

"No, no . . . I . . . I told them *my* name was your name."

"Oh, well *hell, that's* all right then . . ."

"Well, *I* didn't know what to say . . . they were asking me all this stuff and I kept trying to think what it was all about — only they wouldn't tell me, so . . ."

He rambled on for quite some time like that but it turned out that he actually had no idea what they were after, just that they wanted to talk to whoever lived there. And aside from lifting an eyebrow at the skimpy attire, they weren't really hassling him at all — not a word about dope plants.

It was just no use arguing with Anton when he got his righteous glands working, however, and he was in pretty high dudgeon over it. Suddenly he reached into his pocket and pulled out half a dozen wilted little dope plants. *Our* dope plants! This, need I say, was entirely too much.

They looked utterly forlorn and pathetic and I stood up, stuttering, "You . . . you . . . you . . ." but Zeke shushed me and took the plants. Anton tried to say something but I nailed him with a Grade-III Glare and he slunk away. We put the plants (whose roots, fortunately, were still pretty much intact) into some wet soil and waited. Late that night we snuck out to plant them but we had a devil of a time finding a place.

We finally settled for putting them in next to an unused garage in an alley not far from 140 — they were surrounded by the rankest sort of weeds and not six inches from the pavement but it was the best we could do, given the circ's. We had some fun with Anton over the next month or so, calling him by my name . . . until he finally started answering to it and then we stopped.

We didn't expect much and, in fact, within a week they were all either dead or missing — except for one little tyke that hung on gamely, getting scrawnier every day. I watched over that last one with dying hope, fearing the worst. There wasn't much I could do. Then one day I was walking down the alley and I came to where Marie should have been (all right — so I named a plant) and she was gone. My heart broke, for I had really begun to get attached to Marie. But then I looked a little closer and saw a

big rock, clearly where there hadn't been one before. I bent down close — and Marie was sticking out from underneath.

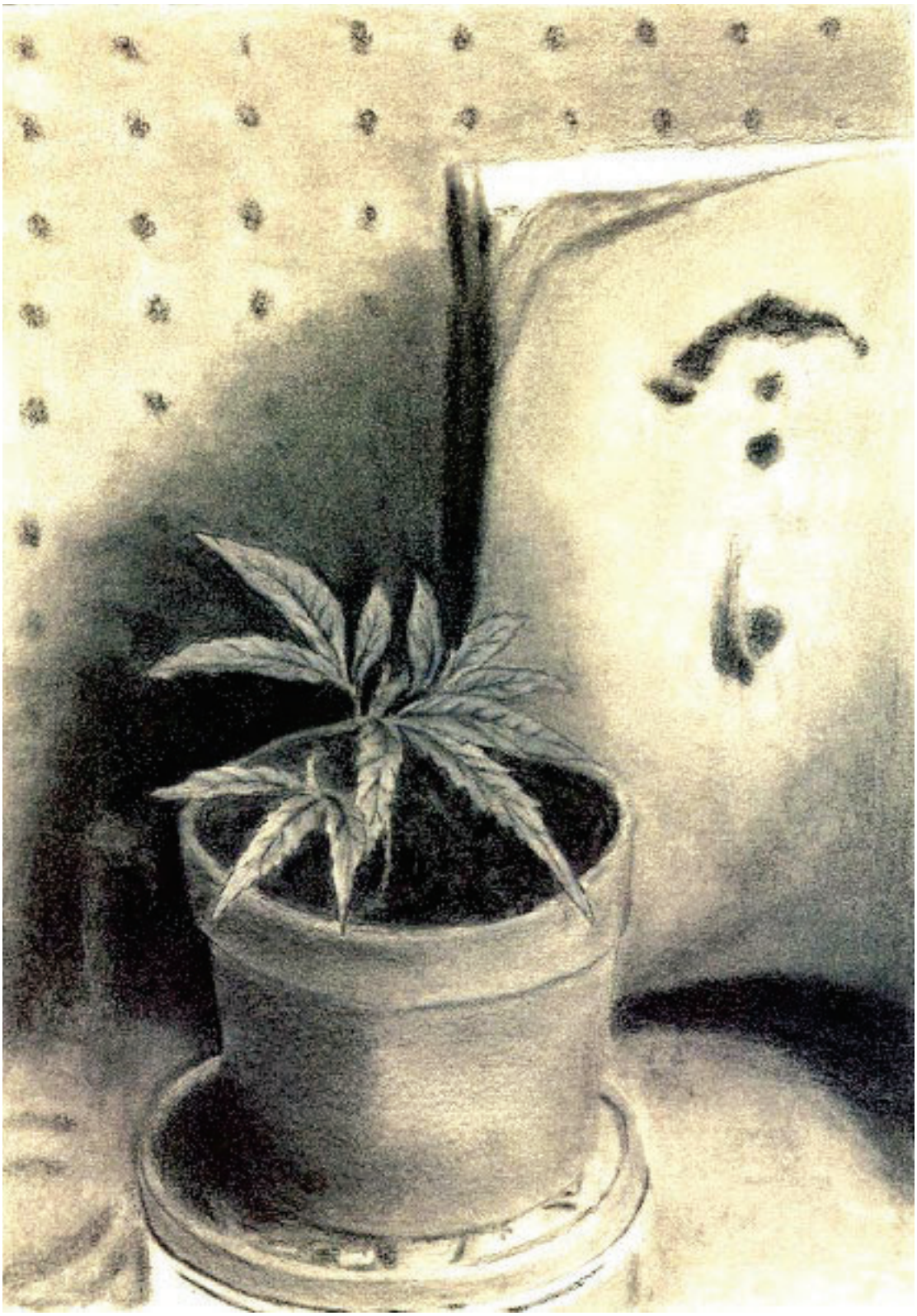
Someone had done this on purpose — that was obvious — and *that* got me mad. I gently removed the rock, dug Marie up and brought her home, seething with outrage. Zeke agreed to help revive her but she was damn near a goner. He loved dope plants as much as I did but he never allowed himself to get sentimental over any one plant — and finding a permanent home for her was going to be tougher than ever. Southern Indiana is not Guadalajara, after all, and growing a plant really big means hunting up a place where you can tend it often. You need plenty of water, good soil and absolutely maximum sunlight. And no people. Marie had already had a rough time of it and I think Zeke secretly thought I was wasting my time; but determination plus ingenuity equals . . . something or other. Anyway, I was determined.

Ian and Davy had both worked from time to time at the local newspaper, driving the shortage truck and I had occasionally helped. Now I scoped out the area around the plant and found a spot that bordered some railroad tracks. Nothing grew there but scrub bushes and derelict cars and I wandered back one afternoon and noticed a siding that was used to bring in newsprint. The tracks went over a small trestle that crossed a little stream and there were lots of trees back there — I walked over the trestle and found a beautiful little clearing, right next to the stream. Even better, there was an abundance of poison ivy that undoubtedly did a good job of discouraging pedestrians. I was sure I'd found the ideal spot.

I took Zeke down and showed him the tiny clearing, just big enough for one really good-sized plant. He took one look and said I was crazy.

"Now, look . . . you see over there? We aren't fifty yards from a main highway and not *thirty* from the back of a *newspaper* plant. Are you nuts? Why not just plant it on the courthouse square!?" That was sarcasm, I suppose, since I had tried that once and it hadn't worked out. But I pointed out all the poison ivy (he jumped about three feet in the air — he is extremely sensitive to poison ivy) and said we had nothing to lose. We had no other place else, anyway, and it would have to do.

He moaned and groaned awhile but he admitted he didn't have any better ideas. Due to the poison ivy, however, he said it was all up to me, he wanted nothing more to do with the place, so I took Marie down one bright, sunny morning in May, cleared out the weeds, and set her in an open spot. As I dug the hole I found that the soil was a black, sandy loam, kept wonderfully moist by the stream. I built a small fence out of sticks and briars to keep the rabbits out and went down to water her twice a week until her roots began to take hold. I spent a lot of time weeding the area and dosing her just right with fertilizer, and slowly Marie recovered.



March 29, 1973 — The last remaining U.S. troops leave Vietnam. Defense Department casualty lists:

U.S.: 45,948 combat deaths
10,298 non-combat deaths
303,640 wounded
South Vietnam: 184,546 dead, 495,931 wounded.
North Vietnam & Viet Cong: 937,562 dead.
"Non-combatants": 415,000 dead, 935,000 wounded.
Total: At least 1,593,354 dead, over two million wounded.
General Weyland says "Our mission has been accomplished."
April 11, 1973 — Sen. Barry Goldwater likens Watergate to Teapot Dome; says, "there's a smell to it."
April 17, 1973 — Nixon announces "major developments" on Watergate after "intensive new inquiries." He now says his aides will testify at the Senate hearings; Press Secretary Ron Ziegler declares that all previous denials of involvement by White House personnel are "inoperative."

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I don't care what you do
I wouldn't wanna be like you
—Alan Parsons Project

One day I was walking up and down the aisles in the grocery store when a strange fellow in sandals and a long-billed yachting cap simply walked up and started gabbing, apparently taking me for a kindred spirit. He wore baggy pants, an old flannel shirt, and he had a large knife in a leather holster in his wide leather belt. He was called RamJet Jimmy.

RamJet was in his mid-20s. He was tall, extremely thin, and he had a scraggly red beard that accented intense blue eyes. He followed me up and down the aisles, toting a double-armload of boxes and cans, running a seamless monologue that never stopped. As we walked along I noticed that his packages began to quietly disappear and by the time we reached the checkout counter he was carrying nothing but a Snickers bar, which he paid for. On the way home the boxes and cans came tumbling out of his pockets, his pant legs, the back of his shirt, his cap — he even had a sack to put it all in. It would have been gauche to comment on it but RamJet was clearly a master.

He trailed along after me, back to 140, and made himself at home. Zeke simply accepted this without a word and RamJet set to work fixing dinner from the loot. He talked the whole time while we ate (eating nothing himself) and we soon caught on that it made no difference whatsoever if we listened to him or not. We could leave the room, go to the bathroom, read, chat among ourselves — it didn't matter one iota to RamJet. He wanted to talk and audience participation was purely optional. He was, of course, a speed-freak, and he popped White Crosses on the average of one an hour, keeping the

talk-mill pumping.

A sample: ". . . I like a kitchen that feels set off from the rest of the place, y'know, not like it's in the same room with you — say, why does it have a step there so you have to step down, it's lower than the rest of this place, isn't it? . . . I saw a kitchen like that once and it had this kind of divider, kind of a bar, between the kitchen and the living room and it felt like you were cooking right there with the chairs and the couch and all — you wondered what happened to the grease, did it get all over everything? . . . well, maybe it had one of those hoods over the stove so it pulled the smoke up into it, but I just didn't like the feel of people eating and talking and reading all in the same room; so, what I was saying was . . ." Ba-duh, ba-duh, ba-duh.

It was like all of those groceries spilling out — you wondered where it all came from. I couldn't listen to him for very long, it made me dizzy, but when I did happen to tune in for a bit, I found that RamJet could be a fascinating stream-of-consciousness talker. He covered everything and nothing and never bothered to connect one thought to another. It always took me a few minutes to react to something he'd said and if I managed to butt in and ask a question, his face would go absolutely blank for a second. Then he'd slowly turn toward me, a puzzled look on his face, staring at me for several seconds like I was a total lunatic. Then he'd simply shrug and continue. He was speed personified.

He kept it up all night and I finally dozed off, his pleasant drone lulling me into a warm sleep. When I awoke the next day he was gone — perhaps he found us a little dull.

Actually, Zeke and I were so befuddled by the unaccustomed noise that we had forgotten to break out the dope pipe and RamJet had been somewhat offended. It was a dire breach of etiquette, after all, but after a few days he evidently forgave us. He appeared out of nowhere, standing just outside the decrepit old screen door, waiting quietly for us to notice him. When we finally did he came on in, stretched himself out on a chair, tossed his cap on the floor and resumed his monologue, quite possibly right where he'd left off.

This time we were ready for him, tho, and we aimed to slow him down a bit. Zeke pulled out the pipe and the best bag of dope and for once RamJet stopped talking. He smiled a quiet smile, turned a fond eye on the pipe and said, "Well now . . . well now, what *have* we here?"

Zeke loaded up the pipe and handed it over and he sucked down that first hit all the way to Bengal. "*Mighty* tasty," he said, "mighty tasty in-deed. Yessir, seems to be local stuff . . . homegrown, I'd say. Your'n? Yessir, yessir, mighty tas-*tee,* indeed." He took another toke, then another, and we awaited results — but then off he went again, even faster than before. He was just a torrent, a fountain, a geyser of relentless, mind-numbing chatter. Every single thing that struck his eye reminded him of seventeen things he'd wanted to say about that item and his eye was gyrating around the room

like a lighthouse beacon. He'd never *seen* so much to talk about. We were miserable; in our naivete we had assumed that, once we got him high, RamJet would just *have* to slow down, like any normal (stoned) human being, and then we would have a chance. Instead he plunged even farther into the speed, an overdrive Gotterdammerung. Worse, we now had to listen to this stoned.

As he got himself more and more wound up, his talk went so far afield that he went off the deep end and into the Twilight Zone. We were so baffled we didn't have a chance of keeping up — it was like listening to a used-car salesman on a Mexican radio station. RamJet had the metabolism of a hummingbird; racing so fast that we must have seemed like statues to him. There was nothing we could do and we knew it — we were helpless under this cascade of peltering jabber.

As he got higher and higher his speed paranoia began to take over and his palaver (always bizarre) became strange and disjointed. Zeke and I exchanged uneasy glances and somehow RamJet caught it. Oh, Christ, I thought, here it comes. Sure enough, he started making dark asides about "what we were up to" and launching into myriad conspiracy theories — the Mafia, the Kennedy assassinations, the CIA, ITT and Wonder Bread. He was heading for an explosion but there was a nary a thing we could do about it — his pilot light was out and all the burners were on. I sat tight, hardly moving, afraid I'd do or say something to set him off.

At last he reached the denouement of his twisted rationale and jumped up, shouting, "I know — I know — I *know* what you guys are thinking — brain tumor, right? You're thinking *brain* tumor! Right??! Well you're wrong! It ain't a brain tumor I got . . . its a brain *rumor*!" and with savage, disgusted fury he hurled the pipe against the wall, leaped wildly for the screen door . . . and went straight thru the rotting screen. He ran shrieking down the street, his cries gently fading away. . . .

The air was crackling and the scene was straight out of a Tom-and-Jerry cartoon: there was a man-sized hole in the screen and the jagged edges were framing a suddenly too-clear view of the street beyond; the door was bulging out on its hinges and half a wooden crossbar swung and creaked, as if in a breeze.

Finally Zeke got up and sauntered over to retrieve the pipe. He slowly lit a match, applied it to the pipe, blew it out and said, "Well now … isn't he the cheerful son of a bitch!"

April 27, 1973 — FBI director L. Patrick Gray resigns after it is revealed that he destroyed the White House files of Howard Hunt at the urging of John Dean and John Ehrlichman. Dean warns that he "will not become a scapegoat."
April 30, 1973 — Nixon announces that John Dean, H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst have resigned. Nixon says he "accepts responsibility" for any "misdeeds" but denies he had anything to do with it. He says "both parties" used "such tactics" in the election but that "two wrongs don't make a right."

Ronald Reagan says that the Watergate break-in was not a crime because the defendants "are not criminals at heart."
May 2, 1973 — The New York Times cites a grand jury investigation, saying the GOP plotted to have Muskie defeated and to ensure that McGovern win the nomination, since he was considered the weaker candidate

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And there's a road in the distant wood
And the eagle flies with the dove
—Steven Stills

Planting was much easier on Lampkins Ridge since there were now four prepared beds. All we had to do was bring up some compost to beef them up a bit and put in the seeds. But Calvin and George had moved back into town and using the farm was out; we realized that we had to branch out in case of a disaster on the Ridge. Anton and Davy declined to participate, except to say they'd pitch in with the watering and harvest, so it was back to just me and Zeke.

An old geezer who had become a customer (it really did do wonders for his arthritis) told us about an old "Lovers' Lane" near town, so we went out to investigate. It was much too close to town for comfort and there was a house only a couple of hundred yards away, but even so it seemed fairly deserted. There was a small field just off the road and a long, dirt lane that ran between it and an inviting stretch of woods. We found two clearings in the trees that seemed about right and hastily brought in compost and peat moss and dug out our serpentine patches. It was a piece of cake, considering, and once they were in we took a walk over the field to see if there were any other possibilities.

It was a terribly exposed spot but there was one advantage — the field sloped up and away from the road and then down, so that anyone driving by couldn't really see you. Any plants less than six feet tall would be pretty much invisible. Still, it seemed a pretty brazen place to plant — and then we found the Pig Patch.

Not twenty yards from the road we came across a small area of very tall weeds hemmed in by a fallen-down old fence. It made an oval about ten feet long and six feet wide, just loaded with rich, composted manure. After scratching our heads for a while, we figured it was an old abandoned pigsty. We dug down and the compost was a full two feet deep — a gold mine! This we could not resist. We had several seedlings we hadn't yet put in, so we brought them over to the Pig Patch and cleared out the weeds. We set in twenty seedlings and topped them, then hung citronella pellets on the fence posts and ringed the whole thing with blood meal — all standard procedure by then. Finally we put down a heavy mulch and watered them, giving the ground a little pat

and a hoarse, whispered "GO!" that had become part of the ritual.

Having done so well there, we traveled high and low looking for other spots to plant but there just wasn't anything that looked right. Either the soil was bad or there were the spent shells and tracks that meant hunters came thru in the fall. We had the Ridge, Lovers' Lane, the Pig Patch, and Marie (who was flourishing down by the newspaper plant), and that would have to do.

We'd done so well in '71 that we were still selling the occasional lid from that batch and '72 hadn't been a washout. We were gaining something of a reputation by this time and I hadn't had to work for two years now. Of course, I was too much of a grasshopper to have saved anything. Zeke worked occasionally but mostly relied on his income from the dope and the Reserves. Davy was getting a small amount from his grandparents and he and Anton (who had been offered a grant from an impressed music-lover — and had high-mindedly turned it down) both worked from time to time down at the paper. Anton was getting around among the artistic set quite a bit and he met a woman at a party, one of those friend-of-a-friend things. He didn't seem to be all that interested in her at first but she was flirting outrageously. She had fallen for him right away but there was one little complication — her husband.

They were not yet separated but (according to her) she had been planning to leave him for some time and when she met Anton that, apparently, was the end of that. Shades of Kim. Anyway, he was being chased by this dark-haired, elegant beauty while Zeke was involved with yet another violinist. With Davy out of 140, you'd have thought that Zeke and I would be perfectly comfortable but I wanted a place of my own, too, since I had also met someone interesting. In fact, two someones interesting.

Kelly was tall and ballerina-like (i.e., wide hips and a flat chest) with very long, dark hair and a cool, come-hither smile. She lived with her friend, Lisa; a small, dark woman with extremely intense eyes and a burning sense of destiny. They had a couple of furnished rooms in a large house over on the south side of the university. Kelly was a student but Lisa had quickly tired of the academic life and was working as a waitress in a 24-hour joint nearby. Before long I was spending the night with Kelly (on a mattress on the floor, of course) and this had been going on for a few weeks when one night, out of the blue, she said she didn't feel like making love — so why didn't I spend the night with Lisa. I was a tad surprised but it seemed like a charming suggestion so I took her advice.

Naturally I began to spend a lot of time over there and things could, on occasion, take an interesting turn. In fact, it got so hot and heavy that I just had to get a place of my own, for Zeke was not only seeing Kelly and Lisa himself, but also another woman who lived just down the hall from them. The permutations were getting far too complex.

May 17, 1973 — Sam Ervin (D-NC) chairs the Senate hearings on Watergate, with Herman

Talmadge (D-GA), Joseph Montoya (D-NM), Daniel Inouye (D-HA), Howard Baker (R-TN), Edward Gurney (R-FL) and Lowell Weicker (R-CT). Chief counsel Sam Dash and minority counsel Fred Thompson head investigation.
May 21, 1973 — Dean tells investigators he was "flabbergasted" when Nixon announced at a press conference (Aug. 29, '72) that Dean had made a full inquiry that showed no one "presently employed" in the administration "was involved in this bizarre incident." Dean says he made no such report.
May 25, 1973 — Elliot Richardson sworn in as attorney general; appoints Archibald Cox, Harvard Law Professor, as the Special Prosecutor to investigate Watergate.

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Come senators, congressmen, please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall
—Bob Dylan

On May 17 the Senate Watergate hearings began and this was an event I wouldn't miss for the world. Of course, we had no TV so I had to traipse over to the Commons to watch.

I can't say that I missed TV all that much. True, Anton and I did catch a baseball game from time to time, especially during the World Series. He was a Red Sox fan (natch) and I was Dodger-Blue.

As for the rest of the TV fare, it was enough to make a person scream with frustration. On the few occasions when we were suddenly confronted with the thing, it seemed gross, manipulative and a puzzling form of self-hypnotism. It did strange things to people. For instance, I noticed that people watching TV were perfectly content to gab right thru the programs — but the instant the commercials came on everybody clammed up, absolutely captivated by the lurid ads. I never could figure that out.

At any rate, this was history in the making and I soon became a TV addict myself. The Commons was always full — dozens of freaks, studious types and teachers dropped in to catch the show and from the first day, it was a captivating drama.

The hearings were chaired by an old coot named Sam Ervin, a North Carolina Democrat with a big, jowly face, thinning white hair and a crackly southern drawl. He seemed to inspire confidence and a believability that was the exact opposite of Richard Nixon. He was a folksy, breezy, down-to-earth man with the soul of an unflinching and highly intelligent patriot. It didn't hurt that he also looked a little like grandfatherly Walter Cronkite — Ervin was soon dubbed Uncle Sam.

The first person to testify was James W. McCord Jr., one of the five burglars arrested in the Watergate offices, who also just happened to have been the Security Director for CREEP (the Committee to Re-elect the President). It was he who had finally

broken in Sirica's courtroom. Facing the possibility of a 40-years-plus prison sentence, he sent the judge a letter declaring that "perjury" had taken place and that there was "political pressure" to remain silent. He was also a former CIA operative and he seemed an able enough spook. In a tightly controlled voice he told the committee that he had been promised money, "rehabilitation," a job and executive clemency if he remained silent. He said that John Mitchell, one of Nixon's oldest and closest friends (the former attorney general and director of CREEP) had been the "overall boss" of the operation and that John W. Dean III, the White House counsel, was in charge of the cover-up.

This was the first real break in the dam in a case that had been well on its way to being totally and successfully whitewashed. Judge Sirica (a Republican) had strong-armed the proceedings in his courtroom, openly mistrustful of the prosecution's handling of the case. He had taken over the questioning of some witnesses and as the testimony was wrapping up had said, in effect, that the government had not done its job and that it was time for him to step in. He had threatened lengthy prison terms to shake up the defendants (he was known as "Maximum John") and it had worked. Without him, the whole thing would have been successfully swept away, a dirty little secret forever relegated to the bin of all the other conspiracy theories.

I had no doubt, of course, that it was all a Nixon-led-and-inspired operation from the start. Once in power, it seemed obvious that Nixon would use the apparatus of government to create a huge network of political espionage and sabotage. This burglary undoubtedly was but the tip of the iceberg, for Nixon could never have been content to stop at simple spying on his "enemies." He was without doubt the most devious bastard this country had ever seen. More than anything else, his repeated promises to end the war had gotten him elected. But during the very campaign where he was promising to end the war, he was actively engaged in a blatantly illegal conspiracy to scuttle the peace talks that Johnson had finally been persuaded to undertake — solely in order to ensure that there would be no peace treaty. He knew full well that an end to the war, given the closeness of the race, would have guaranteed the election of Hubert Humphrey.

Nixon's actions, as a private citizen (engaged in a campaign for the presidency, no less) were certainly illegal and Johnson had been told of the plot by the CIA and the FBI but he remained silent. In 1972 Nixon agreed to essentially the same peace treaty that the North Vietnamese had offered in 1969 — indeed, the terms were actually *worse* than had been offered originally. At last Nixon was able to announce "peace with honor" . . . on the eve of *his* reelection. Thus, tens of thousands died merely to ensure the reelection of Richard M. Nixon.

I didn't believe for a minute that the "minor" tapping of a phone in the DNC headquarters was merely an example of "over-zealousness" by a few individuals. It smelled of an entire operation devoted, not just to "dirty tricks," but to out-and-out political sabotage. I remembered now the words of Boo when he had said, back in

September, that Nixon would be impeached on account of Watergate. We had all laughed then but now, listening to McCord and seeing the determination on the faces of the senators, I was beginning to see the light.

May 31, 1973 — Dean turns over to Judge Sirica the 1970 memorandum of a plan by G. Gordon Liddy. It included "surreptitious entry of facilities occupied by subversive elements"; "relaxing restrictions on covert coverage [opening mail]"; monitoring telephone and telegraph circuits; an increase in the number of "campus operations"; secret photography of documents or individuals in compromising situations; kidnapping of Democratic delegates; the use of prostitutes as agents to entice and inform on Democrats, etc. Most of the plan was illegal but Nixon personally approved it. Rejected by J. Edgar Hoover. Sam Ervin calls it a "Gestapo mentality."
June 6, 1973 — In a deposition, John Ehrlichman testifies that Mitchell approved bugging Watergate, the Fountainebleau Hotel in Miami during the Democratic convention, and McGovern campaign headquarters in Washington.
Hugh Sloan, CREEP treasurer, testifies before the Watergate Committee that several White House personnel pressured him to commit perjury in regard to the $199,000 cash disbursements to Liddy. Says Mitchell told him that "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Testifies no one in the FBI investigation asked him about either the money or Watergate. [The Liddy money had been "laundered" in Mexico and was the primary focus of the cover-up.]
June 14, 1973 — Magruder (deputy director of CREEP) testifies that he and Mitchell authorized the Watergate wiretaps as part of a "broad intelligence-gathering" program. Says he and other Nixon aides decided on a cover-up story immediately following the arrests of McCord et al., in order to protect Nixon's reelection campaign. Admits numerous perjuries and reveals that the DNC had been bugged prior to the June 17 break-in. He and Mitchell approved Liddy's $1,000,000 "Gemstone" plan for sabotage (a milder version of the 1970 plan) because he felt it was justified — he had seen people "breaking the law" in antiwar protests "without any regard for any other person's pattern of behavior or beliefs." (Also says that Liddy had once threatened to kill him after he put his hand on Liddy's shoulder — calls it a "Liddy mannerism.")
June 26, 1973 — Dean tells of an "enemies list . . . several inches thick" and plans to "use the federal machinery to screw our political enemies" by manipulation of "grant availability, federal contracts, litigation, prosecution, etc." Targets include Democratic and Republican members of the Senate and House; newsmen; political, labor and media organizations; celebrities; businessmen; academics, etc. — a total of 1,025 organizations and 4,300 individuals.
June 27, 1973 — J. Fred Buzhardt (Special Counsel to Nixon) sends a letter to the committee, accusing John Dean of having been the "mastermind" of both the break-in and the cover-up.

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And your wise men don't know how it feels
To be thick . . . as a brick

—Jethro Tull

I made one more stab at finding a room and walked all over town, looking for that one sign that I knew must be up there somewhere. About the last place I'd thought to look was on Sixth Street, since I didn't care for the idea of doing a repeat performance with Ma Balls, but when I finally went past the place, there, on the house next door, was the sign I'd been looking for.

It was a big limestone place with huge pillars framing balconies in front of each apartment — two above and two below. One of the upper ones belonged to a middle-aged gay named Franz, who had put the sign out. He showed me down a long hallway, past the kitchen, to the room he was renting out. He was wonderfully cheerful and easygoing, no more uncomfortable with his gayness than a priest was with his cassock. The place was top-to-bottom art deco and there were blue mirrors, plants, and 1930s furniture everywhere. In one corner stood a tall statue of a nearly nude "maiden" holding a crystal ball aloft in a bizarre and graceful pose; there were dozens of glass knickknacks among the yards and yards of bookcases — which included the complete set of a first edition of Casanova's memoirs, the pride of his collection.

Franz took to me right off, tho he could tell I wasn't gay (said he preferred not to rent to any "competition"), and he was only asking $15 a week for the room. I gladly took it and moved in the next day, to the barely concealed relief of Zeke, and things quickly settled into a patternless routine. Franz was an early riser and I was a late-night person, so our paths rarely crossed. He said nothing about the smell of grass, tho he rarely smoked dope himself, and I, of course, said nothing about the parade of lovers that he brought home. Like many gays he was joyously promiscuous, fond of going to the baths in Indianapolis to pick up new "friends," who turned up again at regular intervals. He was a very popular guy. For the most part I only saw them on their way to the bathroom if I was on my way out (it was a handy feature of the place that it had a back stairway) and I was amazed at the variety — there were body-builder types, "Mary" queens, businessmen in suits, cross-dressers, perfectly straight-looking students, construction-guy types and one or two that looked like movie stars — handsome as Greek gods with deep tans, expensive clothes and perfect hair. These last could have stepped out of a magazine ad and looked like they posed when they were taking a leak.

Kelly and Lisa apparently arranged things between themselves, for they never showed up on the same night. In no time I was getting all the pat-and-tickle I could ever have hoped for — it was an absolute dream and the rains of May and June soon blossomed into the heat of summer. The honeysuckle vines crept up the walls under the windows, filling my room with the scent of priceless innocence. But ever since the spring day when I had gone to one of the quarries with Davy, Sara, Kelly, Lisa and Zeke, I had been ashamed of my fish-belly white color (in fact, for some reason all the women were deeply tanned and all of the men pure white).

There were dozens of old, fallen-down limestone quarries around Bloomington — a favorite spot for swimming and out-and-out heavy-duty lounging. Big blocks of graying stone framed the huge, oblong pit. Dogwood and redbud dotted the rim above the fractured, squared-off walls of limestone and far below were the dark waters that had seeped in long ago, bringing a halt to the quarrying. We made our way along a narrow path to a wide ledge and, zip-zip-zap, the women had their clothes off and plunged into the wide pool. The air was warm but the water was still ice-cold and we three manly-types just stood there while Kelly, Lisa and Sara swam around like adolescent swans or a trio of nymphettes from *The Rite of Spring.* We glared down like three Frenchmen who'd just discovered that the "pate" they'd eaten was really some green leftovers from Thanksgiving. We were bitter.

After a bit we feigned indifference and sat down to have a smoke but we could hardly ignore the sounds of that romping school of dolphins in the pond. What really got me, however, was how *tan* the three of them were — not halfway thru the first month of spring. I took off my clothes to lie in the rays, getting a start on a tan of my own, but as usual all I got was a mild burn and a colony of chiggers, who set up housekeeping and began holding parades in my honor.

At Franz's place, however, I had the remedy at last, for Franz was a tanning-nut and he kept a bank of sunlamps that bronzed him year-round. He was inordinately worried about how "old" he looked and oblivious to the fact that his constant tanning only deepened the fast-growing wrinkles. In midsummer, he left on one of his trips to visit relations out east and I had the place to myself for a few weeks. He'd said to use whatever I wanted around the apt and my eye soon fell on that set of lamps, hanging like a cluster of silver bells over a narrow pallet in his bedroom.

Franz, I knew, would lie under these things for half an hour or so every day so I figured that ought to be about right for me, too. I kept my shorts on (just to be on the safe side) and lay down under the lights — the warm sensation flooded over me like a soothing massage. After diligently turning over and over for half an hour I decided, what the hell, I'll give it another ten minutes or so for good measure. I felt great. Boyhood days on the California beaches came back, when I had been as brown as a nut for most of the year. But that night, about 2:00 a.m., something tickled me. One eye opened and I felt another tickle. I started to roll over and go back to sleep when the pain of ten thousand red-hot needles set me bolt upright; my skin felt like it'd caught fire. Indeed, it had.

In incredible pain, I waddled into the bathroom to stand under a cold shower, discovering that I was a mass of tiny white blisters, covering me from gazzle to zatch. Only the outline of my shorts remained and it was small comfort, for the fire barely eased at all under the ice-cold water. Oh, Christ, I thought — I believe I done it this time. I couldn't move, I couldn't lie down and I couldn't sleep. I could wear nothing but shorts and the only place I could sit was perched on the edge of a chair. When Zeke

came by the next day I had him go out for every burn medication he could find but it didn't do a thing — just putting them on was an agony that would've driven Gandhi mad.

Worst of all was the absolute lack of sleep, for after the first couple of days, my mind was wandering all over the place. I didn't have enough concentration to read or even listen to the radio. Misery is a word that hardly even begins to convey it — I was a cockroach with an ulcer in an all-night Mexican restaurant. The third night, I couldn't stand it anymore; I would've tried anything to stop the constant screaming that covered almost every inch of my skin (tho Kelly, coming over and taking pity on my state, removed my shorts and gave me a massage of that one, last, burn-free place, bringing me a few minutes of blissful relief; it actually became something of a routine and I even managed to bring her some "relief" as well). The lack of sleep was doing me in, however, and I finally resolved to try the last resort.

Like anyone who has smoked grass, I'd noticed that people who resist the experience and get tense often develop strong headaches when they try it for the first time — and if *you've* got a headache or some other pain problem, it can intensify the pain far more. For that reason, I'd been avoiding grass entirely and suffering in (more or less) silence — but now I was desperate. What the hell . . . nothing else worked, I might as well give it a try. I put a couple of tokes worth into the pipe and lit up.

It was miraculous — instantaneous — the pain was not just diminished, it totally disappeared the very second I had the first hit! Halleluja! For a moment I couldn't really believe it — I laid back against the pillow . . . and felt nothing! Another toke and it was as if I'd never been burned at all! At last I could get some *sleep* — or so I thought. There was just one problem. Unlike most people, not only did I not get the munchies when smoking dope, I couldn't even look at food — and while it put most people to sleep when the rush was well past, it woke me up and set my mind to racing until I was completely down again. I sat there, wide-eyed, my mind roving all over creation for several hours — and when I finally began to feel like I could bag some Z's, the pain came right back. It was a quandary to try the soul of St. Francis . . . smoke and feel no pain or don't smoke and finally pass out from sheer exhaustion. In the end I had no choice. I smoked until I simply couldn't stay up any longer and then waited until I came down and blanked out for an hour or two until the pain woke me up again. I spent a full three days like that — alternating between a wide-eyed, stoned alertness and fitful unconsciousness, as miserable as I'd ever been in my life. To this day the sight of a "tanning" salon sends a shiver of dread up my spine.

June 28, 1973 — Charles Colson says the "enemies list" was actually a "guest list" for White House social functions.
July 13, 1973 —Alexander Porter Butterfield tells investigators that all Oval Office conversations had been taped.

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Hey, you, get off of my cloud!
—Rolling Stones

Franz's place was only a block from Dunn Meadow and I began spending a lot more time there, as well as in People's Park (a reclaimed vacant lot next to the Von Lee theater). They had been taken over by freaks and on any sunny afternoon were full of longhairs tossing Frisbees, playing guitars and sitting on the lawns making beaded jackets and macrame belts. A couple of years before there had been an eclipse of the sun and Dunn Meadow had been the prime focus for the "Drive Away the Dragon" party, where dozens of freaks gathered with drums and horns to rescue the sun. It was a fantastic, colorful feast — a proclamation of joy — and ever since, the Meadow had become a counterculture haven. Some even pitched teepees and tents there. The cops would order them out from time to time but they'd spring up again in a week or so. You couldn't throw a brick without hitting someone smoking grass and everyone pitched in to keep the place clean. There was rarely any trouble, save for the odd frat-rat trying to start some hassle — he'd be surrounded and gently edged away, like a virus being expelled.

There were rock concerts nearly every weekend in the summer and on Midsummer's Eve a Druid festival sprang up. The enormous oak tree was festooned with garlands and a miniature version of Stonehenge appeared, each plaster-of-paris "stone" about two feet tall.

Back in the “good old days” The Who and The Rolling Stones had been to Bloomington for concerts in the old long-abandoned 12th Street Football Stadium. Since then there had been a string of great events from Leon Redbone to a local rocker called Johnny Cougar (who seems to have made a name for himself later as John Mellencamp) to Patti LaBelle. Now the Stones were back for a gig in the new basketball stadium—and on Mick’s birthday, no less! We scraped together the cash as best we could and otherwise got into the mood. Unfortunately, for reasons I don’t understand, I don’t remember a bit of it.

July 23, 1973 — The committee issues subpoenas for White House tapes; Nixon refuses to comply, citing "executive privilege." Special Prosecutor Cox issues his subpoenas, also rejected. July 30, 1973 — H.R. Haldeman testifies that any money paid to the Watergate defendants was for "legal fees" and "family support" and not hush-money.

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I’m on the pavement
Thinkin’ bout the gov’mint

—Bob Dylan

In late June, John Dean testified for four days before the Senate Committee on Watergate. In a shaking monotone, he told the story of a White House obsessed with covering up the purpose of the burglary and the extent of the internal espionage operations ordered (at least in one earlier, outrageously illegal form) by none other than Nixon himself. He revealed the existence of an "enemies list" that the Executive branch had used to "screw" their political opponents — or, indeed, anyone that they simply did not like. This list, Dean had said (and he should know, since he had helped compile it, on the orders of Haldeman) was "several inches thick" and included both Republican and Democratic members of Congress, newsmen, labor and media organizations, celebrities, businessmen, academics and people opposed to the war. All in all, there were some 1,025 organizations listed and 4,300 individuals. These people were the targets of "grant availability, federal contracts, litigation, prosecution, etc." and on numerous occasions, the IRS and the FBI had been influenced to harass them. No one could believe that Richard M. knew anything about such a perverse misuse of governmental power — but no one could explain, either, how such an extensive program could have operated *without* his knowledge and approval. He was known to be a president who took pains over all the details of running the executive branch — and, indeed, things such as an "enemies list" were a direct outgrowth of his own paranoia and his philosophy of how the presidential office worked.

This was a bombshell. The Republicans looked like they'd been hit on the head with a sackful of potatoes and they stammered out one excuse after another. The break-in at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office (an operation conducted by the White House "plumbers" — a unit of espionage agents set up after the "leaking" of the Pentagon Papers) had been ordered, said Dean, "directly from the Oval Office" and Ehrlichman himself had not known of it in advance. In other words, Nixon himself had personally approved and perhaps initiated the plan. Dean also revealed the existence of the "Huston Plan," which, in 1970, had been a proposal to have the FBI and the CIA use break-ins, buggings, mail interception, campus operatives and numerous other illegal means to ferret out "subversives" and (just incidentally) identify more "enemies" of the White House. J. Edgar Hoover had vetoed the plan and that had earned *him* a place on the enemies list — but the plan had gone forward, in modified form, and even members of Nixon's staff and *his own brother* had been bugged.

Nor was this all. G. Gordon Liddy, a nutcase spook to end all spooks, had proposed to the head of CREEP, ex-attorney general John Mitchell, a plan that included document forgery, solicitation of prostitutes to discredit Democrats, surveillance, political spies, sabotage of Democratic campaigns, muggings and kidnapping — all in the name of political expedience. Mitchell had turned it down as too expensive (!) but had approved a trimmed-down plan a few months later. And this was not comic-book,

cloak-and-dagger stuff, for *it had worked* — the Nixon people had decided that Muskie was the strongest candidate and McGovern the weakest. Thru the use of numerous "dirty tricks" they had succeeded in derailing Muskie and Humphrey and having McGovern nominated. This was politics of a whole 'nuther kind.

Jeb Stuart Magruder and a whole parade of Nixon loyalists came forward to say that it was all just "politics as usual" and that every candidate in recent history had done the same thing. They said that it was justified, in any case, by the "violence" in the streets and the antiwar "treason" that was sweeping the country. John Dean was attacked as a traitor to the cause and he and he alone was said to have masterminded the cover-up — that he was lying about Nixon's involvement and had made up conversations that had never taken place.

And then, on Friday, July the 13th, in the basement of the Senate office building where the hearings were being held, Alexander Porter Butterfield revealed the existence of an Oval Office taping system that had been in place for over two years. Nixon, the incredible goof, had bugged himself!

Day after day in the Commons we watched the drama unfolding on the big TV set high on a pedestal in the corner. It was a party atmosphere and no one doubted any longer that Richard M. was headed for impeachment. It was no incidental "burglary" that was being investigated now — it was the systematic use of the entire executive branch of government to commit crimes and subvert the Constitution, solely for the private, political ambitions of the president sitting in the Oval Office. We "wallowed in Watergate" with absolute abandon and broke into applause as Uncle Sam Ervin shot down one apologist after another, saying that he knew flimflam when he heard it "because I understand the English language as my mother taught me." He was a character straight from a Thornton Wilder play and we loved every white hair on his head. *This* was the kind of man who had written the Constitution and he was not about to let a gaggle of con-men destroy what this country stood for — high-office be damned.

In the midst of all this an excitement seemed to fill the streets, the very stones of the buildings, and there was not a single person who didn't seem to be living in a state of heightened awareness, a kind of intensity of being that was almost overwhelming. The Nixon loyalists hunkered down and muttered fantastic excuses, repeating the White House line that "everybody does it" and that the press and Congress were just out to "get" Nixon. The local paper wondered if it wouldn't be better if we "put Watergate behind us" so that we could "get on with the business of government."

Aug. 6, 1973 — Spiro Agnew announces he is under investigation for receiving kickbacks while governor of Maryland.
Aug. 15, 1973 — Nixon again accepts "full responsibility" for "abuses during my Administration" but insists the nation stop the "backward-looking obsession with Watergate." Pat Nixon says "Watergate is behind us now."

Aug. 29, 1973 — Judge Sirica orders Nixon to turn over the tapes for private examination. Nixon refuses and appeals.

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One big pile of garbage
Is better than two little piles
—Arlo Guthrie

In August, Kelly and Lisa came by one day and proposed that we all move in together. Things had been getting hotter and heavier than ever and they'd found a three-bedroom apartment over on North Atwater. I made my apologies to Franz, who gave me a great big leer and said he understood *perfectly*, and we moved in the next week.

It was an odd-shaped place on the second floor, with a little central landing at the top of the stairs that led off to the bedrooms, a tiny bathroom and the kitchen. Kelly was an English major and, like Lisa, she'd been married once before. They'd both discovered that they were married to a bum after the first few months and Kelly had gone back to school, where she was also working on a minor in harpsichord.

Under my watchful eye, they practiced their belly dancing together, clanging their finger-cymbals and giving their rear-ends a healthy workout while I played the bongos and made useful suggestions. They had elaborate, gorgeous costumes that they made themselves and had their teacher, Madame Zorinda, come over for lessons.

It was a blissful time, when I would often retire with one and, halfway thru the night, crawl into bed with the other. The sheets would wind up in a tangled mass by morning and I would spend half the day catching up on sleep. If it hadn't been for Zeke, they'd have worn me out in a week.

Thru all of this, while I expected to get some looks of disapproval from Anton, he was far too occupied with Barb. She had been chasing him openly for quite some time now and her actor-husband seemed to have given up with apparent good grace. That, at least, was the demeanor he adopted; underneath he was seething and deeply hurt. Whenever the two of them were together, Barb treated him like a child. She had nothing on her mind but Anton and that was that.

Anton played hard-to-get for a long time, either taking it out on Kim retroactively or simply wanting to be sure this time. Considering the misery he'd gone thru before, it was understandable. But he was happier than he'd been in a long time, tho he feigned Puritan indifference. He wouldn't have fooled a kitten — he was never a slob in his personal appearance but now he preened like a champion Abyssinian.

Eventually Barb and her husband separated permanently and she and Anton took a house together on West Kirkwood. She was an open woman — intelligent, caring

and straightforward. She had an air of wry good humor that was a cross between Marlene Dietrich and Groucho Marx. Now she was alive, happy, exuberant, and she set to work getting Anton housebroken. It was an easy matter to assign chores but she soon learned that any chore assigned to Anton may or may not get done within a fortnight, so she finally whittled it down to just the one task of taking out the garbage. Even this was not to his liking, for it was news to him that a bag should be taken out as soon as it was filled, rather than simply shunted to one side to join its mates. Such fastidiousness brought out his sarcastic side but Barb persisted and at last he got the idea . . . sort of.

It became his practice to take out the trash diligently every other day — but somehow the bags never made it farther than the back porch. It was a distance of perhaps three steps and as far as he was concerned, it was a monumental concession. Having won this minor victory, Barb wisely kept silent.

But it was a spacious, closed-in porch that would hold an awful lot of trash bags and at last the fearsome smell permeated the entire house. Barb put her foot down with a bang. I happened to come by during the *denouement* and there were dozens of trash bags, some ancient, some quite obviously modern, packed onto the porch right up to the ceiling. Anton was sitting forlornly on the back steps, clutching a skein of plastic bags, uncertain where to begin and unused to the barrage of abuse still streaming from the kitchen. He looked miserable. His eyes pleaded for help with such pathos that I almost felt a twinge of guilt as I went inside to commiserate with Barb.

He finally went to work, cursing the whole time, and I caught a glimpse of him out the back window as he pulled the decaying mass into the black plastic bags with a rake. This, however, was not the end of the tale. The following morning they were awakened at 5:00 a.m. by the trash collector, who was demanding an explanation and refusing to touch the bags, which Anton hadn't bothered to close up. They were piled eight feet high at the curb and only with his help would they do it. It took them a good fifteen minutes to toss it all into the truck — the trashmen raving at him the whole time.

After that, Barb bore down with something like religious fervor. He *would* do his part and that was that. But she was not reckoning with Anton's obdurateness when it came to the mundane — she could let things slide or do it herself. No amount of threatening, nagging or cajoling was going to do the slightest bit of good. A stalemate was quickly reached and, since she had her own work to do, finishing up her degree in biochemistry, the house soon took on the air of desuetude that was Anton's trademark.

The odd thing was, it was not as if he were totally lazy or congenitally unwilling to involve himself in cleaning. For instance, there was an old woman who lived next door to them, a sweet old thing whose children had largely abandoned her, and her tiny little house was almost overflowing with the accumulation of years of trash. Above all, there were piles and piles of old newspapers — she hadn't thrown one out in ten years or more. They covered every wall right up to the ceiling, mostly three tiers deep, and they lined the hallways so that there was barely room for a person to squeeze past. It

wasn't that she was untidy, she was simply unable to keep up and the entire place was a mess.

Anton and Barb became quite fond of her and at last they decided to give her a hand. They spent an entire week cleaning up the old lady's house. Anton participated with gusto and when they were done it gave them all a sense of real satisfaction. He could *do* such things — but not when it was the grinding routine of the everyday, which he treated as anathema.

The old lady died about three months later and her children, who had left her completely to her own devices for years (even in her final illness when Anton and Barb were calling around frantically, trying to find someone to take care of her) descended like flies to pick over the house and property. "Good Christians" these were, and they wailed like lost lambs at the funeral — silently adding up the assets with every tear.

Sept. 2, 1973 — J.R.R. Tolkien, author of The Lord of the Rings, *dies at age 81.*
Sept. 24, 1973 — Senate Hearings resume after a recess. Charles Colson testifies that the break-ins were "lawful" because they needed information to back up charges the Democratic National Committee received campaign funds from Cuba.
Oct. 3, 1973 — The Providence (R.I.) Journal-Bulletin *reveals that Nixon paid $792 in taxes in 1970 and $878 in 1971 on an income of more than $200,000 each year.*
Oct. 10, 1973 — Vice-president Spiro Agnew resigns after pleading "no contest" to a charge of income-tax evasion.

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Each and every heart it seems
Is bounded by a world of dreams
—The Moody Blues

Zeke didn't often go down with me to check on Marie, given his claim that he could "look at" poison ivy and break out then and there, but in mid-August I insisted and when we walked across the trestle bridge, he almost dropped a log.

The sandy soil, kept moist by the stream, was absolutely perfect for dope and, what with weeding and doses of plant food, Marie took off like a time-lapse photo of a stalk of corn. In just two and a half months she had gone from a scrawny little seedling, still recovering from the rock episode, to a ten-foot-tall behemoth — peeping over the top of the railroad trestle like a kid over a banister. Zeke was flabbergasted. Marie towered over us. Her stalk was as thick as a chair-leg and her leaf-fans were enormous. Zeke, suddenly paranoid, raised the problem of camouflage, since from the railroad siding she looked like a poster child for the DEA. I asked what he thought we should do and he suggested tying peanuts to her branches and pretending she was a peanut-tree.

More sarcasm, I suppose.

By mid-September Marie was topping out at fourteen feet and had begun to resemble a giant redwood. There was a monstrous thunderstorm one night and we raced out the next day to check on her. She was lying flat on the ground, half in the stream, and our hearts sank — but her taproot was still intact and we propped her up with sticks and guy-wires. By this time her branches were over six feet wide — about as inconspicuous as a giraffe in a swimming pool. Nothing for it but to hope for she was definitely the Ultrasaurus that we'd been trying for all these years.

By late in the month we were seeing signs up on Lampkins Ridge that things were not as they should be. On the road going up and across the field there were dog tracks and — much worse — horse tracks. Moreover, someone had clearly been walking over the meadow and while they hadn't found the dope patches yet, it was probably just a matter of time. The plants in the Lovers' Lane patch were untouched, but they were also uninspiring. They had never gotten above three feet tall and we hadn't a clue as to why this was — putting in compost and seeing to it that they had plenty of sun and water didn't do a thing. This wasn't the first time for something like this and we could never tell what went wrong.

The Pig Patch plants, on the other hand, were thriving. We hadn't thinned them much and they were a kind of mini lettuce-patch. We couldn't let them get very tall since they were so close to the road but they were a dense hedge, flowering beautifully. Since this patch was so close to town we kept a careful watch and pulled out the males diligently. By late October we had our first true batch of sensimilla — seedless female flower buds that were incredibly potent.

We'd never experienced fresh, homegrown sensimilla before and this was the proverbial one-toke stuff that we'd always dreamed of. We gradually accumulated enough sticky, black hashish to create a tidy little stash — a stash so potent it was almost like doing grass again for that one virgin, first-time experience. We treated Anton and Davy to a couple of hits each and they were duly astonished — stunned into silence by a searing rush that lasted over half an hour.

Unfortunately, we waited just a tad too long to pull out the plants on Lampkins Ridge and when we went up in mid-October, three of the six patches were stripped of plants. It was the first time we'd ever been ripped off on any kind of scale and the thought of all the work and tending we'd put in, plus the idea of so-called "freaks" doing such a thing, infuriated us. To take a few buds, even a few plants, would have been entirely OK but three whole patches ripped off made them, in my eyes, the lowest of scum. I put a curse on their blighted, microcephalic lives.

Nonetheless, it was turning out to be a decent haul, tho not nearly on a par with the vintage '71 crop. But I was concerned about Marie — she'd put so much energy into growing that it was delaying her flowering. I was in a storm of frustrated anticipation, afraid to go down and check on her but getting more and more worried every day.

For, you see, tall plants are usually males and while our males were pretty decent, by and large the only thing they were good for was making rope. I badly wanted Marie to be a female and vindicate all the care I had poured into her survival. Would the first little pips of flower-buds be the light yellow that said they were male, or the Kelly-green of the newly forming female?

Finally, in October, Zeke and I went down with a camera to record for all posterity our wonderful, gentle giant. I have a picture, peanuts and all, with Zeke standing inside.

Marie, praise be to Allah, was female.

Oct. 12, 1973 — Nixon nominates Gerald R. Ford, minority leader of the House, to be the new vice-president. The Court of Appeals orders Nixon to turn over the subpoenaed tapes to Judge Sirica.
Oct. 18, 1973 — Walt Kelly, Pogo *cartoonist, dies at age 60.*
Oct. 19, 1973 — Nixon offers his "compromise" on the tapes; saying a "summary" would be provided whose authenticity is "assured" . . . on the condition that there are no more subpoenas. Cox rejects the offer.
Oct. 20, 1973 — The "Saturday Night Massacre": Nixon orders Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire Special Prosecutor Cox; Richardson refuses and resigns. Nixon orders Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus to fire Cox. He refuses and is fired. Robert Bork is ordered to fire Cox and does so.

PART VIII
CasaDolce

When the truth is found to be lies
And all the joy within you dies
—Jefferson Airplane

In late summer the Watergate Hearings got bogged down in a legal wrangling over acquiring the White House Tapes. Nixon insisted that revealing even portions of these tapes would forever "damage the presidency" and he owed it to "future" presidents not to comply. The Appellate Court took the chance on future presidents and ruled that he had to turn over the tapes to Judge Sirica — the one great hero in the entire affair. Judge Sirica, a Republican, was a federal judge who assigned himself to the Watergate break-in case and simply would not take "I don't know" for an answer. He persisted in applying pressure until James McCord finally broke and began the landslide — and without "Maximum John" even Woodward and Bernstein would have been left spinning their wheels.

Nixon at last offered his final "compromise." He appeared on national television with stacks and stacks of loose-leaf binders behind him (each containing but a few sheets of paper) and said he would release these transcripts to Sirica if and only if there were no more demands for tapes. Special Prosecutor Cox suppressed a snicker as he refused the gallant offer.

Then in rapid succession there came a series of events so outrageous that the entire nation was shocked — no one could have predicted such a bizarre turn of events. In September Spiro Agnew announced that he was under investigation for receiving bribes and kickbacks while governor of Maryland (it was later learned that he had continued to receive payoffs in office) and in October, after weeks of indignantly bleating his innocence, he pleaded no contest to a charge of income tax evasion and promptly resigned as vice-president.

People were just beginning to take this in when, on Saturday, October 20, came the *real* bombshell. Nixon called Elliot Richardson, the new attorney general (the executive branch had become a revolving-door of new appointees) into his office. He told Richardson that he was unhappy with Cox for showing so little "respect" for the president and he wanted him fired. Richardson listened politely but refused to do so, and when Nixon insisted he resigned. Nixon called up the deputy attorney general, William Ruckelshaus, and told him to fire Cox (whose charter explicitly stated that he could only be fired for gross misconduct). Ruckelshaus also refused and Nixon fired him. Finally Nixon appointed Robert Bork as the newest acting attorney general and

Bork agreed to fire Cox (but forgot the second part of his promise to Richardson and Ruckelshaus and did *not* thereupon resign).

The reaction to the "Saturday Night Massacre" was swift and overwhelming. First tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands of telegrams, letters and phone calls poured into Washington — almost all of them calling for impeachment. Nixon had made it clear that he believed himself not just *above* the law, but to actually *be* the law. The mask had been ripped off and no one believed that an innocent man would resort to such a blatant subversion of an "independent" investigation. Soon Nixon issued a laundered version of the tapes, but the Judiciary Department followed almost at once with an accurate transcription — and the shock deepened.

Many people professed to be taken aback by the coarse language on the tapes but this was no more shocking than hearing the same language from an irate uncle or the head of any large corporation. It was the language of the times and the prim reaction seemed to be a kind of transference — an unwillingness to face what the tapes really revealed. The president had been the initiator in routine conversations (that were not in the slightest concerned with affairs of state) with planning and matter-of-factly coordinating a large cover-up. What Dean had said was true — Nixon had calmly discussed giving blackmailers a million dollars in hush money, and the containment of what was patently a White House operation.

And if *that* were true, could it also be true that the "burglary" really was just a small part of a vast espionage network? Had this president put in place a skein of internal spies, dirty-tricksters and political subversives? Had the IRS, the FBI and the CIA been used for "screwing" his opponents? We only had Dean's word but the attempts to discredit him and pretend that the cover-up had been all his idea was beginning to look a little frayed around the edges.

On October 24, the head of the House Judiciary Committee, Peter Rodino, said that an impeachment investigation would proceed "full steam ahead." Oddly, the tone, even among the crowd in the Commons, was somber — we were no longer jubilant as the reality sank in. We were being proven right, yes, but the impending impeachment brought no sense of victory; instead, it was sad.

And then, finally, the transcript of the March 21, 1973, tape was released (amazingly, Nixon believed these transcripts would clear him) and it backed up John Dean's version of events completely. Dean had told Nixon of the status of the cover-up and openly informed Nixon that several people were involved in an obstruction of justice. Blackmail, money-laundering and other criminal matters were discussed and when Nixon asked how much money would be needed, Dean replied that it would cost a million dollars over the next two years. No outrage or surprise as Nixon replied "We could get that. . . . You could get it in cash. I know where it could be gotten. . . . But the question is who the hell would handle it?" Perjury was also discussed and Nixon said "It seems to me we have to keep the cap on the bottle. . . ." Dean continued to warn of

the growing dangers and Nixon, referring to the blackmail, said that it would have to be continued. He suggested they continue to run a "stone wall" in regard to the cover-up and cite "national security" as their reason for refusing to cooperate and even coached Haldeman and Dean on how to use memory lapses to avoid answering questions.

In the end, those who were convicted or pled guilty to the crimes that he initiated and encouraged included John Mitchell, Richard Kleindienst, H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, John Dean, Jeb Stuart Magruder, Herbert Porter, Robert Mardian, Fred LaRue, Charles Colson, Herbert Kalmbach, Dwight Chapin, Egil Krogh, Donald Segretti, G. Gordon Liddy, James McCord, E. Howard Hunt, Bernard Barker, Eugenio Martinez, Frank Sturgis and Virgilio Gonzalez. Two were former attorneys general, most were lawyers, most were disbarred — and most went to jail.

Nixon later declared to David Frost: "Well, when the President does it, that means it is not illegal."

Oct. 23, 1973 — Western Union "inundated" by largest outpouring of telegrams in history, most advocating impeachment. Nixon agrees to turn over some of the tapes to Sirica.
Oct. 24, 1973 — House Judiciary Chairman Peter W. Rodino says that an impeachment investigation will begin.
Oct. 31, 1973 — Fred Buzhardt, Nixon's attorney, says two tapes are "non-existent." Calls for impeachment intensify.

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Now all my fathers, they've gone down
True love, they've been without it
—Bob Dylan

Bad luck seemed to stalk me like lawyers to an airline crash. There were monster thunderstorms all that fall, with howling winds that sent the trees swirling in the gale. Kelly came to my room one morning and I followed her to her front window and looked out — the Comet lay squashed under a tree, like Bambi under the foot of Godzilla. I'd never known what heartbroken meant until that moment. I was forlorn for days but nothing could be saved, not even the joint-dispenser, and she was hauled away for scrap.

I didn't really need a car but Zeke's van had long been sliding downhill. After the valve job he had let it run down to the point where the steering wheel was so frozen that it took two people to turn it. He had to ask someone along if he wanted to go anywhere. (Zeke's idea of maintenance was to ignore a problem for so long that something worse would develop in the meanwhile, reducing the original problem to insignificance. Thus, as long as it didn't actually blow up in his face, he could feel he

was making progress.) By now it had reached the point where the van was less of a vehicle than a sort of overgrown wheelbarrow and he offered to sell it to me for $50.

This sounded intriguing but there was so much wrong with it that I didn't know where to begin. With some help from Davy, I set to work on the steering first, and slowly, painstakingly, got her back in running order. Within a few weeks she was more or less back in shape but a new complication developed when the landlord told us that he was selling the house and the three of us would have to move. Kelly was talking about moving to Cairo (Egypt, not Illinois) to try her hand at teaching English in a foreign country and Lisa wanted to get a place by herself.

So I began to think of making the van livable, putting in a bed and fixing it up like Davy's old VW bus. That was easier said than done, for she leaked like a sieve and I wasn't sure I could talk Davy into body work. Since he was a sculptor, he was getting more and more proficient at metal-work but he by no means was all that keen to get into such an enormous project. But the VW bus had bit the dust a few months before and I thought I could get him interested — except that he and Sara abruptly announced that they were moving to Texas. It seemed like everyone but me was developing the wanderlust all of a sudden.

Nov. 17, 1973 — Nixon declares "I am not a crook."
Nov. 21, 1973 — White House reveals that there is an 18½ minute gap in a subpoenaed tape. Rose Mary Woods, Nixon's secretary, says it was an accident. Republican governors outraged by this new "bombshell." Calls for resignation increase.

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So far away . . .doesn't anybody stay
In one place anymore?
—Carole King

Davy and Sara left for Texas after Christmas and we got a letter from them saying they'd wound up in Houston. With so many people leaving I began to feel the fiddlefoot itching. Since I still wanted to get the van fixed, I loaded up my stuff and headed out for the Southland.

I had been diligently avoiding the South, so, thinking to check out its bad reputation for myself, I took a route that went straight thru the heart of Mississippi. It was cold as I drove down thru the densely wooded hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, past lazy old farms with white fences and big tobacco barns. Just over the state line into Mississippi the land flattened out and became one long monotonous skein of cotton fields, just like in the old songs.

The cotton bushes had been harvested months ago and the scraggly twigs stood

out in bleak miles of pathetic decay. The towns were a mirror of those blighted fields and whenever I had to stop for gas or food the people glared at me with deep suspicion. The men shot streams of brown tobacco-juice my way and the women simply stared in open hostility. The frayed and falling-down white-frame buildings seemed to be held up by tin signs advertising Phillips 66 and Redman Tobacco. There were pickups galore and sullen kids chucking rocks at mangy dogs — there was an air of barely contained violence in everything I saw. Mississippi had all the charm of a knife fight.

Louisiana was another world, almost a different planet. There were enormous pine trees and the beginnings of strange, mist-soaked bayous. I wanted to see New Orleans but there was that undercurrent of a longed-for violence, brooding just beneath the surface. It was like when I'd been in Arizona in '72 — I'd actually driven right up to the California border. Southern Cal had been a fantastic place to grow up . . . but one whiff of what it had become and I turned back north and kept going.

The air was hot and damp, closing in on me like a heavy, wet cloak, and I sped for Texas as fast as the straining van would take me. The landscape opened up again into a desert-like plain of scrub grass and dusty farmland and the spires of Houston stood out like a thumb in the eye of civilization, drawing everything towards it from the vacuum of the vast stillness. It was a strange skyline — brief and self-conscious; proud of its isolation. I drove around, thoroughly lost, until I finally remembered that Davy and Sara actually had a phone.

I called for directions and drove to a rundown residential section that had been swallowed up in the urban sprawl. I found their house and at the door a glaring long-hair silently pointed me to an entry at the end of the porch. It was an enclosed stairway and all the way up it was plastered over with a dizzying collage of bizarre photographs, naked women and helter-skelter graffiti.

Davy and Sara were glad to see me and we had something of a feast that night of lasagna, Sara's homemade French bread, and wine. It was visiting two refugees in the midst of some huge rabbit warren.

They had the second floor to themselves. It had been hit with the piecemeal "renovation" of dozens of tenants — all with wildly differing ideas on decor and comfort. Davy had stripped it down pretty much to the bare essentials and the furniture consisted of a couple of three-foot-wide wooden spools for tables and some low stools. His sculpture dotted the rooms like aliens dropped into a prairie cabin. A few of Sara's pictures hung on the walls. There were paint tubes and turpentine cans lying about at random, as well as brushes, chisels, enormous clumps of wax and clay, steel-rod armatures and easels, platforms and canvas dropcloths. There must be, I thought, artist studios in the south of France or in Rome that looked exactly the same.

In a day or so we settled into a kind of routine and I explained that I wanted to do a complete job on the body of the van, since it was nearly falling apart. With more or less good grace, Davy agreed to become my technical advisor and I set to work

feverishly, hosing down the whole thing and scrubbing it clean, then working with tin shears and a hacksaw to cut away all the old rust.

After another day or two in the dense, humid heat (and this was October) I gave up trying to imitate an ambitious politician and settled into the southern rhythms. Each day began in mid-morning with a trip to the grocery store for a few essentials. This was one of Davy's daily rituals, a walk to the tiny little hole-in-the-wall store. It was permeated with a powerful, pungent smell — like that of chlorine bleach mingled with a strong body odor. A toothless old woman sat behind the counter, and perched on a chair in the corner sat her tremendously fat son. Apparently he was the source of the odor and it was so strong it set my eyes burning. It did, however, tend to cut down on impulse buying. Davy rushed around, picking out rice and Veg-all and the standard two six packs of beer. I dove for the outside.

Beer was something of a national religion in Texas and, not wanting to offend the natives, I quickly fell in step. You could see people on their way to work in the morning lobbing empty Lone Star cans out of car windows. And not just the pickup types, either — guys in business suits who drove Mercedes and Cadillacs. With all that beer, the loud-mouthed, swaggering Texas *persona* became less of a mystery. In the never-ending, sweltering heat, I was soon swilling the stuff down with the best of them. The work on the van went much more slowly — but it was happy work. Like the old sage Benjamin Franklin had said: “Beer is the proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.”

The characters who lived downstairs from Davy and Sara were freaks of a whole 'nuther order. Their names were Phil and Don and they would stumble out of bed and into the yard, scratching, yawning and half-dressed, about two in the afternoon. There they would sit drinking beer, smoking dope and watching me work on the van. Phil was tall and lean with shoulder-length hair and an engaging, con-man air — which was natural, since he'd recently gotten out of prison for smuggling marijuana into Texas from Mexico. He'd taken it all in stride and didn't seem at all perturbed about the idea — he laughed and said he'd made a lot of friends there.

Don had a huge beer belly, a wild black beard and a greasy tangle of hair that hung in a long strand all the way down his back. He was a lumbering giant with an enormous cast on one leg, the result of a motorcycle accident —his right foot had been almost completely severed. He laughed that off as Phil did the stint in prison; they were nothing if not happy-go-lucky.

They pulled up lawn chairs and howled encouragement at me as I worked, calling me the "Bondo Kid," from the body filler I was using up by the gallon. They got no end of enjoyment watching me work and tossing the occasional empty beer can at my head — which was, to them, a form of friendly camaraderie. What the hell, I just grinned and tossed them back.

Davy and Sara got along well enough with Phil and often joined him in a game of Scrabble (he'd become a real master while in prison). Sometimes they went

downstairs to watch "Star Trek" on his tube but they were considerably more wary of Don. This was understandable — almost at once he told me that his favorite entertainment was dropping acid and then going to see *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* over and over again. He asked me to go along one day (it was his forty-seventh screening; according to Phil, he roared and howled thru every minute of it) but I had a sudden attack of the busy's and declined. Don was actually crestfallen — seems nobody *ever* wanted to go, poor fella.

Without a doubt, tho, Phil and Don came up with some of the best and most exotic dope I had ever had — things like blond Pakistani hashish, Maui Wowie and Thai sticks of incredible potency. *They* smoked the stuff all day long but I usually begged off until the evening so I could get a few things done before getting totally zonked.

The work on the van went slowly but I got a lot of help from Davy shaping the pieces of aluminum to fit over the gaping holes in the panels. I was on my own with the body filler, tho, and I slathered it on by the bucketful, then spent hours sanding and touching it up. One week went by, then two, then three. I got pretty handy with a beer can, too, but there was a night when I got to feeling a bit too sure of myself and took Sara on, which was a mistake.

It was another cool, perfect evening and we were up late, as usual — she working on a massive pile of French-bread dough while I kept her company at the kitchen table. She was putting down the beer at a good clip and, not to be outdone, I matched her, beer for beer. Davy had gone to bed to let us slug it out. Sara chirped along contentedly and when the beer ran out I volunteered to go get some more. She said that sounded good and after *that* six-pack, I went and got another. Sara burbled along, as happy as ever, while I sank deeper and deeper into my chair, asking inane questions about the bread dough when I couldn't remember what she'd said last. She was gay and carefree and showed not the slightest sign of intoxication. The arrogant slut. I began to hate her for it — one last beer and I couldn't even get my fingers to curl around the can. She finally announced that she was finished — and was there any more beer left? Just mine, I mumbled, and handed it over. She finished it off in one swallow, merrily tripped off to bed and I stumbled downstairs to the van. The next day she seemed perfectly fine and I decided, as Davy had long ago, that that was the last time I was going to compete with Sara on anything.

Behind the house, across a long yard, was an old abandoned house — a rotting hulk that I could scavenge wood from for building my sleeping platform. There were three large pecan trees behind it and a favorite pastime for Davy was to go pecan-hunting. Among the leaf litter and old husks, they were remarkably hard to spot but I became practiced with time and every few days we'd spend an hour or so collecting a sackful. The unaccustomed midwinter warmth was strange and a mood of quiet expectancy hung over everything, a sense of nervous anticipation. Davy was growing

ever more taciturn and removed, as if the still heat was driving him inexorably inward.

Sara liked smoking grass but she was wary of anything else. Not so Phil and Don, who would have tried boiled rat glands if they thought it'd get you high, so I asked Don about psilocybin mushrooms. I'd heard that they grew wild in that part of Texas and with the enthusiasm of a little boy on a scavenger hunt, he agreed to help me look for some likely fields. Sara went along for the adventure and we drove out into the countryside in Don's old pickup truck.

We finally came to a field — a strange place with very young trees growing among huge old oaks and small clumps of briars scattered around on a lawn-like pasture. We split up and went hunting for any kind of mushrooms we could find. I had a picture of what they looked like and there was supposed to be a test that was infallible — if you pinched the stem and it turned blue after a while, that was psilo. And, sure enough, after an hour or so I found one and yelled out to Sara to come and see. After that we began to find more and even tho they were few and far between, after a long afternoon we had a small jar full of them.

We took them back and Don ate his entire share right then and there. Sara and I poured honey over the rest (that was supposed to preserve them) and put them in the refrigerator. That weekend Davy and I finally persuaded her to try some and we each downed a couple apiece.

It came on slowly as the evening gathered and across the street I could just make out the form of a gigantic jade plant that grew there — a bizarre, eight-foot tall tree that seemed to be suffused with some strange life form, like an Ent from the Tolkien tales. Its shape and posture were conveying some message I couldn't quite make out. Their apt had a wonderful porch that ran the length of the house and we sat out there in the growing dusk, silently taking in the sensations. After a while I noticed Davy, crouched on all fours, stalking one of his sculptures. It was a series of spires, each topped with a small silver ball, and he was peering up into it from all different angles as if seeing it for the first time. Sara was gazing at one of her paintings and said she couldn't believe she'd painted it — it seemed somehow alien, yet familiar, too. We went around the room looking at each thing in turn. They had a kind of life to them that I'd never noticed before, something unrelated to what Davy and Sara had intended. There were things they didn't realize had been there at all. Soon it was too dark to see and I switched on a light; it hurt our eyes so I turned it back off and Sara broke out the candles. We wandered around that big, bare room, holding up the flickering light like three figures from an old movie unearthing an ancient tomb.

We settled down by the big, round spool of a table and talked. Davy and Sara launched into a discussion of art that I could barely follow but the gist of it seemed to be that art had nothing to do with capturing any sort of essence or representation of a thing or (worse) idea. Instead, it was seeing something, portraying something, in a way that it hadn't been seen before, with eyes and a mind that were open to its various un-

obvious possibilities. Which meant, of course, seeing it with an intensely new awareness and that was what the psilo was letting them do. That was how they saw, for the first time, where they had been succeeding and failing. It was a moment of intense discovery and, too, a simple acceptance that art, beneath all the cant about "symbolism" and "meaning" was just the simple fact of seeing, both with the eye and with the mind (all of ours being different and yet oh-so-connected) in ways that we do not normally see. Out of indifference or inattention or simply because we load up our seeing with so many things from our baggage of expectations, we needed the broadening effect of art to reawaken the senses.

We talked for a long time and when at last I went down to the van to go to bed, they were caressing each other in another form of discovery and I suddenly felt very lonely. Little matter, I got out a book and read by flashlight until almost dawn. When I got up it was mid-morning and I went upstairs, encased in the afterglow of the psilo. I was making some coffee when I heard someone singing outside and I looked down into the street. There was a young boy on skates there, wearing headphones and singing to himself as he swooped back and forth down the street:

Dance with me . . .
I want to be your partner
(Orleans)

He glided in wide, graceful curls in and around the cars and I felt utterly, utterly free and at peace; more immersed in life than I had ever been.

Dec. 6, 1973 — Gerald R. Ford sworn in as vice-president.
Jan. 15, 1974 — A panel of experts report that the 18½ minute gap had been erased and re-erased at least five times and that it could not have been done accidentally.
Jan. 30, 1974 — In his State of the Union address, Nixon says "One year of Watergate is enough."

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GODDAMN . . . the Pusher!
—Steppenwolf

It took six weeks but the van was about finished on the outside. She was finally beginning to look like a true trucker and less like an explosion in a daisy-factory. At last I could turn my attention to the dismal interior. I covered the floor in wooden planks and scrap carpet, salvaged from the derelict house, and made a sleeping-platform out of

a chunk of old plywood. I bought some cheap paneling for the walls and over the rear window used a large cloth with the signs of the Zodiac on it that Lisa had sewn for me. I draped an old blanket behind the seats and Davy donated an icebox left over from the VW bus. I even installed some speakers and a radio/tape player. There was plenty of space under the bed for clothes and extra blankets and I still had the propane lantern from NoDak. I thought of the old hermit as I installed some judiciously spaced shelves and nails and the one item I'd saved from his tiny cabin — a little wall bracket that held a single candle. I added some Van Gogh prints and a photograph of an old Indian and the place was complete. It was a home as snug as 140 and, in some ways, just as big. It only remained to paint her and we rented a sprayer and put on three coats of metallic blue, tearing off the ugly old bumpers and replacing them with stained oak two-by-twelves. She was a whole new van and I was as proud as a Republican with a Swiss bank account.

On my last night with Davy and Sara, Phil and Don showed up with a huge bag of dope and got us all royally ripped. Their beady little black eyes gleamed like sharks and they kept dropping hints that maybe, just maybe, they could afford to sell a little of it. Narrow-eyed with suspicion, I tore into one of the bricks and sampled a bit. It was incredibly dynamite stuff so at last I broke down and bought a key with the last of my savings. I stowed it away carefully and didn't open it up again until I got back to Bloomington, two nights later.

It was a long drive back, passing thru fall and into winter again, and I showed up at 140 and let Zeke marvel at the transformed van. He was truly amazed and we went over every detail, then I calmly pulled out the tight, heavy package and waited for the oohs and ahhs. Zeke watched with glowing eyes as I broke it open — and a pile of stems, seeds and shake poured out. I took a whiff. It was, at best, rank Mexican cattle-fodder. We smoked a J. Zeke said, "Well, I don't see any p'ints about that frog that's any diff'rent from . . ." I stopped him cold, doing my best imitation of an Anton glare. Those bastards. It was the Infamous Bad Stuff all over again. Somehow they'd done a sleight-of-hand and pulled a switch on me. I warned Zeke not to say another word and threw the odious crap into a corner. I fumed for days but I was unable to come up with any way of getting revenge. Then it occurred to me. Perhaps it was small compensation but there was such a thing as natural justice. *They* were the ones who were going to have to live that way, for the rest of their lives. They were the scumbags, not me, and the only way I could really suffer any more from it was if I let their evil *transfer* to me. Such things only get passed around, like a broken typewriter from yardsale to yardsale. What we wanted, of course, was *perfect* justice, but this would do. I dismissed the intent and thought of it as an accident — just one of those things that happen. What the hell. Sooner or later, they would reap their scumbag harvest.

Feb. 5, 1974 — Patty Hearst is kidnapped by the "Symbionese Liberation Army."

March 1, 1974 — The Watergate Grand Jury indicts 7 Nixon aides and names Nixon as an "unindicted co-conspirator."
March 29, 1974 — Mariner 10 passes within 466 miles of Mercury.
April 3, 1974 — Patty Hearst says she has "chosen to stay and fight" with the SLA.
April 11, 1974 — The House Judiciary Committee votes 33-3 to subpoena 42 presidential tapes.
April 15, 1974 — Cameras reveal Patty Hearst (now called "Tania") taking part in a bank robbery in San Francisco.

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'Round, 'round, get around
I get around
—The Beach Boys

Zeke was working for a German character who was into buying houses and renovating them. I was getting pretty hard up for cash, so I went to work for Ernst doing demolition work. He didn't pay much but I got a free room to stay in, only a block south of 140; it was still too cold for the van. It was so small I had to put the bed up on top of two dressers just to squeeze into the place — kind of like living in a submarine. But it was on the second floor with a nice view of the elm-lined street and I only had to share the kitchen and bath with two others. Spring was well under way and I decided to move into the van. I was tired of Ernst and his schemes and the van was very comfortably set up, so I loaded up my stuff and trucked on over to a quiet, tree-lined street near the university.

It was an old residential area and the street was still paved with bricks — one of those quaint touches that made this part of town seem like a step back into the last century. I was parked behind a frat-house on a narrow, one-way street overrun with students and cars during the day but very secluded and lonely at night. I had to get to sleep early, since the bustle would wake me up by 6:00 a.m., but it was wonderful to get up with the birds — to sense that freedom and impermanence that came from living, literally, on the road. I carried my bag of things over to the HYPR building every morning for a shower and to use the bathroom.

Zeke loaned me a bike — an old, rusty thing with big fat tires and a basket in front. I occasionally picked up odd jobs here and there, as janitor at a local theater or doing yard work for little old ladies, but I spent a lot of time in the library, reading books and magazines. Naturally, I was diligent about chaining the bike to a post out front, since the bike thieves around campus were notorious. One day, however, I came out to find that someone had stolen the chain — and left the bike. Nice touch, I thought.

They had a booksale at the library once a week and every so often I'd buy a pile of old *Scientific Americans,* to read late at night. On a chilly day in mid-April, I loaded

them into the basket and headed back for the van. Just a couple of blocks from home, I was making a left turn on Seventh Street when this yahoo in a four-wheel drive Bronco came barrelling at me from the opposite direction. It was a frat-rat and he pulled out halfway into the intersection and honked — trying to give me a scare, like yahoo frats do. I nonchalantly flipped him the finger and he roared past, his buddies yelling the usual crap about "hippies," etc. I just kept on going and gave them another bird.

I could hear them all the way around the block, tho, as they came roaring back. Just as I was pulling up to the van and opening the side door, here comes the Bronco-load of cretins. They storm up beside me and jerk to a stop. There are four of them. I begin to wonder if I've made a mistake.

The yahoo-driver leans out and says "Hey, you!" I look at him like he's a bug and say "Yeah?" He says, "Hey . . . you know, you made an obscene gesture at us back there!" "Ah," I think to myself, "'obscene gesture,' yet. I think we got a moron here." I don't say a word, just stare at him, not knowing whether to laugh or not. In the meanwhile, however, an old, beat-up Plymouth has pulled up behind the Bronco — a low-slung hot-rod with blatting, roaring mufflers and two young "townies" inside. There's no room to pass, so the townie is honking his horn — rather insistently. The frat-rat is just getting warmed up so the guy next to him leans out — and flips a bird to the car behind! This was not wise.

Things get a little complicated, here. The passenger in the townie car leaps out and comes running up to the frat-car and, without so much as a word, starts beating on the guy who's flipped him the finger. This guy has no idea what the hell is going on, so he grabs the townie and hauls him halfway into the Bronco — whereupon the driver freaks out and guns it, squealing away in a haze of blue smoke. The townie-driver pulls up next to me and yells, "Hey, where'd my buddy go?" I shrugged and pointed at the receding Bronco . . . which has now sprouted a pair of legs, flailing away on the passenger side.

Townie takes off after them, his muffler roaring, and for the next ten minutes I am in absolute amazement — it was straight out of a Keystone Kops movie. Every couple of minutes I see the Bronco tearing up and down the side streets with the townie in hot pursuit just inches behind. He trails after them, honking his horn all the way — back and forth they go, up one side-street and down another, and at every turn, there's those legs pumping wildly out the window. It was wonderful. I watched this farce for what seemed like an hour and a small crowd gathered to take in the show. We laughed our heads off — but I never did find out how it all came out.

April 18, 1974 — Judge Sirica grants Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's request for a subpoena for 64 White House tapes.
April 29, 1974 — Nixon releases 1,200 pages of "transcripts" that do not include material for 11 of the 42 tapes subpoenaed.

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One thing I can tell you is
You got to be free
—The Beatles

Zeke had met a fellow composer named Abby who lived on the south side of town. She was all smiles and energy, full of projects and commitments and always on the go. She gave the impression, in a nice sort of way, that she was well aware of how famous she was bound to be some day.

Her husband, Dmitri, was in the sculpture department at IU and had become acquainted with Davy there. Abby and Dmitri were another beautiful study in contrasts — she was breezy and carefree, Dmitri was an odd mixture of mild paranoia and cool mysteriousness. He was intensely curious and inquisitive and he had an extraordinary knack with tools. It was more than just handiness; if he was given, for instance, an old antique from the blacksmith era that nobody could make head nor tail of, he would stand and hold it for a few minutes, hefting it this way and that, and then tell you what it was used for.

Abby was coquettish and wry, with a gleam in her eye that reminded me a little of Kim. Dmitri was very tall and tho quick to smile, somehow he seemed excruciatingly shy. It was all the more disconcerting, then, when at times he could engage a person in intensely personal conversation, posing seemingly neutral and objective questions — yet obviously probing motivations like a trained psychiatrist.

Dmitri and Abby had a fondness for wine, which gave me my chance. The wine I'd made in NoDak had been stashed all this time under the table in the kitchen at 140, gathering age, and from the beginning Davy and Zeke had made fun of the idea of "chokecherry" wine. It didn't help matters any when I finally cracked a bottle to "show" them and it turned out to be harsh, acrid and definitely on the sickly-sweet side. To say nothing of the fact that apparently it hadn't really finished fermenting after all and in the middle of the night there was the occasional loud explosion as a cork got blown out of a bottle. It looked like a fiasco.

I was about to toss the stuff out and put an end to the snide remarks when I made one last test of a bottle that had popped its cork the night before. A miracle — it was superb! It had a soft, fruity, tart taste that was far from what it had been. Tho still a bit "young" I unshipped several bottles and took them over to Dmitri and Abby's place. Zeke sneered his usual sneer but he about dropped a kitten when Dmitri proclaimed it the best wine he'd ever had.

After what seemed like an ominously long hiatus, things were beginning to heat up on the Watergate front again. They had a TV and night after night we watched the

news but all the action seemed to be taking place behind closed doors. This was no cover-up, however — you could feel the guns massing for an assault as Nixon vowed never to resign. More and more he was wrapping himself in an imperial pose but there was no longer any doubt that a sea-change was under way.

Everything that spring seemed to be in a state of unease and upheaval. Dmitri and Abby abruptly separated and she moved out, house-sitting for a professor who was out of town. Dmitri decamped to a house out in the country. Lisa was living with a jazz trumpeter from Chicago and Kelly, who had a strong fiddlefoot of her own, had flown off to Europe and was teaching English in Cairo. Anton and Barb announced that they were leaving for Connecticut, where Anton had landed a teaching job. Suddenly the town seemed lonely and barren. Calvin and George had split up while I was in Houston and Calvin had gone to, of all places, New Orleans. Ian, Erica, Davy, Sara, Kim, Anton, Barb, Calvin, and Kelly were all gone. Zeke and I were in constant demand for good dope, however, and quite a few people had come to depend on us for smokes. It was time to start the eternal struggle over where to plant.

We were taking a big risk with Lampkins Ridge, given the rip-off of last year, but it had been our mainstay for a long time. We planted Martha and Gertrude but did a perfunctory job on the two that had been plundered, using them as a decoy and hoping the bastards would be satisfied with that. We did a particularly fastidious job of camouflage on the two that had gone unnoticed and went up to see them as little as possible, trying to avoid making paths.

We could plant in the Pig Patch, near town, but the Lovers' Lane group had bombed out so there was no point in trying there again. But we found a dirt track leading to a grove of trees just to the east and there we found another little clearing we could try. Colombian grass had become all the rage and we decided to start some experiments, putting in some exotic seeds for a change. Colombian certainly was potent but I didn't think much of the stone (far too buzzy for me) and we thought we could hybridize it.

We needed more places to plant, however, and since Dmitri was living out in the country, we laid our problem before him. Considering how paranoid he was, we weren't expecting much but he surprised us and said he'd be glad to show us a couple of spots nearby. He took us across the road and thru some woods and we wound up on top of a hill. There was a steeply graded pasture on one side, dotted with huge old mulberry trees, and an vast field of briars beyond a barbwire fence to the right. The briars were enormous and plenty thick enough to discourage visitors, so we hacked our way in to take a look.

We found a couple of wide ledges on the steep slope that were just big enough to accommodate the size of patch we liked and the soil was ideal. Tho certainly lacking in nutrients, it was sandy and light. We were getting highly practiced in the routine of beefing up the soil and in no time we hauled out some bags of compost, bone meal, peat

moss and blood meal and managed to cart it over the hill to the briar patch.

It was quite a job to clear out the roots of those tough old briars but we got it done and laid in two nice patches, each about four feet by ten. We'd been accumulating seeds from various types of exotic dope and we made this our prime experimental station, planting Jamaican, Afghani, Hawaiian, some weird African stuff and Thai, hoping to make some interesting crosses. Dmitri gave us a hand and I got the impression he was doing this as much for the experience of something new as for the dope he'd get out of it.

May 7, 1974 — Nixon's new White House lawyer, James St. Clair, announces that no new tapes will be released.
May 9, 1974 — The House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Peter Rodino, begins impeachment hearings.
May 17, 1974 — Six SLA members killed in a shootout.
May 30, 1974 — The Judiciary Committee warns Nixon that failure to comply with its subpoenas will be grounds for impeachment.

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Well, do you ever get the feeling
That the story's too damn real and in the present tense?
—Jethro Tull

Spring snapped into summer with a heat wave that came down like a hot blanket and settled in for good. The long, humid days were weighted down under a staring sun. In the trees, the cicadas whirred in the sudden quiet and even the cars seemed to move in a hushed slow-motion.

After months of secret doings, the House Judiciary Committee was at last getting down to it. Nobody had forgotten the firestorm that followed the Saturday Night Massacre as the press singlemindedly dogged the preparations for the vote on impeachment. After months without any real news, the committee convened in July and I began haunting the Commons once again. A crowd of freaks, students, professors and a smattering of suit-types watched the big TV, high on a little platform in a corner, surrounded by trophy cases and antique photographs of the athlete-heroes of old IU — adding a surreal tone to the already surreal events on the tube. Many bought popcorn and watched the proceedings like a movie, tossing popcorn into the air when key points were made.

The committee (much larger and more somber than the Senate Committee) was a mystery to us. It had a number of entrenched Republican diehards who had apparently been doing their best to gum up the works, setting up a smokescreen from beginning to

end. They insisted on clear proof of criminal wrongdoing and excused everything with the preposterous argument that "everybody does it," tarring all past and future presidents with the assumption that they were power-hungry, paranoid manipulators who constantly subverted the laws for political gain. Many Americans believed and applauded this line, wailing that the Democrats were only out to "get" Nixon. Ominously, the Southern Democrats seemed happy to go along with all this, for the South loved Richard M. and they were pressuring their congressmen heavily. Nixon's twisted rhetoric and pseudo-patriotic posturing suited the rednecks to a T.

Nixon had continued to stonewall the committee subpoenas and they had had to rely on the few tapes they could get from Leon Jaworski, the new special prosecutor. The final phase began late in the month and Chairman Peter Rodino, a quiet, nervous-looking Italian from New Jersey, finally got things under way. Several Republicans began by arguing that they couldn't decide anything without "additional evidence" — meaning the evidence that Nixon had refused to provide, even as he and his lawyers insisted that it would exonerate him. This fell rather flat in the heavy silence.

And then, suddenly, on Saturday, July 27, 1974, the vote was in progress. It caught us by surprise after all the pretentious wrangling, especially since it was a vote on a "substitute" and not on the actual Article I itself — but it was the vote on impeachment, nonetheless, for reasons none of us quite understood. We could tell this was it only because the commentators told us it was and because of the "historic" face that each of the congressionaires hastily put on.

All twenty-one Democrats voted "aye" on the obstruction of justice charge and they were joined by six Republicans. The final tally was twenty-seven for and eleven against. I was stunned, elated, and puzzled, all at once. Nixon, I realized, was going to be thrust out of office, rejected by the American people two years after the most stunning landslide in the history of the United States. Abraham Lincoln had been proven right again — you couldn't fool all of us, all the time. I was, finally, extraordinarily proud of what I was and where I lived.

May 31, 1974 — The Supreme Court agrees to hear Jaworski's case against Nixon for the 64 subpoenaed tapes.
July 24, 1974 — The Supreme Court votes unanimously that Nixon must turn over the 64 tapes to Sirica.
July 27-30, 1974 — The House Judiciary Committee votes yes on three articles of impeachment.
Aug. 5, 1974 — Nixon releases the "smoking gun" tape, admitting a "serious act of omission." The June 23, 1972, tape reveals that he openly encouraged the cover-up just days after the burglary took place.
Aug. 8, 1974 — Nixon announces he will resign.
Aug. 9, 1974 — Gerald R. Ford becomes the 38th president.
Aug. 20, 1974 — Ford nominates Governor Nelson Rockefeller to be his vice-president.

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Long time, no see
Short time for you and me
—The Moody Blues

The rest of the summer floated by with an unreal sense of disjointedness. A tremendous burden had been lifted — the war was over and the Dragon had been defanged, driven from office in disgrace. An unfettered sense of joy became one long, continuous festival and there were concerts in Dunn Meadow, People's Park and in the streets. You could go anywhere and simply walk into the nearest party. Dealers were passing out J's on the street and there were gatherings in the state parks to cook food, go skinny-dipping and barter for clothes, beads, incense and books. Friends would stop by my van in the middle of the night for a J talk about how we could now begin to take over the political system and start a new era of tolerance, harmony and peace. "Imagine" played on the radio over and over.

Dmitri had a job over at the concert hall and he let in me and Zeke and whoever else wanted to come along thru a back door. We'd sneak up to a vast catwalk above the stage and listen to Beethoven's Ninth or Bach's St. John's Passion, looking straight down at the orchestra. That is, until Zeke, clumsy as ever, dropped a lit J right down onto the head of a tuba player. The guy went crazy, trying to get it off his head, and we spent half an hour eluding the cops. Six of us wound up on the roof, hiding in the darkness 'til long after midnight, when we snuck out.

In early fall we made a trek up to Lampkins Ridge to pull out the last of the males and we were just making our way along the trail that ran down the center of the field when suddenly, out of nowhere, there appeared a man and a woman on horseback. We'd never seen a soul up there and we were stunned into silence. They just glared and kept riding. A couple of days later we went back up and there were dog tracks everywhere. The two patches nearest the path had been ripped off. We harvested the rest, even tho the females were only half in flower, and at last had to concede that that was the end of the Ridge — the end of an era.

But the Pig Patch was more gratifying. One plant we'd topped in the spring performed spectacularly — it sent up four main branches from the stump, each as thick and as hardy as a main stalk. When it flowered, it turned out to be female. It was only five feet tall but each branch was a dense mass of flowers — we called her the "Grandma" plant. A bad thunderstorm in September split her right down the middle but we tied the branches together with twine and she kept right on trucking. In late October she gave us our all-time yield for a single plant, over a full pound.

On a warm fall night we drove the van out and did the manicuring on the spot.

We opened the side doors to take advantage of the full moon and the soft, silken breeze and sat enshrouded in the heady aroma, picking flowers and gathering hash. We'd found that we could clean the plants *before* drying and control the speed of curing much better, using paper bags. The smoke was spicy, delicate and mild. We listened to Vivaldi on the tape player and rubbed the hash off into a little cup, keeping ourselves mightily stoned. Bach, I said to Zeke, had been touched by the finger of God; Beethoven was the heart of all mankind; Mozart was the embodiment of genius; but Vivaldi — Vivaldi had touched the souls of the angels and stood before the entrance to heaven, wreathed in utter joy.

In the field next door the Colombian patch had turned out to be a disappointment. Generally, grass isn't bothered by the first few light frosts and will keep right on flowering. The Colombian stuff never did flower and the first mere touch of frost had killed them. We had to yank them out and the dope was far from high quality — we dumped it in with the rest of the low-grade shake. I hated the stone anyway so it was no great loss. Out at Dmitri's place the experiment with new varieties in the briar patch worked out well, despite an early scare from marauding deer. We spent a serene evening cleaning the harvest with Dmitri, doing a thorough job of labeling and testing each one. Zeke carefully marked down the critiques, as if we were wine-samplers in the vineyards of Bordeaux. The Jamaican was "vibrant," the Malawi was "piquant" and the Afghani "robust," donchaknow.

By the light of the lanterns, Dmitri's front room was an eerie place. The stone sculptures scattered around at random cast strange shadows. There was no other furniture at all except for a small round table that we used for our piles of green dope. We dried the samples on top of the gas lamps. As usual, Dmitri was given to bouts of wild laughter and, what with the soft hooting of an owl outside in the trees, it was a spooky scene. Between that and the hash and the endless sampling, I don't think I've ever been more ripped — if you don't count my first time on acid when we did the double dose, laced with the Notorious Opiated Hash.

In the early winter things were getting mighty chilly in the van and I was beginning to cast about for a new place to stay, considering a move back into 140. What with the proceeds from the new harvest starting to come in, we were both in Fat City. But Zeke had been having an affair on the sly with Abby (with Dmitri's absolute blessing — or possibly *schadenfreude*) and she was moving out to a place in New York State, up in the Catskills. There she planned to turn an old resort hotel into a sort of retreat for musicians and composers. Zeke announced that he was following her out there and all at once I was in sole possession of 140 again.

Sept. 3, 1974 — Harry Partch, avant-garde composer and ex-hobo, dies at age 73

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He hears the silence howling
Catches angels as they fall
—Jethro Tull

By now 140 was a patchwork quilt of leftovers, a saga of the years of people who had lived there. Davy had left a large grass mat and some shell-and-sharks-teeth necklaces. Ian's bed and the Warm Morning stove still dominated the room, along with Zeke's piano and the bookshelves, which by now held an eclectic library. Anton had bequeathed a wonderful old Sony tape recorder and over the door to the kitchen was a curtain made out of several of Kelly's six-foot-long belly dancer scarves. Sara had sold me one of her paintings — a muted still life of vegetables and fabrics — and on the other walls were prints of Van Gogh, O'Keeffe, and various photographs. In the closet were a number of jigsaw puzzles donated by the old hillbilly, Kaintuck, plus flutes, drums, sculpture apparatus, old magazines, blankets, fishing poles and, unaccountably, a car bumper. Zeke had left behind two cats, Death and Taxes (from one of Sophie's litters), who were in training for the Olympic trials in free-form sleeping. The bathroom was in a pre-WWII time warp.

I seldom saw George, and Dmitri had also moved out to the Catskills, to be closer to his son, so I spent the evenings drifting around, growing ever more restless and moody. I met a fellow from somewhere out East named Carver and began spending some time with him. Carver lived in high style, half of the year out in Brown County and half in Bloomington. Exceedingly thin and hawk-like, he was always accompanied by two German Shepherds. Carver was a high-powered dealer, commissioning others to grow huge crops of grass out in the country and flying down to Florida or Louisiana several times a year to make big import deals. I guess he took to me because he admired the quality of our dope. He liked to talk, too, and I could go on for hours about anything, whether it made sense or not. Carver couldn't tell the difference anyway, for he was a good-time Charlie on a grand scale, always stoned on something and no more serious than a kitten with a catnip mouse. His entourage included artists, hookers, bohemian professors, racetrack touts and the odd City Councilman or two, whom he kept well-greased with dope and favors. They passed some of the grease along to certain cops and Carver hadn't a care in the world.

I have never seen anybody who could live so wild and suffer so little from the effects. In the span of a single evening, Carver would do several lines of coke, half a bottle of Wild Turkey, two or three joints, a couple of pops of nitrous oxide and whatever pills happened to be handy. The next day he'd be ready to hire a rock band for an outdoor concert and spend the day setting up the sound system. He wore black jackets and Italian silk shirts, open to his navel, dance slippers and gold chains. He often spent the weekend at Churchill Downs, driving down at 90 miles an hour in his

Porsche, where he would commandeer a group of tables in the clubhouse and hold forth on his vast knowledge of thoroughbreds — which consisted mainly of the supreme wisdom of betting on long shots, since those were the only "exciting" payoffs. They invariably came in next to last and he would roar with delight. The girls purely loved him.

All the glitter and hard-driving "fun" began to pall tho, and I felt the tug of the fiddlefoot. I'd been sending Zeke dope at regular intervals and hearing strange stories about CasaDolce, so I loaded up the van and set sail for the Catskills. Carver threw me a party, of course, and as I was leaving he gravely handed over a bag of "goodies."

It was a sixteen-hour drive and I was so happy to be on the road, I wanted nothing more than to keep on going. I drove all night, thru long tunnels under the mountains of southern Pennsylvania — the radio crackling with snatches of '50s rock and hillbilly country. Too soon, I reached the Catskills and was passing Woodstock and Yasgur's Farm.

Sept. 8, 1974 — Ford grants Nixon a "full, free, and absolute pardon." Nixon accepts the pardon, saying it will "lift the burden of Watergate from our country." Ford says it is what the nation wants. His press secretary resigns; hundreds of thousands of telegrams and phone calls protest the pardon.
Sept. 16, 1974 — Ford offers "conditional" amnesty to 28,000 draft evaders, who must swear an oath of allegiance and perform two years of public service; response is termed "disappointing."

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An' it was raining from the first
An' I was dyin' there of thirst, so I . . . came in here
—Bob Dylan

Zeke had told me to ask for CasaDolce but even tho I asked for directions several times, no one seemed to know anything about the place. Coming out of the plains near Woodstock, I was suddenly in a confusing welter of small mountains, steep and heavily wooded. Finally about eight in the morning I spotted a hand-painted sign and when I pulled into the long drive the first thing I saw was a jumble of derelict cars and an old abandoned hotel, slowly crumbling into the ground. I was sure I'd taken a wrong turn somewhere. But there on the porch was Zeke, wearing a fatuous grin and waving a Three Caftles at me. I stood out in the yard for a minute to take the place in, not quite sure what to make of this. The hotel was two stories high, with a long balcony running the length of the porch, the epitome of a Catskill resort of an age long past. It hadn't seen paint in twenty years, reverting to a splotchy gray, and the balcony railings were

leaning this way and that, like the picket fence in a horror movie. Some of the windows were sporting cardboard panels. The overall effect was that of a dilapidated, rusting hulk of a ship, about due for the scrapyard. Zeke grinned and said, "You shoulda seen it before we fixed it up." There was nobody else around and we sat and Mused on Life for a while.

At last there were stirrings in the house and we got up to take a tour of the place. Just inside there was a large room with a stage off to the left and a stairway straight ahead. There were sounds from the kitchen but we went upstairs and Zeke gave me my choice of the dozens of ratty bedrooms. I was too tired to say anything and crashed on some cushions from an old sofa.

Later that evening I met the inhabitants. The fellow who owned the place and had opened it up for Abby to use was called Poker Jack; he looked about as worn out as the hotel, tho he couldn't have been more than fifty. He was friendly, in a distracted, offhanded way, and obviously enjoyed his role as host to a group of artists. He kept a more or less permanent poker game going on in the kitchen, under a pall of blue smoke and bottles of Jack Daniels at the ready.

Abby presided like the Queen of the Nile, directing events with aplomb. She was constantly finagling for money — applying for grants, scheduling concerts and holding "symposia" on whatever came to mind. The other denizens were a motley collection of musicians, dancers and Buddhists, about half a dozen or so, all mightily stoned. They were particularly glad to see me, since they were in a constant state of panic over where to get more dope and they'd come to regard my Care packages of homegrown as manna from heaven. They'd come tearing back from the post office whenever a package from Indiana came and hunt up Zeke with impatient expectation. Now I'd brought them a true bonanza, a pound or more, and I was regarded as a sort of prophet from the land of the unbelievers. For a day or so I was treated with a solicitude that bordered on fawning.

All except Lizard. Lizard was a space cadet of the Starship class and he smilingly ignored me as he smilingly ignored everything. At first I thought "Lizard" was a nickname but when I managed to corner him one day he insisted it was his real name. The story was that he'd had it legally changed from god knows what and it suited him. Not because he was ugly — Lizard had long blond hair and the thin face of a true ascetic — but he had the unwavering, mild grin of an amphibian on Thorazine. He owned and ran the sound equipment and Abby showed him a deference usually reserved for the pope. He had installed the sound system in a large booth at the rear of the "ballroom" and it was like the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. There was a sixteen-track tape recorder and amplifiers the size of NASA computers — nothing but dials and wires and huge spools of tape. The speakers in the hall were the size of phone booths — six of them.

No one wanted to talk about Lizard but I got the impression that he came from a

rich family and that he'd renounced all connection with his bourgeois past . . . except for the allowance from home. He had his own supply of cerebrum-stretchers and kept himself as permanently stoned as a field mouse on a poppy farm. He was also incredibly touchy about his equipment, as I found out when I waved a cup of coffee a little too casually. It sent him into a frenzy of wild alarm, tho the coffee landed harmlessly on the floor, and I was banished from the sanctuary.

I saved my own bag of goodies for a fitting occasion and fell into the rhythm of the place, which suited me perfectly. The house didn't begin to stir until sometime around noon and Abby would assign chores to the inmates, sending some off to house-cleaning duties and others out to forage for supplies, cadging donations from the local hotels, restaurants and shops. Officially I was free from impressed servitude but since all the cars in the yard were permanently disabled, my van was shamelessly commandeered for chores. I insisted on driving, since they were the sort to start a discussion at the wheel and then turn around and stand up to make a point.

Invariably, these field trips held surprises. That region of the Catskills was called the Italian Alps (as opposed to the Jewish Alps, just below) and it was a retreat area for Mafia dons and their disciples. They had lavish homes set back in the hills and there were dozens of Italian restaurants, where we made the rounds, putting up posters for upcoming events at CasaDolce and soliciting donations. Surprisingly, they often handed over food or small amounts of cash, apparently relishing their role as patrons of the arts (or possibly just because greasing everyone around was sheer habit).

Often there were scenes straight out of the movies. Some old don in a checked suit would be sequestered off in a corner, holding court, and a couple of "representatives" from a mildly rival part of the family would say something that would insult one of his "companions" and a tense bout of shouting and shoving would ensue. The door to the kitchen would burst open and an enormous cook with a blood-spattered apron would come bustling out, brandishing a gargantuan knife and yelling "*Take*-it easy! *Take*-it easy!" This always had an immediate effect and the opposing camps would go back to their respective corners, still snarling, as the don blithely ignored everything. They were so like packs of dogs that it actually raised the hackles on my neck to watch these bizarre encounters. Even when the thin veneer of civilization slowly settled back into place, I got the feeling that any loud noise would set off a frenzy of outraged violence. From then on I dreaded going to these places.

Dmitri was living just a few miles away, keeping house and chaperoning an old, used-to-be-rich alcoholic playboy named Sandy. We went by to visit and I saw that he'd taken custody of Eric, Abby and Dmitri's son. CasaDolce was hardly the place for a two-year-old but they were both quite happy. Sandy, according to Dmitri, had inherited millions from an industrialist father and had squandered it all in a decades-long party. Dmitri said he'd lived in a San Francisco hotel for several years, taking one suite after another as each in turn piled up with junk and the leftovers of his gargantuan

dissipation, until finally he was paying for an entire floor. He was a jazz lover and had known (and sponsored) most of the great musicians from the Golden Age. He was a huge man, well over six feet, and bore a carefully cultivated and striking resemblance to Ernest Hemingway, right down to the barrel-shaped torso and full beard. When he came downstairs (he never got up before two in the afternoon) he gripped my hand in his enormous paw and bellowed, "Well, well, well! Another fan come to visit!" and since I hadn't the slightest idea what he was talking about I just grinned and bobbed my head. He exuded — exploded — bonhomie and intense, if somewhat tattered, energy.

Dmitri got a stipend from Sandy's ex-wife, who managed what was left of the finances, and also did renovation work on local resort homes. It was part of his job to see that Sandy got no more than two or three bottles of wine a day (the doctor said that cutting him off completely would kill him, so he set a ration) but it was, of course, a losing battle. They maintained a friendly war with one another, Sandy doing his best to get extra booze and pills while Dmitri fended off each subterfuge with limited success. It was a grand game and apparently they'd both come to enjoy it.

There wasn't much I could do about the conditions at CasaDolce but I made a couple of stabs at it. Nobody did any cleaning that amounted to much, until Abby went into a conniption fit and had everybody pitch in for a few hours to make the place decent. Baths were another story. I made what I thought was a telling hint by buying a large box of soap and leaving it on the kitchen table but some enterprising soul wandered by that first morning, puzzled over it for a while, decided it was a sculpture kit and promptly carved a chess set. After that I gave up, investing in incense and leaving around bottles of patchouli oil.

Sept. 25, 1974 — Lt. Wm. Calley conviction for the murders at Mylai is overturned due to "pre-trial publicity."

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Really don't mind
If you sit this one out
—Jethro Tull

In the midst of some rather strange preparations for an upcoming show, I made off into the woods to avoid being spotted. Dmitri came by to do a little handiwork and later in the day I caught sight of him roaming around in the woods. I figured the work phase was past so I let him see me. He had a kitten with him, a new recruit that he'd named Ohchi, which he said was Russian for "Big Eyes." He knew the area around there pretty well and was off to visit "the Falls" so I tagged along. We followed a small trail and before long a ridge opened up on the right, dropping away into a deep cavern.

Dmitri said that these falls were the second tallest in New York (after Niagra) but that almost no one knew about them — they were almost impossible to get to from anywhere else. After about a mile I could hear the sound of rushing water and then, quite suddenly, there it was.

The stream that fed it was a small affair but the drop was a towering precipice. The muted roar was loud but cool; somehow all-encompassing and yet soothing. It sank into me, inducing a kind of deep meditation and we sat next to a large pine tree to take it in. The falls hit a small ledge halfway down and then plunged far, far below into a foaming, crystalline pool. The gorge opened out into a narrow fan, with trees hugging close like introspective monks. The mood was of a privacy so serene that it was hard to imagine why it hadn't been spoiled long ago by dozens of houses dotting the hillside. Dmitri said that the falls had been a favorite subject with painters of the Hudson School — how it had managed to stay remote and pristine was anybody's guess.

I pulled out a J and we smoked until the sun began to set and the bugs began to warm up in earnest, then we headed back down the path. Ohchi had followed us faithfully all the way out, finding plenty to occupy himself with while we sat, but now he balked and sat mewing for attention. He was utterly tuckered out. Dmitri picked him up and carried him back, as tenderly as if he were a child. When we got back there were lights on everywhere. People were bustling in and out, lighting torches up the drive and tacking up a banner above the balcony. Lizard had abandoned his slow-motion dreaminess — frantically barking at everyone in sight. He was under siege in the control room amid miles of wires, tangled around him like the coiled sea-serpents of the Laocoon. He did not look happy. Abby was playing Helga the Bitch-Goddess, barking at everyone in sight, and Zeke was doing his best to silently slip thru the two barrages without taking a direct hit. I managed to edge back out just in time but Dmitri got snared. I abandoned him to his fate.

I sat out in the van as the darkness fell and soon the cars began to pull in and park, passengers filing up to the hotel and on inside. After what I considered a safe interval I went and stood in the back of the hall — the crowd numbered about fifty. There were three pieces on the program — one by a gay black composer Abby had gotten to know at IU and two by Abby herself. Zeke, of course, was a first-rate composer but Abby seldom used any of his music. Apparently it wasn't esoteric enough. She treated him with a kind of patronizing isn't-that-nice attitude which, for some reason, he put up with.

The composer had intense eyes and a regal bearing. His piece came first — an electronic thing on tape with an improv on drums and violin by Zeke and a woman in a long black dress with long black hair. It began in a spacey, moody vein and slowly developed into a stunning tone poem of many colors and shapes. It had a broad expansiveness — an attentive peacefulness and introspection, just right to suit the lingering mood of the falls. When it was over Abby and the others began setting up for

her stuff. The first involved three synthesizer keyboards, several percussion instruments, strings, two flutes and what appeared to be an old, hand-crank washing machine. It was called Key to the Ultimate Cosmos or some such and went on for five or six eternities. It was all "significance" and "daring" — pretty much shoving its profound originality into our faces with all the subtlety of an all-star wrestler. Who, by the way, could have carried a tune better.

After pelting the audience with this foofaraw for a long, long time (and doing several self-initiated encores) she gave us a break and declared an intermission. The rush to the bar was phenomenal and we hit the booze with inspired determination. Abby seemed to compose pieces that actually took place more during the intermissions than on stage. Everybody stood around "appreciating" it to death by pretending to take great pleasure in its alleged philosophical implications. I heard a lot of crap about "bold sincerity" and "sculptural fecundity" and went outside a couple of times to puke.

With mounting dread I followed the others inside for the final piece and silently predicted to myself that it would be one of those grade-school-inspired "audience participation" things. I was right. There was an assemblage of instruments on stage that would have bewildered Toscanini. Assorted musicians began running around, grabbing things and flailing away at them as Abby launched into a "poem." Sure enough, within minutes she began urging the audience to make "comments" on the "performance" and "interact" with the "concept." A few gave it a half-hearted try. The rest sat in silence, like the embarrassed accomplices in one of those newspaper photographs of the people who are "looking on." This was a dereliction of duty for Abby, of course, so she got out among them, instruments in hand, and began bullying and badgering people into "realizing the moment." Even the musicians on stage began to look tired and ill at ease as she kept at it. Finally a couple of the drunker ones took her up on it and began tootling away. Abby read some more poetry.

I sidled out and found Dmitri crouched on the porch, cackling away like a deranged hen. We smoked some dope and waited for the inevitable thunderous applause that signaled the end of the triumphant ordeal. The audience trooped out in an unholy rush, muttering things about "babysitters," and quickly disappeared into the night. Zeke joined us, looking aggrieved, and we made for the van to comfort his soul with my finest homegrown. He'd asked for it, the goof.

Events of this kind seemed to plague the entire region with a perverse regularity. You'd think that any potential audience would have long since wised up and found some ravishing entertainment at the local bowling alley but this was, after all, the Catskills, where "culture" was as entrenched as a barfly on his favorite stool.

A few nights later we all trooped out to what passed for the local amateur theatre. The "Elysium" was a renovated barn rigged up with a stage and some loudly buzzing lamps. They looked suspiciously like car headlights encased in old tin cans. I love amateur theatre but not ten minutes into this thing I was sorry I'd ever learned to

speak English. It seemed inadequate for the playwright, too, as the "actors" tortured it into ever greater heights of puerile cant. The story was apparently about a woman who goes to New York, gets raped, falls in love with her rapist, murders him, and then gives birth to a full-grown rhododendron (or perhaps azalea) — none of it in that order, of course. The "plot" was only there to provide window-dressing for various harangues on what was wrong with the human race in general — and the audience in particular. They did their best to soften the blow by inviting one and all to witness their own astonishing genius, which was modestly alluded to in an infinity of little nods and winks. When the moment was near at hand when they were about to take their clothes off in a frenzy of "love" and "honesty," I slipped out the side door. It was a lot more fun dodging the mosquitos.

Oct. 15, 1974 — Ford offers his plan to Whip Inflation Now by distributing WIN buttons.

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—listen: there's a hell
of a good universe next door; let's go
—e.e. cummings

The nights were getting cold in the mountains and fall was definitely turning into winter. It was time to shake things up a bit, so I pulled out the bag of goodies that Carver had given me. Zeke smiled. As if pulled in by some sort of long-distance radar, Lizard appeared in the doorway. He had a puzzled, hurt look on his face, as if he were amazed we would keep something from him. I showed him the bag and he smiled. Inside there was a good-sized lid of Thai-stick, a few grams of rock coke, a dozen or so tiny metal canisters of nitrous oxide, various pills (speed and Ludes, mostly) and some black knobs of smoking opium. They smiled some more.

Poker Jack greeted the news with enthusiasm and launched into the project with a flair. Some of the troupe were down in the City but there were still about eight of us and Abby invited a number of artists and freaks over. Poker Jack called in his card-playing buddies. We cleaned up the kitchen and the main hall, draping tinsel, audio tape and pine boughs everywhere. The painters hung up several large oils, Lizard hooked up some colored lights and Zeke got all of his drums and marimbas arranged on the stage. Poker Jack went out for some Wild Turkey and a keg of beer.

Things got started fast. Lizard and Zeke plunged right in and got a French dancer introduced to Thai-stick. A hefty old broad named Madame Xenoria showed up, all flowing scarves and necklaces. She was an astrologer who wrote a column for the newspapers and even tho she must have been close to eighty, she had a rare fondness for coke, snorting up delicately like an old hand and demanding a glass of sherry. Zeke

got to work on the marimba, doing something that sounded like Kodaly. The artists began filing in, most with a load of paintings to put up. One of the poker players wandered around asking what each one "was." Some fool would launch into a long explanation, at the end of which the old grit would say, "Yeah, but what *is* it?"

An Indian guru with a huge beard showed up, apparently thinking he'd been asked over to give a lecture. Zeke and the others made way for him on the stage and he began to drone out some capital-C Consciousness. His name sounded like Baba Hum-Harrumph and he settled in on a little dais to hold forth on the Cosmos and Awareness and all of that. People were milling around getting stoned but he made a nice backdrop, what with Zeke on the drums and somebody playing a sitar to accompany him. His eyes were outlined in heavy black kohl and he opened them wide every now and then — apparently to emphasize some particularly astonishing revelation — and the effect was quite startling. He got applause every time and calls from the drunken grit to "Let 'er rip, chief!" After a bit Baba gave up and politely accepted a Wild Turkey and ginger ale laced with Ludes, probably thinking it was iced tea. An hour later he was stoned out of his gourd — I caught sight of him perched on a speaker, chanting a tune that sounded suspiciously like something by George Harrison.

Madame Xenoria laughed outrageously at everything. When some idiot asked her what phase the moon was in she answered, "Well how the hell should *I* know, boobie — go out and look!" I took to her right off and spent an hour or more at her knee, getting her to talk about astrology. I don't know if what she said about Aspects and Benefics made any sense or not but she had a keen insight into human nature and enormous common sense. She was also as drunk as a Baroness.

The nitrous oxide made fools of those who snorted it, making them giggly and stupid, but it didn't do a thing for me. Likewise the coke, which I never cared for, since it tore up my nose something awful. I never trusted the unreal, Superman effect of coke — to me it was just a lie and a cheat. The Thai-stick was another story and I augmented it with a little beer, tho not enough to ruin the stone. A writer from "Saturday Night Live" showed up and an acting teacher from the City named Alice. She had a penetrating intelligence and a vast knowledge of theatre. She could instantly adjust to another person's sensibilities, at once in tune with their reality — but also ever-so-slightly mocking their insecurities. Late in the evening I wound up in bed with the French dancer. All evening she'd been laughing and backing into the furniture (dancers are notoriously clumsy) and when she at last backed into me I made the most of it. She made love like a swan, enfolding me in her wings and murmuring softly her delight. I'd never known anyone who so willingly communicated what turned her on and who was so totally responsive (and inventive) to what flipped *my* flippers.

When we went back downstairs, well after midnight, Sandy had shown up — he could smell a party from miles away. He was roaring drunk, of course, buttonholing the dazed-looking guru and pelting him with a discussion on Buddhism. Sandy claimed to

be an expert on that, too, and he was also expounding on Art and Jazz, expansive as hell and the center of attention. Dmitri finally showed up, looking for Sandy, and we got him royally ripped in no time.

Apparently his breakup with Abby was reasonably amicable but there was some tension at the moment over who got permanent custody of Eric, so they were keeping their distance. Zeke was no longer her lover either, I gathered, for she spent the whole night clinging to a bare-chested guy called Snake. He was a wheeler-dealer from New York and as phony as they come. Naturally, she was deeply enamored of his fast-talking shmooze. About 3:00 a.m. Sandy passed out cold — holding forth with aplomb one moment and then pitching straight forward the next, landing right on top of a recumbent Madame Xenoria. We propped him up in a chair in the kitchen. When I wandered back that way a bit later he was snoring mightily, two long streamers of snot dangling down from his nose. The poker-players were in gales of laughter: "Hey, dig the tusks!" "Yeah, man, tusks!" so I got Dmitri and we tried to figure out a way to get him back home. Zeke gave us a hand as we rolled him onto a blanket and hauled him outside — he must have weighed 300 pounds.

It had snowed in the night and that helped slide him along but his head kept going *bump-bump-bump* down the stairs. He kept right on snoring. We loaded him into the bus (the tires sagged pitifully) and drove him home. Up the stairs of the porch on the blanket, *bump-bump-bump,* and we left him in the middle of the living room like a beached walrus. We had another toke and crashed.

The next day nearly everyone was either monstrously hung over or pathetically strung-out. Since I'd pretty much stuck to grass I was OK. But I'd had enough of the *artiste* posturings at CasaDolce and decided to bid the place adios. Zeke waved me down the drive with that shy, gnome-like grin of his.

Oct. 30, 1974 — Muhammed Ali wins the heavyweight boxing title for the third time, knocking out George Foreman.
Nov. 8, 1974 — Eight National Guardsmen are acquitted for the Kent St. murders.
April 29, 1975 — Saigon falls; North and South Vietnam unified under Communist rule.

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Satisfaction

There were the usual visitations from the *soi-disant* saviors from the Ashram, Utah, and the Hallelujah tent. They flitted in and out like fireflies and made no more of a lasting impression. The encounters with young women were often just as fleeting. You'd see the glint in her eye as you quickly made conversation and then off to find some corner where she would teach you something, whether new or old, but always a delight.

Until I met Janice and then her friend Darla. This was new and more lasting, for the three of us got along beautifully, each contributing a different facet of the sparkling gem. We found an apartment that was depressingly middle-class but we soon had the mattresses on the floors, the candles lit, incense burning, and the makeshift bookshelves; some for the new books to be read or old books slated for rereading, another for the books to be donated to the library: Vonnegut, Asimov, Heller, Roth, all worthy authors but there was an overflow that was too heavy to cart around.

Janice and Darla were into exotics, bellydancing, chanting, cooking Thai and Indian food, playing the harpsichord or Irish flute, while I sank more into simple meditation and a kind of daydream. It was a tie-dye swirl of experimentation and joy. There was more sex than I could handle but they took up the slack with one another. I also called in Zeke for reinforcements and he, not reluctantly, complied.

And then we got the news. The Rolling Stones were coming to town. On Mick Jagger's birthday! Well! This we simply had to see. I'd seen plenty of local bands or shows passing thru, sometimes in recital halls, sometimes in the backs of bars: someone called Johnny Cougar, a delightful evening with Leon Redbone, Patti something-or-other (remembered nothing about that one for some reason), but this one was going to be epic, held in the basketball palace, Assembly Hall, which held thousands. A few months before The Who had also played there but somehow we missed it.

We were up too early when the day finally arrived and had to catch a nap in the afternoon. Janice and Darla spent an inordinate amount of time on their costumes, trying this, discarding that, but in the end looked radiant and both moon- and sun-splashed. Colorful would be the word, I think. I was my usual drab self, more the female robin than the male peacock. We held off toking up until we were on our way to the Hall, so that it wouldn't wear off too quickly.

We needn't have worried. Immense lines of freaks streamed in and the air was so thick with dope smoke that we were aloft the whole three or four hours (whatever it was, hard to say). I doubt any of us remembered the warmup band but they were good and were enthusiastically welcomed. Then there was a long pause in the dark as the stage was reset and when the lights came back on there was a huge ramp leading out into the middle of the audience and a weird contraption on stage.

When Jagger strutted out the place just exploded. They started out with Honky-Tonk Women and he simply flew, pranced, sprang, and threw out raw sexual enticements. They played for two hours to an enormous shriek almost as loud as their playing, which was deafeningly loud. Mick regularly jump-skipped out to the end of the long runway to increasing screams. He was like a magnificent athlete, bone-thin and as nimble as a colt. How he kept it up was incredible.

They finally ended with Jumping Jack Flash and, of course, we were all exhausted, stoned out of our gourds, and happy.

Janice and Darla and I only lasted two or three months but it was the longest I'd ever

lived with young women. Janice flew off to Spain and Darla discovered that she had a young son to take care of and yet another encounter evaporated.

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I'm traveling in some vehicle
I'm sitting in some cafe
—Joni Mitchell

The old days were gone and even 140 was changing. The landlord finally lived up to his threats and started in on his renovations of the front apts. One night while Davy was visiting the landlord showed up drunk with a buddy of his and started hollering about tossing us out. I made some comment or other and he came at me. Davy stepped in between us to ward him off but the four of us wound up outside — where Harlan's pal pulled a knife on us and began threatening mayhem. I moved out the next day and found a new place, just a few blocks south of Davy and Sara's.

It was time to face it. Friends dispersed, protests over, too many freaks turning to booze and coke and head-spinning drugs that wouldn't turn you loose. The war was over, Nixon was gone, and you could just about hear the end of an era coming to a close, as final as a curtain coming down, kerplunk. How long had it lasted? Six years? Eight? Ten? No matter, it was over, done, finito.

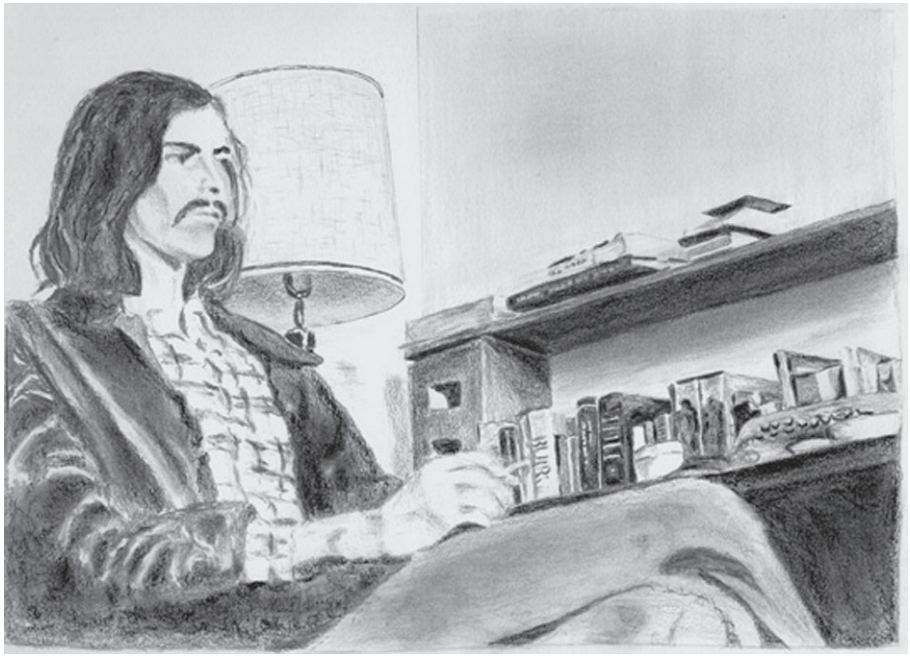
And what about all the drugs *I'd* done? Nearly all my experiences had ended in disaster. Baby woodrose seeds, Jimson weed, utterly *bad*. Ecstasy, cocaine, heroin. They would *seem* lovely, but turned you into something you weren't and would soon take over your life completely. LSD was just too damn strong and too damn strange. Even psilo had turned against me, on the River Cam. My experiments had left me with a feeling of distaste, disappointment, and disaster barely avoided.

But in the end, had we really accomplished anything? Nixon's viciousness was his own undoing, but clearly we had created impetus to stopping the Vietnam War. We had made racial and sexual equality mainstream issues, igniting true cultural reform. We had diverged from the generational stereotypes that had shackled America. But above all, we had fostered a new sense of hope and the power of love. We loved America, and it had changed.

I looked down at the pipe in my hand—what the hell was I going to do now? Assuming I had any more time coming to me. I put the pipe aside. This was going to take some thought. Hmmm. I was good with words, I knew that. Editor perhaps?

And I awoke, as if from a dream.

We are changed into the grass of springtime
Our hearts will grow green again
And they will open their petals;
But our body is like a rose tree
It puts forth flowers and then withers.
—Aztec poem



O very young what will you leave us this time

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