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CONTACT:

Yesterday it got me good. That early summer restlessness.

"Bev," I said; she's my woman, "I've got to get out of town. Live in a teepee at the ranch. Maybe get a job down south."

"I think you're right."

That was yesterday evening.

Today, while Bev was on the milk run, Rita comes over and says incidently that she'd like to call her ex, Arlo. Arlo is a geophysicist for McPhar Associates out of Tucson, Arizona. He has a team of 3 or 4 and they travel around the southwest doing IP's with Henrietta Multimode looking for mineral deposits or geotherms.

"I'll tell you what, Rita. I'll pay half the cost of the call if you call right now. I can ask him if hes got a job for me."

"You're on," Rita smiles.

Like that. A few minutes later I've got a job. Not a fancy job. A dumb grunt. Carrying instruments or packing a pot. Luggin line. Pays only $2.25 an hour, but I also get a free room in whatever good motel--"with a swimming pool," Arlo insists--is in the area. And I would get $9 per day per diem. That is about, lets see, $25-30 a day. "Not bad for walking around the desert and the mountains."

Arlo laughs, "Its 115° in the shade in Tucson. We'll be workin around Safford, Arizona, starting, oh, about next Wednesday or Thursday. Thats the, ah. .about the..."

"Today is the, ah. ," I checked the calendar, "...the 16th. So Wednesday would be, is, the 19th. So the 19th or 20th gives me 3 or 4 days to get down there."

"We might be doing one more job here in New Mexico for a dude that
wan
in Safford. I'll rent you a room. Whichever motel has a swimming pool."

"Yeah. I'll probably hitch. Maybe train. I'd like to fly."

"Tell ya. I'll check with the office. If we get this job, you'll have an extra day or 2, or more. I'll call you back. Right now I need a nap. We finished early today and I drank to excess."

"OK. I'll get my truck together."

Seems I've got a job.

I do my pack. Essentials of life--I could camp several days on the desert if necessary. Sleeping bag. Ground cloth plastic. Sheet, by way of luxury And important enough to carry: a copy of R.A. Lafferty's Okla Hannali, which I recommend to anyone. My journal, rain coat, down jacket, rapidograph set, ink, 6 pair of socks. I'm ready to walk if I must.

Water. Let me not forget water Earthblood. Blood of God. I carry my canteen full of Missoula water. I sometimes refill although it may only have a single drink missing. 'Top it up.' I consider the residual Missoula water as seed for the entire canteen. I carry home with me. I share it with those I feel akin. Missoula, you may know, has soul in it.

Cooking oil. 6 inch fry pan. Compass. Nylon cord. Salt. Spoon. Baroque recorder. Whew! A lot of preparation, it seems. And when I observe the difficulty with which I make these preparations, I flash that maybe I'm second-guessing myself.

And that's pretty foolish.

Truck up. Arlo calls. Yep, he'll do the other job. Details. Call McPhar Associates in case of catastrophe. He'll leave a message in case of a change of plan or whatever.
"Man," says I, "Arizona sounds like tough weather. But I've wanted to do a desert solitare."

"We may get to Colorado after 3 or 4 weeks of Safford. Leadville, Colorado. Very good country."

"Sounds good. I'm coming down."

"See ya."

So it's on. Maybe I can make a contribution. I've been looking. I think coal is dirty. I feel this need not be the case, but that's what's happening. Was it the astronauts said the only sign of humanity visible at orbital height was the smoke from the Four Corners coal-powered power plant? No wonder the west coast power folks want the power plant to be located in Montana.

No thanks.

McPhar does a lot to locate and counsel on geothermal wells. Steam power from the earth's magma. That looks clean. Recycle the water used. There'll be thermal pollution, but there'll be no popular resistance to that. Too sophisticated right now. It could be worked out. And I'm not worried about supercooling the earth's interior. I could help locate those steam wells.

Means visiting a lot of natural hot springs in the wild country.

Be nice if I could make my contribution with solar power. Hydroelectric is technically solar power. Solar power is perfect. We can live on light. The smoothest technology--on light. Just like vegetation. Clean. No waste. Finite, but I can't see the end of it. Just like the bodhisattva who reaches Satori or Nirvana and lives on light alone. Why don't I hear more about this?
I once hinted to one of my high school students that he could synthesize organic chemistry, biology, and the physics of energy by creating a pseudobio form that would capture sunlight during the day in a photosynthetic process and release it at night. An organic battery. An energy-producing lifeform. Just toss it a bouillon cube every 2 weeks.

That's science fiction today

OK. I'm ready to go. Geothermal is permissible.

Bev and my 6 year old daughter, Ashley, ride with me to the Orange Street onramp. Bev takes the wheel.

Goodbyes. Goodbyes. There's a lot I could say about goodbyes. Later.

17 JUNE:

GOIN DOWN SOUTH

It's late afternoon. My pack feels good. I feel confident on the road. If I don't get that ride soon, I'll call Bev and do one more night at home.

Here comes a VW camper. Is it one of the People, or a pseudo? Pulls over. About my age, I'd guess. His age shows. I suspect a pseudo after picking up on the Sigma Nu stickers on his window. But once we talk I think no more about.

He's an artist, this Larry Schwing. I've done paintings. And I've thought about it. I'm always verbally painting the scenery as I travel. I talk it and he fits it right in. A good man. He has traveled the west researching graduate schools. He has spent the night in Missoula with his frat brothers. We talked flyfishing. We talked colors.

We talked rattlers. "Tucson has rattlers, right?"

"Right. Half of Tucson's shade is under the rattlers. The other half is under the scorpions."
"Do they rattle every time?"

"If they have a chance, or if they are warning. They'd be foolish to rattle just before catching a mouse or frog or a somewhich."

"Do they get a rattle a year? I've seen 10 rattles."

"No. Credible folks say they grow a rattle every time they molt. I watched a crayfish in an aquarium. If he picks up just sediment he doesn't grow. If I feed him a lot, he grows fast and molts often. I spose rattlers are similar."

"Then they're blind for a while and rattleless?"

"I don't know about rattleless. That crawdad is whole when he climbs out. Sheds antennae and other small appendages. Whole damned outside. Except eyestalks. Rattlers even shed the membrane over their eyes. I've seen the discarded skins. I think they have rattles after shedding. I think they are temporarily blind, though, and the snake gets paranoid. Its said to be a dangerous time. Not much warning."

"And not much shade."

It wasn't heavy talk, but it was good. We talked and looked at the setting light, passed Warm Springs and Galen and went into Butte.

Butte. Its one of those brown towns in the daytime. But at night its beautiful. At night, going west down Pipestone Pass, the city is lights in a bowl. Tonight, coming from the west, there is a red bluegreen sky, blueblack mountains, yellowwhite lights. He photographs it.

We picked up a speedy talkin cat just before we reached Butte. Good lookin. Very strong karma. "Hi," he says to Larry. "Hi," he says to me.

"OK," I says, "and yourself?"

"High enough. Goin home. No money "
"I relate." My pocket money is $20.

"Been travelin day and night," and he states some barely credible distance he has traveled in some barely credible period of time. He travels as fast as he talks. Is OK. He has it quite well integrated.

"You say you've traveled at night?"

"Yeah. A lot," he said. I felt a kinship.

"I've tried, but rides at night, no luck. Comes night and I walk in the cool, then find a place to bag it. I don't think I've ever hitched a ride at night."

"I've been lucky." His karma. "I caught a truck last night in Seattle that took me all the way to Missoula."

"A truck? Pretty high. I've hitched quite a bit and I have gotten a ride with a trucker only once. Really needed his help that time, though."

"I've had excellent luck. You know. A guy needing talk to keep awake. Night drivers on a long run. Yeah, I've been done well by the truckers."

I looked at the map. "Damn. Interstate 15 goes north from Butte. The south connection is 7 miles back."

"Ask at that service station. There must be another connection here in town," Larry suggested.

"OK." Inside I asked.

"Eh?"

I repeated the question.

"Oh, yeah." Too loud. "About 7 miles west a here. Its marked."

"I know. I missed it." I repeated the question once again. "Is there another connection from here in Butte that joins 15 south?"
"The interstate runs right to it."
"OK. Thanks." Back into the car. "Hear that?"
"Yeah."
"Looks like I've got to go west again."
"Hell, I'll take you back."
"That's out of your way 14 miles."
"Nothin,'" says Larry. "Hop in."

Back in the seat. Larry's nameless shepard pup jumps into my lap and chews on my hand with his very sharp teeth. Its warm. Its a great night. Its evening and night rides are usually tough. It may be the speedy rider's karma. Or my own.

Grand. Just grand.

Larry takes me onto Interstate 15. Misses a turnaround ramp. Finally, some distance down the road, he lets me off.

"Thanks a lot, Larry." Seriously.

His VW bus churns gravel as he drives across the dividing ditch to the northbound lane.

Thanks again.

On Interstate 15, just south of Interstate 90, you can see the fires of the Ramsay or Silverton smelter. Lurid flames. I think of Hell. Flames ...fire...emergency...emergence. .emergence of hellfire. Man helping man extinguish the emergence of hellfire.

No one, as far as I've sensed, successfully writes in the divine voice. Flashes as I walk past the flames. Somewhere to my right in the night a gasoline engine pumps water. Water. Circles. Continuity.

Heres the man, boxin down the interstate. Lurid lights behind im. Outlook good. Goin south to the desert and gonna be paid for it. Ummm... Thumbin the few passing cars. Not really expecting a ride. Its night, right? How far will the man go before he decides to bag it in one of these bushy flats? He thumbs all the trucks, not expecting one to stop. As they pass he flashes a hello.

A truck slows down and stops. Far out! And at night, too.

Up into the cab. There is no passenger seat so I jostle my pack around until I get comfortable.

"Say, if another truck passes us, I'll ask you to get down low."

"So they can't see me?"

"Yeah. This is an old truck, so other trucks pass me. If its a Garrett they may report me. We're not supposed to pick up hitchhikers. But sometimes I just decide to hell with it and pick someone up. Especially in this slow truck."

"To keep you awake?" My second sentence. My second question.

"Or boredom. I like to help, too. Done some hitchin myself. Not much anymore. The worlds changin."

"Why don't truckers usually pick up hitchers?"

"Not allowed to. ICC regs don't allow it."

"Why not? Afraid we'll steal a load of melons?"
"Ha. Maybe. Mostly, though, because of accidents. Some companies are pretty slack about it. Big firms, like say, Garrett, PIE, Buckingham, Intermountain, don't do it because, like in our case, accidents. No insurance if you get busted up and sue Garrett."

"Everyone on the road runs that risk."

"Yeah. And distractin the driver. But I sometimes need someone to be around to talk to and keep me interested. Shortens the run. I'll be glad to get home."

"Where's home?"

"Salt Lake."

"Wife and kids?"

"Yep. I got me 2 boys. One girl."

"I've got a wife and one woman child."

"How old?"

"Just turned 6. Yours?"

"16. And what a hassle. Can't control her at all."

"I didn't think control of children did anyone any good." Like a question.

"That's not what I mean. I'd like to see her get into things more slowly. Instead it's late parties and drinking and grass, and boys, I'm sure, and my wife and I both worry when she's so damned late. She's stayed away over night."

"Did she call?"

"She lets us know."

"She doesn't sound so unconcerned. Just exploratory."

"She's a good girl, really. I'd like to take better care of her, is all. I'm a bit paranoid about her. Don't want her to get fucked up so
young." All the while shifting and steering. The truck was light, I could feel, but it still wandered the lane.

We talked easily. He was hungry to talk and I was getting a trucker's view of it. "Most guys have CB--Citizen's Band--in their rigs, but I can't afford that. I've got this," he gestured at the suitcase I had asked about, "to keep me company." He opened it up. "I keep my tapes inside here and clothes and stuff. I just get the alligator clips and hit a hot wire and a ground for my tape deck," cut into the edge of the suitcase, "and radio, and hold it all in place with these elastic hooks. I can set the speakers anywhere."

"So you can put it in any truck."

"Mostly this old wreck. I don't care. I do only what I have to. I just had 70 days off. Gasoline and strike and layoff."

"What did you do?"

"Made good money. Rebuilt a van. Did an excellent job. Bought at $800 and sold at $1500. $700 profit. Excellent paint job. I paint, too. And body work. That's art painting, mostly. I make silver jewelry. Look at these." He turned on the interior light. The ring was massive but well done.

"Nice stuff."

"I do em for the joy of it. Turquoise, but I sell em as fast as I want to. Silver is nice to work with."

I think of Weird Bob in Missoula. An artist. His silver jewelry is art, but it barely pays his rent and materials.

"This is black spider turquoise. Most expensive. I generally don't fool with it, but I got it cheap and set some of it."

"A friend in Missoula, Bob, does silver. He sent away, through a
contact, for turquoise, $10 a pound, I think, and it came back doped up.

"Treated. They do that to keep color up and to keep poorgrade stone from fallin apart. $10 is pretty cheap. You can't even talk black spider for that. What do you do?"

"I write a bit. Travel around. Spend time outside. Try to reconstruct my head. I teach sometimes. I'm going to Arizona to do this job as a geophysicist's teammate. Walkin around the desert?"

"Your wife mind?"

"No. She thinks its a grand idea. What I need. She shows concern for my well-being. But I am plenty happy at home. I feel if you are going to be happy, home has as much to offer as anyplace."

"Me, too. I take as few hauls as I can. I'm just fine at home. Take my bike up into the hills to camp and fish..."

"Take your boys?"

"You bet. Youngest is 9, so I can take em both. They love it. The oldest is 13..."

"I taught seventh graders last year 13 is the age where the boys just want to be near dad. Most unhappy 13 year olds just want to relate to an older male. Specially to Dad."

"I know. I like it, too. At home I can drink a little beer, but not too much..."

"I don't do too much myself."

"...and grass."

I felt that was the case. "Yeah. I prefer grass to beer."

He relaxed a bit. Strange, we approached that so slowly while it was a silent tension between us. We both suspected we shared that. A recognition. A similarity of vocabulary and lifeview. I wondered why it took
so long to verbalize it. Grass should bring us together, not divide us.

"I don't carry on the road," I said.

We were moving through Dillon.

"I have fished here. It's got good water and ground water Green. Nice mountains," he said.

I could only see city in the night. He went on, "They have a college here. But I hear they're thinking of closing it. Something about accreditation."

"Too bad. Even a bad school is an excuse for communication and experimentation. They may be more concerned with degrees than with education."

"Right on. I'm going to have to stop just south of town, at the Barrett talc plant. You can't be seen there. If you want to wait at the onramp or walk down the road, I could pick you up if you're still around."

"How long does it take you to load?"

"About 2 hours."

That's the tough part about trucking--not having your liver shaken loose; this dude hiked, rode cycle, exercised, and he rode one of those hydraulic seats and stayed in shape--but loading. The driver does that.

I got out at the exit. "See you in about 2 hours. Maybe."

I shrugged into my pack. Fastened my packbelt. I was in shirtsleeves. The night was balmy warm. Stars down close. Some closer than others. I set out afoot. I'd walk as far as I could in 2 hours. To my right I see a dark square shape. A slag heap? But it is huge. I walk beside it a moment or 2. Oh, yeah, a mountain. Strange how that appears.

A beautiful night.

I walk a bit.
Now I'm singing as loudly as I can:

Bringing it back from Mexico
Bringing it back from Mexico
Say Tai Red and Montana Green
And that Gold is a real scene
Bringing it back from Mexico
By plane, on foot, however you go
Bring a little back from Mexico.

Now brothers, now brothers
Duck those grey skylines
Get under open skies
Spend just a little time
With your lover, your lady
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine
Bring back the pleasant clime
Bringing it back from Mexico
Bring it back from Mexico

Singing my soul, hope, sunshine, love, grass. I feel fine. Going south? Maybe I could bring it back.

Bringing it back from Mexico
Bringing it back from Mexico
I've been up and I've been down
Bringin, bringin, shoo-wa its been tough
I've lost and found and learned enough
To make it up as I go south
To bring it back from Mexico
To bring it on back from Mexico.

Truckin. I sing truckin songs, too. Whistlin. Hootin. Jivin myself. Feelin fine. Doin my own brand of freewheelin jazz celebration and prayer. I never know where the rhythms will lead for sure, but I steer my music like the night flight of Jonathan Livingston Seagull. Hoo-oot!

I walk out of the lights of Barrett. Find more lights. I stop at the reststop and fill my canteen. Piss. Read the walls. Back out under the open sky. Theres a light in the sky from Dillon, Barrett, the reststop. How many people never see country dark? Moonlit highways? Pure starlight? Its always spoiled by headlights or the splash of wasted city
light. Under high cloud cover I can see a town miles away by the reflection on the clouds. I imagine someone lives in smoggy sunlight and in nightless nights. I hope they like it there.

truckin
down to New Orleans
truckin
in my BVDs...

I grow silent remembering Mike O'Neal's doorless old car. He'd scream through the moonlit nights with his headlights off. Scared me the first time. I've done it since.

I shift my attention to my ears. The Beaverhead River is beside the highway.

Zap!

In midstride, with no thinking time elapsed, I find myself walking backwards. There's no mistaking the sound I hear

Rattlesnake.

Understand. It's night. Bright stars. Blueblack nightsky. But the highway and mountains are black. I can detect the white right limit line. And a rattlesnake in the road.

Several thoughts.

Still singing I might not have heard him.

And, calmly, rattlesnakes make 2 general sounds, discounting individual differences. First is a twitchy buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz that is either an interrupted buzzing or a nervous twitchy buzz melody over a lower constant buzz. Signals anger, irritation, fight or other stress. The second sound is a constant whirr. Laid back warning. Curiosity. Interest. An invitation to restraint.

And how do I get around him? He's maybe crossing the road. Infrared
vision? Army starlight scope? I must be as obvious to him as Johnny Carson on TV. Big as an anaconda? Fast as a black mamba? This could get out of hand.

Calmly now. He might be lying on warm pavement. That's a rattler pastime. I jumped him on the right of the right limit line. On the paved shoulder. So if I make a big arc, hitting my apogee at the point opposite his estimated position.

Did it. Walked in the lefthand gravel at apogee.

If you ever drive south from Dillon, look at the width of the road. Judge my courage from that.

A flashlight would be a useful emergency tool for night hiking.

Using the lights of the few passing cars, I walked back in the illuminated increments to see my fear. He was coiled, but relaxed. 24 inches. I looked down at him, "Hello, little brother."

I resumed hiking gingerly. Watching the white line carefully. Using the oncoming headlights to silhouette low profiles.

Later I relax. I laid on the highway against my pack. I heard breathing behind me. Then the musical clatter of feet on the rocks. Then the distinctive hollow thump of a stiff-legged grazer. Probably a deer.

I did my nightly ritual yoga exercises and prayer.

I noticed the stars move away as I stand up. You've noticed a mountain changing size as you approached it. A decent mountain looks as big at 5 miles as it does at one mile. It seems to recede as you approach it. If you haven't done it as a child, try this. Lay on your back and look at the starry sky. Maybe pick your favorite constellation. Watch the sky as you stand up. Ats something, eh? Maybe crouch and leap at it.
a few times. Its the mountain trick. But the difference is magnitude.

I walked to the bridge over the Beaverhead. Theres an island in the
center of the river. I decide to pace the river's width. As I pace I
discover the bridge makes a marvelously bigdrum sound in certain spots.
Soon I'm dancing and singing drum music.

I'm 31 years old, right? Should be a sober man of knowledge engaged
in God's work--bringing the children to awareness and the world to Eden.

Instead I'm dancing on a midnight bridge.

The I Ching might say, "Cross the great waters."

My solitary behavior is my best prayer.

The Beaverhead is 30 paces wide under the bridge.

I sit at the south end of the bridge and wait. It must be 2 hours.

Wheres at truck? I wait. No one else slows down. I'll wait 10 cars.
If no one stops, I'll sleep down beside the Beaverhead.

As I climb the pigwire fence I remember my snake friend and make
ample sound. I scruff loudly through sage brush. My feet find uneven
bag down on the plastic. Undress. Watch the stars. There is a rock
under my feet to keep me from sliding unawares into the river

I sleep well.

18 JUNE:

I wake. I find my bedding place is only 10 inches from the river,
high with runoff. I was sleeping in lush quackgrass, west of a rich
chokecherry bush. In the sunlight I see I did not sleep in rattlesnake
country.

I do the morning things. Brush. Wash. Repack and record the pre-
vious day. Then up onto the road.
The first car, a modest red, passed and I flashed, "That's my brother."

Those words composed my thought, but they do not express it all. I felt the driver was an avatar or a spirit I had seen before. I was very happy to see him. When I am feeling well and someone or something comes into my life I will often feel the connection as a flash of recognition. In this case, I saw in the passing stranger characteristics of a former mentor, Iron Duke Donica.

He pulled over. I ran up. I had my pack in my hands. He gestured for me to put my pack in the rear. I often think, when I am outside the car and my packsack is inside, that the driver could just peel out with my truck and leave me standing and saying stormy words. I think this although my instincts say trust the man. This may be the paranoia of possession.

As I opened the door to climb in he said, "Guten Tag. Ich heisse Georg."

I might have immediately reacted prejudicially. German, especially obviously American G.I. German, in Montana is dangerously phoney. But the charm of the man made pretentions fall away. "Guten Tag. Ich heisse Parris. Wie Gehts?"

"Ah, gehts gut. Sie sprechen Deutsch?"

"Nur Strassedeutsch. Hessig."

"Mir auch. My family, Schaffer, is German. I try to practice when I can."

"Yeah. My wife and I play German at home." I was in and comfortable and he pulled out rapidly, talking nearly constantly About how he cheered a waitress who was working too hard and who kept him waiting for toast.
About how he enjoyed humor and how the power to laugh was a great release. About how he felt humor was the ability to decorate spaces with words, gestures, or even the ends of sentences and thoughts. Omitting the obvious. Or including the obvious.

He steered around a chuckhole. "I'm going to Sun Valley. That's why I wear these nice clothes." He indicated a clean yellow cotton shirt. Dark, well-fitted slacks, and good shoes. They were obviously not new. They looked clean and comfortable. "I'm an artist, you know. Look at that painting in the rear window."

As I looked I connected--one, grad schooling fraternity artist--two, truck drivin silversmith painter--three, wandering minstrel of visual art and laughter The painting was of an Indian. Technically it was amateur, professional, and inspired. Some areas were flat. Others were sensitively 3D. Some beautiful light and shadow. How much light and shadow is recording and how much shorthand or accent that contributes not to the specific, but to the whole? His colors harmonized--almost. His brush strokes were nearly enjoyable on their own merit, but a few...

"I painted some of that with my fingers." Laughter "The art critics used to argue about brush strokes in Van Gogh's work. It's obvious to me that those are finger strokes."

Wasn't that Gauguin? He may not have his facts accurate, but his point was.

"I'm going to Sun Valley to paint for the tourists. That's why I have to look successful. I did that painting in a bar in Butte. From memory. And I had only a few tubes of paint. Isn't it a great lookin Indian? Close to fact, too. I still have the painting although it got me a few drinks, a meal, and a friend that will know me if we ever see each other."
The painting was on the edge. Nearly a wooden Indian. Nearly a human being. Dilettante. Nearly genius. It could go either way. Technique was weak, but exploratory and personal. The subject conventional, but it invited identification. Limited palette, but his colors were nicely distributed. I put it back on the rear window deck.

"I've sold a lot of my paintings. For $50 to $80. Sold some for more. Sold nearly all of my paintings. I wanted $25 for this one. Don't you think its worth $25? I know its worth more. $25 is a real low estimate. I did it in about 30-45 minutes, but its pretty good."

"Do you sign em?"

"Usually. But my significance, if I have any, is a more immediate thing."

I felt a deep stir. I suppose a psychologist might call my stirrings episodic delusions, but I call them experiences. Unique, firsttime experiences. Flashbacks? There is no 'getting used to' honest-to-god original experience. Real reality will scare the too deeply conditioned. Anne once said, when I mentioned a possible reality where different natural laws permitted copious miracles, "It would drive you insane."

But where do I live?

It's a world of miracles. When I'm dead or blind I don't see them. There is no crazy input in the still musty world of 'common everydayness' Or is that death? But when I'm alive--oh, Lord! Those coincidences Charley Dickens was talking about--that's reporting. That's Ken Kesey and Tom Wolfe talking 'synchronicity'. That's Kurt Vonnegut Junior's 'chronosynclastic infundibulum'.

And that 'common everydayness' needn't be death, either. That's conditioning again. How shitty were your parents? That's conditioning. You
can be shitty if you quit trying. Just indulge yourself. But remember Ulysses. He returned home to his wife.

So a number of things: a flash of recognition, a greeting in the German my wife and I play, third artist in a row, talk of the here and now--led me to connect, intellectually at least, that this might become one of those miraculous experiences with its coincidental ally--choice.

Decision.

Meaning is something I feel. Like I am under the microscope of the ultimate Motha Hubba of the universe. Center stage. God's Protégé. And everything--everything, yesterday, today, tomorrow--everything depends upon a decision that is approaching me. The greatest decision to be made by man is approaching. I'm not too sure with what the decision is concerned. Chose to give up the structure and decisiveness, and accept the flow. It's frightening. I am sure that this is why some LSD users freak out. Meaning. Firsttimeness for which there is little or no conscious preparation. I am sure this is the feeling--meaning--that causes some to escape into insanity

Meaning is life.

Thinking outside of your head.

Sign.

I understand a line of the I Ching. From Hexagram 64, "The task of a man is nothing less than to lead the world out of chaos and violence and into order"

Ah, such a flight now possible.

'Sign' is the root of significance.

Am I supposed to follow him? A life of minstrel-art? Romance? Contributing here-and-now to those needing some entertainment, life, and
"Thats where we live," I commented aloud.

He looked at me. His neck was long. Face homely. Small man. His eyes clear and honest. "I peddle laughter. Its good for us." I had been smiling, but not laughing much. I felt our kinship did not need that reinforcement. I did, however, feel good.

I reached in my pack for my canteen. Offered him some water. Sign of my willingness to share. Sign of my kinship. Trust.

"No thanks. I've got this." Thermos bottle up from between us.

"7up. Sweet. Wet. Want some?"

"Yes. ..ah..," I hiccupped. "Good."

"7up never did a thing for Milwalkee."

As we drove he talked constantly and freely. Loose. I could see where he could loosen others with or without drink. "No. I drink more pop than liquor, although I do my duties." He looked right at me. "I'd like to drink constantly, but a strong man doesn't." Then deep into the eye, "Some of us need to be obsessed with strength." Then a slight reduction of the intensity. "Know what I mean?"

I said, "Yes."

And I do.

Later he interrupted himself, "What are those?"

Across the road in front of us. Or busy at the sides. "Gophers. Some say ground squirrels, and some say prairie dogs. Never knew anyone could tell me which was which or if those are all names for the same thing. ..gophers."

"Why are they so close to the road?"

"Stupid."
"Now thats not very charitable."
Charity = a willingness to identify with others. And doing it.
"They're uneducated."
"Much better," he laughed.
"They're the gopher equivalent of foolhens." He signaled question.
"A foolhen is a young, firstyear grouse or sagehen. Unafraid of man. I guess they learn fear. They'll stand right in the trail until you are club distance. Those are the only grouse a citified hunter might bag. These are young gophers. Foolish. Fearless."

A vision of hunting as a young man. Chasing a foolgopher down a hole under a cattle saltshield. He came up and innocently looked at the muzzel of a 22, some 4 inches from his nose. A friend killed him.

"They're really cute little creatures."
I agreed.
"I could see one as a pet. Rolling around on the car seats. Sitting on my shoulder. Standing like a plastic jesus on the dash." He laughed.
I smiled, "Yes, I'd think they could be domesticated. I don't know."
"Think we could catch one?"
"Sure."
"OK. Next one we see, we'll stop." We stopped. George opened the trunk. "Want some Vienna sausages? A sandwich? I've got some bread."
I reached into my pack and got a length of nylon cord. "No thanks."
Cars passed on the road. Some people ignored us obviously. Some glanced, then away. Some looked, openly curious. And some took it all in, smiled or waved.

"I like to stop as I travel. Puts things in perspective. Good
sausage," he took a bite of the very plain sandwich. "Sure you don't want a sandwich? I have bread enough."

"I'm pretty much a vegetarian," I said.

"Maybe I'll grow into that," musing. "Like a slice of bread?"

"My mother's udder," I laughed. "You're trying to feed me like a Jewish mother. If I was hungry I'd a said yes and probably eaten a sausage too."

He chuckled, scattering crumbs on the sage and sand, "Yeah. I do. I've been hungry."

We started ambling through the sage and sharp pointed grass similar to beargrass, but rather blue. "Beautiful grass," he said with his mouth full. "How do we catch a foolgopher?"

"I've studied the problem..." He looked and lifted his eyebrows, but he did not laugh. "...last summer. I did a survival trip in the mountains. It was late July, early August. Lots of berries on the divide so I wasn't starving. And I had more trout available than I could stomach. Once a gopher got into my packsack and stole most of a smoked fish while I was a quarter mile away talking to another gopher." I took out my small tin slide-whistle--a toy I'd been carrying for some time. I did a few chirps. A decent imitation, but a bit too high. A talkative gopher will answer, even from underground.

"Not bad. We could use these as bait." He held out a breadcrust.

"Good idea. We could do a coyote-split on em," I said, sounding like a teacher, even to myself. "Find a hole first. One that's current. That's got a gopher looking out. We approach it together. The gopher goes down. I lay down behind the hole with the loop around the hole and the line in my hand," I held up the soft nylon line, "and you walk away bein
as noisy as you can. Use my whistle. We could even set some bait the right distance away. He'll come out. "A quizzical look. "They're very curious creatures," I said. "...to look. In a moment or so he'll stand up if you're walking away. Zap! I'll noose him. Coyotes do the same thing, but without the nylon rope. I guess gophers can't count so well."

"Umm." George didn't sound that interested.

"Don't really want to hurt one." That's true. Except for fish, I try to kill nothing. I don't know why I make exception for fish. I don't waste any fish. I enjoy catching and eating them. I often eat trout heart, liver, eggs.

Delicacy = any edible small enough that the effort of securing it is overprice--or reason to pay someone else.

Maybe I kill fish because I am part fish. Every fisherman is.

We wandered further in a circle about the car. As we crossed the highway George asked, "How do we find a hole?" and dropped the empty Vienna sausage can into the culvert mouth. "Suppose there's one in there?" He crouched and looked in.

"It's too large for gopher cover," I said. I got into the ditch and picked up the can.

He frowned, "Why did you do that?"

"It's pollution."

He looked right at the beercans and popbottles and left at the Kenturkey Fried Chicken baskets.

"I think this is beautiful country, if you take time to know it. Montana desert, almost. It belongs to all of us. I don't inflict others (Often.) with my hangups, but I try to keep it clean."
He took the can from my hand. "I don't suppose you have any ciga-
ettes?"

I laughed, "No."

"I guess I never thought much about it. Littering. Tossing each
ing one thing at a time, well, it seems like an exception each time."

"I know. I gingerly figure if I clean up my trip, everyone will
benefit." We started back to the car.

"Beautiful plants. I'd like to plant one. Do you suppose I could
dig one up? Would it live?"

"Probably," I said, knowing George a bit better.

He lifted long sharp blades with his toe. A grasshopper buzzed off. I reached my arm into the car window and got my canteen. As he walked to his side of the car he talked about Sun Valley. Inside he opened the jockey box and got out a pack of cigarettes. "I'll feel too guilty to throw out the butt," I saw filters, "since you get so uptight about littering." He said that easily and chuckled.

I smiled, "I'm not selling a guilt trip. It's just important to me."

"Well," he smiled back, "as long as you're with me I won't litter again." Sounds of a long time. "You be sure to remind me." He laughed again.


He looked over from the driver's seat, "You do a lot of 'instructing'."

We laughed at myself.

He started the car and we picked up speed rapidly. A gopher ran off the road ahead. "Sure cute little creatures."
Once again he drove and talked. I enjoyed him. Up ahead I saw a hitchhiker. George slowed down and stopped just beyond the hitcher.

...a chick, I exclaimed to myself.

I carried a latent fantasy with me at the time. I am happy with my wife, but I felt that there was a perfect match out there. Someone with all my interests, but of the opposite polarization. Female. A strong girl not afraid to hitch alone. Successful in an earthly fashion, but rejecting that to fine-tune the spirit.

But I was not really disappointed to see that the hitcher was a young man. Beautiful.

He was 5'6" or 7" Light; maybe 125. Long, loose mousecolored hair which hung straight but in a graceful curve due to the natural body of his hair. He had some characteristics of the shy--his movements were languid and easy. He avoided aggressive eye contact. Characteristics of the young man--the untried sensitive.

He was wearing a loose shirt and bellbottom jeans. Comfortably dressed. He was carrying a small canvas daybag by one strap. Difficult to carry on a long hike. He had a long, dark blue jacket with red pockets.

He climbed into the rear seat and sat quietly.

George turned and asked, "Where ya goin?" George was uncomfortable. I felt it immediately. Because the boy was young or innocent? George spoke with difficulty.

The boy looked up at George and George immediately looked back to the road. "I'm going to Ogden. Maybe I'll get a job there."

"Well, I'll take you as far as Dubois, I think its Dubois, where I take a right." He turned again to the road. Later he turned to me, "And how about you?"
Somehow I didn't feel that this was the right connection. The point at which I move and establish an eternity. Where I select my next life. Maybe 2 miles past Dubois I would be wracked with remorse. It has happened before. But if this were that strong a connection I would be (Perhaps.) quaking with love and my vision would change. "I'm gonna head on south. That job."

Easy words on the outside. No big decision. On the inside I weighed them soul deep.

I turned to the boy, "How'd you get out to this desert?"

He smiled suddenly I knew we could talk. "I got a ride from a local from just south of Dillon. I walked through there last night."

"You musta spent the night somewhere around there."

"Yeah. Beside the Beaverhead."

"So did I. The first bridge south of Dillon."

He looked right at me, "I crossed a couple of bridges, I think."

We rode quickly through that half-desert of southern Montana and into central Idaho. We rode quietly, occasionally making observations. We talked about eagles and sagehens.

As we approached the Dubois exit I saw 3 big birds slouching near the road. "Vultures?" But I alone saw them.

George let us off at the Dubois exit. Desert-like country. I like green mountains. George looked a bit sad as he goodbyed us and left. I felt some sorrow, too, but, thank you, not that gut-wrenching remorse.

I thought about the integrated mind. Through golden opportunities and about fascinating temptations.

"Where'd you start?"

He smiled, "From Butte last night."
"It's a connection. We walked through the same area. Did you go to that reststop with all the lights?"

"Yes. It was heavy, man, really heavy. Those mountains were just too heavy. I did acid the 2 days before I left Butte. I think I was doing flashbacks."

"Good flashback country. I got off on some of those rock shapes against the sky to the right."

"Yes. And so dark.," he mused.

"...once you get past that reststop beyond Barrett..."

"Not the night, I was flashin strange shapes coming out of the night. Black as black. Some were shapeless blobs. About freaked me out."

"Ever read the Carlos Castenada books?"

"Who? I don't read much. I'll learn sometime."

"Castenada is a dude who writes about psychic awakening and drugs and unordinary reality. He sees black holes."

"My brother talks about psychic stuff a lot. I don't. It scares me."

"What do you think about your own black shapes?"

"My own fears coming out of the workable darkness."

"I had some trouble on that same stretch. It'd be too much if our things took place at the same time."

Suddenly he looked very wise. "More exactly?"

We sat down on the highway by the Dubois onramp going south. I couldn't see a thing moving in the town. Around us the heat rose in sheets. We talked constantly and easily. Often our talk was not topical, but a concert of intervals and harmonies. It had been a while since I had talked like that and I was getting high on it.
"Want some water?"

"Yes. . .ummm, good stuff. Thanks."

"Water is a kind of sharing thing with me," I said. "I nearly always carry it. Its getting," I shook the canteen, "a little low. Maybe..." I looked toward the town.

"Its good to rest my feet. I got a blister from carrying that bag last night," he said and leaned against his daybag. "I walked a long way."

"Yeah. You walked further than I did. Weird. Our paths ran parallel from Butte, more or less, and converged with George." I thought of the time we marked when George stopped to eat. The time putting breadcrumbs into dusty gopherholes.

"Its the workings." He laughed. "That town is a put-on. I haven't seen a thing move since we've been here."

"Cardboard props."

"Should we walk over there and create it?"

"Sure. Visit one of the gas stations."

"Cold pop. Right on."

Up. We bumbled onto the freeway

Bumbling = goodnatured, apparently undirected activity Results of 2 or more individuals doing cooperatively some task neither had done before, or of those 2 treating the task as an activity of secondary importance, the main issue being the enjoyment of the conversation and the feel of being close to one another.

We bumbled onto the far left of the southbound lane. Inside. On the fast lane. Hitching as we walked back to the overpass. Cars hissing past like a fastball pitched close to the ear. People passing looked askance.
I saw that, but it did not influence my excellent spirits.

We flipped a coin to see if we visited the Texaco or the whatever.

"Call it. Heads you name the direction."

"Heads," he said immediately. "We go right."


We got cokes and sat inside talking. "Tell me more about the black holes," he asked.

"The black holes of space," I gauged, popping the top from the pop. "I don't really know if there are such things. I'll tell you what I know. The People's Grapevine. I should verify all this stuff myself, but..."

My shrug indicated that I thought my conceptual level on black holes was sufficient for my needs. "It's theory. No one knows if there really is a black hole. Anywhere. Here on earth I weigh 150 pounds and I'm 4000 miles from the center of the earth. If I was high enough to get to the sun and walk around without damage," I made crushing signs with my palms, then snapped my fingers and said 'poof!' "I would be 400,000 miles from the center of the sun and I would weigh 4500 pounds, roughly. Now imagine a cosmic slip. The sun collapses in on itself. It shrinks to, guessing, 2 or 3 miles in radius. Even if the heating and lighting processes of the sun were still going on, from earth you'd see nothing. And that's because the gravity at the sun's surface, some 399,998 miles below me--I'm still standing where the surface of the sun used to be--the gravity at the surface would have gotten so terrific that everything would be terminally attracted. Sucked in. Even light. Awareness, as we are now demonstrating, could get back out, but that's all. No radiation. No light. And if I went down to the new surface of the sun, I'd weigh 40 billion
times more. That is about, ah. .6 trillion pounds. Gravity wouldn't change on earth. Earth would still orbit the sun in the same fashion." I looked across the highway. "6 trillion pounds. That's a heavy. Anything that came within a mile of the surface would be terminally attracted, never to escape. It's freaky." I set my coke down and got a drink from the water cooler.

"So the black holes are just an idea?"

"Well. .not entirely. From what I know, they explain all sorts of observational things detected in space. Gravity affects light. The black hole sucks it all in. Light bends around a planet somewhat. That's one reason why the edge between the light and dark on the moon in not completely sharp."

"And reflection. And...," he pondered, "and atmosphere? Looks as if awareness is the only thing that can be free of the distortion of matter," he said.

"Think you're right. That's why the finest minds talk about the infinite void. The clear blue void. I figure if a star could see, it would see a clear blue void. I figure if a star could see other things at all, maybe all other things would look like stars, because the star is the center of illumination for that area and all bodies around it would be completely illuminated on the star side."

"'Starside' is an interesting word."

"If you were sailoring in space you couldn't see a black hole. You detect it by only one thing--that would be great stellar-equivalent gravity pulling you toward a point in space where you could see nothing."

"What did they see that makes them suspect, then?"
"2 things mostly. First, Einstein was proven right about light being attracted by gravity. Matter warps space and attracts light. Or maybe space repels matter, driving matter into pockets called planets, suns, asteroids. Anyway, when light is bent, there is usually a red-shift. Light always goes exactly the speed of light, C, but the frequency of light is reduced a bit if the light is warped. Red is at the lower end of the frequency spectrum of visible light. That's thing one. 2/3 of the stars within 100 lightyears of Sol are binaries, trinaries, or otherwise plural. Sol is an anomaly. A single star. That's thing 2..."

"Still lookin for the perfect mate."

"Right." I held on to that for a beat. "Cygnus X-1, I don't know how far, is visually a single star. But it acts like a double. It acts like one of 2 big bodies orbiting the central point of gravity. Orbiting each other. It makes a wobbly line through space, like it was in a spiral and we were looking at the side of it. That wobble and the red-shift indicate a black hole at Cygnus X-1."

After a while he spoke my thoughts, "A black hole could change the theoretical history of the universe. At least the creation theories."

And he said he didn't read.

"They say that. Or it drains our universe into another."

"Or they're just the other side of a star"

"Or of a quazar," I said.

He smiled big, "A black hole is the tap root and the many stars the leaves."

"Weird stuff. How many black holes are suspected?"

"I don't know. I got my information like you are getting it now."
It's a piece I've got no physics for. Freaky. Like Hitler. Somehow Hitler doesn't figure. Maybe he was a black hole. I think that once you turn your powers on, you can't maintain them unless you are pretty clean. Guilt turns the powers off. Powers bring awareness. I guess," remembering The Old Man On The Mountain, "it's all about awareness. Awareness can only be maintained by what the Rosicrucians call a 'cleared' mind. No distortion by neuroses, psychoses, personality, or by their vehicle, guilt. Get guilt, lose awareness. Power has a desire trip connected. Power is an incidental. Hitler had a lot, but his was an autodestruct trip. That's not too aware. Any awareness that would do that is wounded--insane. If an awareness is dying, why drag others into it?"

"I wonder what kind of world view he had?"

"A disease I can do without. Can you understand without getting some on you? Like politics? Like economics? Ken Kesey said to Thomas Wolfe when Wolfe was helping Kesey and Babbs or someone else handle this big freshly painted something and were having trouble. Wolfe, in his crisp suit, dark glasses, very unhip white gloves sort of costume, accepted by all the truly hip, of course, was watching. He decided to help and did. They stood back admiring their fruits and Wolfe discovered some paint on himself. Kesey laughed and said, in that way he has of making the words speak at all levels, 'You can't fool around with it without getting some on you.'"

I tossed my coke can into the garbage and went over to the candy machine. "I'm afraid of the Hitler thing. His vision. Everyone has a view. You see black shapes. I feel the future..."

He said, "I met a guy in Butte could deal with the whole thing in
terms of pool. He said certain dudes were cue balls, or movers. Some
were 7's, 5's, some 6's and some 1's and so on. You know people have a
real fear thing connected with the 8 ball? The 8 in the infinity symbol
on one end, dig? This dude said people act according to laws of physics.
Incidence and reflection..." Pretty classy for a nonreader, I thought. I
had been impressed with his conversant education several times already.
"...and if you pushed one a certain direction at a certain speed, he
would hit someone else and he might carom into someone and she would
roll right up to you." He finished his coke. "Hows that Iceberg?"

"Decent. Soft with the heat, though."

"Think I'll have one. He was a pretty high dude."

"He must have played alot of pool."

"He was nothing special on the felt, but he was a good man."

We got a couple of candy bars and went back to the highway, talking
as we walked. Words can so often fail me. They can fall like petrified
wood. But conversation now, thats different. Its communication. It can
lift me. Fly me. Fill me with magic. Turn a trip to the garage into a
flight into deep space, skirt the dark holes and suggest the stars on the
other side. I tell myself to listen to what is in all the words of a man
or boy who speaks from himself. There is more than one universe tangent,
cotangent, convergent and contingent upon us. Every man will show you a
new one.

I was feeling like this young man. Oh Lord, I felt good. We sat
back down and waited another long period. I didn't track the time. I
was enjoying just lying back rapping with him.

"I wonder how far I walked last night." He removed his shoes. "I
got some tender places. No blisters. Except for my hand."
"Here." I got my map from my pack. "This'll help."

"How far? Can you tell me?" He wasn't much into maps.

"Maps and good tools. With an address I can find a house in New York. In Pittsburg. In Chicago. City folks are often astonished. They don't know their own city beyond major routes and personal paths. Mountain. City. Wilderness area. I conceptualize them and do fine. I walk and eyeball and get a picture of the area. Then I look at a map and feel the whole picture reconfigure inside my head. Zzzaaapp! I don't get lost," I hyped.

"The highway," he pointed at the right limit line with his toe, "is my map."

I feel good. Feeling good cannot be faked. That's real confidence. Be honest, I tell myself. How do I really feel? And how deeply? If, by cosmic accident, I don't know how I feel, how do I find out?

The Hall of Mirrors. The Infinite Mirror.

I saw my image reproduced a million times. A billion times. They shared my thought as fast as that. When I laughed, they laughed. When I dance, they dance. Lift a hand. Wink my eye.

I looked at the mirrors behind me and they turned around, too.

Am I the Dancer, or the Dance?

Do I lead or do I follow?

Sometimes my images wear your face. Am I following you or are you following me?

If I look into the mirror...

You talked about reform school. Getting up at a certain time. Having certain clothes you must wear. A certain period in which to eat. A time
to work. Ways you could not talk. A cell. A time to sleep.

It's a dismal world, inside there.

But you didn't feel badly. You told me about it and you laughed at what put you there. You questioned, "What do they have on their minds?"

Unfortunate them.

Your father came home drunk and your mother taunted him until he hit her, then she cried and screamed and said he beat her. You saw it, but the intense vibes--like a dogfight--paralyzed you and kept you from seeing the whole pattern.

Sure, you had it bad. Genius. Limitations.

But you felt good.

They put you in the slammer. In an orphanage. In a reform school. In jail. In prison. In the pattern of your conditioning. In your own karma. Slam!

Poor them.

You felt so good you made me feel good. Thank you. You felt so good you wondered why they felt so bad. They feel so bad that they spread bad feelings. They get violent if you don't accept their depression.

No one feels worse than the executioner. He is black.

How do I feel?

I feel good.

.I will see you. And you are me.

How do you do?

Would you live in a world where everyone felt exactly as you?

All bad feelings grow from the resistance to the good feelings. (In the medicine lodge, the elders look quickly at one another and their eyebrows lift.) That is not an invitation to smack. Or coke. Or alcohol.
Don't forget why you came here. 'Do your own thing' does not extend to the suicidal, for the suicidal seeks to destroy a world.

I am in a hot tub. Washin off the road dust. Its good to be home.

Good to be home.

You were right.

Most of them are homeless whites.

Is that why they are so unhappy? Why they can spread unhappiness?

An absentee landlord

will not hesitate to rape the land for his ends.

Death

is an absentee landlord.

By now you've quit your job at the drivein. Or been fired. Did he say it was national policy? Does Peabody feel badly about ripping Kentucky?

No? I suspected that. But if Yes? Then why do it?

Your contribution may be how you feel.

How do you feel about that?

You feel good.

You feel good.

Lordy, Lordy...you feel good. That makes me feel so good.

Evertt, I love the light in you.

I asked him about his coat. He said his sister made it for him. His mother sewed on the little red triangle of thread that topped the kickpleat.

He spread it over his bag and sat against it--his legs in the road.

"Why Ogden?"

"Last year," he laid down against his pack, "I was hitchin this same road to see my sisten in Ogden. I met a dude in a fancy sports car was
goin to Ogden. Had a lot of money from restaurant work. He was goin to open some small, speedy one-man drive-ins. I was looking for a job and he plugged me in. He liked my work so he says, 'Come to Ogden again and I'll give you a drive-in of your own to run.' So I'll see." Pause. Then a bit heavy. "I am always lookin."

For a job? He means for something else.

A clean blue station wagon pulled over. I noticed the rear of it was empty as we ran up to the front. We were in quickly Slam! Vroom! Rolling past the potatoe prairies and $80,000 irrigation systems. Past the potatoe towns.

The driver is a salesman. He sells business machines with lots of small electronic parts. "Like Texas Instruments?" I ask.

"Similar. But Texas Instruments are cheaper than ours. Texas Instruments earned a good name and now they have expanded to meet a popular demand. Looks like they have sacrificed quality for quantity. We guarantee and replace. Quality control"

"Do you believe in your product?"

"Have to. I could push one of our computers off the counter and it'll still work when I pick it up."

"Onto the consumer revolution?" the boy asked.

"Consumer revolution?"

The boy was silent. I answered, "A revolution of consumers. For years consumers have been at the mercy of the advertisers and manufacturers. You know a need for zurks exists. Someone would make zurks. A good product. Demand grows. Production expands. Advertising begins. Consumers without real need for zurks buy zurks. Expansion continues. Advertising
creates a zurk mystique. An advertisement for color TV includes a shot of a Jackson carpet, a Lincoln Continental seen through a huge thermal-pane window, plastic plants, a Keene painting, and the model, wearing an Arrow shirt and H.I.S. slacks, is watching the Zenith color TV through his Cool-rays while smoking a Camel and greasing his zurk."

"Sounds obscene," laughs my partner.

"My wife and I have grown aware of that. We buy some extras, but mostly we buy only what we need," salesman said.

"There is not so much recession and depression as the economists would have us believe. Its more like a massive change in spending habits."

"People are buying less," our salesman said.

I noticed I was doing a lot of talking in an uncommon voice. I felt like I had some ideas. I was lecturing, but somehow, perhaps through the young man's listening power, I felt I was being well listened to. "And its not because people cannot pay high prices. We've decided not to buy a new car every other yard. .er, year And borrowing and paying interest?" I laughed, "The people, conscious or not, are on to a bigger game. Real food. Real clothes. Real lives. The garbage era is ending."

"What about supply and demand?" he asked.

"Demand was controlled by supply through advertising. A crazy, speedy, thoughtless upward spiral. A greed-perpetuated system. Now the easy raw materials are about gone. We are approaching the time for second-generation raw materials."

"Second generation?"

"Lets see. .the hot spots will be junkyards. Very rich. Recycling is just the start. And big business is not the leader--although they'll wake to it in a big way--the people have acted."
The boy spoke, "The consumer revolution. Its part of the renaissance."

"Real tools," I said, "are still necessary and cared for and purchased. You can tell by touching them. I like to buy quality shoes. Disposable cigarette lighters are a waste of money and materials. You can recognize reborn families. Conspicuous consumers are confused dinosaurs or eggs in incubation. Its almost Biblical Revelations. Disappearance of the Great Green Pig."

Salesman's eyebrows came down on that. If we are wrong, we have at least one salesman who is thoughtful.

He stopped in Roberts, Idaho, and had a cup of coffee. He bought me a coke and my young friend a glass of milk. The salesman talked to a satisfied customer from some nearby university. Sitting inside the café, I noticed a woman.

For some time I have tried to spend less energy on long-distance appreciation. I enjoy close associations more. I have met only one woman in my life who was both ugly and ill-tempered.

My wife is beautiful, strong, and her periods of depression are manifested as weariness. A good rest cures her.

But still I feel a dissatisfaction, right? Married 9 years, and during that time we can remember only 3 or 4 periods when were genuinely in love. When our lives were magic. When we could communicate through the spaces by telepathy. 9 years. Love is so difficult. By now we should have it. Yes? Or am I being greedy? Does anyone ever get it right? Live their entire lives in love? Imagine feeling your mind come alive. Never weary. Your life a beautiful story full of gathering magnitude. Imagine looking forward to old age and death together--as good as it is now, it must continue so after death. Since we have found God
in each other, death has become a promise of a natural and beautiful change. Idealism. Utopia. Those things are no longer pie-in-the-sky sloppy sentimental dreams, but real and realizable goals toward which we can live. Imagine every day bringing you closer to the complete tactile realization.

Right now I'm not so enthusiastic about death. About eternity.

Eternity. Eternities. The Eternities’ Doorway.

I have felt the jive that's Time stop. I have jumped forward and jumped backward in time. I have seen the people at the bar rock forward, stop, rock backward, stop, and rock back up to the present. Lift that beer up, lower it, lift again, lower it again. Lips form the word, unform it, form it again. I controlled it somehow, but it frightened me.

"we shall meet again/ If your memory serves you well..." --The Band.

Eternity is always waiting for me.

So I die. My brain grows dim as the oxygen is used up. Smaller and smaller the hologram shrinks. I don't see it as smaller, because I'm smaller too.

One of the freakiest experiences I have ever had was reawakening while I was awake. "Oh my God, where was I?" Bummed out in retrospect.

So dying is merely separating my life from the physical plane.


The salesman said computers, as they evolved, divided and redivided. He had a beautiful analogy I cannot now fully recall. like, "A computer
can do a function for each division of a nanosecond. That's one billion functions per second--binary functions. If a man could make a decision, a function, per second, it would take him 31 years 259 days to do one billion functions." There is a smaller electronic time than a nanosecond. The picosecond.

But the inner mind does not function by division. Continuity is the characteristic of the inner mind. Mythology Divinity. Meaning and experience are inseparable. The level of God and soul.

So I die.

Eternity. Eternity

No matter what it looks like to a computer, I come face-to-face with a data bit with no beginning and no end. Life is only a single data bit. A data bit a lifetime long.

It's gonna reflect my life.

That's karma.

That's poetic justice.

That's sin and payment. Good and reward.

Maybe it's a second of dimming, dimming, but I'll understand my life as a single piece.

A second is long enough to incorporate eternity.

I pray I learn Love before then. A happy ending.

Bev and I.

We struggle with ourselves. After 9 years it should be perfect, or perfecting. I'm gonna keep at it. I hope I can change at the next accidental moment of love.

Despite all that horseshit, I suspect sometimes that Bev is not my perfect match. Wouldn't it happen easier with the more perfect mate? My
female wisdom? I had decided to quit looking. Concentrate on Beverly.

But now, sitting in a cafe in Roberts, women are coming in my eyes.


She looks at me.

Contact. A smile.

Can she be Ms Right? Just a word. A minute. Will I learn Love in time?

We get up to leave. No cosmic accident throws us together. I didn't get up to talk to her. Out into the car. She is still drinking her shake. Back on the road.

That's part of Parris' consciousness.

We got out at Idaho Falls and stood around on the road for a bit. He looked toward the town. I felt he wanted to visit there. "I enjoy hitching," I said, "when I have no schedule. The tangents are the trip. But now I should hurry towards Phoenix."

He repeated absently, "The tangents. the trip," as he looked toward the town. He was laughing somewhere.

"But conscious decisions are rarely as deep as unconscious directions," I mouthed as we moved down from the interstate, "Conscious decisions can grow out of the preconscious, of course. That's integration." I was laughing at myself. What the hell? I was curious about Idaho Falls. And I needed some cheese and maybe some salami. Sources of protein that won't break down rapidly unrefrigerated.

We found a local store and I purchased sunflower seeds, cheese, and
licorice. I put them into my pack. He got nothing, "Where'd ja think we'd find a drivein?"

We stepped outside and looked at an advertisement, now 2 weeks old, of a group that had played in town. It seemed a meaningful moment. We'd see that group later. I feel very close to original music.

We spoke to an old man sitting on the brick wall in front of the store. His crutch rested against his leg. Instead of talking, his grunts dismissed us.

We walked up the street. Young people in passing cars looked out in friendship. Young girls, beautifully filled out, but too green, smiled upon us. My friend was very attractive to them. A fair share of those looks were for me.

Too green, I thought, remembering that night with Jo.

Love them. Treat them as equals. I can't take them to bed. Too green. (It's a storm. He's got a memory trip. Call him back.)

Dream: Walking in a huge building. Where's the swimming pool? Where's the locker room? Hollow voices from the water. Beautifully sexy nude chick, colored in camouflage-blotch green. Desire and curiosity. I follow her. She goes through a door. I see an empty skin on a desk beside me as I follow her towards the door. It is camouflage green--shapes of medium, shapes of dark, shapes of light, green. There is a huge knobby penis and fascinating testicles, also camouflage green, on the skin. A disguise. That's what it wears to lead females through this doorway, I realize on the other side of the door. Now how do I get back?

Walking down the Idaho Falls street. Watching the highschool girls drive by and flirt. Thinking about that camouflage green mask I found that night hanging beside Jo's window curtains--3 months after the dream.
Those highschool girls are my friend's girls. Beautiful. Green.

I need a woman with whom I can be a man. I'll find her She may be 16. Or 36. Not some dolly who gives the thoughtless body, and who serves guilt as the digestive, but a woman who gives herself, including her body, and who can accept love in return.

Inside my mind this little storm passes. I am aware of it, and I am aware of where I am. I talk with him. Flirt with her. See Idaho Falls. They cruise the drag here. Flirt out of cars. Shades of 'American Graffiti' But here is also the brotherhood of love.

ByGod, I feel good. Thanks, whoever. Good vibes out. Good vibes in. The storm of memory, fear, passes my observation. I'm not afraid. I just will not lay a green chick, I suppose. I might be responsible for her forever.

Not greatly divided. I feel my mind quite well integrated. Some insanity, no doubt, but it does not distract me so far that I miss the flow of a topical conversation.

(OK. Hes back.)

"They are beautiful, aren't they?" Love em like my younger sister. Sloe-eyed, sexy sisters. "Say," I gesture, catch the boy's eye and re-direct it, "shes OK."

Earlier I had felt foreboding. I had been seeing mostly older people. That might reflect my consciousness, I had thought. Since this young man, I had seen more and more youth, and I had been talking more easily--without premeditation--enjoying. Rejuvinating the mind.

"Make me young! Make me young again!" Kilgore Trout calls out to his Creator as his Creator drives off in His rented car

Like Kilgore Trout is Kurt Vonnegut's father. Junior.
Desire for the youth of others? Oscar Wilde and young men. Me and this young man?

Sometimes it takes young minds to liberate the youth in the elder minds. Rejuvenation. Sharing. The senile mind refuses this--scared of change, I suppose. A man might trade wisdom for youth. That's not too wise. But communication without judgment--the youth feels the stillness and wisdom of age and the elder feels the excitement and exuberance of youth. That's a start.

The soul--we all have one--is ageless.

"Except ye be as little children, ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."


Until the elders have wisdom, following the innocent will probably lead us to the truth. (Remember green women.)

Often: The older fear the young. "Am I irrelevant and out of date?"

: The young fear the older. "Am I childish?" Strange word to be used pejoratively "Will I embarrass them?"

I heard Ken Kesey say, "Its not the devil who is trying to destroy the earth. This is the devil's home, too. Its some dark cosmic force we must unite to defeat."

Be ware that which divides.

What force has taken our elders from us? They know a lot at the deeper levels. We can't live 50, 60 years and not know. What's the problem here? Self-deception?

Demand the wisdom that is ours.
As I see more young people around me I feel I'm getting cleaner.

Walking through Idaho Falls feelin good. We find a drivein on the lefthand side of the street. Go in at the rear. 4 tables.

"Want a burger?"

"No thanks. I eat as little meat as I can." And he has only $6. I have $20.

I notice that the girls are very sensitive to me. To us. They want us to be sensitive to them. They speak to an elder friend, a girlfriend's father, a bit too loudly, "I hear they're going to raise tuition next year." Ah, yes, college girls. "I've gone 2 years and they've raised it both years." Going on Junior, too. For my benefit, I felt.

He was already at the window, so I too spoke loudly. "I'll have an icecream cone, though." Another 25¢.

He sat back down at the other end of the table. He looked across his pack at me, then set the pack under the table. He inclined his head slightly toward the 2 college girls. I smiled at him.

The the girls behind the divider in the kitchen came out. To talk and to look. At us, it seems. Why? I thought it might be my friend. He certainly was beautiful enough, and young enough to have few ulterior motives. Honest. At us? His pack was by his feet. My packframe leaned against the wall. We were obviously travelers of the other wilderness. Romantic figures. At me? I was facing them. I'm occasionally attractive. When I'm feeling good. 31. Long hair and beard. 5'10" 150 pounds. A little soft in the gut, but not fat. Blue cotton shirt. Blue jeans. Fine Redwing rock boots, the Vibran soles of which are coming off for the second time. Red kerchief around my throat. Pretty usual, except for the way I felt.
Maybe coincidence. They were just rapping and I happened to see each of them as they glanced toward me. Curiosity. We were obviously strangers and strange things capture attention. Park your Austin-Healey in Newtown, North Dakota, sometime. Perhaps nothing had changed and I was noticing the constant for the first time in 2 or 3 years.

However, I did notice it.

I was aware of being the object of the intense awareness of others. Through my harmony with the boy, no doubt.

All this time he and I carried on an animated conversation. We occasionally shared a silence.

As we walked back to the freeway, he threw his milkshake cup onto the gravel. I turned, picked it up, answered his query, "We are one family. The Family of Man. Earth is our home. The whole earth. I can't ask anyone to keep the livingroom as clean as I'd like it to be, so I make my trip as clean as I can, and," I smiled at myself and looked at the cup in my hand, "I take some responsibility for my group." I did not wish to embarrass him with my litter trip.

He took the cup from my hand. "I'll do it." He carried the cup as we walked. A carload of girls passed and whistled.

He said, relative nothing specific, "The brotherhood."

The words etched in. I felt lighter. The realization of brotherhood in beauty. In life. I was anxious, too. I have messed Love up far too often.

The girls completed the drag and turned around. They honked as they cruised past. He winked and smiled. Then a look of pensive yearning, "What I really need is a good woman. A good woman."
Edgar Cayce says the crutch of the opposite sex keeps us from becoming enlightened rapidly. Still, the young man was speaking my mind.

He stopped, turned to me, "I'm looking for the perfect woman." Then, as he started to walk again, "It has no beginning and no end."

And for a flash I felt eternity

On the freeway we got a ride quickly. A young couple from Pocatello in a small yellow Dart. They started to say, "We have only room for one," but we were in and juggling baggage—they had a lot; they were just returning from a 23 day guided tour of Europe with their parents—and ensconced before they could articulate their preference with politeness. Don't misunderstand. We were not aggressive. Our understood partnership was merely more highly articulated than their polite preference.

Varoom. Wooden gearshift knob on the floor. Black interior of almost-leather material. A very fat, well-cared for dog had to sit on our laps as we shared the back seat.

We had a good talk. My friend stayed rather silent. It seemed he was a little shy around others—at least when I was there. Somehow I can't imagine him shy normally. His speech was not inhibited around me.

The dude, Jim, was freshly graduated in psych. MA, I think. But most of his experience had been formal: education = a guided tour. Mostly with his parents.

He, and his wife, J.R., were innocent and intelligent, bubbling with interest and enthusiasm. They asked about meditation. I related my experiences and what I had heard. He asked about drugs, reality, the whole trip. I recommended he read Carlos Castenada's book, The Teachings of Don Juan, and mentioned the beautiful writing of Alan Watts. "I highly
recommend *Be Here Now* by Baba Ram Dass for getting the rhythm of a meditative mind." I felt his interest was genuine and that those books would lead him to the heavier. I was surprised he had not read any of them earlier.

"Doors of Perception, that's a start," I observed. "Aldous Huxley."

We talked psych. J.R. asked a few pertinent questions. So did my friend. I gave Jim my ideas on the healing power of genuine community, on lay psychology, on Jesus as a metaphor for the periodic assertion of the unconscious--the Overmind--that overwhelms the structured consciousness and causes needed change or corrects the mechanism of mind. And I spoke about the value of real experience and vulnerability.

I found I had a lot to say, and the way they listened made me feel that what I was saying was rich in truth.

We did not shock them, frighten them, or turn them off. We excited them. They are ready for experience. They are well educated. He has much data. She has direction. They invited us to stay the night in their front yard.

"Shall we?"

"I don't care."

"I'd rather travel while there's still so much daylight left." Damn this appointment business. It was about 5.

We had a good ride. I enjoyed these people a great deal. They gave me their address as we got out.

Pocatello, eh? The signs are strong that Pocatello is a good place.

We walked across the overpass. Looked at the sun on the greenery and the lava cliff. "It's a beautiful area," I said, "reminds me of Luxembourg."
"I've never traveled much," said my friend. "Where's the town? Over there?" He looked east.

"West. Travel is just data. People are the trip. Soul is at home."

A large green supercar pulled over. A woman was driving. As I climbed into the back she said, "My name is Pat."

"My name is Parris. I don't know his name."

"Oh," she said lightly, "then you don't know him very well."

Pat. Patricia.

I remember loving a Pat. Patricia Ahearn. In the forest--confident, healthy, quick, strong. In the city--shy, skinny, bleary-eyed, and somehow undernourished. My love. Small-town said 'obviously unbred' Taught me about myself, though she didn't often speak her own mind.

I have been expecting to meet her again somewhere. Now this Pat.

A woman with a 3-year-old boy

I have rarely been picked up by a woman. Once by a nurse's aide leaving California in '72. She picked up 5 on that trip. Once by a woman on the Columbia River leaving Portland. Turning at the wrong intersection.

Now by Pat from Pocatello. In a supercar "God, look at that! 90. Goes! My car, a 1958 Olds, is in the garage in Pocatello to be tuned up, it needs more than that, and I told him I was going to see my parents in Soda Springs today and so they gave me this to use with no questions asked and most of a tank of gasoline. Uses gas like crazy But isn't it big? And does it love to go."

I listened and watched the little boy He was acutely aware of me, but he was also shy.

"It almost makes me want to just keep right on going down the road,"
she said.

(I'm not asking.)


(Its just a child's curiosity)

A few moments later he does it again. Pat pushes him sharply back, "Once more and I'll paddle you."

Rick is a good boy. He means no harm. Probably can do no harm. Bright chrome. Knobs. Gadjets. Will he fear instrumentation? Will he overreact and become a mechanic/technician?

Pat is not consciously cruel. Almost unaware of him. She is after what all of us are after.

Memory: Tom Andress says, "They chase around all night."

I say, "Women searching."

"And what is it they are after?"

"It."

"Everyone's after the same thing."

"Love," I said. Tom smiled big.

The Old Man Of The Mountain, to my right, smiled also and I felt a flood of gratitude and fulfillment. He said, "You've come a long way in a year."

Seconds only had elapsed.
Pat is after love. She is accommodating. Too full of other's ideas and values. Spacy. Pat, where are you?

"Ricky and I are going fishing up at Soda Springs. Maybe spend a night. Maybe visit my folks. (Visit your folks.) They have learned... damn, look at that! Over 90 again. This beast would love to fly."

She would ask us to come up, if she thought we wanted it. Shes so anxious to please that she almost ignores her son for us. His activity is a slight distraction. --Yes, I see you, Ricky  Now be quiet.

Quiet. Still. Dead. Absent—at least temporarily. Hes not going to hurt the airconditioner. And if he should? Its no one's car. No one has a lot of cars.

As gently as I can, "Come back and sit with me, Ricky."

He is a little afraid. But he climbs back.

Pat, I love you. I'd love to make love with you by the fireside where we could hear the stream. Make my contribution to the unborn child. Kiss your swelling tits. But you are not strong in yourself. Don't ignore your child.

"How old are you, Ricky?"

"Hes 3," she volunteered.

"Please let him answer for himself. How old did your mom say you are?"

Its a struggle, getting that thumb to hold down the little finger. Hand prepared. Show. 3 fingers.

I smile at his trouble. A laugh thats an invitation to share. He smiles and laughs with me.

"No trouble at all for a friend," I said.

She might go as far as Tucson if I donated for gas. Live with me in
Safford. Big, delicious blue-eyed fisherwoman in my motel room waiting with hot food, lovin', and I could spend time with that boy and love the new child. I would treat her good. Slowly push her onto herself. Maybe she'd get strong enough to leave me.

**Fantasy:** Pat, I'm married. Got a child. I'll probably always be married to Bev. Tell ya what, though; live with me this summer, see Arizona, maybe camp in the desert. We could care for each other. Write your folks for money for the birth. We could have a good season.

"This is good country," I said. Lava flows. Twisted brush. Rocky breaks. Mountains close.

"You should see it on acid. We did some last weekend and freaked around a while like kids. Wow! Beautiful. Then we went up into the hills. Theres natural hotsprings up here big enough to lay in."

"Soda Springs?"

"And lotsa others."

(It figures. Geothermal area.)

"What kind of acid did you do?" he asked.

"Blotter. Blotter sunshine. It was a real good trip."

"I did blotter 2 days in a row before I left Butte. There seems to be a lot of blotter around this summer."

**Precog:** Glacier Park. 3 dudes from Minnesota. Blotter acid on the logjam. You will remember, Bob. Mike had a hit, too, hidden inside *The Politics of Ecstacy* in his front room.

"Are those things developed?" I asked.

"You mean commercially? Not all of them. Most mean a short hike. Freaks (You include yourself.) go skinny-dipping in some all the time. I know some nice ones too hot to go into."
I didn't ask if she could show us one. That would start the fantasy, the thoughts, the episode.

What is that hesitancy on my part? Here is a good opportunity "Never pass up an opportunity," says Zen Master Soyen Shaku, "but always think twice before acting." Foolish as it is of me, I feel responsibility for people that come into my influence. I could easily use Pat, but she needs, is asking for, more than that. A day or 2 of love is plenty for anyone, occasionally. But it makes another time of waiting more difficult. Ah, Pat, you're lovely, but it's an extra trip, a luxury. I've got this thing about work and making a contribution (Come to. She would be a contribution.) to our kin.

Love, that's what she needs. Not a man, not a special man—that would help, of course—but God. I wonder if she ever heard of 'tough love'? My thought. Sister Providencia's words. It means strength. Strength to be happy alone. Strength to accept love should it happen. Strength to experience. Strength to say goodbye when its time.

Most of what people call love is sentimentality. Sediment-ality. Old clippings from weddings of someone else to somebody. Pressed flowers. Pictures taken at a dance, at the Foresters' Ball, at the Senior Prom, at the Military Ball with...what was her name? I'll never forget. Mother kept every slip of paper: letters, receipts, candy boxes, ribbons, broken toys, school papers.

That's neuroses; not letting the second that just passed become past. Things are temporal. Let em be. Love is not swooning. Remember when 'the tender sex' actually passed out from excitement? Imagine Tamara Press or Germaine Greer swooning from a rough word. Love is not fainting.
Love is experiencing directly. Here and Now. Be whole. Be alive. And when its over, let it go. (Don't stop halfway. Finish it.) Strangely enough, when you experience directly, you forget nothing. Okla Hannali said, "I remember every blade of grass I have ever seen."

Every chemical reaction, every molecule, every atom recalls completely anything that happened firsthand to me. Even movies. Especially conversations with Michele, with Danny, with The Old Man Of The Mountain. Every moment in the sun. Indelible.

But I don't memorize. I don't recall. Its just there when I need it. It is there every minute I am alive. Your eyes, your name--those are echoes of Patricia. Your expressions, your actions--those echo Sandy Your womanhood--that echoes my mother. It all echoes my feminine counterpart. Yin to Yang. My polarity. Anima.

Hello, Devi.

And goodbye.

.now lets see. I've got a commitment. Time to go. I'm probably not your Mr Right. You're too spacy for me. Scared. I need a real woman, one who could look me in the eye and say gently, "Bug off," or "Come here and love me."

Ah, the rationalizations. They fade like echoes of echoes. After original thought come the refinements. After that come the rationalizations. Passing... Gone.

"If you ever pass through Pocatello again, stop by 666 something and we'll smoke a doobie or 2," she offered.

We got out at the exit to Soda Springs. He smiled as she drove off. I did too, although I was a bit sorry to see her go.
Gone.

He winked, and I experienced his words, "Those Butte women are a pain in the ass. They won't take a hint for an answer."

We walked a ways down south together.

He asked if I had ever seen the inside of a truck. I had already told him of the connections: talking about rattlers, seeing one; talking about trucks and night-hitching, getting a night truck ride; talking about looking for Ms Right, and getting a ride from a woman. "I told you."

"Oh. Yeah, you did."

A few minutes later a truck stopped on the inside lane. I ran and he followed me.

Up inside. Beside a stereotype.

I don't like calling anyone a stereotype--the eye of the beholder and all that. But this dude was a stereotype.

Except for his size. Very small.

Truckers, the stereotype has it, are supposed to be big, virile, fuck-a-redhead-at-every-truckstop type guys. This guy was minute.

But he had all the other cliches about him. Sleeper. Airconditioner that was out of coolant. Iron seat. "Man, my kidneys are botherin me. Shakin around jars your liver loose, ya know. Whatzur name?"

"Parris." I didn't give him my full name. Something evil emanated from him. Strange, I've traveled with ex-cons, hustlers, liars and thieves. I've messed with bored housewives, in my foolish youth. I've boogied in black bars. I've sung in indian bars. I've put down a beer with the bikers. (Sounds like a trucker's song.) They were people. I have toyed with Packy--a friend big as a grizzly who filled the air with
a feeling of a catastrophe about to be. Drug dealers; some easy, some hard as absolute zero. I've looked into the eyes of that guy who comes to buy your river valley bottomland for the highway. I have felt the power and danger of people coming out of the center of themselves.

But I cannot remember being as threatened as I was by this too small, cliche spouting, stereotypic truck driver.

"I'm Rob Walker, he said. He looked at my friend, "And your name?"

I turned and looked at him. He said, "Ev Everett."

Traveled a long time with him and didn't know his name. Didn't hear it right this time. "What?"

"Ed Everett."

Still didn't get it. I was almost embarrassed to ask again. "Ed Everett?"

"No. Ev. Everett."

Somehow I wasn't supposed to get that name. It boggled in my ears. The mind beating out the ears. I wanted it quite badly I never got it.

Rob was rather quiet. It seemed he wouldn't talk unless I primed him. So I did. Lived in an apartment for $350 a month. Was absent more than 3 weeks of that month. Had a girlfriend who was studying to be an R.N. They had 'dates' together Sometimes they stayed at her place. Sometimes at his. "I been thinkin of us getting our 2 places in one. Save us both money. But Pam's nearly graduated and I guess their standards are pretty high. If I call her from the truckstop she comes and gets me."

He spoke of the many dollars he made. "Save many?"

He smiled, "Nope. Got a 1972 Lincoln Continental in cherry shape. Drive it only around town. Half a mile from my apartment to the company parking lot. Mostly its parked. I won't be buying another one for a long
'Wheres your money go, then?'

"Rent. Drinkin. Takin Pam out. Movies. I love movies. I see em all, when I'm not on the road. See 'American Graffitti'?"

"Nope. I'd a liked to."

"Oh, well..."

He spoke about trucking. Good money. He was saving a little to buy a small farm someplace. Some chickens. A milk cow. He wanted to fish. Never had since he was a kid in Oklahoma.

"Whats to catch in Oklahoma?"

"You mean no water? Theres catfish and ling, sturgeon, and trout."

A dreamy pause. I felt some of his faded memory.

He spoke more of driving. He listed his runs. He listed the layovers. He sounded like the 'I've been everywhere' song. "Yeah," he said, "I've seen lots of wrecks. Like this pass here," he geared down for the descent, "a rig like this, so damned old, bouncing all over the road, I go pretty slow. Still," he shook his head, "some damned fool farmer in a beatup pickup. Jesus Christ!..."

Right on cue. A balloon-tired tricycle crossed the road just ahead. He had to slow down quickly, but he didn't hit the panic switch.

"Just like that. They'll pull out right in front of you figurin anything this big can't be too fast. If I flip the switch, all 18 of these wheels lock. Still, that ain't gonna stop you on a dime. I rolled a truck once on a hill like this. You know what they say about your life flashing before your eyes just before you die? Just don't you believe it, no sir. I was drivin all the way. A few scratches. All."

"Then you weren't about to die," Ev said.
"Humph. Anyway, you gotta look out for them crazies. You gotta drive 3 miles ahead of yourself and a mile behind yourself, or else."

I was looking down the road. I saw him turn. A crazy sort of rippling in the corner of my eye. He said, right at me, "...YOU'RE GONNA DIE."

I know about the heroic voice. I've heard it. I've spoken it. It's a here and now kind of voice, full of meaning and totally unpremeditated. It's evidence that real speech is involuntary. It is words not lined up like that before. Created at the moment. They last the rest of your life. Our vulgar—even when eloquent, educated, and well enunciated—words are passing things. Temporal. Light. Half-heard, then invisible. Politicians, educators, parents, and I, use the vulgar most of the time. But occasionally we have meaning. Statesmen, teachers, mother, father, friend, and I, use the heroic occasionally.

A child once said, "I know Santa Claus is just my mom and dad."

I replied, "I used to think that, too." Then I tried a long-distance connection, "Have you ever heard your mom and dad say something special to you? Something you know you'll never forget?"

"Yes..." I felt that that was true.

"Do you remember that their voice didn't sound like mom or dad usually sound?"

"..." No words. But she had heard it. It's a normal experience of the beloved.

"That might have been Santa Claus' voice. I think he has no special body, but uses good people to talk through and do things through. His spirit talks and lets people do very good things for each other."

I think that's a fair interpretation.
Rob's voice spoke cliches.

Why had this one hit me so deeply? Was my consciousness telling me that I was going to die? I was scared. That communication was aimed at me.

"Not for a long time," I said into the air. Rob shivered a little.


We rode in silence a while. He said, conversationally. "This long haul. We'll be in Malad soon." I think it was Malad. "There's a checking station there. One of you will have to get into the sleeper." I volunteered. It was in the center. In the sleeper with the curtains closed, I felt I was already in the coffin. I enjoyed it. I played at it. Maneuvered into the suicide seat. Maybe we'll have a wreck. I smiled in my black box.

The checking station waved us through. A lot of refrigerated chickens and no checkup. Is OK. As I was climbing front again, Rob said, "Nice bein out of there, huh? It's a nice place for a while, but," and I missed the stress for a time, "IT'LL WEAR YOU DOWN."

I was a long time realizing what that meant.

A long time realizing that only saints should gamble, toy, or flirt with the dead.

And it gets darker.

About Ogden, Ev asks, "Are you going on?"

"I guess so. I'd like to get to Phoenix on time."
"Oh." Implicit invitation. No verbal suggestion of a place to stay or eat. No other suggestions of ilk. He seemed subdued. Almost sad.

My mind was a conflagration of bits. Ridin with Death. Leaving the search behind. Opt for miles, and omit smiles. Distance. Pennies, not partners. I remembered a painting done during the Dark Ages—you know, where the canvas is divided into bright and clear above and hell below. Some muscular Rubensesque male is being dragged downward by dark figures with wicked grins. The muscular male is unable to mount serious resistance and his arms wrap about his head. His eyes are wide with fear. Incapable of effective action. Lost in a sea of confusion and doubt.

Rob said, "I'm going to Salt Lake. You can come with me. I'll leave you off at Ryder's Truck Stop. You can eat there and pick up a truck south. They announce rides over the P.A."

"That sounds fine. That P.A. trip is an excellent idea."

"Not all truckers can carry hitchers, but some can. Just report to Mary Ryder at the desk and she'll call it out. Riders and rides."

"Sounds fine. I just may do that."

Ev seems smaller. Sadder. We talk little as we near Ogden.

"You're not coming to Ogden."

"No. I'm afraid (Afraid.) not." Have I passed up another destiny? Here I'm passing up 'looking for the right woman. No beginning and no end', to ride with what? Death? Should I go with Ev? I love him. I have always been looking for Ms Right, too. We harmonize. Build on one another. I feel strong around him. My words come easy, my love comes easy, women come easy, my thoughts are new and I communicate them quickly and in good order, omitting nothing. When we travel together.
I look at Rob. (Try charity.) "Truck drivers are supposed to do a lot of whites to keep themselves awake. Is that true?"

"I used to. Used to do a lot. Lot of pills. But once, between here and Salt Lake--I was driving the long haul and anxious to finish and see Pam--and it was a bright, clear, sunny day. in the middle of the afternoon; well, I saw a herd of kangaroos. Now you don't have to be no politician to know there ain't no wild kangaroos in Utah. I flipped the switch and locked 18 of em and flattened one side of all 18 as I slid right up to em. They were finishing their grazing on one side of the road, and the whole herd, there must have been 25 or 30, were coming up on the interstate like chickens or cows or tame antelope, walkin across the interstate slow and careful, and if I hadn't braked just when I did, I'd a trucked right on through the herd. No tellin how many I'd a killed or hurt. In broad daylight. I just sat there. Guess I was too scared to do much. They stood around and then a few went down the left side and started grazing around. Then most started down. I nearly ran all my air out through my horn then, and they took off like antelope. Up over the fence and across the field."

"Could they have been antelope?"

"Nope. Thats what was so scary. It was broad daylight. They were real, absolutely real to me. Teeth, hair and eyes. Just like you see em in the movies or on TV. You know that wild animal show.."

"'Wild Kingdom'? Ev asked.

"Thats it. 'Wild Kingdom.' They grazed, ran, and jumped just like kangaroos. As soon as I was rollin I threw those pills as far as I could out my window. Haven't had any since. I don't mind if other people want to eat em, but not for me. No thanks. No, sir. It was real. Just like
they were really there. If a man can have hallucinations like that, he could accidentally hurt someone."

"True," I agreed with Rob, without conviction.

"Broad daylight," he mused, half-aloud, "threw the rest of em out."

I thought it best not to tell him that maybe he actually saw kangaroos, that hallucinations get too much bad publicity and too little thought, that hallucinations are accompanied by an intense sense of reality, and that that sort of vision is an imperative communication from the unconscious.

"Kangaroos. Thats not a bad sort of vision." Ev's eyes twinkled at me. "Do you like kangaroos particularly?" he asked.

"Never thought much about em."

"You might get a book and read all you can about them." I turned to Ev. An understanding passed between us.

"Kangaroos, and in broad daylight," Rob said to his windshield.

The truck slows down. Stops.

Ev opens the door and jumps out. He turns and looks. There are tears in our eyes. We do the brotherhood handshake. He says one word.

"Brotherhood."

Back on the road. I examine my sorrow.

Pocket philosophy and fantasy: We had mutual needs, Ev and I. We wanted genuine companionship. Togetherness. Intimacy. We shared a lot. The woman trip. The drifter trip. The seeker-in-the-other-wilderness trip. The travel-light trip. Music. Words. Thought. The Heart. As the connections flooded in, I felt more and more nauseated.
All these things were things I had not thought, would not say, but which I had been living. It is the unformed assumptions, nebulous feelings, the expectations growing out of what that engineer our lives.

I know so much. Too much.

Everytime I have experienced love, it felt like a surprise. I was approached on the blindside. Some unconscious dream.

Dream = a configuration of reality, growing out of the unforced stuff of central self. Realizable.

Fantasy = a) upright fantasy--a synapse between dream and the conscious mind. The workable image. It is unaware of the roots in the dream. This fantasy is largely realizable.

b) inverted fantasy--built by the conscious mind and aimed at the unconscious. False. Reflects desires, not the self. Mostly not realizable without self-deception.

Tomotem used fantasy as his vehicle. We would find ourselves harmonizing in his fantastic stories.

But this I do not understand--

When I discover a dream or fantasy up in my conscious mind, it usually means I have sacrificed another destiny. I'm no longer blind there.

Does discovering a fantasy in the conscious mind and maybe speaking it mean that that fantasy will, or will not, become experience? If I discover the fantasy, become conscious of it, then there is a possibility I will react conventionally, instead of ACT. I may react in a conditioned fashion, rather than spontaneously, creatively, and honestly

I know too much.

"Except ye be as little children..."
Children are innocent. Their deepest minds are mythic. Happy endings. Accepted magic. If children were allowed that condition, they would grow whole. They would be unflinching realists, and believe in God.

The Amerind talk of shamen, minges, brujos, medicine men...those are whole men. Men of vision: Crazy Horse, Looking Glass, Black Elk, Okla Hannali, Joseph, Tomotem, Lame Deer, Peter Pitchlynn.

There were the dead among them, too, just as there are among us. In the old ways they did not survive. Now we have Apple Indians. Even Peter Pitchlynn, an old mingo, lost much of his power trying to be a whiteman senator and an Indian at once. But the names we recall historically are the Indians who knew what was happening. The Indians with vision. Resisted, most of them did. Some did not. Each of them made a personal decision and contributed all they could to their people. The names we recall are those that rose to the top when the critical time came.

How could such a few resist so long? The whiteman had to resort to ecocide, genocide practically, to dominate. Still they have their spirit. Their hair grows back.


The People = the brotherhood = HUMAN.

The People are of any color. Any culture. They are evolving even as I write this. They Love. They are change. They maintain personal power. They have no fear of 'giving themselves away.' They may be the
gentle people next door. They need not be earth-shaking leaders.


Continuity. ?Eternal.

The greatest leaders, ?who said, are those who receive no unusual attention. The next best are those who receive public love and adoration. The next best are those who are trusted and respected. Then there are those who are feared. Last, there are those who are hated.

This seems to be the same in every culture. In white America it seems the hated leader is avoided. Good. But the feared leader can be found. The weak employee fears expressing his true feeling and thoughts because 'the boss' might not understand. Rob Walker's girl cannot move in with him, although it would be more economical, because 'they' have high standards.

We seek, overtly, the trusted and respected leader. Acceptable. Not too powerful. Holding.

But look at this mess of the Nixon Administration. The shame of our government. The People can be justly proud. Someone--who was he, ?janitor, a tiny mote of good, adequate--opened the hole in the dike that grew into a flood that exposed the buggings, the breakins, the whole Watergate thing.

Who was that masked man?

Strange, isn't it, that the Lone Ranger, one of our recent folk heroes, was masked. But he did have a bosom companion who saw his face. An Indian. Silver bullets? Why, he was a virgin. An innocent. And his guardian angel, riding a pinto named Scout, was married to the land.


You know why Jesus was nailed up, of course. He was no 'yes man'. He could not be moved. He did not accept the system--economic or religious. He did not try to change it. He built something entirely new: The Life of Jesus.

He went directly to the spring of Life.

That takes strength.

Power.

Children have that strength. They believe. That's why it is nearly impossible to kill a child. Even insensitive parents, parents in hell already, cannot often kill a child. As they drive the child further and further from himself, fantasies emerge, schizophrenia develops, 'behavior' shows externally, but the person still lives inside. The child goes to sleep. Some call them the dead, but they can be reborn in a long and joyous and painful process.

The enlightenment.

Children can be kept alive and awake. It takes Love.

Love = I write much about this. Still, I write too much and too little. Love is composed partly of Charity. Charity, you remember = the ability to accept, and the act of accepting, differences. Love is composed partly of Change. Change = Every picosecond the path to the Truth is slightly different. That difference is Change.
Children intuitively know what's going to happen; SOMETHING EVEN BETTER. They cannot say specifically what, but whatever it is, they are not surprised.

There is no preparation for, no 'getting used to', Life. Children can do it. So can a few elders.

So I'm sitting in this truck watching a cinemascopic bubbling up of the trip I would have had, unknowingly but evolving into my awareness, then into my consciousness, with Ev.

I try to accept it. To live with my remorse.

Is this the story of a man who never moved? Of a man who sacrificed all of his possible destinies? Of a mouse? A nobody who was nothing? A crashing flight of a flaming butterfly into the outer darkness?

I felt that. Intellectually, at least.

Riding quietly, complacently, in a diesel monster that has a belly full of frozen chickens and orders to regorge them onto Salt Lake City. And Death at the wheel.

Pictures: Pictures of life with Ev.

It's evening. As I look out of my window I visualize mellow times sitting in a bar with Ev. We are talking to 2 girls. One young. One a bit older. We don't have much money between us. The girls offer us a place to stay until we find jobs. We find jobs. Both work for the drivein man. We gave the girls what they needed, and they gave us what we needed. Remember Pat? But they weren't quite right, so we moved on. It was a pleasant parting. Love. Thank you. Come again. We meet girls and women at the drivein. A lot. Some become regulars. We see some we know at the bars. Ev meets one he likes and goes for 3 days while I do a good job of handling the drivein alone so he won't miss a day's pay. He comes back.
feeling depressed. We joke. The pain goes. I meet a chick from Salt Lake City and go to visit her twice. As I discover I know her as well as she will ever let me, I find I am passing up many chances to be with her. A quiet scene, "You're not quite right for me, Elaina." (An interesting pasttime, but still irrelevant.) Some depression. At work Ev provokes my humor by whipping up a detergent shake. We decide to hitch to another place, this chick offered a job to Ev in Pocatello, so we move.

All this time I am sending Bev half my check, when I have one. How does that resolve? I could not see that deeply. I keep up honest correspondence with her. She knows who, where, how and what I'm doing.

I bartend in Pocatello. I meet a woman through Ev and I get her a job as a barmaid. We have a good thing together. Then she decides to go home to Winnemucca. OK.

Nowhere the perfect match. 'No beginning and no end.'

Meanwhile, because I have quit slipping downward and have maintained a spiritual level, albeit low, I amass more personal power. I have lived some magic, a level of the dream, so the magic increases. Years pass. Months. Weeks. Or just days.

I discover the perfect mate; a female Ev. The chick I saw in that first flash! Beautiful. Harmonizes. Spiritual. Soul. Musical. Living. Has psychic powers but is cautious of them although she uses them and lives with them. Says, "I've been looking for the perfect old man."

Zap! Critical mass!

Fusion! My female wisdom and I united forever.

Take that, Eternity!

Ah. .but that is gone now.

The fantasy that would have been truth blows apart like mist as a

I want to puke something.

A car passes. Full of young women. They smile and wave.

By God! Maybe the magic hasn't passed. Maybe a chance! I smile as the fantasy reconfigures.


Good times. Bad times on the road. A hitchhiker catches up to me. A woman. 30. Blue work shirt and blue jeans. Red neckerchief. Lean, but a little loose because she doesn't exercise as she might. Blonde hair Blue eyes.

"Is your name Jean?" Nods.

"Is your name Parris?" I nod.

Shes me, get it? I'm her. We both run from Love, but this time we know its critical. As we get closer and the magic starts she gets scared and runs. I follow. The thread holds. Then I think, "I'm being eaten alive. Shes absorbing me. Vagina dentata. The Devil is a woman. (Have no fear.)" I run. She follows, trusting to luck. Just as remorse starts to turn the knob, she enters the station.

"OhmyGod, I'm so glad to see you." Tears. Reunion. The magic holds.

We spend eternity together. Running less far from each other each time. Accepting the new magic as our mutual karma improves. After all,
love is the center of our relationship.

Truth is all any of us have in common.

I look to my left. Death is driving. Hes smiling slightly.
"Gasp!" says one of the voices, "The Jean trip. Its gone too!"
I don't get the remorse.
Instead a long slow warm front, with a drizzling depression.

Am I such an asshole? Running from love.
Oh God, grant that I learn to live Love. How much time remains?
"It'll wear you down." It'll get you sometime.
Its not physical death that scares me. Its the other "tombstones in their eyes," says someone in 'Goddamn the Pusher Man'


Stop!
I am instructed --don't think about it.
I look at the driver He is happy to be almost home. Homeless.
Depression. Too insensitive-dull-confused for the terrible pain of remorse. Wisdom come to late.

Don't think about Ev. Don't think about a white bear.
But the pictures come.
A polarbear is serving beer in frosty mugs. I look at Ev's eyes. Theres love there.
I have nothing against homosexuality. Some love is better than no love. It is better to love someone than no one. But the beautiful union possible through the sharing of fitted opposites is a sign I cannot ignore.

"...no beginning and no end?" I'm not sure I believe that. Search. Ev's eyes stay the same. He changes into She. A woman. A beautiful woman. Why hadn't I noticed before?

I look for the perfect mate. So does she. We find only each other looking for each other in each other. Struggle.

It turns over again. Focus.

We find each other in each other. Focus.

The mirrors are aligning. Focus. Focus.

2 6-foot DNA molecules coming together. Oscillating flow of electromagnetic fields in the larger field. --Its coming alive. Its waking up. "...no beginning and no end." Eternity. I believe that.

Ever seen eternity? Its there all the time. Anything can happen. Theres time enough.

We are looking for it. Now its God in each other. No matter what Bardic plane, no matter the level, there is a Paradise waiting if I can focus on Love.

The truck slows down, "This is the exit. This is as far as I go." The residue of positive thought rots. The picture is gone.

"You're gonna die." The depression chokes me. Like drowning very slowly. I can hardly breathe.

The waitress at Ryder's Truck Stop can hardly talk. Maybe they've got her already. Ripping out the neural connections with both hands.
Stirring the delicate bioform with hell-hot electric prods. Congenital? What kind of violence reaches into the womb? What can obscure the Word? Since working at Ryder's? I still think she has beauty. I care for her. I'd like to know her. Talk to her without embarrassment. Given long enough I could wash her fear away, I boast to myself.


"Coffee?" she barely articulates.

"No. Thank you, anyway." Who fucked her up? How? She reflects a lot of beauty. Maybe it's like dogs. They could speak English, but their tongues are too loose.

While I wait and while I eat I record the day's pertinent facts and key expressions and names in my sketchbook. My 2nd day on the road. I feel good as I do this.

The depression has not blown away.

As I write I watch people and listen. Tough-looking lady-killer truckdriver making too much eye at passing women. Obnoxiously obvious. Chauvinist. Well, he has a good act. Probably keeps him out of bed a lot; fewer chances for failure. Or maybe fewer opportunities to be a sexual athlete. Then again, maybe he is on a love trip. Maybe women feel his genuine love and can ignore that honkey veneer.

A woman slips into the seat beside him. He brightens. Showing. Talks too loudly. That's an ego trick. Why is she attracted? Wife? He is slightly proud. Shows off to his friend and to his friend's son.

The woman is lovely, but she looks a bit hardened. Her long black hair reminds me of a wahine. Reminds me of Julie. Very sexual. She gets
up and moves away. Father and son leave. So does good-lookin.

I see these women moving. That difference. .ah, yes, prowling.

Prostitutes.

Layover ladies.

A big girl, well-built, 6'2", and that wahine sit together over milkshakes at the next table. The wahine says, "How'd it go?"

"He chickened out."

"Too bad."

"Yeah. He was kind of a nice guy. We sat in his cab and talked about it. I thought he was up for it. ."

"Where? In the rooms?"

"No. .he had this sleeper Quiet. Private. I thought I had him, but he started talking about his wife. He just got a separation. I couldn't get him on another line. He started shaking. Got the shakes and backed out."

Fascinating women. The male as side-of-beef. Beef shots. Objectified penis. Runs about $5 an inch. A fitting climax to a long haul. Satisfaction? We only guarantee physical, sexual satisfaction; better'n a handjob. We cannot guarantee other, non-objective satisfactions, now can we?


They might serve a legitimate need.

But their faces get hard after a while. Like carnies.

I got up. Paid the girl with the loose tongue. I liked her. Preferred her to the tough ones. Went outside and spread my bag in an empty lot, under the stars, city light reflections. And trees. I was hidden in the tall grass.
I walked back to Ryder's past the filling pumps, past the parked trucks. Wrote a poem on the shithouse wall:

Free-wheelin
18 wheeler
weed smokin Fred
Layover ladies take care
pushed out this tile
with his pecker's head
Accidently
Layover ladies beware.

Then I drew a big arrow pointing to a brand new tile that didn't quite cover a large hole in the wall. I laughed at my sophomoric humor as I washed my hands. Truckstop graffiti is among the best in the world. College kid stuff is derivative, plagiarized, or short of balls. (Chauvinist.) I have read, maybe in a truckstop, written on the paper seatcover dispenser; 'Hippie handkerchiefs', 'North Dakota napkins', or 'Hippie diplomas'. Although it was at Berkeley I saw this symbol and these words:

THE PHANTOM CAN

I like original art anyplace I see it.

I called Bev. "Sorry I didn't call last night, I was between towns and telephones. I'm in Salt Lake City at a truckstop. The American Inn or somesuch."

Pleasantries. Then I told her how depressed, bummed out, I was. "Maybe I'll just forget this thing. I'm certainly getting bad signs. Naw, I'll keep pushing through."
I smiled at my waitress and paused for a moment--maybe I should shove all this mental, neurotic bullshit and talk to the 2 layover ladies who, after all, were selfemployed, I assumed, and who could give me a shot of their vocabulary and a real insight into their world. Heavy. Maybe even a demonstration piece of ass. In another life I was a good pimp.

Later, maybe. I saw a frowsy prostitute prowled by in her car as I went out to my bag. Undressed. Laid back.

And the depression oozed back.


Depression. Something else again. Erosion. Continuous. It'll grind me into nothing unless I do something quick.

What kind of trip has this ugly karma at the beginning?
I laid back down.

Running through my mind..

Fear.

Creativity. That's the God in man.

Fear. Do you fear the new? Do you fear love? Do the women in your life have the vagina dentata?

And it's fear that kills us.

Ironic.

Death is part of living

But fear of death kills us.

I sit up.

Meditate on the stars. Then on a large deciduous tree. I play eye games. I see lights. Then shadows. Highs. Then lows. Then as much of the tree at once as I can.

I am pretty calm now. Tuned. As centered as is possible for me now.

Then I pray

I pray hard.

Scraping deeply as I can.

Fears. Hopes.

Asking for Your will.

"Please show me Your way."

Suddenly it speaks.

Not by word.

But by sign.

"Oh!"

I am startled. In the midst of prayer I see it. It hits me hard. I know it is a sign.

A bird. Silent as an owl. Flying at night. Big and white as a seagull. It flies suddenly out from behind the top of the tree upon which I
had been meditating. It flies south a distance, then does a 180° turn, easily, quickly as a barnswallow, and disappears. I stare in awe.

Do seagulls fly at night? Richard Bach thinks that only Jonathan Livingston Seagull does. But the movie.

Oops! Another bird. This time definitely a seagull, flies directly over me. Serenely north.

What does that mean? What does that mean? A sign. Oh Lord, I'm so thick. A message. What does it mean? So slow. So untogether. I'm so slow to understand. Lord, help.

I meditate on the tree just north of me. Question. Question. No answers.

Back in my bag. What good is a sign if I can't read it? Might as well consider the sign a near miss and return to sleep. Drift off...

Whazza? Whazza? I know what that bird did. I saw it.

It was flying due south. I had checked earlier with my lensatic compass as I played. It did a 180° It flew north.

And the next seagull flew north.

Am I supposed to do a 180°? Should a man turn around, ignore a good job that all the folks back home think he should jump at and enjoy, just because some seagull acts like a barnswallow chasing mosquitoes? Foolish. Foolish. Not so intelligent.

I laid back down. Its easier to continue in the direction I'm already going. Covered up. Cozy. Foolishness.

I was nearly asleep when an old Sufi saying came to me, "Would you like to die? To quit? To fall from the Way? Its as easy as falling asleep." Hit me right at home. I've long been a sleeper Sleep in on
mornings. Cut classes for a nap. Not this time, Self.

I jump up. Gather gear. Up on the back. I skirt the truckstop, like a rattler in the road. Back out on the highway thumbing north. I do feel better. I imagine how I would feel if I could always do God's will and face His Love.

I wait a long time. Bad smells come from the warehouse behind me. Trying to poison me? Too late. Even if I die, I will do so doing God's will. Going God's direction.

I feel good.

19 JUNE:

HEADED UP NORTH

I wait a long time for a ride. The false dawn lights up the north beautifully. Light blue fading to a starry blueblack. No light to the east yet.

I could wait a long time and it would not depress me. And wouldn't it be ironic if a truck picks me up? I could see all trucks as metal devils. Manifestations of the green pig. Air polluters. Gas burners. Rubber users. Road hogs. Traffic perils. But that's only half of it. The flip side is distributors. Food carriers of our social body. Vitamins and minerals in the blood. As long as some of us are city dwellers, we are dependent—chained—prisoners to and upon trucks, cars, railroads, sky and water transport and the chain store.

It'd be a fine world if we were all free. Dependent/devoted to the highest function each of us can conceive. For me it is my integrated Self. Surrender to the God in me.

A truck passes. I thumb. Then wave.
The 3rd eye, "the foreye" Ashley names it, located in the middle of the forehead, does not need a hole and a silver grommet--thank you, Lobsang Rampa--although I suppose there may be some function in the mystic decoration. Rather, that eye looks inward at the center of the self to the point from which we spring. Insight. Intuition.


Insight. I wonder about the outer darkness. That's living in the outer consciousness, afraid to get down to it. Afraid to get down to the feelings, the psychic springs. You. Me. The Book of Mormon, high as it is, and the Bible, high as that is, both warn us against those who have psychic powers and those who read signs. Strange. The best measure of truth I have is my most earnest feeling. I feel that God is trying to teach us to recognize the truth. Truth. Invest your talents. How can I arbitrarily decide some talents are acceptable and some are taboo? Especially when the prophets use their whole (Holy.) person to live and their vision is beyond me in magnitude alone. Do I listen to preachers who do not understand true charity, in the stead of those prophets?

He is everywhere. Everywhere. Anything that lets me see into my own mind and heart, be it chickenhawk guts, rising smoke, clouds, river, birds passing overhead, 3 crows on my roof, a stork in your chimney, someone who speaks your mind, or a sudden flower, gets me closer to God's Knowing. When a man or a woman does what is right with their whole body-mind-spirit-soul, then he or she is a saint.

A 3rd truck passes. It shifts down. Then speeds onto the freeway
I know a few people that believe their thoughts exclusively. A shame. Thoughts are slaves to our selfish selves and to random impulses. 'Drunken monkies.' A man who gets deeper than that gets simpler, it appears, but the quietness of the mind lets the truth shine brighter.

"Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy."

Ever do as I do? Things are getting hyper, frenetic, speedy, too damned noisy, and I take a deep breath, sit back for 10 seconds. Wow! Most of the nervous noise was coming from myself. Same trip, but now I'm not so Buzza-buzza.

Another truck comes around the curve. It says 'Associated' on the side of it.

"Associated with whom?" I ask aloud.

The truck pulls over. Associated with whom?

I wish I could give you an accurate report/recording of this dude. He was moving Mach I. The first thing he said was, "Going to Cody, Wyoming?"

"Wha. ? Well, I had."

"Well, if you're ever in Cody, Wyoming, remember me to Wild Bill."

"Buffalo Bill."

"Right from Vonnegut. Read him? Got good connections. Sirens of Titan."

"Chronosynclastic infundibulum," I said, proud that I could put that out without rehearsal. Somewhere in this passage the door was slammed and the engine revved and the gears changed.

"Highway. High roads. I picked up James Taylor on this stretch of road. Was going to Canada to do a gig with some group, he was, whatever
group, and when I picked him up I said, he'd just jumped over the divider, 'Where ya from?' and he said, just like that, 'Road Island' Took me a full minute to connect with that trip; 'Road', simple enough, that's the freeway, 'Island', that's the divider. Those are called islands, you remember."

Too fast for me. How did that connect with Vonnegut? "Well, I, ah. ," tried to fill a space intelligently.

"Once I left a cafe back in Salt Lake, I was hitchin, and I got to an exit I'll show you in a while, headed for Ogden?"

That was said like one sentence, but I got it. "Yeah." I could pace him word for word, but those jumps.

"I can take you to Riverdale. I was watchin this interesting guy in the cafe for a while, then this beautiful girl, well, good-lookin, joined him. I watched for a while. They looked familiar. Then I left for Ogden. I got a ride right outside the cafe to this exit I'll show you. I stood there with my mummy bag on my arm--I had pushed my arm into the center of it--and I was flashing the power sign with the other I was standing on my tiptoes and stretched as high as I could go. Vonneguts right when he says we are living on many planes, in many dimensions at once, cause this big car, a fancy Parisienne, pulls up. Ever hear 'New Morning', Dylan's album?"

"I've heard all of Dylan's stuff at least once."

"Zimmerman. A Jewish person. There's a line in one of them, 'What's this I see on my window glass?', or similar, I've heard it 100 times. I've got his albums at home, but that's my favorite because it's got me in it. That was me through the window. Hitchin."

Meanwhile he drives this old truck 30 or 40 MPH toward Ogden. Shifting constantly.
"What are you going to Ogden for?"

"Going to look up a friend." What are the chances of finding Ev? I'm not sure of his name, his sister's name. I have no address. Check out the driveins? An opportunity passed is rarely recapturable.

"Where?"

"I don't know. I suppose I'll look around a little."

He seemed slightly confused by my answer.

"I go right downtown in Riverdale. That's part of Ogden. I could let you out at the first light. You might have better luck on the freeway, though."

"I'll look around town first," I insisted.

"The Parisienne went by me first," he resumed with no appreciable pause, "then it did a 180 right on the freeway. Came back and picked me up. They, he had that girl with him, were talking about 180° turns. He asked, 'Is this time?' and she said, 'Not yet' and I don't know what they're talking about. He asked me how I was doing and I said, 'All it takes to make me happy is a coupl'a kids to call me pappy.' and I gave him the idea for a song that has that line in it, almost. I didn't recognize him at the time. I kept looking in the mirror. Maybe my staring made him nervous, he asked the girl, 'Is this far enough?' and she said, 'Not quite. Let's give him a little more.' They were just joyriding, see?"

"Yea." Whew! So fast. I missed about 2/3 of what he said. Not the words, but the connections. So I can't recall 2/3 of what he said. I couldn't plug it in. Relate. It's like he gave me a piece of a fabric in which I could see the threads and a fraction of the pattern, but not enough to see the repetitions, variations, or, by extension, the whole of what he was saying. Even the concretes took on a certain mutability
"Wastes gas. Fouls the air. I wouldn't drive truck if I didn't need to keep food on the table. And the cost of gas. ."

An opening. He had done nearly all the talking. I felt I should make a contribution. "We've certainly been lied to. Big corporations have no person accountable. You can't jail a corporation for a wrong act."

"They have legal entity."

"Game. It's not really punishable. An obvious wrong is considered in terms of cost. 'We cheat. Make 5 million. Get fined $200,000. It figures. Profit. We'll yell, but we'll make money And if, by chance, they actually prove something, we can fire the current Vice-president or change the name of the company.' Gas companies, power companies, you watch, their profits will be way up. And this president. ."

"I rather like him. I think he's trying. He's just surrounded by a miasma of cheaters, liars, punks, military-industrial pimps and politicians." He used a lot of expressions like I do, but in the face of that he liked the president. "Nixon has done a good deal. Like tighter drug controls. A real crackdown. And on crime." We're just not hearing it all, I thought. "Marijuana. That should be removed completely. It ruins youngsters too young to know. It's even in gradeschool."

The eye-of-the-beholder thing again. TEOTB. I thought grass was a perfect social drug. It gets you into yourself and into others. A harmonizer "It's not as bad as alcohol."

"Yeast culture. It's no good either." He related the yeast thing from Vonnegut's Breakfast of Champions. He ended with "You are what you eat."

Natural, organic grass. That's a growing, thriving plant, but.. Maybe it made me grow up before it was time. A few more years.
"So he turns to her..." Oh, back to that. "and he calls her Echo. Zap! I've got it. It's Bob Dylan driving the car. I don't say anything, stars like their solitude, too. So I just talk, take it all in, and don't mention that I know who they are. I did say that I saw them back at the cafe, and watched them meet, and thought it was strange that they should pick me up on a Sunday drive almost like a synapse and they motored this far just to give me a ride. He looks really nervous and she looks at him weird."

Rapping. Rapping. Rapping. In there is a discussion of his brother who doesn't believe he got a ride with Dylan or gave one to James Taylor, either, "But I played the album for him and did a running commentary on each line. I'm not too sure yet that he believes me; that that ride is what changed my life. Changed my whole life. I was kinda casting about, then I got direction. Direction," he repeated.

I looked at a low pond out the window. Morning was coming. The light was coming up. Beautiful colors.

"Oh, Nixon will be ousted, but you know, and I feel certain. " and then he said, very slowly and deliberately. "...things are going to start getting better."

Things are going to start getting better Reinforces my decision.

"He influenced my life. Changed it. I don't even know what he was talking about, except for 180° angle turns. Blew my mind."

Mine, too. How much did he know about my decision? How did he know? An agent of God? Jesus, himself? He is, you know. I was not surprised to be picked up by Him.

"Pretty soon he says to Echo, I think it was Echo, 'How about here?' She answers, 'This is fine,' with a big smile. They're both smiling like
canary that swallowed the bird...I mean cat. Catbird. 'This is as far as we can take you,' he says and stops. As I was getting out I said, just to let him know I knew, 'I enjoy the music of The Band a great deal.' He smiled and knew I knew, then did a pealout on the road, crossed the island, and took off back to Salt Lake. It was a profound...Hey! Theres the exit I was standing in. Bag on my arm, on tiptoes, when he picked me up."

It looked like any onramp in the world. I expected what? radiant white light?

"Its been getting better and better for me. I finished my book, New Jerusalem Flash, and I know I'll find a publisher soon. I don't expect money. Paperbacks, good paperbacks, being all over the world. But something. A check for groceries," he laughed.

Dressed in his collegiate buttondown collar shirt, his hair rather short and carefully trimmed, cleanly shaven, pants pressed and shoes shiny, he was assailing me with contradictions. Yet I had the context of my sense of wholeness. Hostility Fear But genius and genuine feeling.

"Good paperback is all over the place. I read some Louis L'amour the other day to sample it. I suspended my prejudice and found that I enjoyed it. Sitka. Do you read science-fiction?"

He stumbled a little, "Like whom?"

Hmmm. That used to be Kurt Vonnegut's thing. But not into S-F. "Like Samuel Delany. Half poetry, half connections, half electricity Its high."

"Can you tell me some titles?" He was talking like a human. He had been talking so fast and hard that I was almost excluded, except as a listener. Maybe he had some anxieties I couldn't see. Hidden hostilities.
But he certainly had connections. And the holy-wholey-powers are the only forces that can put it all together. "Einstein Intersection. The Fall of the Towers trilogy. The first book of his I read was City of 1000 Suns, a hokey title, but I read it. Was impressed. Asked my wife to read it aloud as I built an outhouse. Best I ever built. Best I ever read, at that point. Then there's The Rings of Aptor, I think, and The Ballad of Beta-2, and Driftglass..."

"No. I don't remember any of those."

"I also like R.A. Lafferty. Zenna Henderson. Robert Heinlein."

"I like him. Stranger in a Strange Land."

"But he's stagnating. His voice is not changing. He's got Azimov-period humor which covers him while he says some really shitty things."

"I'm working on my second book now. Under a penname."

Another shift. I supposed I had been sounding like a recorder.

"What penname?"

"Well. Remember Rocket Davey Johnny?"

"Can't say as I do."

"Vonnegut picked up on him. Vonnegut's influenced me a lot. Or I him. Anyway, I don't copy him. It seems he uses some of the same tricks I do just before or just after I do."

Could I be riding with Kurt Vonnegut Jr? I've never seen him. That would certainly be consistent with his talk and our current reality. "I know what you mean. Do what you know is right anyway. Critics are professionally critical. Often they ascribe innovations to the most popular or successful writer and quit questioning at that point. I think when things evolve they occur all over at once. Someone might have a better focus, but that doesn't mean that Randy Sparks in Mondak, North Dakota,
didn't have it occur to him as a genuine revelation. It's like Lafferty says in 'Symposium', a short story, 'Do you know why nobody discovered the 3 laws of motion before Newton discovered them? And why Newton did not discover them before he did? Because--THEY HAD NOT BEEN TRUE THE DAY BEFORE.' I don't completely agree with that, but there do seem to be planetary thoughts that occur worldwide at one time."

"Like connections," he said, "Connections. A happens to me. B happens to me. I remember em both because they are somehow special. Then when C happens I have enough data to create ABC. ABC is how they integrate. ABC = D, OK? D is a real thought. A discovery. A movement of information from the unknown into the known. It's a revelation. You earn it. It's yours. And that D--call it D₁--happens to connect with D₂ and you have E. And so on."

"'I am the Alpha and the Omega.'"

"Yeah. 'I am the alphabet and the omega.' How long are you gonna see your friend in Ogden, if you find him?"

"Not too long. I had some heavy bad vibes on this stretch of road and I may wait a while before I go south again."

Notice.


"Yeah," I continued, like a toboggan on a very steep slope, "I felt a real danger around the truckstop..."

"Ryder's?"

"That's the one. I thought I'd take another run at it." Again that
dimming. Memory of the mask of tragedy on the face of an angel. "Like circling a rattlesnake."

"Oh." He was silent a while. Then, "About connections, synapses," he slowed for the exit, "I was watching the Tonight Show a while ago when Johnny Carson was hosting. His guests were Judy Collins, heard her, and Joan Carter. Here's the light. You'd better get off here."

I opened the truck door and picked up my pack. "Thanks for the lift." Slammed the door.

"It was a strange connection, you know," through the open window, "All those names starting with the same letters."

Prumm-rumm. And there he went.

I shouldered my pack. "..J.C. So?" Then I blinked at the Connection. He had answered the first question I had directed at Him.

I walked into Riverdale. It might have been South Ogden. I had a lucid and easily recallable image of the exit, so I did not make the effort of confirming the name of the place. If you live on a street very long, you need not check house numbers to find your house.

It was a gloriously new morning. The light was full and tangible. The sun was coming up in the center of a deep drainage between 2 mountains. The sky was void blue. A cloud completely translucent, was completely angel-white. Precipitation falling from it was white, then gradually golden. Golden rain. The rain never hit the earth.

I was high. Hash high, acid high, psilocybin high. The original stuff. Those clouds were me. That golden sun was me. This town, with thick green trees and nearly empty morning streets, was me. High on Karma. Not drugs. It can be done. High on psychic engineering. Not
training wheels.

I looked in a show window as I passed. I was straight up. My back felt new. Me felt good, although I was a little tired from a nearly sleepless night.

Goin north.

I walked around town just looking. No chance of finding Ev. I saw several mounds of dead ants at cracks in the sidewalks. A sign? Of what, ant poison. I have never shared the fear of ants. Because the tickle on your legs and the back of your neck? Pests, they call them. Well, I suppose there are enough ants to permit fearful folks their little trips. There are a lot of insects, though. Some I really care about; lady bugs, butterflies, moths, praying mantis, those giant striped beetles that lift their wing covers and pinch them down quickly to make a whistling sound, Japanese beetles we flew like kites in Virginia, lightning bugs I played with in a clear Mason jar under the covers of my bed, ants I've watched for hours, caterpillars with painted faces, dung beetles, golden manure flies, delicate damsel flies and caddis flies, salmon and may flies, those black 2-piece beetles I would put my finger upon and hear and feel them snap at the joint again and again, sometimes flipping up into the air--clicking beetles we called them, buz-zetty grasshoppers with colored wings, and those 3-inch brightly colored grasshoppers ?locusts that we played with in the open field by Cherry's Bar in Dallas--they were solid red, blue, yellow, or green. There are others.

I'm respectful of some insects, too. I wouldn't exactly say afraid. Those arachnids. Daddy longlegs are fun. And a certain black shiny spider would pop loudly when we would step on them. I have just recently learned to touch those pasty white giants with a catface on their double-horned
backs. I look out for scorpions, chiggers, black widows, wasps and hornets, hermit spiders, your basic bush crab, hairy spiders, jumping spiders, and brightly colored spiders—beautiful as they are. Once, in the Bitterroot Valley, when I was in the fourth grade, I crept into the musty calfshed. Standing up inside I looked about. There in the far corner was the most awesome spider I have ever seen. Understand, I have lived in Texas. My dad used to prod tarantulas with a stick, then shoot them with a .22. Some looked as big as turtles coming down the sidewalk in the dusk. Once mom asked me to stay in with the witchy babysitter and my weird siblings while she and dad went out. I waited a safe period. Then I went out. As I quietly closed the screen door—plop! Slide! A huge tarantula. He'd either fallen off the ceiling or jumped completely over me. I ran back inside. Stayed inside. They frightened and fascinated me. But none like this golden giant of the calfshed. He was 3 inches across. Golden netting. His abdomen was ruby red an inch in diameter with golden macramé webbing about it. Like the wicker or woven straw webs with large geometric openings that you find on genuine Italian wine bottles. I stared at him. He measured me without blinking, I am sure. I led the neighborhood kids and my brother in to see him. Later he disappeared. He could have gone anywhere in the barn. Or in any barn. I have laughed since as I thought we could have used his web to net salmon.

Wonders everywhere. The everyday miracles. The miracle of the mundane. Like sunrises. Its new every time. Everything is unique. 12 basic personality types—equivalent to the 12 Olympians? A laugh. Somehow we are all identical—at DNA level? Inmost soul? But our vision, our universes are unique. Pity those who don't see miracles, for their universe has
looked away.

I feel just grand. I did something right.

Me and the courthouse. An old man sits in a chair west of the flowers. Lovely I ask, "What building is this?"

"Harumph...cough. gurgle. I don't know."


"Oh yes, yes, of course." He got up, gathered his chair, and left.

I hadn't intended to scare him away Who is stealing our elders?

I leaned my pack against a tree, laid my head against it, covered myself with my down jacket and rain coat, and slept on the courthouse lawn of South Ogden or Riverdale.


Ah h h h ughh.. step.

Red brick walls on both sides. White window sills. Not Toledo, then. Ughhh h h. step.

Where am I going? The street is still narrower. Why this trial?

Ughh h h. step.

How long can I do this? How long must I do this? Where am I going?

I could do this forever. Ughh h h. step.


"I'm going home."

I turn and step. 30 feet. Egad! Another step. 40 feet. I know this feeling. It was when I was learning to fly. Another 40 foot step. Joy. I'm going home. My feet barely touch the ground. 40 feet. 40 feet. 40. 40. 40. Nearly flying. 40 feet. Home!

I pass the window of my acquaintance, the 13 year old. He's impressed. He has rough features, like a stereotypic cop, bull, insensitive muscle. Bald head. Little blue eyes. "How did you do that?"

"Easy." I've already passed his window. Took an easy right down a slight hill in an opening in the way. Like those small courtyards you discover in Venice. "I'll show you." Its difficult back up the hill. I draw a line in the dust. "Watch." As I walk further up the hill to take a run at the line, I realize I'm again laboring tortuously. I turn. I run. Out of step, I thought. I jump too early.

Is OK. I sail all the way to the foot of the hill again. "OK?" I ask him.

"Wow! Let me try." He backs up easily, it seems. Runs at the line. He falls. A twisted wreck. "My knee! My knee!"

OhmyGod, I've had a bad knee. I know. I know. I run back up the hill to help him. (Don't forget. Don't forget.)

I wake up. People are walking about. The parking lot is full. A
young man is setting up sprinklers around me, leaving the one that would hit me until last. I get up slowly. Repack my pack. Talk to him a moment. Then leave. Back to the freeway.

The dream has left a doubt—like an empty moth carcass on a spider-web. Remnant. Swaying futile in the breeze. As though the ghost of the moth were still essaying escape.

FALLING:

He walked back to the freeway and stood for long minutes on the approach. He looked at the sky like he was searching for something very high and small. He looked north, then south. Then north. Then south. Transparently indecisive. He spoke aloud, "North? I have proven I can do God's will. South? This whole thing could be the most integrated rationalization for not taking a job in my history."

A plane flew low, dusting some chemical over the trees by the creek. Coming from the north. Going south. He said, "Follow the wind," as though that were an insight.

He walked to the exit south.

As I approached the exit, a small car pulled up. "To Salt Lake?"
"Yep."
"Climb in."

Just like that. So quickly. Maybe I've worked off the bad Karma.
"Where are you going?"
I gave him the Safford story.
"Are you a teacher?"
"Among other things. Do I sound like a teacher?"
"Yes. The guy I'm having an affair with is a teacher in Salt Lake."
I have a disagreeable task to take care of there today."

"My disagreeable task has just been completed. I did a bad karmic trip from Ogden to Salt Lake last night and now I'm going to take the same run over."

"Rather strange."

"Yeah. I feel a man has to do what he feels is right, even if he looks strange to everyone around him." Said with more bravado than I felt.

"I'm gay. I found out about a year ago. Its been incredibly hard to come out. I've told my wife and she understands. I've been having an affair with a guy in Salt Lake City. Hence, my disagreeable task; I have to tell him that I'm in love with someone else," he said.

A new love. Correlates with a change of direction.

He wore a white flowerprint shirt. His chin was weak and his mouth was small. A pretty face. Clean pants. Expensive shoes. A partial beard. He could have been anyone you know, driving his mother's car to Salt Lake City.

"I also have to tell him that I've got the clap." He smiled and showed white even teeth. "Theres much more promiscuity among homosexuals than among the heteros. The bug gets around."

I searched my feelings. A little reserve, but not much else. No active disdain, rejection, reaction, avoidance. I felt a kinship, but I was not attracted. I didn't feel a connection between the homosexual and the previous night's experience. I said, "I got it once. From a chick. We considered each other as source. Nothing showed on my lab report and I decided that I got a phallic dose of her youthful anxieties. I pissed lava for 3 days."
"It gets around quick in Salt Lake. There's a bar where straights come in to watch, or maybe be picked up. That's where I got it."

"Right in the bar?" No shock. I was thinking of Gypsy Jenny saying, "Look at that," and turning to see Edie giving Spencer a handjob up at the bar in Eddies Club.

"Just outside. Hence, my disagreeable task." He gestured toward the city. No limp wrist. "This is hard to do. Alan has money. Lots of money. He pays for everything. We have trips planned to Europe, Canada, and Mexico. And I like him very well. But last night, it was an important night for me (For all.), I decided that I really loved this other person. Discovered my love. I'd do without money to be with him."

"Some love," I said, "is better than no love."

"I might even have to get a job. We have this perfect little apartment picked out. We found some beautiful curtains yesterday. I'm going to move in with him." A touch of embarrassment, "I've never done anything like this before."

Touching. " Sounds like you've made the right decision." Then, as a test, in the declarative voice, "You're going the right way." Nothing. No lightning. No cataclysm. No weird looks. Reality maintained its usual tone. I was questioning, but no bad vibes. Maybe I had done it right. All I lacked was conviction.

"How does your wife feel about you moving in?"

"She's OKing it. She only wants to see me happy, I think. She'll give me a divorce with no alimony or anything. She has a lover so everything is OK."

He took an exit. The sun was hot. Other hitchhikers sat on the pave-
ment. I got out and waved goodbye, not yet aware of any signal that perhaps I had set out in the wrong direction.

I walked to a gas station, filled my canteen, checked my map, purchased and ate a candy bar, and sat in the shade a few minutes. People seemed to be catching rides south slowly, but north rapidly. N'importe quel. I walked to position and thumbed.

Nothing.

So, despite Utah's law 'No hitching on the freeway or onramps', I shouldered my pack and started up the ramp.

Suddenly an authoritarian-stentorian voice in my head, "Turn around. Get off the ramp. Get off the ramp. Turn around." Loudspeaker patrol car The boss ant. Soldier ant.

"Yeah, yeah. Sure." I shrugged.

I returned to the supersunny spot and thumbed. 5 minutes later the voice, with no distinctive alterations, ordered, "Keep your hand down."

Too fucking much. The soldier ants were getting savage glee out of this. What kind of state is Utah, anyway? Police state. Discipline not from within, but imposed from the exterior. Fuck em, I wasn't going to sit on my hands. I decided to watch for cops, instead.

A long time. A couple hours later this dude with a pink flowerprint shirt pulled up. "Going south to South Salt Lake?"

"That's not far, is it?"

"No. But if you're still here when I finish my business, I'll give you a lift." Varoom.

My previous ride listed about 4 interesting gay bars in Salt Lake. Pinkshirt belonged in one of them, I guessed.
30 minutes later he was back. "No thanks," I said, "I think I'll grab a longer one." Is that gay talk?

He smiled, kindly enough, "Be pleased."

I waited a long time.

My water ran low. I topped it up. I darkened the drawing of a woman on my canteen cover.

I wiped my brow. I could feel my face burning.

I waited a long time.

Some years ago, when all this started, I was gasing up at the local selfservice when some children in the back of a passing camper hooted, "Ain't she cute?" "Hey, good lookin!" I had long hair. "What about a date?" 13 year olds taunting me. "Hey honey, hows about a kiss?"

I was not irritated, nor depressed, although I was engaged in the war against ignorance, prejudice, and the forces of darkness at the time. They may have been parroting their rednecked parents' words, but they were actively curious, interested and, actually, rather unprejudiced--they made the move to talk to me. We had a place to start. I would not spontaneously act or react as their parents might anticipate. We'd be into conversation very quickly.

But these Utahans. Mormon? I don't know.

A hitchhiker learns to read faces. Some drivers don't see me, but cross to the far lane as though they had been moved over by fate. Some smile and signal, "Just this far." Some look--look away shaken by the eye contact. A few sneer--thumbs down; the finger. A few smile guilt. Some happen to pass close to me, then suddenly slow down to just as suddenly reaccelerate. Hand jive. Facial ballet. Lip reading. I see it all.
A hitchhiker uses it, too. A smile, although they don't even slow down, to soften them up for the next dude down the road. Wave at most of them. Be human and vulnerable. It's no secret that karma can get you a ride, or that the vibration rate you are experiencing can stop a car. Feel fine. I have stood under the big triangular 'Merging traffic' sign and suddenly pointed to it, mouthing "Hows about. ," with facial language to match. Stops em in their tracks, even if they don't get the message for 15 miles.

Even on bad corners folks will body-talk.

Except these Utahans..

Children everywhere, even in a car with Mr and Mrs N. Credibly Uptight, will venture an honest gaze, a smile, a peace sign, a slight wave or a shy nod, or, the universal constant of children, curiosity

Except these Utahans.

Can't be just mormons. Arlo was raised mormon, and I've known a few openminded and openhearted mormons. I read some of the Book of Mormon as soon as I realized what Latter Day Saints literally means. It's a genuine Holy Book. There are saints in every temple.

And, family rumor has it, I may be a relative of Brigham the carpenter, himholyself.

That book talks about the 'stiff-necked' in quite condemning terms.

The eye-of-the-beholder and all that; the people of Salt Lake City are stiff necked. Afraid. Nearly sealed up.

I have visited nearly 50 states, Canada, Mexico, and some of Europe. Nowhere, except in Utah, have I ever seen children afraid to look upon a hitchhiker
So I stood in the Salt Lake sunshine, my smile melting into phoney, into grimace, into determination. I'm concerned.

'Hey, look at me. I'm a person. I've got a New Testament and a Book of Mormon in my pack. Hey, I like seagulls, too! In fact, I may have gotten a message from one... (Go north.) I've never stabbed a grandmother Or raped a baby.

Zoom. Zoom. No eyes. No smiles.

Is it mormons?

'Hey Maybe it was a relative of mine that helped you build that temple. Talk to me. Listen.

Zoom. Zoom. Zoom. The thought crossed my mind that I could die here. I could die at anytime in any place. Why ever be anyplace in which I would not like to die? If I died in Salt Lake the seagulls might notice, but the drivers, the buyers, the sellers, would treat me no differently. They might even treat me better. Well, that's a course of action if nothing else comes up.

'Help. Help! My energy runs down like sweat. I'm going south to get a job, to work, to sweat in the sun. Respectability and all that.


Maybe no one lives in Salt Lake City They are just overgrown sperm hunting voracious as mindless crocodiles for that great ovum in the mucus.

Umm. .getting bitter, eh, Parris? Whatever they have is contagious, eh? Get into the cosmic caustic just a little further. Stiffen that neck. Obviously they are submorons. Morons. .mormons. Cackle. Chimpanzees could watch this crowd and see nothing to imitate. Out asshole them. Shout from the roadside, "So you cast out the blacks because they are not comely?" Ever see the dry inner lacework of dead cactus, Parris? Dry.
broken leather of old river beds? Ants. Ants. Piles of dead ants hurrying home. Oh, it reeks so of...

But that's enough, isn't it?

I'm depressed, but I won't become poisonous. I'll think of something.

About this time a big dude in a light brown khaki shirt makes that deviation of a fractional degree in his step that says he's going to approach me. He does, straight off. He reminds me of Paul Newman. "You, boy," although he isn't that much older than me, "been here a long time."

He moved his head to indicate a garage. He'd been watching from there. "Where're ya goin'?

"Down south." He made a 'what for?' shift with his face. I told him.

He looked at the traffic. "Real bad corner. They ain't gonna stop. Unless you goin' north." (Go north.) He scuffed his toe in the dust.

"It's the same in the south. Heap hotter's all."

"A job will help. It's a good job. Decent pay. Good folks to work with."

Not interested in that jive. "I'm an alcoholic. I went to Seattle to escape the bottle." Twinkle. "I'm going across this street to get me a bottle right now." He smiled, "Don't wait for a car. Hop a freight. I'm going back to Seattle by freight soon."

His eyes were very clear blue. There were 5 beads of sweat on his upper lip. He seemed perceptive and in charge of his mind. I trusted him. He was human. There is no doubt that his next words grew out of genuine generosity "Up about a half mile from here, see those railroad cars?" I did. "There's a freightyard. Walk up there, take a left, walk a mile or so to the tower. Ask around. Take the Rio Grande to Grand
Junction, in Colorado. From there take the Santa Fe to La Junta, not Denver. They're no help at all in Denver. Only place I know where yard-bulls still chase you out. From La Junta you'll get to Albuquerque or Trinidad, where you can hop one to Phoenix. Try it. More and more you young hippies takin to the rails."

"Well...maybe. I'll give it a half hour here."

"OK. Suit yourself. Train don't fail. Theres one goin south soon today." He reached out a big hand and struck me good-naturedly on the shoulder. I had to visually correct my balance. He smiled, "Suit yourself."

He left, crossing the street in big steps.

Far out! A person. Damned nice. Helpful, too. Been thinking about the rails, but. I felt better. I'll give em a half hour, yet.

All the hitchers going north were gone now. "Maybe," I said aloud, "maybe I should be headed north."

I waited 30 minutes.

I saw him coming back across the street holding a bagged bottle by the neck. I found myself smiling back largely. "No luck yet."

"Bad corner. Told you that." He came up close and smiled, "Don't know why you insist on hitchin. Easy. Warm. Maybe get a blowjob. Maybe you get $10. Easy panhandlin. I see more and more you young hippies ridin the rails. Takes you where you want to go. No waitin on the fearfals. Good boxcar. A fire. Good travelin." He drank from the papersack. "See that boxcar?" He gave me the directions once more. I repeated them. He smiled and said, "Got enough money?"

"Yeah."

How much should I tell him? "Enough if I don't have any trouble."

"Naw. Don't smoke. It helps me save money."

"So buy a beer or a can of pop." He extended the money again. I took it and stuffed it into my watch pocket. I did not have to fake appreciation.

"Remember what I said," he shouted over his shoulder.

I appreciated the 50ç, but I looked with more desire upon his bottle. I wonder if he noticed?

I drew out my maps and looked. It seemed Grand Junction was out of my way. Still.

A car pulled over. The driver stepped out and held his seat forward as I carried my pack with one hand and my map with the other. Into the back.

"We're not going too far, but we'll help you get off that corner. Thats a bad spot. Mostly local people and short rides."

I noticed a shotgun on the floor beside him. "Going to hold up a gas station?"

"No," he laughed, "we shoot hitchhikers."

His woman reminded me of Linda Ducharm back in Missoula. Very pretty Indian. He was lean and blonde. Young and vigorous. Maybe my trip is improving. "I haven't seen many of the People."

"They're here. Mostly in different parts of town. We are from Brigham City, just visiting here. I think there are more older people in Salt Lake. Maybe they are retired." Retired versus the young--too often a very quiet conflict.

The girl gave me the remainder of her orange pop. I started feeling
better I looked out the window as we crossed the railyard.

They took me to the south edge of town. It was a better environment although there was much less traffic. Soon a red Valient pulled over 3 young men. The 2 in front were tanned and shirtless. They looked sulky. Sullen. A heavier dude sat in back in a red knit shirt with a white chessman over his left breast.

"Thanks a lot. I've just spent most of the day in Salt Lake in the hot sun. Just got a ride here. Haven't been here 15 minutes before your ride. Maybe my trips picking up. That was a very bad wait in Salt Lake."

"That happens." A conversation-stopper. One of the dudes in front. My words dismissed into the open air, or thrown back into my face. I thought, but did not say, at Knitshirt, "Your friends are not very talkative." Somehow that was an important thought.

We rode in silence. Out of the Salt Lake area. I could see the sky change as we got further from the lake. Out past Murray. We took the next exit. What is this? We left the freeway to take this exit without a word. I watched for sign. "Maybe I should stay on the freeway," I said.

"We'll be in Midvale for a half an hour, then take you as far as Provo," said one of the California-colored.

Well, I've got some time, might as well see their trip as wait on the asphalt. I started studying my hosts. The 2 in front had the open look of the People, the driver certainly, but they both looked rather depressed. Fatigue? The redshirt had that fat unquestioning look of a mind in larva stage.

We pulled into a cul-de-sac. Redshirt got into his car and left. The passenger-seat tanskin with slightly pinched mouth spoke, "Put your
pack in the blue bug." He looked hurt and bitter.

The driver, tall now out of the car, said, "Want a beer? Come in."

I moved my pack and walked to the porch of the house. A large truck stopped in front. It was covered with a huge hydraulic hoist, a winch, cables and drums, and a block and tackle rig. A very heavy dude with a bluebeard face came into the house like belonging. Tall Tanskin handed me a cool 'Coors. I popped the tab and dropped it into the can as I watched bluebeard come across the yard. He reminded me of Dale back in Great Falls.

In California, Utah, Idaho, Europe, Canada, Montana, Butte, Brooklyn, Anaheim, Missoula, no matter, I am struck by things, by people, that hit me down deep. Recognition. Its real recognition. Why, I know that! Thats a mountain from Mineral County! Thats a bend from Fish Creek. Thats Dale. And theres Gypsy Jenny

I remember in Yellowstone, being a bozo with 1000 other bozos waiting for Old Faithful to blow its thing, I saw a couple--one with a huge head of kinky-curly hair and a jiveass motion, a childish sort of 'we're together in this foolishness' air about him, like he enjoys it all and can share it with a child or adult or enlightened one; the other, heavy, Indian, dark straight hair, a real smile, high cheeks that say honesty and a joy of life coming from the center, and a look of 'I am joyous. I can be a child in joy. Its because I've got this gift I can share with you.' Thats Danny and Tomotem. "Bev. who do they remind you of?"

"Danny and Tomotem." (Thats another time.)

"Right." I stared. Mannerism. Nuance. Even appearance, except for specifics, was the same. I watched. Old Faithful upchucked. We were so far from it, 'Don't go beyond this point,' that Old Faithful could
have been a travel film. No fear. No intimacy. Fuck the park. I set out to talk to the duadDoppelganger.

"We'll wait for you in the car," Bev called.

The couple turned into the crowd.

Dreamlike they drifted through the crowd. I pursued them. Between the trees into a large building. Their actions said they were the spirits of Tomotem and Danny, caught out of time. Tomotem is married. Has 2 womenchildren. Lives in a little green house on the reservation. Danny is in New Mexico; on a McPhar crew. I saw them in the crowded building. They had physical differences, but still they were the same. Tomotem and Danny in different, but very similar, bodies.

They acted pursued. They did a quick confab as I closed the distance, then the Danny surrogate went out a side door and the Tomotem duplicate went into a toilet.

I stood empty a moment or 2. What's the point of all this? They are not really Tomotem and Danny. Obviously. What would I say to 2 strangers? But so similar. Why seek disappointment? Nanda says, "Disappointment is a trap we set for ourselves." I returned to the camper.

Recognition. There's something about that I have yet to learn. Maybe there is only Me on this level of awareness. All of my avatars are ready to perform, like dream wraiths, as my attention turns there to here. When I have recognized them all, accepted them all, I can get on with it.

Bluebeard smiled and walked into the house. I went in and sat down. Tallchick greeted tall Tanskin like lover, yet a bit formally. A little boy. A german shepherd. Pinchmouth sat and Bluebeard rolled a joint or 2. I was in the circle, but I also maintained a distance--hanging on to 'That happens' much too long.
Tallchick turns on the TV. Some words. OK, but I'm not giving away my person. OK. They don't force me either way. A second Coors. Generosity. I say more words, and listen to theirs. Are they real? Bluebeard says, "So the pole comes out and the truck rolls ahead and snaps the other pole off like...," snaps his fingers.

Snap! Off?

He laughs. Tall Tanskin, with a rough scar across his latisimus dorsi I see now--does he breathe with difficulty?--talks about building sectional aluminum buildings, "...40 feet in the air, our biggest, and he says, 'Eat your lunch up there and I buy you studs a case of Coors,' so we did. No such luck today, though. Whew! That sun was scorching."

"Poor baby," teases Tallchick. The TV was for the daytime soaps, she admitted.

This seemed like a special trip. I toked on the roach. Maybe I should go really straight? Do the job. Quit this smoking and drinking shit? Might as well. Stuff used to help me give my person, but not much anymore. I'm not giving these people much. They hardly seem The People. Maybe I can't tell the difference anymore. Today. Maybe they are empty, almost-convincing puppets. Reciprocal. Eye-of-the-beholder. Maybe I'm trapped in a null-set. Dr Strange, where are you. And Dr Snootful, you promise to fix me up.

And at this point, completely as a nonsequitur, a chick on the TV doing a Wrigley's chewing ad, turns toward me after the pitch is over, and says, clearly and for me alone, "Well, it's over now."

Somehow I'm not convinced. Dead again, huh?

"A coward dies a thousand times."
Disappointed. Sorrowful. Not relieved, really, but resigned to accepting whatever Bardic plane I have fallen to. Love where I am. That's my fate. That's where a moment of free will led me this time.

But I'm still not convinced I'm burnt out and empty. (Face it honestly.) Psyche calls out in her restless sleep, "Face it honestly." I do fair. Why does she, why does He, instruct me in honesty unless there is something still in shade?

I talk but little to Pinchmouth as he drives to Provo. He plugs good tapes into his stereodeck. Good move, Moody Blues. Gandolf.

(She still calls. She is awake. Listen. Listen. Respond in stillness. Respond in motion.)

A book of life.

I get out at the Provo exit. Should be good hitchin. Pinchmouth wasn't so bad. Fatigue. Self-consciousness combined with fatigue on his face, lean and confident tanned body, to produce the sullen air. Earlier, my eyes had imbued him with insidiously ulterior reticence.

Well, I'm going to make it from here. I promise myself I'm not going to quit trying as long as my faculties are relatively together and I yet breathe.


No real fear of that. Is there.

Memory: Parris—if I'm a vegetable, unable to move or talk or see, will you see that I'm put in a sack and dropped from here?

Pat, looking off the old Superior bridge into the wintergrey Clark Fork—euthanasia?
Parris--yes. Mercy kill.

Pat--yes.

But that was long ago. Another life. They were wrong. That bridge is gone.

No. As long as I breathe, as long as any tissue stirs, I'm going to try to get back to God, going to let learning happen, going to permit life and experience to happen. "A brave never takes his own life. A brave dies in battle."

Standing on the Provo onramp. I had been there maybe 20 minutes when a patrol car pulls through and parks. Waiting on me? Take a chance. I walk over, "Hello. Are you offering a ride?"

There's no change in his face, unfortunately. It was a stereotypic face. Genuinely sullen. Expressionless except for the frozen determination. Ill-temper, authoritarian insensitivity, and imbecility. He looked beat about the face. His face was scar stiff. Thick. Even his eyes were the cartoon piggy eyes. Small, surrounded by squint marks. Very round. He would hardly look at me. A very curt, "No." Was I making fun of him?

Those eyes; grief, torment, and determination. Determined by something else. His struggle may have been over for years. Here was a man who could be violent. Despair does that.

I said, allowing him no time for thought, and in a tone that, by comparison, made my first comment a good-natured jest, "Can you tell me what the hitchhiking laws are in Utah?"

No smile, "Just don't hitch beyond the sign." The sign read, 'Entry prohibited pedestrians, equestrians, and nonmotorized vehicles.' He looked away somewhat embarrassed.

I walked back to my spot. The patrolman moved onto the freeway.
An older fellow gave me a ride to Springville. "Take 50 south. It'll keep you off the freeway 50 is a truckroute. Good rides into Colorado, New Mexico, or Arizona."

I did not trust him. I make rapid assessments of character by regarding the face. Was it Lincoln said, "A man makes his own face at 40." The muscles. The movements. It is with extreme difficulty that these lie. And look at the face at rest--what does it say? Words, words, intonations. Those can lie.

This dude, 40 to 50, had a lean face, heavily creased and lined with driving. And a will to keep his consciousness up. He intended well. But he did not know.

I was not convinced. Still, the freeway ramp law was a hindrance. A hiker cannot stand on the ramp near the freeway. He must stand at the mouth of the ramp, beyond the sign, outside the proscribed area.

I started down 50 with him.

50. An error, I realized after standing a long time in Springville. Why was I avoiding the most direct, the fastest route? Perhaps I did not truly want to reach Safford. This might be a tangent. True, I wanted out of Utah as fast as possible. Utah had been a colossal bummer so far. This was the shortest route through.

A ride with a young man to another junction with an exit road from the freeway. The map is too gross. Inaccurate. A whiteman's map drawn in some Enco office back east. Generally the map is OK. Specifically. I'm lost. I don't like this condition. Maybe I should walk back to the freeway. I stood. I sat. Then I laid against my pack. Finally I walked into the sharp sagebrush and laid down to sleep. I dreamed of walking in the desert.
When I awoke it was still daylight. Bright golden. To the east I could see 2 rainstorms. Despite my possibly previous error of turning south again, maybe my karma was changing.

I stepped to the road. Within moments a green pickup stopped. I climbed in beside a small, freckled, tanned cowboy with red hair. "Hi. Hitchin' a ride?" Twang. Western tape on the deck.

"Yep. Headed for Tucson."

"I can take you as far as Helper. I'm needin a bit of company." Country-western tape a bit loud. He accelerates onto the road. Helper? That's a decent ride.

Then the music strikes me hard. Hank Williams singing, 'Burning bridges behind me.'

It was true. I should have continued north. 'Burning bridges behind me/Its too late to turn back now.' Oh God, have I lost myself forever?

Headed south-by-southwest toward Helper as the bluffs to our left turn the brilliant brass of sunset, as the shadow spreads from the valley wall on our right, across the floodplane, and up the north side. Hank Williams on the stereo. A conversation with the cowboy.

And I am trying to think without distortion.

I see seagulls heading west into the long light. West and north. Golden air. Blue shadow. The mouth and lower end of this canyon are very beautiful.

Assess. Assess.

I suspected I was to continue north. But I turned south again. Back to my doubts. Back to my fears. Fear and doubt, the 2 that have addicted more of mankind than all else. Isn't this repeated experiencing of death
warnings, announcements, premonitions and signs a certain sign of serious mental illness? How much before I am reduced to catatonia?

I observe myself shaking and sinking into multimindedness. Multi mindedness. Disintegration. Do this. No. Do that. No. This is death. This is disintegration. Turn right. Can't do that--right is a bad sign. Turn left. Can't do that--isn't there something about the 'right hand of the blessed and the left hand of the damned'? What if it's all a trick to lead me left? Take a job. But doesn't mean working for the man and isn't that selling out? Doesn't that mean leaving people I'd rather be loving and enjoying for the postponed rewards of money and position. Work for myself? Sounds better. But if it's work, then I don't enjoy it and I must reward myself 100 ways that cost more than I earn. But if I don't work, aren't I a parasite--Parris-ite--and a burden?

Remember Michelangelo's Sistene Chapel? Charon and the ferry. Those writhing bodies in the river Styx. Writhing bodies. Directions. Directions? Which way to go? Remember that medieval painting of judgment day? The 2 burly broadchesters pulling the husky man to death. Is he resisting? No. His eyes are wide with fear. His arms are wrapped about himself. His hands pull his own hair and clutch his own skin. (You do remember)

He is disintegrated. No direction. There is no leader in his mind.

But hell is not a puritan or mormon place. There is no punishment fit for all. Instead we punish ourselves. True poetic justice. Tantalus. No one condemned him to that. He did it himself with his own desire. He thinks he is Tantalus. Or Sisyphus.

Dante called them the circles of hell.

Circles.

Strange how words come to mean. Circles. Caught forever in the
circles of ourselves. Being aware of our circle. Ever Sisyphus. It grows into eternity. Forget. Don't face it. And does it end?

I could die forever

But God takes no satisfaction in punishment. That's man's satisfaction. And consider change. There is no justice in eternalizing yourself unless you had, at some time, the chance of changing yourself.

The great of spirit live among the great of spirit forever
The dead stay among the dead.
The weak and confused of spirit stay in a universe of dim confusion.
Change. Change.

Oh, God, how can a man change his heart? How can a man change his universe?

And where is Parris? Being taken down, down south, by someone I see as a grinning redheaded insensitive. A thinly disguised death's head. I do not blame the cowboy. It's Parris' eye that sees this. The cowboy doesn't know he is insensitive. Or dead. And surely to his daughter--

"I bought her a pony 2 weeks ago. She's been on it every day since."-- he is a majestic man. To a saint, the cowboy looks saintly. To Jesus he is Jesus, of course.

But to me.

Goin down south. Captive of circumstance, ignorance, and weakness. Is that my circle? Feeling forever, "Oh God, I just took a wrong turn."

"Do you want a beer?"

"I'll take a coke."

He stops. Gets a beer from a refrigerator inside the gas station. He has stopped here before. Back inside, "No coke." We move again. Continuing down south. Should I jump from the pickup? Throw out my gear and
jump? Maybe break my neck and skin my body?

"Insane, I'd say. Just jumped right out without a word. Probably drugged up. Drug damaged brain, I'd say."

"Yeah, too bad. Those hippies seem to have no sense." Another can of beer. Throw the empty beside the road. "If I ever caught my kids doing drugs you'd better believe I'd beat em. Kill the pusher. Shoot him like a dog."

I remember becoming suddenly aware—all becoming aware is sudden—of my eyescan pattern some years ago. I was scanning, quite unconsciously up to that point, in a sharply cornered figure 8. I could not drop the pattern. It would return in a few seconds. I was fear-struck. The figure 8 is also the symbol of infinity. The symbol of infinity: an oscillating circle seen from the side. Circle.

I tried to hold my eyes steady. No good. I tried to force them. No good. Proust, "It's either easy, or it's impossible."

No control over myself. I'm going to crash. 1,000,000 parts each pulling different directions. Maya mind.

Whew! Put behind all that dismal thought. I know a man can change. How do I know?

Change is constant.
Change is God.
Change is Love.
Change is Creation.

God is Love is Creation is constant. Truth is.

Dolson says, "The facts are in constant flux. The Truth is absolute."

Those who seal themselves off, refusing any new input, recompute the
same data forever in the same program in the same proportions. The infinite loop.

But accept one new bit (. . . is Creativity is Change. . . ) and a new answer can result.

I can change. I can change. Oh God, I can change.

And we topped the divide--Soldier Summit--and left the last part of day behind us.

(Waves roll out. The sinner. The 9 mile circle. The breathe falls. The light goes out. The sun sets. To the east we see the red on the mountain's top. The place that held the sun last yesterday, receives it last today Death.

Dreamlike, the scene changes. It WAS a dark planetscape. Smooth, featureless soil in front, soft but unmarked in darkness so complete that our vision alone illuminates it. Ahead, low darker hills. Above, the credible brilliance of stars piercing down without atmospheric distortion.

NOW it is the same planetscape with a thin ghost added. It is late afternoon. The sun is bright and low in the west. At this time, when we face east, we stand taller by one day. and, if the air is clear, our vision is elevated by one day. This acute vision, if directed to the vegetation, shows us the entire tree in detail. Detail of leaf, limb, and serrated bark. Highlights are golden and bright. Shadows near black. Or black. At this time of day, night is birthing in the shadow of each leaf, behind each blade of grass, east of every treetrunk, thick or thin; night is birthing in the new silences of the meadowlark and butterfly, in the tired man's appraisal of his completed work.

NOW, as we look upon the lightless planetscape, we see the bright
edges of leaves which do not exist, edges illuminated by that late afternoon sun that is not there. Edges new moon thin.

As we gaze, it dawns upon us. We are looking at tomorrow's forest. Yesterday's jungle. The bright ghost of the life that was. The life that is.

Life--the earth. That dark basso profundo, ponderously rises and falls, reaches, wrinkles beneath the thin, eternal transparency.

Glinting dim, like a river beneath starlight, streams run from the low hills, water our forest, and disappear in the non-ness behind us.

Look. Look now. Even through the dense, dark planetscape under our feet. Even through the whispering premonition of the late garden. Even through all that, see into the stellar distances of the subatomic.

Hear the harmonic distances of the 4 forces, each with its meter, each with its interval decorated with the necessary Matter sounds like notes. The stars, beneath our feet, ring true; illuminate new life symphonies.

Space--the ground. The infinite void that stands as foil for all being.

Energy--the vehicle. The fabric that holds it together 4 forces; weak, strong, electromagnetism, gravity. 4 named manifestations of the one force. Avatars of Energy.

Matter--the pigment. The colored this. Colored that. Footstones.

Balance. Proportion.

Music of the spheres.

All ideas exist together, harmonizing in the perpetual renaissance that is realization of the NOW.

New moon thin--Mantles of the Now. Memory, perception, precognition; derisive term: 'long hair' music, art, words--all integrated into the same
continual being, renaissance, basso profundo.

The lightless planetscape.
Black hole.
Quazar.
Star.
Matter
Big bang. Pulsing. Continual creation. Steady state. Entropic. All simultaneously
We reach forth, not with hands, and rip the dream fabric, rend the black planetscape, pierce the illusion.
And the void--the ground upon which we can paint the Truth, is primed. Waves roll in. The Saint. The 9 mile circle stands completed. The breath rises. New light. Birth. The sun rises, and the place first in shadow at sunset, receives the light first today.)

Downhill. Down into the valley. The cowboy drives quite fast. Helper, a city name that sounds reassuring, reminds me of quick, caustic imps. It is night and I see, because of the smokestained pickup windows, yardlights circled by haloes. As though it were foggy outside.
As soon as I step from the pickup, "Thanks for the ride," (A lie.) I find the night is clear and warm. I drink a coke and watch the attendant roll in the hose and close for the night. Midnight in Helper, Utah. A southward drainage.
I walk through town. A car squeals out and an invisible beer bottle explodes at my feet. Grand place. A supercar with 2 young males stops.
I climb into the rear They both wear baseball caps. "We just beat Helper. Helper hasn't won a game this season."
I asked where they were from.

"Price. Say, we can take you through Price if you want."

"Sure." Then I talked freely and easily. Relief, I think. They could accept what I said, although they made a detectable effort to be open—somewhat like those young girls mixing with whole men and women who might be the same age.

We cruised the drag through Price. At the stoplight the driver called out the score of the game to the car beside us. Reported his hitchhiker. It was good P.R. for the next dude through.

They took me all the way through town, said, "Hell, its just a little ways to Wellington, we'll take you there." They did. Then they said, "We're not doing anything, we'll take you to"—what was it?—"Midvale."

Through Midvale, out of town a ways, stopped, turned around. "Thank you." I was up on them, but not putting them down. They went miles out of their way. Maybe I had psyched them, but if I had, I had done so innocently.

Memory: Summer of 72. Red-headed Mike Walker. Somewhere in northern California. I was spending a day waiting. Sacramento, maybe. I saw a red-headed dude get on the ramp behind me, and he looked nearer than the 25 yards at which he stood. He came in my eyes very easily. I was giving up the wait. I was going across the freeway to buy a bus ticket for a distance down the valley. He had taken my place as I was telephoning to find out about bus fare and I had to walk past him on my way to the bus station. As I did, he flashed a power sign full into the air, and a car stopped just as I was beside him. I got in. The driver was a low-rider. Old car chopped. Dusty smell. He wore a porkpie. He looked gentle and strong at once, like Bill Stoinoff in Missoula.
Mike, he had introduced himself, loaded several pipes with hashish and we smoked some miles. When we left low-rider's car we were naturally traveling together. We got another ride very quickly.

Mike said he was an ex-con. He had been put up for--?18 months--on a drug bust. "Unloaded me my hash and some good bricks. I'm going to Huntington Beach to live with my bro. He has a motel there. Can put me up. Visit my probation officer there."

I didn't ask for details of the bust. Busts have a certain similarity. He spoke easily—not much ego to interfere, but balanced ego is not the only requirement. "Going to stay with bro for a bit, then truck south. Got some primo weed buried on the desert. I'll sell you a share cheap. We can sell together."

It wasn't a sudden offer, we had come to know each other quite well very quickly That happens. I can occasionally get very close to people whose trips are, I may mistakenly think, very different from mine.

You see, Mike had a power. I don't know if you have felt your own powers, but if you have not, suspend your disbelief a moment. Mike could flash a certain sign on the air and get a ride in a minute. He has to pay later, I suppose. Believe that for the length of this short tangent. He also could ask for much more than he needed, as long as this request was not verbalized, and get it.

Example: After our second ride, with some hyper foreigner living in the valley who talked constantly with Mike--I was sitting in the back--and whom neither of us could understand, we were picked up by 4 young freaks from Cour d'Alene. Watching them in the gas station, I felt deep kinship with them. The driver, and owner of the car, was tall and handsome and moved like an athlete. His face was sharply chized. He was a
a leader and incisive, although he still had that internal lack of confidence observable in the untried. He had his chick with him. She had azure eyes, amazingly clean, that had at once the light as well as a hint of the tentative. She was lean. 5'5". Beautiful complexion. She wore cutoffs and a bandana halter which cupped firm, small breasts. A nice smile.

The other 2 were also beautiful. There was Moose. Big, too gangly, clumsy as a puppy, dressed as loosely and covered with colorful patches. There was Poet. Dusky, very slight, 5'6", big, dark eyes, and a rhythm in his speech and movement like he was floating in a medium-sized swimming pool. He was a poet or musician--although he may not have done those things. Confident, he would have been a mesmerizing, hypnotizing, pied-piper sort of stroller. Beautiful, like I said.

So we climb in. They can take us maybe 100 miles, a good ride, before they have to take a big left and head for the Rocky Mountain Rock Concert in Colorado. Remember that rock concert during the summer of '72 in Colorado where some misguided was going to wake a great spirit--Mammon--out of a mountain tarn? That's the one.

Mike starts rapping. This and that. Quickly. He rolls joint after joint. "Well, we've smoked my stash." And we keep on driving. Mike is talking about everything, even the driver, "You semi-straight? Young dude?"

The driver makes no reply.

Mike says to me, "Do you think they can talk?"

"Sure. I heard them earlier." That was true.

Mike says to the driver, "You can talk? How about it?" No response. To me, "Maybe he can't hear, either."

"It's just taking him a while to find his way up out of the mirrors." I knew. It's happened to me. I could identify deeply with what was going
on in the driver's head; in fact, in the heads of the other 3 as well. The lag. The lag of conditioning. Innocence, I suppose. Sleeping awareness. They were stoned.

100 miles passed. "Theres our turn," Moose, in the passenger bucket announced.

"I'm driving this," Larry, the driver, retorted.

(Are you sure?)

Mike and I were both headed for Tustin. Thats 200 miles out of the Cour d'Aleners' way. I had made sure not to project my desires.

Mike, I realized, had laid a nonverbal request on them. Every human is anxious to please, somehow. They were not monied well, I knew. How far would they take us?

I started divorcing Mike. I don't ask for beyond my needs. I had only a light rucksack and $40. $20 of that buried against catastrophe. $20 for 3 months of travel, food, and amusement. I give of myself in return for what I need. It's an austere life, usually cheeze and salami, but many people are willing to share their life-furnishings--an extremely high percentage of people, in an effort to insure security, carry 3fold their actual need--in return for a share of me. Because 3fold furnishings is nearly a fulltime job to carry, many of these people have ignored themselves. Ignored Love, so to speak. Those who cling to furnishings--things--usually have difficulty giving of themselves. They are hungry for Person--a necessary nourishment--and I was hungry for food--also, at this point in my growth, necessary. Sharing got us both high.

I have been on both sides of this transaction. (Let no one starve. No contribution is too small.)

Mike was working on the driver. On them. On me? I accepted a ride
that was not, perhaps, freely given.

I was sitting in the center of the rear. Mike to my left. Poet to my right. The chick must have been uncomfortable sitting on the console with her upper arms inside the bucket seats. I inadvertently touched her bare back. She wordlessly moved ahead—that wordless shuffle we do when our body space is violated or endangered. Mike motioned, 'Keep it up.' What the hell, I'm going to play.

Outside it was dark. Poet was falling asleep. Moose was asleep, snoring like the noise of waves against convoluted rock. Larry was driving, intense in his responsibility and half oblivious to the rest of us. He was also, I could feel, suspicious of something. She was aware, but uncomfortable and bored. Mike was acutely aware, even with his eyes closed. In the dark, in the light of passing cars and freeway lights, he silently watched and approved of my game.

I touched the girl's back with one finger. She jumped. Then relaxed. I touched again. Less of a jump. Soon no jump at all. One finger. Then another, as though a very small man were venturing one step at a time from the secure footing of the driver's bucket seat onto the dangerous—?thin ice—footing of the young woman's back.


Step. Pause. Safe to proceed? Step step step. She didn't move. The game was on.

The little man ran here and there. Each time he approached unexplored territory, his step was tentative, and occasionally he would dart back to a familiar spot on the warm back, frightened by some imaginary danger. Sometimes he romped and gamboled totally uninhibitedly.
Poet, to my right, must have been aware. How could he have missed it? I was using my right arm and hand. He was partially awake when I started. Would he alert his pal, Larry? No. Was there anyone in his head? Why not watch? Why not object? Why not look straight at it, at me, then dismiss the whole game as trivial? No. Instead his half-alive eyes—he was tired—always avoided the sport by the critical 10 degrees—an excellent indication that at some level he was aware. Soon he appeared asleep.

Larry spoke some to the chick. She got him a cigarette and lit it for him without a sparkle of embarrassment. A very together girl, I decided. I've met many girls much more integrated than the boy or young man with whom they consort, although they are treated with very little respect or overt disrespect by that male. Seems a very common condition.

She leaned back.

The right hand man played a while, then dragged a little left hand man into the saga. They both played, one finding some delicate joy over there, then darting to his friend and leading his sometimes doubtful, sometimes shy, sometimes joyous, sometimes courageous—communicated by body-language alone—friend to the discovery, where they could both explore, celebrate, flee, or leisurely discuss the wonder.

The game deteriorated into massage: I massaged sensuously. My hand deeply into the back of her pants, feeling the damp sweat in the crack of her ass. She shifted. Larry looked quickly around, sensing something. But he saw nothing, and quickly returned his eyes to the road. Her cut-offs were looser now.

My left hand was posted a short ways onto her ass. My right reached up under the very thin cover of her halter, into the warm dampness under
her right tit. One finger, back and forth in that sheltered overhang. Yum. I was appropriately detached. I had not objectified our tactile intercourse, but, yes, I do admit mild excitement.

I considered this a delicious mini-adventure. They were white middle-classed semi-liberated youth. Sounds like I really had them pigeonholed, doesn't it? But you understand. They smoked dope. She took long trips with her man—she no longer kept mom informed of every experience. Novices learning the world. Still involved in a lot of ego games. Hanging on to values that had no personal meaning.

Yet she was able to step out of all that and carry on, passively as yet, a finally innocent, but rather intimate tactile conversation in a very delicate environment.

Whew! Stilted words, eh?

In the cover of her loose doe-colored hair I massaged the nape of her neck. The finger man explored her right ear. She wriggled appreciatively.

Larry glanced around. Given time, I would have talked to Larry about it; "Were you aware of anything concrete as I played with her?"

I would certainly like to exaggerate this story. Get a hand into that mousy muff and delicately pummel that no-doubt well-lubricated clitorus, but that would be falsehood and yellow journalism. I've handled the conversation tastefully to this point.

And beside, this episode is a tangent within a tangent—a common deterioration of far too many story tellers, I'm afraid.

Furthermore, the dash lights were far too bright, and the cutoffs offered far too little cover.

Later, somewhat into what Mike called the 'California Grapevine', the girl asked Larry to stop so she could change her clothes. "Damp crotch,"
Mike said. Mike relieved Larry at the wheel, I sat between the front buckets, and the chick, bless her, landed in the center of the back seat. Larry slept, much too fitfully, and I enjoyed the unexpected return of an unasked for friendship. Karma, I suppose.

Slowly we return to the narrative thrust of this tangential example of (Chauvinistic.) selfishness.

On the freeway Mike played car games. He harassed an elderly couple in a light brown car. He would pass them, go very slowly so they would pass, then he would repass them. The game continued far too long. Mike pulled our car over in Tustin, California.

The innocents had taken us much the length of California; many, many miles out of their way. Mike and I climbed out of the car. The 4 changed positions and we talked a few minutes. I looked deeply into the eyes of the young woman. A genuine kinship. A shared experience. A timeless bond. Our relationship had balanced—give and receive. What a mellow memory.

On an impulse I dug deep and gave Larry a 5. A small enough token of thanks, but 25% of my traveling funds. The 5 was small. It must have been the act. Such a deep look of genuine gratitude flashed on his face and I knew we, too, had balanced.

Mike and I said goodbye and set off on foot. Mike suggested doughnuts and chocolate, so we visited a small shop. It was early morning and we purchased a couple of doughnuts apiece. My needs were met.

"Want more?"

"Not really, although I wouldn't refuse a gift."

"I can get more."

"Yeah. How?"
Mike changed the subject. I let it go. I suspected the nonverbal request power was at work.

As we were going out the door, the swarthy cook called Mike back, and handed him a paper sack with a dozen day-old doughnuts.

I was impressed.

But, I'm sorry. Mike, although I will enjoy your gifts--I enjoyed 6 of those doughnuts--I cannot buy what you are selling.

Later, at my friend Jeannie's, Jeannie offered Mike his choice of embroidered patches she was selling. "Mason and I are selling these, but I can spare 1 or 2." Mike sat on the floor and took all of the butterflies he could find on the short stand. Maybe 15.

"Mike, how do you feel, picking all the butterflies?" Somehow these words questioned the whole soul trip.

"Huh? Oh, yeah. I left some. " The only time I called him. The only time, bar one, I saw him act relatively unaware.

He stayed with us several days. I dug out the small amount of hash I had been saving for a special purpose, and smoked some with him. He went out to ball the unhappy married woman next door. He was back shortly, looking freaked out and confused for the second time. I did not get the particulars on that tryst.

As he made ready to leave later, I gave him $15, never expecting to see it or him again, although he promised a key of excellent grass. That'd have been the cheapest key I'd have ever seen.

"You'll never see a sign of that money," Jeannie said.

I looked at Mike, "I know." I was mildly relieved to see him go, but at the door I called him back for a moment and gave him a genuine gift--the rest of my primo, socko, killer hashish. It had been for Jeannie, and
she didn't wish to come that close. Mike looked surprised, then grateful, then he left.

I turned to Jeannie, "He hustled me for the $15."

"I didn't like him much," Jeannie said. I had come to California to ask her to return to Montana and he distracted her.

"He's beautiful," I said. It was true. "But he is also greedy." I hope he outlives that. The primo hash should help.

He manifested greed. Asking for more than his legitimate need.
Verbally or non.

Tomotem once said, "Greed is asking for something you don't want twice."

When I integrate those 2 facets of greed, and understand, I will be wise.

I did not ask the 2 boys, verbally or nonverbally, to take me as far as they had. Perhaps it was a genuine gift--the sort that makes giver and receiver stronger.

Thank you, baseball fans.

I walked into the warm night singing. The stars were low. The yard-lights were bright in the yards of the little farm-like homes. My song disturbed the dogs.

The further out of town I got, the further apart the houses became. They were now farm houses. Main crop: alkali and mesquite.

I found a white spot of alkali a short ways from the road beneath the 'Vernal. Duchesne' sign--no indication of a junction on my map--and did my exercises. In my bag I looked up at the stars and hoped for answers.

20 JUNE:

I got up in the morning with no idea of the hour. I usually arise
late, but on the road I get up when I wake up, or when it gets too hot. The days are longer when I'm hitching, so the hour is no great matter.

I packed up and walked to the road. I stood beside the Duchesne sign. I realized that Duchesne was probably pronounced Do-shane. We have Frenchmen in Missoula named Deschamps; pronounced Day-shaw. I also realized that Marie Dushane, one of Okla Hannali's 3 wives, was probably actually a Duchesne. I felt that was true. (It is true.)

I stood in the sun thinking things like that. I had other pleasant flashes at first, but gradually the lingered erosive thoughts returned; turning south again, "Well, its over now" from a TV. "Burning bridges behind me" from the cowboy's stereotape, and an exploding beer bottle at my feet. Crash! Perhaps I had been shotgunned and this was my afterlife.

I thumbed. The sun was abrasive. No one slowed down. I saw few cars with only one occupant. I saw many cars full of people. Car pools? No matter, a car full is a less wasteful car I compliment Utah on this.

But those full cars were loaded with late 40 and 50 year old folks. Where are the young people? I considered older people and I considered sinking into a world of older and older, then into the world of the dying or dead, then into a world of skeletons. Cheerful stuff.

Let it go. I ain't dead yet.

But as the hours passed, my ability to recall myself tired. I felt the eternity principle turning me smaller. The lathe of heaven. Angels with their bright shrouds thrown back, their heads up, pass by on the highway. Dante, a tour guide, says, "Thats a Parris. He spends eternity standing in a hostile, paranoid rural area on a secondary road in the hot sun. His water always becoming less."

e e cummings, 'To An Athlete Dying Young.'
A man can die at any point. Do what you like. Love your work. Do and Be what is rightly you.

Fritz the Cat dies walking beside the road carrying Winston's empty gascan. Bleached bones.

Beckoning maidens stand up in the sagebrush. The Lorelei. Eternity in Sangsaric shadows.

Phew! Let it go.

Actually, I'm just standing here trying to hitch a ride. Goin to Safford, Arizona to a good, clean outdoor job with a friend.

Can I have a ride? I'll ride with your cows.

Zip.

Can I have a ride? I'll ride in the back of your pickup.

Zoom. Zoom...zoom.

I get rides easily, as a rule. I've heard some speak of waiting patiently a day and a half, but a half day is very long for me. I'm standing here second-guessing nearly as fast as I think. Of 2 minds? 2 minds equal and hostile to one another? A man oscillating between 2 storms?

"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways," James 1:8.

Anais Nin says, "The self...a virtual point between conscious and unconscious which gives equal recognition to both." Jess Lair quotes that in I Ain't Much Baby, But I'm All I've Got.

Yin. Yang. Integration.

"The surest test if a man be sane is if he accepts life whole, as it is," Book of Tao, Chapter 21.

Live happily simultaneously in the eternal myth and in the unique-external universe. Dream + thing = 1.

My manic and depressive things circle and wheel around inside my head

My heart is going down as I wait.

I watch the angry dog across the road straining on his taut chain.

'German Shepard Eats Unknown Hitchhiker. Mrs Erlie Farmer says, "I faggered no harm done; an sides, I cain't call off Killer when hes eatin nohow. But that seedy indigent was standin out there a countin my chickens an lookin in my frontroom winda. He was a gettin soggy in the sun anyways, and I spose if Killer hadn't eaten him when he did, the meat woulda just been wasted."' Roadside carrion.

Black crows, big and heavy as a destructive habit of thought, circle around my head.

I recall, perfectly now, that hurt, retreating aspect Rocket Davey Johnny had taken when I mentioned going south again. Had I turned my back on God's will? I don't understand.

Maybe I should cross to the other side of the road and go home. Crazy?


I'd be happy with salvation. Of course.

Gimme ride. Gimme ride. Preach to me. I'll listen.

Strings, beaded with brightly colored cars, are snaked past me by the Demon Appointment.

Sage hens--disguised vultures--duck out of sight as my gaze seeks confirmation. Black crows pick at the overheated cheese of my flesh.

Slow down. I'll ride with your chickens.
My map says I've taken a wrong turn. This road goes where? Salida is just over there in Colorado. I missed going through Salina, that's luck. Sounds like where Janis Joplin sacrificed a most crucial destiny. Let it slip away. Maybe I would have died there.

Let it go. Janis maybe was stricken by the loss of the highest destiny, the white light or whatever, the loss of which makes the second or third heaven, genuine happiness-heavens compared to where most of us live, seem like hell. No, I don't want to visit Salina. Or was that Salinus? Probably Salina. "lookin for a home/ I hope he finds it." That was the destiny, the trip. Goin home. What a crucial trip to lose. I'll even avoid Salida.

Where was I anyway? Neither here nor

Fuck it. I'm gonna turn around. Go north to Price. Call Bev. Maybe that'll help. Maybe I married my mother. Cry on her shoulder Brought to his knees by the world where these mormons live every day.

They ain't interested in saving me. Hell, they ain't even interested in seeing me. Driving by. 4 or 6 to a car, not even looking at God's seagulls or at His sky. Or His alkali flats. Just starin at Demon Appointment and drivin their blacktop.

I shout at a passing car, "Do you have His Word sealed up in you?"

That'd be crazy if they heard me. Maybe thats the answer and I'm misled. Find one to live with. Get sealed up. Don't smile. Just like that choir of 12 in the Charles Chaplin movie where he preaches David and Goliath.

Iron faces. Waitin for Pie in the Sky

Maybe they're right. Maybe they're right.

Work hard. Copulate to procreate. Give of yourself only to the Lord.
"Hey, I may be a relative of Brigham's!"

--You build a temple?

"Well, no."

--You build a city?

"Not yet, you see."

--No excuses. Ever save a soul?

"Workin on my own. Thats what this."

--At 31? You should be a Saint by now, doing lasting works for the People of God.

"I want to. I will."


What's He teaching me by showing me all these iron faces and children afraid to flash with curiosity? What's the lesson here? What mountain is this?

I cross the road.

Within 5 minutes a pickup stops. "Climb in. I'm headed for Price."

I hear his tapestereo first thing, "...when I found out what she was headed for/ It was too late/ She's come undone."

No! I wanted to stop the pickup. To continue south. Eternity travelin, or workin in the desert is better than the terrible energies of Chaos. "...she found a mountain that was much too high."

She it Him. All those pronouns mean Me. She. My alter ego.

Mountain: any obstacle, which when overcome, leaves the climber stronger.

Mountain: unification with God found through a particular path. The
mountain is the path.

"...and when she found out that she couldn't fly/ it was too late.
Shes come undone. "

Fly: integrated thought. The ability to make accurate, true jumps.
Intuitive leaps. Creativity. True thought.

Pieces flying in all directions. An open system. An exploding universe. Entropy

Outside we passed another hiker going south. Looks bummed out.
Inside I cry stop! I'll follow him. A partner going south. We would have grown to know each other. Seeing each other leap-frogging, hike and ride, stand, ride and pass.

Instead I'm doing endless pointless circles on the desert. Never getting it together enough to get to Safford or to Missoula.

"...shes come undone. "

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the King's horses and
All the King's men
God is the King. The angels. The People. The healing of true community. True Humans.
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.
They did it once? Together--get it together. Horses do the heavy work. Men do the delicate. Humpty was an egg. Eggs hatch. Butterflies. Humpty fell. Get it together

Get it together?

Relentlessly, "...shes come undone. "

You remember them. Nice enough people--as much as you ever get to know them, that is. Piecemeal people. For a day they do this intensly. Then they do that--only getting a start, then losing it as a new impulse comes in. Never getting the whole thing done. You start to speak of it
and they interrupt with overdone enthusiasm, carrying it momentarily with ramifications, applications, translations, refinements, and ?what was it, ah, restatement of the topic, a quick remification and, ah... What was it we were talking about?

Or a sudden silence that was a time in coming.

(We appreciate. .)
"Any man whose words lead precisely to what exists, who never stoops to persuasion." --Wendell Berry, Farming: A Hand Book.

"A man is as good as his Word." Homily.


Undone.

Outside I know how I look: competent.


At center, things must still be beautiful. Others, I believe, see it in me. Who, now? But a spring that never goes dry. Low in dry times, but a spring. I've been close, but never to It. Water over the mountain. A spring on the high mountain's top. Nourishment. Sustenance.

It gets thin.

I see the city Dirty. Concrete. Inhuman. Unliving, except for the speediness, the pointless buzzing up of nerves just before death. Speed up. Buzzzzz. & The running dead. The dashing dead. Stop. Go. Yell.

Speed up. Scream. Shake your fist. Dream of a nuclear war. Wheres God in all this?

Ring around the rosie, play a game of fashion.
All fall down. Button, button, whos got it?

Concrete. Numerous locks on every door Where is God in the city, except in the people who are.

Except. .except... Thats right. He reaches even there. Its getting thinner...see? But I can still see It. Without It there is no life. None. Even in the busiest, He must be. Even in the most dismal concrete desert there must be water Water reaching up like a tree--Tree of Life--in the concrete building. Drink. Without water there is no life. Drink. God's blood. Drink. He sustains, even in the city.

We are bags of walking water. The water is Nature. The walking is God. Drink.

Rivers are the arteries of the land. Streams are the capillaries. The capillary runs to your cold-water walkup.


Selfrighteousness is tempting. An easy suicide.

But even there the milk of human kindness--milk = nourishing solids carried by water, Mother Earth; kindness = kind = kin--can reach through and nourish.

Rain falls on the city, also.

"But man, its a filthy rain."

The rain does not bring the soot. The rain gets to the city streets despite the soot.

"But man, we rainchannel, gutter, and sewer that water."

To parch the earth under the city.

Follow it down. Follow it through the sewers. The water circle. Get to the earth. Down to earth.

Reduced to seeds. Reduced to the strong simples.

Its thin in Chicago. Thin in Salt Lake City.

But, if there is to be life, It must be.

The young man stops his pickup at his job. I thank him and get out. Price. Now what? I walk the sunny streets looking at people and in windows. I'll see how far $20 will take me on the bus.

2 old men stand in the shade sharing words and silences. "Excuse me, can you tell me where the bus station is?"

One of them looks afraid, and stands back. One, the grizzled man with a florescent hunter's cap and the ear flaps down, steps to me and says, "Eh?"

The clean shaven, fearful one, mouths to me, "Hes hard of hearing."

"Where," I say loudly, "is the bus station?"

"Speak up," he smiles, "I can't hear too well."

"Where is the bus station?" I fairly shout.

"Bus station?" Then he reached out and held me by the shoulder. I was amazed by this act of real acceptance. He looked me in the eye, and stuttered words to me.

I had previously thought mild nerves and a stumbling tongue are 2 symptoms of the rampant deterioration experienced by those who run from life in fear. But this old man was not afraid. He was gentle and he reached out to me.

Is that where I am going? I blame no one but myself for where I am and for who I am.
Maybe I have some thanking to do for something I am.

I walked to the bus station. I called Bev and told her how bummed I was. I told her I would see if I could escape Utah with $20 worth of bus.

$10 rolled tightly in my waterproof match container, is Emergency Only money Not part of the $20.

Bev said, "Danny got to town last night. He says McPhar pays travel expenses for most employees. Arlo should have offered bus or train fare."

"Hmmm," I said, "I'll call Arlo if I can."

I called the Desert Inn in Safford. No word. I called the Desert Inn in Tucson and in Phoenix. No reservation for a Parris Young or an Arlo Furniss in either place.

I walked to the elderly woman behind the ticket window. She was watching a TV quiz show. She walked to the window, "Can I help you, Sugar?"

"How close can I get to Phoenix for $20?"

She figured from charts. Panguitch, $18, I think. Green River, $10.50. Grand Junction, $14 or so. As I noted these possibilities, I looked at the clock.

9 o'clock. I had spent that fruitless eternity thumbing before most people had gone to work. Only farmers were out that early. I had not given them a real chance. Tourists, especially heads, travel around later. I frowned, "When's the next bus south?"

"They come into town about 2. Leave at 2:20."

5 hours. "Could I buy a ticket to Grand Junction now," Grand Junction, I'll hop a freight, "and, if I think of something else, could I cash the ticket in?"
"Well, dear, I could make up the ticket and you could pay for it just before you got on the bus." She looked at the boy painting the ceiling white. It was the first coat and the roller strokes showed plainly.

"Better yet," she looked back at me, facing me with her handsome but rather overfed face and silver hair, "buy your ticket just after the bus arrives. There's always plenty of time."

I told her my dilemma--no rides, deadline--by way of conversation. She listened and spoke quite openly. Despite her coarse features, the kind of face and body I imagine hell is crowded with, she had humanity about her. Everybody's mother, Dearie.


Maybe I should make a hitching sign out of a cardboard box and use those red letters: DO NOT CRUSH or maybe HANDLE WITH CARE. And underneath that print: TUCSON.

I stand in front of a new Supersave on the south end of town. 'Grand Opening, July 22.' Weird Bob's birthday I know I'd find cardboard behind a new market. I cut one out. I walked to the door of the market and found it open. I went inside to borrow a magic marker. They would probably donate a little ink. The Supersave in Missoula is practically a personal type of community store. A smiling understudy cashier gave me her grease pencil, then returned to her cash register practice. I started my sign. A few seconds later the manager very rudely showed me out--afraid, he said, I would hurt myself and sue him. He was so anxious for success that he
sacrificed his first customer. It was largely my mistake for feeling that because I knew one Supersave almost personally—the checkers and the managers—that some other Supersave would recognize me. There are friendly markets, but no friendly chains.

I was pissed. I walked to the highway without looking back. I thought the very busy people inside had leered at me because I had asked for cardboard and grease pencil I had not worked for. Except that cashier. She still had time for a genuine smile. I thought I saw powerful leers on the men in the parking lot who were planting cement, painting lines, and moving those little concrete tire dividers around. "What do you expect? You don't work."

And I was pissed. He had some reason, but no heart. (A judgment, Parris.) He was so anxious for success that he sacrificed his first customer. (An attributed crime.) He is so anxious for everything to go well, that those little things will drive him to ulcers and to cold, impotent fury. (Punishment.)

No. I must not attack him. Must not condemn him. Delicious daydream vengeance getting thinner—magic lantern show in gathering daylight. Anger flashes back at me. I once became so angry with my sister that I wanted to punch her out. Instead, I grabbed my packsack with both hands and shook it at her. A piece of rusty barbed wire that I had picked up on a trail and later used as a field expedient frame pin, just broke the skin in the little pit between thumb and forefinger. It didn't bleed much. It hurt badly and I knew immediately that it was infected. I tried to work blood out of the little hole. As I returned to Missoula from Seattle, where I had seen her, my hand began to swell. Larger. 2 days later I could not use it. "It'll go down." It didn't. The swelling
and discoloration reached my wrist. My hand hurt badly I sterilized the needle and lanced the hole. Easy No sensation at the surface. Drained. Better. Then the swelling began in my elbow. I rushed, now 5 or 6 days late, to the emergency room of St. Pat's. In the operating room the doctor lanced my hand and I felt satisfaction at the explosion of creamy blood that dirtied the table and the doctor's gown and the floor 6 feet away.

The sudden absence of pressure taught me the pain I had been living with.

"Man, what happen to you hand, man?"

"A viper bit me."

If I had hit her, I would have maybe lost an arm. Or worse, I might have lost a sister.

No. It's not my place to curse anyone. Punishment is a personal thing. The usual reason for punishment is the satisfaction of the punisher.

If I knew which car was his I would piss on his engine...smoky, adolescents' secret vengeance. (Evaporate. )

A guilty man punishes himself. I need not. We need not. They need not punish one another for crimes against God.

Social crimes--lets see. .

Standing, thumb out, or sitting against my pack waiting for my ride, I spaced out on Justice. The day is clear, warm and bright. The passing cars are like toys in their bright enamels. Justice...

...lemme see, its only crimes against man's law that man must concern himself with. But man's laws don't necessarily reflect what's right or wrong, good or evil. In fact, any law designed to protect me against myself is usurping my inalienable rights. Marijuana laws. I've laid down
hashish without much trouble. But I can't think of many who have quit cigarettes.

My anger evaporated into mental rambling, in transforming my personal experience into public abstractions.

Why should society take it upon itself to do a man's punishing for him? Some crime, I am sure, is committed to secure punishment. Some is committed to establish parameters. Seventh graders, for instance. Some commit crimes because of who they are. I suspect some crimes are not absolute. Some people condemn nudity. They plunge into lust or fantasy. Looking upon a nude is a crime--for them--not for the nude, not for those who look upon a 'naked Martha' as a Martha without clothes.

Some crimes are committed because the laws are unjust. I remember my surprise discovering that some rivers are illegal to run without a permit, a guide, or an experienced boatman. Good sense to know what you are doing--but a law? It struck me that this law, for example, FACILITATES THE MAKING OF MONEY. Organizations. Paid guides. Guide training; formal. Huge rubber boats floating down the Salmon River. Old, grey-haired folk waving handkerchieves from the redwood benches. The paid trip.

Laws and the making of money. 'No Overnight Camping.' Strange that the theft of money, really quite an exciting and harmless activity--provided, that is, no one is injured or killed--is so greatly punished. Often beyond other crimes.

A safecracker is an artist and earns my appreciation. He harms no one. He inhibits the accumulation of too much money in one place. The embezzler, a bit wormy. working in the shadows, is afraid to assert himself, but his work can be art, too. The pickpocket; I might consider him an artist and essentially human. The jewel thief; can be a classic. A man
of manners, personal power, and artistry. The cat burglar--dangerous, there is a chance of physical violence--but also a chance of art.


Now, however, my irreverent mind flashes a scene: rattlesnakes. Rattlesnake bite is really not poisonous. It is actually quite pleasant. A deep euphoria results with nearly real cosmic fantasies and visions of heroic deeds. Hippies pack picnic lunches and stroll to the badlands to seek rattlesnake dens. Snakebit, they lay on their backs and watch sky television, as the 'poison'--named by those who fear what they might do or see if uninhibited, if their huge unconscious were released temporarily--works its sorcery on maya. The legislature: Governor Dim Badcork, (D) Silverbag Co., "Gentlemen, I have encouraged the introduction of this bill. SB101 is necessary for the protection of Montana citizens. These simple 24 paragraphs of Section IX before you list the conditions under which, and only under which, rattlesnake bite is considered legal." Legal snake-bite? Yes, legal when administered by a paid guide who is approved by the FDA, SPCA, SRA, ERA, FHA, and CIA; or administered by a doctor, priest, established business man--in commercially available superdilute dosages at, ahem, very high prices.

Rattlesnake bites become illegal. Iron-eyed nurses look down upon me in the hospital. They are quietly selfrighteous and indignant. They are morally offended. I am treated like scum. They do their duty, but their lips quiver with righteousness. I repeat again and again, "It was an accident. Honest. I was climbing a bank and when my hand went over the top it bit me. Honest. It was an accident. It was an accident. I
didn't see it. It was an accident." In addition to hospital costs, I am saddled with a police record.

I look up from my vision. Still in Price . Price? What's the Price? Of what? Hot. Dry. No cars. How late is it? As I look up the road a stronger vision comes: Tomotem stands before the fire. We are still. He speaks,

\textit{OH MY PEOPLE}
\textit{THERE ARE JUST LAWS AND UNJUST LAWS.}
\textit{THERE ARE GOD'S LAWS AND THERE ARE MAN'S LAWS. GOD'S LAWS ARE NATURAL AND PUNISHMENT OR PARDON IS GIVEN QUICKLY TO ALL ALIKE. THIS IS JUSTICE. OUR LAW-GIVERS WOULD EMULATE THIS. YET GOD HAS NO UNJUST LAWS. GOD'S LAWS ARE FEW, AND THEY ARE ADEQUATE UNTO THE ALL. OUR LAW-GIVERS WOULD EMULATE THIS. YET GOD GRANTS FREEDOM. GOD'S LAWS HAVE NO NEED OF MAN'S WORDS. OUR LAW-GIVERS WOULD GIVE MAN'S WORDS TO GOD'S LAWS. THIS IS TRUE LAW-GIVING. YET MAN'S IGNORANCE IS OF MAN'S LAWS ALONE. MAN IS IGNORANT ONLY OF UNJUST LAWS.}

Broken. A car slowed down, then accelerated again. The daydream vision is broken. I wonder why I wake at certain times and end or interrupt dreams at certain points. Occasionally I am waked by someone and the interruption is not chance.

I try to recall the Indian before the fire, but it's not right. Instead I recall Mosiah 29:12, "Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just."

I had felt something big was going to be said in the vision. Or perhaps it was only the tone of statement. It seemed important. If a voice can state strongly, 'Oh my people' and cause not laughter, but attention, then that voice is stately, and certainly close to truth.

The tone of "Four score and seven years ago . . ." is certainly stately, but try it in front of the Chamber of Commerce or the School Board.

I wonder if the native Indian tongue had questions. Inflection of
the interrogative.

I use questions a lot. It seems to be a patter of reflection with me. Perhaps even a weakness of thought.


Questions.

I believe in poetic justice. It is just. Karmâ. Personalize Heaven. Personalize Hell. You know that that is righteous. I see it all about me. A liar is not believed, even if he occasionally tells the truth. Cry wolf.

He who lives by the sword dies by the sword.

He who takes from the earth is finally taken by the earth.

Ashes to ashes.

Then what about Skinner and his pet box? Question: What did that monkey/dove/rat do that required a laboratory death? Living dissection, pressing the bar for pellets. Crossing the electric maze.

What's Skinner's karma like? His life? His afterlife? Does he continue his well-rationalized torture and scientific interference? or does he become the subject?

Maybe Skinner is the true villain of the scientific way of thought. Let's record his experiments in stone so no living thing need be subjected to such science again.

Justice. Justice. So much that could be said. So much weeding.

I turn toward town. The bus station. As I walk I think. Panguitch would be perfect. That would get me back on the main passage where the people might be traveling. This route is a local. It is no direct route anywhere. Why did I take this route? I usually know where I'm going. An error such as this gives me pause.

Possibilities: 1. Conditioned. This is the direction of those I
have encountered.

2. Disintegration. Mind carefully revolting against me. Aiming me toward complete inertia. Death.


I relaxed my analyses. Let the thoughts arise naturally.

Hello. Hello?

A free mind often does not care for the questions the hysterically conditioned mind asks. Hello? Hello?

Nothing like an answer

Hmmm What was the question?

Oh yeah, why am I bummed out? Why does all I do as long as I'm headed south lead to gloom? Maybe I'm headed for death.

I remember a quote from somewhere, "Man's death is not necessarily tragic. Tragedy is the death of something inside a man while he yet lives."

I think that's from a 'Silver Serfer' comic book.

The soul-death. That's my concern.

"I'd like a ticket to Panguitch."

"That bus left an hour ago."

I looked at the clock. 12:40. Then at the chalkboard schedule. Sure enough. I hadn't seen it before because I wanted to go to Grand Junction. But just to miss . . .

It seemed circumstances conspired against me.

I bought a ticket to Grand Junction. I'll catch a train there. I sat down with Lafferty's Okla Hannali.

A grand book. It is largely historical, but it has the gift of the indian rhythm. I am reminded of the grandfathers gathered in council;
North speaks, his voice rich with wind and the time when the waters rest. Each speaks in his turn as the pipe is passed. Now South speaks. We face him always. So the story grows.

The whiteman knows the world changes with whoever holds the mirror. In council, each holds the mirror in turn. Okla Hannali, written by Lafferty alone, contains several voices; one, a whiteman historian reporting dates, names, places and occurrences, second—in excellent contrast—a palyful indian storyteller who weaves a fabric of mundane fact, archetype, and pure fancy, and also has the ability to relate history/adventures. There are other voices in the work. There is no difficulty separating the play from the fact.

I have no doubt that R. A. Lafferty has close kinship with our nut-brown brothers. Okla reflects the best representation of indian consciousness I know of, although it might be proper to say the best representation of the whiteman consciousness interacting with the indian consciousness. 

(Communication.)

I looked up from my book as an older indian came into the bus depot. I want him in my story. He wore a well-cared-for brown felt cowboy hat, clean yellow shirt, western ribbon tie clasp with silver and turquoise, black cowboy boots, and pressed bluejeans. I don't know how I know this—he was going to visit his daughter in Grand Junction.

He was of indeterminate age. Just elderly. His face was carefully expressionless—a face for strangers. But I could see that his face was still fluid enough to reflect a continuing life. He was shy—a characteristic of the defeated or the understanding sensitives. I know he can follow in an insensitive world of hurry, strangers, and acquaintances. Quiet. Headdown. But I also know he can not be distracted; first quietly
assenting, but doing his will, then, if I were to insist, he would grow stronger, striding off to do his will, and if it came eye-to-eye, his soul would be immoveable. Do or die.

I want him in my movie.

Fantasy maybe: He quietly sits behind me. I am reading Okla when he speaks so quietly that I am not interrupted. So strongly.

"Parris."

I am startled that he knows my name.

Once, at the Missoula County Fair, Pat Hayes was dressed as Woodsy Owl. Woodsy Owl walked right up to me and said, "Hi, Parris." I was temporarily--1/30th of a second--marveled, then I recognized the voice in retrospect. "Oh yeah," as I remembered that he had mentioned his job 2 weeks earlier. I had been slow enough to experience a shock. He turned to my 6-year-old daughter and said, "Hello, Ashley." She stood her ground, no shock at being named, and said, "Hello, Woodsy Owl."

Now I read, and heed the Indian's voice, "Look at me."

I do. His eyes are deep and unafraid. We communicate without words. No one notices. I am face-to-face with my own fears and guilt. I want to look away, and I know if I do that act might kill me. I have run from love before.

He tells me some secret. A plan for my escape.

The communication ends.

I return to my book. My consciousness wandering. The vast majority of myself a garden for his seed.

If I asked him aloud, he would be shy and deny it. We are bound by a common experience.

I want to look assured. So what do I do with assurance? I walk
outside with a firm step. 'Look at me. I know what I'm doing.' I was bored. I wanted to move. To go outside to look for God. I suppose my ego was serving me, but such a strange game.

Outside I enjoyed the sun, watched craftsmen assembling pickup canopies, studied the railroad tracks.

Long at the sky

Back inside I was tempted to be bored--anyone with patience in a bus terminal is a lowlife, but I came to myself, relatively, and decided a time of stillness was in order.

It seemed a short wait. 2 buses stopped in front. They emptied and I moved my pack outside.

I was pleased to see the Indian had followed me. Had I inspired his confidence? An unconscious guide through the whiteman's mechanized carnival?

"This is a stopover. Buses will load in about 30 minutes."

I put down my backpack and stood in the sun. Some guide. The Indian quietly went back into the shaded terminal.

I wandered around for 30 minutes. Stood in the sun. Refilled my canteen.

Ah, sweet seeds of Montana water. Missoula in my mouth. An inverted cool blue tree in my body, diluting the hot red blood.

The Indian sat behind me on the bus. I pretended that he and I were travelers of kin. Outside was our mutual land. These others, whites, buzzing with petty words, were dim reflections of the real persons inside them, and that inner person is aware that each has a cosmic link with All.

Oh yeah, there was a family traveling from Price to Grand Junction, this 20th day of June, 1974, with whole children. The parents were alive. Playful. Curious. Loving. They gave life to the bus trip.

Was that where I was headed?

These people were hallucinations to distract me as the desert became hotter and drier. One by one they would disappear, until I was alone, stumbling pointlessly under an unmoving sun directly overhead.

"Where are you going?"

"South. Arizona."

"That's going the wrong direction this time of year, ain't it?"

Why?

Oh, to learn a language that has no form for questions.

To experience, become, to be.

How did I come to deterioration shit. What am I doing? That family, they have genuine love. They occasionally say original things. That cannot be part of maya. Maybe if I listened to them, Love would speak to me. Tell me what I need to know to live through this. Learn not to take my universe into darkness.

The actual job, there can be no evil in that. The evil comes from what? Denying myself? How? Denying my own feelings? How do I feel about this? ?

Like I'm slipping into darkness. A bad trip. I must act with knowledge to avoid the pitfalls.

Memory: I am fishing a creek in Montana. All day below the bridge I fished hard. 2 very small trout. And such beautiful water Must be overfished.

As I cross the brush to the road I think, "These tall, opaque bushes,
the Idaho fesque tossocks, the blue grass. Excellent place to very
suddenly come too close to a moose, or to come suddenly between a mother
bear and her cub. And where's a tree to climb?"

I hear claws on pine bark. I look from one of the openings. At
25 yards south, a mother bear follows her cub up a tree.

Whew! I am impressed. I walk casually away.

As I approach a stand of young pine on drier ground, 100 yards east,
I turn and see the mother slowly turn and regard me. Deliberate.

I turn my back to her and leave.

It's a long way back to camp.

No one has had luck. Not a meal among us.

Grey-haired Earl says, "Up there," pointing upstream, to the north,
"is good water. Big fish. 5 miles. It's a good trail, but the dust is
4 inches thick. Each foot makes a mushroom cloud." He smiles and drags
on his pipe, his eyes bright with mischief. He brought us up here. No
fish here. "Big fish," he argues against my silent resistance. "You
go 5 miles, around a big bend, until you look back at that lookout."
He points at the bright speck on the mountain, then points south, "At
about that angle." He knows something. "I would go, but I walk slow.
This gout." His legs are stiff from the cold water and from the age he
has decided to carry. His tennis shoes are knife-split to allow his
swelling comfort. "I was up there a while ago. Lots of big fish, but I
captured none. My timing was off," that roguish glint, "and I had to leave
early."

There was sunlight, but not much. 5 miles is a long hour Jim,
intelligent but speedy, says, "I'll go."

What the hell, "So will I. Anyone else?" No.

We set off. Jim is a very rapid walker I talk science--Jim works
for Shell Oil as an engineer; he is trying to get the residual oil from the porous rock in the many wells left after the lesser percentage of free oil is so easily and cheaply drawn off--and try to lead us into talk about love and consciousness. I don't notice the miles.

"I'll start here," he says.

"OK. I'll go a bit higher" I do. Crush brush. Dark blue water. Clean. It's late summer. Below, we parked our cars in tall green grass. In one day the grass had become flat and brown.

Flip the fly out. The top of the hole. Here the clear water turns blue and the water deepens as a rock, covered with bright white logs and highwater flotsam, pushes the stream a little uphill and north. It is beau

Wham!

Hardly any elapsed time. A good fish. Silver in the blue water. Pink in the silver. I'm not going to be able to land him. I had foolishly started from the top of the rock, instead of on the other side of the stream where I had landing water.

A second has passed. The fish is big and strong and hard. A big rainbow. I'll try to . . .

Gone.

Just like that my fly shoots into the air. The tension gone. I am wiped out. The sudden relaxation. Intensity. Solitude.

Fishing is sexual. Sudden climax. Even death.

I sit down on the log and check my fly--sexual?--and my leader and my knots. All OK. I get a drink of the cold water.

I wade the icy water that hurts at first.

I know that once a big fish hits hard and tastes steel, there's no sense trying him again for a long time. Every fisherman knows this. I
try again.

From the other side I flip my #8 into the clear water. The current carries the fly over the blue and along the front of the logs.

Sing!

Oh beautiful. The same trout, I am certain. He fights hard. I land him. I kill him quickly by striking him sharply against a rock. Break his neck. Then I lift him with both hands to the sun, "Thank You."

Slowly I clean him. It's a ceremony. This may be feeding time, but the ceremony is part of my celebration. Guts not into the crystal water, but onto the rocks. They will be gone in 2 days.

The trout is nearly 2 pounds. A beautiful rainbow. Not big, but the biggest I had seen in 2 days. Beautiful. I couldn't ask for more.

I try the next hole.

Splash!

I land a pound or a pound-and-a-half of native cutthroat. Side-by-side in my creel. Contrast in color. So lovely. I am touched.

I will not try this hole 2 passes. Better to go on. No sense emptying a hole and besides, I regard the sun, there's not much time left.

4 or 5 passes on the next hole. Another trout. 14"

This is lovely. Too lovely.

I round a bend in golden gravel. A 2-year-old bear is very slowly coming out of the stream. He sensed me earlier than I saw him. So carefully he steps, trying as hard as he can to be invisible.

3 bears in one day That's a sign.

I fish downstream. I release several trout which do not reach from the base of my rod to the top of the cork grip. 13"

It's just swell.

3 good trout in such a short time that the first has hardly begun to
change color. I look at the sun. Still a little time.

I travel faster, wanting to see more of the creek. Hitting good holes.

5 fish now. All from 13 to 15 inches. Enough for a good feed. Maybe I should quit.

6.

Then I notice. There is less water. Less water. Less water downstream.

Flashes of conscience. I have enough to feed my family.

Yeah, but we can freeze 'em.

I've had an excellent experience.

Yeah, but each one is a new thrill. Excitement.

They've been so easy to hook.

Yeah, they're so hungry.

.. Well, maybe one more.

7.

Less water. The stream between holes is very small. Smaller than it is down at the camp. How can this be? I've seen streams run into the ground, but this one didn't. It runs heavy into the Blackfoot River.

Now quit. Am I being greedy? I have enough. Fish. Enjoyment.

---Guilt? Such a whiteman. Catch another. And another. We ain't seen fishing like this in a year.

I'll go to the next hole. Is the Goddess Magiea becoming the Goddess Narkos? Cast.

8.

I look at the water. There is less. Deep holes strung with a thin thread of water. I know soon there will be only pools. Then shallow pools. Then nothing.
Fishing will die for me. Greed will kill it for me. I will kill it for me.

My feet drag me toward the next beautiful hole.

---Yeah, just try this hole.

But

Vision of a dry stream bed. Stinking fish in the setting sun. A world dying because I fished it dry.

"Bullshit."

I turned to the trail, "Bullshit."

Greed. "Jim Ogg, the Game Hog," a song Dick Bureson used to sing, came to me. I don't know if there is a Jim Ogg. Maybe I am he.

8. That's plenty. Could have killed fishing as a joy. As living. I have little enough left as it is. Strange, the forces I put upon myself to make me live my convictions. "OK, OK, I get the message," to the sun.

Already I feel relieved. What'll they say back at the camp? "Did you see that? That damned stream nearly dried up in an afternoon. Never seen the like. Never seen the like."

As I walked I felt better and better. I had not fished very long. I had caught 8 good fish. My creel was falling apart as I walked. I quit before I ate the world. Not bad. Not bad.

What a weird experience. The eye of the beholder.

Impulse.

For no reason, I stop on the trail. I look hard. I listen deeply. Nothing. Still I wait. 30 seconds in silence. I relax my throat so my breath makes no sound. I disallow that soft rocking that my heart usually creates in my body. Center. A full minute. All I can hear is wind high in the p-pine. I can hear the stream, although it is some distance away. A minute and a half I wait.

He looks. Still doesn't see me. I wait until he's a little closer. He's not headed in the diagonal for me, but straight toward the trail. "Hallo!" I call again.

He sees me, turn, and comes up to me. We start down the trail.

"... meeting on a stretch of trail 5 or 6 miles long ...," he shook his head.

"I was sure I was quitting some time before you would," I admit, wondering why I had waited when I had not been conscious of any unusual sensual date, except for that impulse. A minute and a half is a long time.

"Quite a coincidence."

Full true, although I know not how, the words leap from my mouth, "You don't believe this is a coincidence," realizing simultaneously the rap about consciousness had come full circle.

"Well," Jim says, his overt response to my probe being only an unusually long pause, "I couldn't hear over the stream. I couldn't see through the trees. I just happen to come up on the trail (Exactly.) as you are passing. Looks like coincidence." But he will think before he dismisses the incident.

"Trees. Noise," musingly, then brighter, "And you know, I walked a long ways downstream from where I left you on the trail, too. Where I first reached the streambed there was no water."

"It's an intermittent stream.

I'm back in the bus. Why am I having such a negative time on this trip? Greed? Will I enjoy the job too much? Memory of the dream of fucking in the motels. What else? Am I doing what I really think is right?

I escape into the book and finish it. Okla Hannali dies well.
I look out the window, think, "Oh Lord, guide me."

I realize I'm a mess. Going and coming on myself. Weird Bob back in Missoula and I had spoken of belief. I said, "I know if I can suspend my dis-belief, and truly believe, I can change myself and my world. But now," I shook my head, "I am distracted before I get where I must go. Maya gets me. The carnival sideshow--'sideshow', hmm at the side of the highroad, beside the point--attracts me with lights, flesh, music, loud noises, thrills, rides, and all I have to do is coast along with the crowd. A few coppers here. A dime there. Pretty soon I am spent."

Bob listens very well.

"I've had chances. The Girl with the Buddha Eye almost led me back to Love. I've known a saint who had me on the highway a long time. But I slip, then I fall. I walk toward the road again, tearing myself from the crowd and I hear the barker behind me shouting, 'Come and see it! Come and see her!' Tortuous Tanya, the Snake Lady with the Terrorizing Twat!' What? I stop in my tracks. I listen. 'She's the Princess of Pussy. The Queen of Quim and Come. The Zenith of Tight, Slick Snatch. So seductive she seduces virgins while screwing grapes. Ever seen a grape come? Ever seen a grape juice? Then come! Come! Come and see her! See her and come!' I turn around to hear it better. I see the tent. It's covered with such pictures. They are changing, writhing, seductive. No! I turn my back, but I do not go on. 'Come! Come! She can raise the dead. She can make wet noodles stand on end! Bring a friend, we guarantee you a fitting climax! Tortuous Tanya and her Vacuum Vagina. She'll suck you right in. Yessah, yessah, so much blood in that old member you'll get off just carrying it around! Sticky pants for the men! All you need do is watch. And if you participate . . . whoeee!' Then a lower voice, 'And for you ladies, orgasms like your old man never . . . ' Loud again,
'Hubbah, rubbah, hubbah!' I find myself in the crowd moving closer. Don't look at the pictures. Resist. I see ironmouthed old ladies and men with cruel eyes hitting their leering impish children alongside the head with purses and canes. 'That's filth, you filthy little boy.' They beat him until he squalls. It is my conditioning to dislike and do the opposite of these stiffnecked puppets, to resist my own sense that this sideshow is filth. Attraction. Conditioning. What chance do I have? A loud noise above me and I look up startled. As my eye falls upon the picture I realize that the noise was a bait. The writhing princess of reaching pussy. She opens her manskin robe and waves of damp heat, you know that smell, reach my nose and brush my face, and actually reach between the buttons of my jeans. I have a hardon that aches so good. No! It's getting me. I turn my back. The crowd presses me. But I leap over their heads. Who has called me? There is someone I know and trust. I run toward the highway. Then I stop. From behind me comes such deliciously abandoned moaning. Such screams of sensual stimulation. I don't have to turn to look at the crowd of naked bodies orgiastic in the grass before her. I'm nearly facing it in my mind. But I can't turn back to her Bob," I shake my head as I look upon him, 'I can't fall again. I'm almost out of things to believe in."

Bob smiles, "Try disbelief."

"Disbelief? You mean . . ah . . turn off the universe one thing at a time . . disbelief until there's nothing left!"

"That's right. Go to the void the other way. The black void. Infinite disbelief. Then start over, 'Let there be light.'"

"Some idea, but I believe my way is other than that."

"Not yours maybe."

He might be right. Some souls' trips might be more difficult than
mine. But I would rather not see how.

Weird Bob, I reflect, it's only 2 days until his birthday. 22 July. A Cancer. We had planned a big party at the ranch. Kegs of beer. Grass. Out by the pond under the big p-pine and fir. The kids'd play in the woods and water. The people, folks we both knew and trusted, would drink at the 5 gallons of wine, make their words and music, eat their beef spitted over an open fire, eat their mushrooms, drink their beer.

It's simply how you feel. Eating acid can be a religious experience, lifting you toward God. You must be strong inside to avoid the fears, angers, and insanities. It can start you riding like training wheels. Show you you've lied to yourself, perhaps, by listening too long to those (Voices.) who do not love.

Or it can be the terminal freakout. Sucked into the insanities by the lust, greed, anger and fear that you think, temporarily maybe, you are. The overtrained, the conditioned, the puppet whose spirit has been broken or put on ice.

Almost anything can lead you to center. Tantra Yoga. It depends on how you really experience it. When you reach center though, give it all up. Tantra Yoga. Acid. Whatever. Cause, if you're attached to it I can say the words. That's easy. But can I follow the flow of life? God's way?

My stomach quakes as I look out the window at the desert greyhounding by.

Maybe this flight is an escape from Missoula. Maybe I'm running from Love again. Maybe the party was a gathering of angels who would lead me to a different cure, but help me save myself and give me a place, albeit humble, on earth.

**Fantasy:**
SUDDENLY TRUMPET THE TREES!!! TA TA! TA TA!

WHEREAS--A FLASH OF LIGHT
    A MOMENT OF PAIN AND DISCOVERED STRENGTH
    A TRIUMPH OF LOVE AND KARMA
    HAVE OCCURED

WHEREAS--ZAP!
    PARRIS IS REALIZED
    PARRIS IS A RENEWED MAN

IT IS RESOLVED--RESOLVED!

AND

WE, THE PEOPLE, REJOICE!!! !!! !!!

ZAT GREED?

TO WANT TO BE MYSELF? TO WANT TO DO GOD'S WILL?

I AM AFRAID I MAY RESIST.

MAYBE IT'S THE SIDESHOW. MAYBE INSTEAD OF ANGELS IT'S A GATHERING OF
SLAVES OF THE EGO. 'JOIN OUR CLUB. YOU NEED MERELY DO MY BIDDING.' THEY
ALL JOIN IN, 'YEAH, PARRIS, JOIN US, OK?' 'HUBBAH, HUBBAH, HUBBAH.'

SIGN NOTHING. I'M SIGNING NOTHING. COMMITMENT?

DOUBT. DISEASE OF THE HEART, MIND, AND SOUL.

DOUBT.

---YEAH, DON'T YOU NEED DOUBT THOUGH? BE SURE. YOU KNOW YOU CAN
HUSTLE YOURSELF. DON'T TRUST YOURSELF UNTIL YOU KNOW BOTH SIDES.
---It's not that serious. Some folks doubt. Hooked on the needle. Hooked on an 8 to 5 that's killing them bit by bit with some fuzzy promise of retirement on $400 or more a month. Hooked on gasoline. Hooked on coal. Hooked on power. Hooked on TV. Hooked on sugar. Plus.

---But doubt is

(It's the sideshow again.)

Doubt is dust on the soul. Knowing is following the highest impulse the first time it occurs. Strength is following the highest impulse next time. Salvation is following the highest impulse at all. We are born knowing. The Word may be the message carried from God to us coded in 3D in a double helix that can spin out a story of man, mongoose, mako shark, or muddauber.

The voices play inside me.

I've been getting another message about all this.

Wordless.

By God, I'm thinking hard about going home yet.

Is my going south again a terrible mistake? I see desert outside my window. I wish I was cleaner. My J. C. would then be able to adjust my course at every wavering.

"Go north, Parris," He might say, without human language if He wishes.

I want to know. I thought possibly, like the rattler episode, He wanted me to back up and go around. I suppose that could be a rationalization. A self-lie. But maybe is OK. Maybe after a change, I am blind as a newly molted rattler.

All Bev says is, "Go ahead," thinking she tells me what I want to do. One level of that is true. But more deeply? Remember Rocket Davey Johnny

The voice of death can lie. Does often.
J. C. does not. Need not.

Oh, I would love to learn that language. Hope. I must learn the language or I am going to die, I suppose.

Okla Hannali met death full on.

Guilt? Disappointment? Disappointment means I was expecting/asking for something.

I shake my leonine head. Whew! Enough of that. Looking at the spaces. Spiraling down into the quicksand of chaos.

Be Here Now.

Why be lost in the moral consequences of every thought and act? Forever inactive. Catatonia. At an opportunity: don't act--then think 'guilt' about missing a chance of love and destiny; act--then feel guilt about sin and error Sounds like a dead end. A catatonic?

I know I am not that bad. Not that sinful. Accept what I have and build with that. Consider this as IT. This is God. Guilt has nibbled awareness to here. Accept Here. Put away the dissatisfaction and numbing remorse for what might have been and focus on Now.

Death can and will lie to you, to me. I might be herded toward Death by my very fear of Death. Cul-de-sac.

Ah . . . there's the door . . . The very fact that Death does lie to me. 'You're gonna die,' it said through Rob Walker's mouth. But I had an excellent chance to make that into bullshit. I could have won. And Death would have lost it. Lies. Through lies. Death, being what it is, must lose.

We love through rigorous self-truth. We die through self-deception.

Wish I had a perfect mirror and knew each time I looked it would show me Absolute Truth, and knew that it'd be hard, but that I could change. Accept my condition entirely. Learn to love it in spite of the imperfections.
And I could then change a little at a time.

Remember those Greek tales. Antigone. Someplace a line about the remorse men bring upon themselves when they ask and receive the knowledge of themselves, but are denied the ability to change. To improve.

Nearly root-level self-deception.

I think the Greeks should be properly attributed with their greatest contribution to the mind of western man--

Rationalization.

Death can and will die. Death can and does rationalize its goal.

I know a man can change.

**Memory:** Highschool basketball practice. I had to leave early to catch a rural bus. Bluejeans hanging in the showerroom. Pockets. Money. Easy, as I could hear anyone coming a great distance. Perfect crime. I knew some 7th and 8th graders were doing the same. Cover for me. But who?

Wow! Money, you know. $5 for the illicit beer on Saturday night. $2 for gas for crusin the drag. 50¢ a day for candy. It was simply swell.

It got easier and easier. "Say man, this is getting habitual. I'd best quit." Talked internally like that for a week.

Next week I tried to quit. Skipped a day. Did it again.

Realized I must quit. Realized it would be hard as nearly impossible. Some fear. What if I can't quit? Hmm means candy, pop, beer, and gas until I'm caught and have to apologize.

I've got to do it. Concentrate. Sweat.

I did it.

For a week the temptation lasted. My body would start to walk over
to Jack Lincoln's jeans. He was monied. Always more than his needs, I thought.

No, by God, no. I stopped.

Lo! Not thieving got easier, too. A week. 2 weeks.

No more temptation. I rejoiced. I'm cured!

Elmore S. Smith, the superintendent, sent a senior to get me, "Mr. Smith wants you in his office right away." as I was sitting on the bus after practice. At the office Elmore said, "Sit right here," indicating a chair in his stern office. He left. I sat. And stewed Ah, yes, got it.

He came back, "Is there anything you'd like to tell me?"

That I stole some bread? Not a chance. "No, sir. Why am I here?"

"Think about it," and he left. I sat stewing. Maybe they found out about the past. Those other times. Some inescapable evidence. No. I'm not going to confess. I've quit. I know I'm clean.

Outside, in the hall, Beverly Johnson and someone. I overheard Bev as she peeked in and whispered to her friend, "... suspected a long time. Caught him red-handed." Red-handed? From handling copper pennies?

I could not articulate this episode as well then, of course. Only 16 years old. Hindsight makes sages of us all. Then I was shaky-scared and sure my dirt was about to be aired in front of all these people I had been trying to please or awe or impress with my cleanliness, strength, non-chalance, divine indifference, and intelligence. To stoop to sneak thievery ... 

But I had quit. I had changed myself.

Mr. Smith returned, "Did you think?"

"Yes."

"Of anything you'd like to tell me?"

I knew, of course, but, "Is it my grades? Or that I lied about
leaving some papers at home when I hadn't done the work?" A game. I won Free Confession.

He shook his head slowly negative, "No."

"I don't know. Has something happened at home?" Anxiety on my face. Impassive face. He's a good psychologist, I thought. If I had done it, I'd surely talk just to relieve this incredible pressure, this tension, this game.

But I'm innocent! Why can't he see that? I can play as long as he can. I don't even know who stole the money this time.

"I'll give you one more chance. I'll be back. Maybe you'll remember something?"

Jesus, you don't suppose he found out that I beat off in the can?

Maybe there is something.

I looked at the clock. 5:30. I'm going to have some inquisitive parents. Angry, possibly.

Later he returns, "?"

"!"

"?"

"!"

"OK. We thought you had stolen some basketball players' money in the showerroom."

"Oh, that's it. Why suspect me?"

"You have the perfect opportunity. You're the only one who goes down there early, alone, to shower."

Egad! Transparent. Thank God I've quit. " oh well, I didn't do it. You can search me if you want."

"There's no need. I won't even ask to look in your locker. I believe you."
As he took me home he explained that theft had been rampant. I was glad. I was not weak alone. I was overjoyed I had kicked the habit. He said I was most likely and not yet cleared. "We're going to set a trap. You are the only one who knows. If the thefts suddenly stop, maybe because you tell someone about the trap, or because you quit, that leaves you guilty by process of elimination. If you keep it quiet, maybe we'll catch the thief and let you go without a word. Clean record. OK?"

"OK," I grumbled. Seems shitty, but I hope they catch that asshole.

Mr. Smith talked to mom. I talked to mom. She knew. No one else in our family knew.

Later they caught an 8th grader. I sat with my team and listened to his confession, apology, and promise to repay. I am sure there were others.

I took savage glee in my innocence. Savage glee in my self-righteous superiority. I could put him down. Another bad habit I would have to learn to give up.

But, mostly, fortunately, relief. Innocent.

Innocence in my own eyes.

Repentence is change.

It's a long bus trip. ?What, 2½ hours. For a while I was Okla Hannali again. He met Death like a warrior. "Death," he said, approximately, just minutes before he decided to die, "is the trapdoor that allows every man, no matter his life, the escape from the life-trap."

I looked at the semidesertscape, a thin light of residual innocence strengthening me. I looked out upon our world.

It can be Heaven, I know.

But here I am, traveling quickly into night, perhaps, on a course that is humanly impossible to retrace, and growing continually more tortuous.
How can I do 180° now? That would mean hitching back north, probably as far as that exit in Ogden where I turned south again, through this lonely semiarid plain, over this distance I now move easily in a spacious cattletruck.

I feel suspended. My turmoil at rest. Yet I know full well that I am not aiming at any sort of fulfillment. I am traveling with doubt—a grain of sand in the marvelous machine. I am frightened—oh how many times I have said that, how many words for that—by this prospect.

Still, Truth makes itself part of my mind.

Seeds of Heaven.

The bus geared down. It seemed we left a major interstate and drove down a smaller road into Grand Junction. I drank from my canteen and offered grandfather, the elderly Indian, a drink. He shook his 'no' nervously.

He was greeted by his family at the terminal. I felt Grand Junction was smaller than Missoula as I poked a few minutes about, then went to find trainyards. I had seen switching yards, I thought, as we pulled into town, so I set out due west—to what I discovered later is the north yard.

It was empty. Nothing on the very high wooden crosswalk, someone crossing toward my side. I knew we were aware of each other, although I immediately got into this game of 'lets-not-make-him-self-conscious-by-looking-at him.' I looked nonchalantly over the inactive rails. He stood at the platform at the top of the stairs, pretending to look the opposite direction—east toward downtown Grand Junction. I waited at the foot of the wooden staircase for him to come down. He stood nonchalantly at the top waiting for me to leave. I realized the game and walked up to talk to him. He told me nothing. He said he didn't work there, had seen no one, had not heard any activity here, and had to go back to work, so long.
Back over the crosswalk the way he had come.
Strange behavior. I actually frightened him.
I walked down the steps and crossed to the quiet buildings. No cars were parked in front. I wonder if there's someone on guard who could talk. When I reached the front door, a pickup pulled up. 2 railroad men stepped out.

2 miles south. South yard. Can't miss it. Follow Washington, was it? Or follow the railroad track.

I felt these 2 men were either sharing a joke, or laughing at me. Fine. My ignorance in this matter was no jibe. It does not embarrass me to ask questions.

"Yeah, southward to south yard. That's where they make up the trains. Should be a train out for Pueblo this evening."

What bothered me was their apparent size. They both felt 6'6" like the big kids when I was 10 or 12. And they seemed insensitive, like their concern could easily be only Railroad. But they gave true information, I felt.

"Yeah, southyard. I'm going over there in a half hour or so. If I see you on the road I'll give you a ride. Or you could wait."

"I'll walk. Thanks."

What does their immense size mean? That I am feeling very little?

I walked. No trouble. I bought a fudgesicle and was eating it when I saw a mexicano-looking young dude across the street. He was watering the leaves of a large tree in his yard. I felt an immediate kinship. Should I finish my fudgesicle first? Don't want to eat in front of him.

I did not hesitate, but diagonaled toward him. I thought he might fear me and turn to greet me with a lively hose, but he saw my direct approach and turned the hose away. Body language. Greeting.
I saw he was eating a Butterfinger. We were even. We smiled. "Hot, ain't it?"

"Yeah. Too hot to be inside. I'm just playing with the hose. Just to be outside." We leaned on the fence.

"Do you know where Southyard is?"

"Ah . let me think." He was silent a long minute. I looked at his yard. No hurry. "I can't swear about whether or not its Southyard, but if you go one block further the way you're headed, then turn right and follow the tracks to the left, either that or turn left and follow the highway right, you'll come to a big railyard. Can't give my word about Southyard or not."

"Sounds right. That jives with what some dudes said earlier "

"Just turn around that lumberyard." He smiled, "You can see for yourself." Orange fence 8' high. Padlocked gate.

I got my canteen in hand, "Want a drink?"

"No thanks, I've got this. Say, this is probably colder. Want some of this?"

"Yes. That'd be right on."

"Just a second." He adjusted the flow, "This works best." He spoke, I could hear, only of what he knew. I liked him.

I drank of his water The water ceremony.

We talked loosely a few minutes; then I left. I felt good about him. Personal. Easy. Willing to water the leaves of a tree. Or a passing wanderer in the wilderness.

As I continued toward Southyard I considered my feeling small with the RR men. Feelings of inadequacy? But I felt coeval with the mex, if he was indeed mexican. He was beautiful and I was equal. I felt good.

I felt stronger. He had touched me.

The wind blew strong. Dust, dirt, cinders, bits of tinfoil and yellowed papers crossed in front of me. A lone switchengine moved several cars south. A switchman jumped aboard as the engine accelerated. An older switchman remained at the crossing. His face could smile.

"Is this Southyard?"

"Yep," he smiled. "This is the north end of Southyard. That's the tower about a half mile," he pointed, "yonder."

"Thanks. Can a guy hop a freight?"

"If he's able," smile and rock of the head. "Just ask at the signal tower for the when and where."

"No yard bull?"

Smile again. "He comes around about 11 at night. Doesn't do much. Stay out of the little shack, though, he'll chase you away from there. Don't go into dangerous areas when the switching is going on. Go down there by that black caboose, stay to the right of that, and ask at the tower"

I looked down the track. Black caboose? "Where's the black caboose?"

"Just down the track about a half mile. See those other cabooses?"
I did. "Just to the right of them. Walk down there and you can't miss it."

I thanked him and walked to the yard proper. I never saw the black caboose. The wind blew across me, left to right, or at me. I could feel the dust thickening.

Crash!

I watched the humping, went to the smaller glass-enclosed tower, the switchhouse, and read the door The Hole. Inside, hat over his eyes, the
operator stretched out on the resting heater. I knocked.

"Come in!" I went in. He lifted his hat somewhat and looked out at me. "What can I do for you?"

"Is that called 'humping'?"

Crash!

"Yep."

"I've read cars that say 'Do Not Hump' on their sides."

"We disregard that. We hump em all."

"It looks fast and efficient."

Crash! Rolling crash like thunder down the track. This dude has released that boxcar minutes before he laid down.

"Is. We can make em up faster than Salt Lake, Denver, or anyplace west."

"Can I hop a freight toward Pueblo?"

"Yep. Track 5 at 9."

He laid back, covered his eyes again with the colorful beerdrinker hat. "Count from the east side. Don't count the main line."

Mmm thanks. "Can I have a little of your water?" From a cooler

"Sure."

I topped my canteen. He also seemed overlarge, very self-assured, and seemed to be concerned about ownership of the railroad. I owned nothing of it. He worked here and was therefore a caretaker.

So where do I wait? It is early afternoon. I returned to a couple of cabooses I had seen earlier and found an open door. If they were uptight about staying in that yardshack, how much more so a camper on cushioned seats, drinking ice water, looking out the observation window? I sat, looked, and brought my journal up to date. I recorded the humping operation.

**Humping:** In Grand Junction's Southyard, trains are broken down and
made up by humping. In example, hypothetical train A, 200 cars long, is backed onto the manmade plateau called the 'hump'. Perhaps the caboose is first. The operator of the switchhouse, 'The Hole', works under the overseeing eye of the high tower, the signal tower. The Hole is a small, inclosed, airconditioned, red brick switching house with large tinted windows at the peak of the hump and with good communications with the high tower. The dude in the Hole waits until the hoses are disconnected and the couplings broken--manual breaking or electromagnetic breaking, I cannot say; probably manual, although I did not observe this--

---then releases the holding brake ($B_1$). The caboose rolls down the slope onto, for example, track 3. The next car is for Salt Lake. Freed, it rolls out of $B_1$, through the retarding brake ($B_2$), where the observer in the tower, weighing several variables--car weight, velocity, distance to coast--against profit, safety, damage and deadlines, applies the retarding brake ($B_2$), which pinches the steel wheels to slow them down. Screee ... a demonic, nerve rending scream. Say track 2 is express freight to Salt
Lake. Switch 2 \((S_2)\) is flipped inside the Hole and the freewheeling car loaded with hypotheses or paper pulp turns right at the main switch \((S_6)\), runs past switches 5, 4, and 3 until, at switch 2 \((S_2)\), it turns down track 2. It is, let's say, the first car on track 2. It rolls down the gently sloping track until it hits a chock (stop) loosely fitted to the rail. Crash! The car rolls a bit up the angle of the chock, stops, rolls back down.

It is strange to watch; unattended cars moving very slowly but inexorably down a track--silent, clanking, or squealing mournfully--hitting the chock, moving back some yards, reversing, hitting again, rolling back some feet, reversing, hitting again, rolling back inches, coming to rest--all unattended.

This is occurring on any of the 12 or so tracks in the Southyard.

And while this has been happening, 2 cars for Denver have been coasted onto track 7 immediately to my right, as I look out the observation window of the caboose. Rumble. Rumble. Dead giants. Would not slow down for a finger, arm, leg, backbone, or skull.

And a car for Pueblo on track 5 rolls by to my left. It passes close. I can almost touch it from my window by ah leaning out.

Down the track the 2 cars smash into the 20 waiting at the bottom. Crash! You know this sound. All the while that screee, screee, screee of the retarding brake. Blind armored reptiles clash as the harpy screams.

What circle is this?

The earth trembles as a diesel engine lugs and tons of metal accelerate and so much inertia screams silent protest to air and to earth. So little will. Such strength. Brutes bearing brute children, without animal nobility

"We hump em all."
A car of banded-and-papered planed lumber comes down too fast. That indifferent eye in the high tower, that god of computer lights and retarding brakes, he can't always get it right. Bearings unusually good, or a moment of distraction. Crash! Bands pop. Paper rips like silence.

"Happens all the time. We run em through Mighty Mouse. He squares the loads. We reband em. S'nothing."

Huge cars hardly moving strike a lineup. Crash! All that inertia communicated, ringing the train like a gong.

An old wino, far from the tower, is approaching. He must cross track 5. There's a 2 foot gap where 2 cars have failed to couple. He watches. A half mile away, out of reach of eye or ear, 2 heavy boxcars smite the end coupling. Like lightning, the energy is passed from coupling to coupling, the inches of slack are no buffer at all. The separated couplings snap together. 2 feet of clearance gone instantly as giant steel teeth snap and crush in frustration.


2 feet of space between huge and inert masses. Gone. Jason's Clashing Rocks. Then, because the coupling still does not work, the gap reopens. The old wino is old because he sees this. He goes a car ahead and, though he carries a great weariness, climbs up and over a coupling.

In my caboose I hear an approaching deep rumble, or feel it in the very earth. I look up the track. The mindless cars pass left on 5 and right on 7. I look to the bottom of track 6, and I see a light on the end. Bright amber. This track must be closed. Still, each rumble makes me anxious. Ah, this caboose must have weathered a lot of humping. But me? Would I be thrown against the corner of the desk, across the water cooler, or maybe just dumped onto the floor. Jerked off my feet. I tried to nap, looking up occasionally to see huge red cars trundling past the glass.
After dark I approached the high tower. I had laid back all afternoon and several trains had been broken over the hump and made up on the tracks. I was going to verify the train to Pueblo. As I was going up the steps a large jolly man spoke to me. He volunteered information. Yes, I could stay in the railman's lounge. Yes, my best source of information was the dispatcher. Yes, a yardbull still prowls, but only after 10, and then only to see that no one is injured in the yards. Yes, hitching freights is quite acceptable. He finished a sandwich he had been eating and threw the balled-up waxpaper up onto the roof beside the tower.

"Come on in."

He showed me around, his round face abeam. A child, I thought, not feeling that that was judgmental. We went up to the lounge and he got a cup of coffee from a vending machine. "Want a cup?"

"No thanks. I might get a can of soup later. Are there many injuries in the yard? Why is the yardbull hired?"

"Used to be a lot, of winos and dying transients who just didn't look out. You're rather a new sight--a hitcher with a packsack. I haven't seen that before. If you were a wino or a drunk what would you say?"


"Yeah, a juice-freak. A juice-freak might get caught by a loaded boxcar coasting quietly, or by trying to climb under a car at the wrong time." 4 RR men came in. They seemed shy--intimidated by a stranger in conversation with the blue-shirted jolly fellow. 3 sat at the far end of the other table and spoke relatively lowly about cars, houses, women, their jobs, and their friends. One sat alone, listening to both conversations. I found I could keep account of both conversations quite easily.

"Some of those cars really come off the hump. Or finding a car with
an open door, some guys will look out when the door ain't locked down.
You know how, even on the road, trains jerk pretty damned hard .  well,
a guy with his head out the door when the right jerk comes along .  .
clank! That door .  ."

"my dad said he found a man's head in the yard a long time ago. Disgusting," interrupted the listener. "He said he never heard about the body being found. Maybe in a box car on a siding someplace. Heh-heh."

The jolly man continued, "Last year a switchman got caught by a coupling. The 2 boxcars coupled right through his back. Just moaned while they uncoupled them. Then, when the cars were separated, he died. A switchman should know better than that. Or the pallets could come loose, if there's freight, and crush you against the wall. On a hot day you could suffocate, or freeze on a cold night, unless someone heard you yelling or banging." He shivered consciously

The listener spoke again, looking at his coffee. "It's not so bad finding a head. Imagine finding a half head. Imagine finding a quarter head .  ."

I remembered tales from Alberton in the roundhouse days. A hobo cut in half by those steel wheels. As a child I would put coins on the rails and after the train passed I'd look around and find the large flat token. And I remember when I was 15, my brother and I laid behind a hill and shot our 22's at passing boxcars, a quarter of a mile away. I thought, at that time, maybe I'd kill some nameless indigent, throw him off the train in some desolate area and steal his money and goods, and bury him. It was just a thought. Irony--maybe being shot myself by some adventure-seeking child.

I sat with warm soup as Jolly went to get a schedule. He returned
in 20 minutes. "The next freight to Pueblo leaves at midnight on track 2."

That didn't jive with word from the hole.

Jolly explained the schedule codes. Certain numbers occurring in certain positions meant the train was an express or a regular run, or if it was a run north or south. This number is the engine number. That number is the track number and that one the time. This number is an evaluation of the engine, and those X's in that position mean the engine failed during the last run. I thanked him as he left. He had helped, still I felt in him that discomfort or neurosis of outsiderness. Rather, I felt deep and at ease compared to the people I had seen here. I wondered if the railroad work had made these people a little hard. I wondered if I could find and talk to a sensitive.

More RR people came in. I felt 'hot', that is, I could communicate personally and deeply, but I felt the people around me would not be ready for that. Then I thought that the trouble was with me. Pride? Prejudice? No. I could talk easily, and would welcome the chance, but would these people be threatened by self-disclosure? I spoke only to people who looked easy in themselves.

I checked with the dispatcher. "Track 5 at midnight."

I sat alone upstairs. A black came in. His smile was real and his movements well coordinated and loose. I was glad to see him. "Hello." (Brother.)

"Hello." He checked the schedules held in one of those big binders with the big rings that look like croquet wickets. Although he looked busy. I wanted to talk. (Another message.)

"Are you a switchman?"

"Nope. I'm a brakeman." He smiled again but his manner said he didn't want to talk.
"What do brakeman do?" I just wanted connection with a genuine human being. Could I say--Man, I just need a human touch a deep communication. What does God will of me? (A message continues.)

"Same as switchmen, only on the trains. I'm leaving for Salt Lake. Gotta go."

I was left alone, flipping through a Sports Illustrated thinking about my emptinesses. Something about a hey! That was something! A message! I was minutes slow picking it up. What was it? From where? The black seemed unlikely., but who? I searched my mind. And what was the message?

Several men came in laughing loudly. One, a tall quiet man, came over and spoke. He asked where I was going and what I was doing. I spoke honestly about the job and "not that I'm sure that this is the right thing to do. I'm trying to know my own mind."

"That's about all any of us can do." I was surprised by his understanding. He was high, although he avoided my eye. "We strive to do God's will." (It shouldn't be difficult.) He left.

I wandered about the building. I found a shower room. I was tempted maybe when it was quieter ..

(So it begins. It will be difficult, but we ask that you finish what you have begun.)

I went back to one of the 2 tables and sat down. A man came in. At first glance he looked like some very tired official who had just spent 48 hours on some crisis. He wore good clothes, a suit that fit rather well, a matching sports shirt open at the neck. He looked haggard. His eyes were bloodshot. In a millisecond, I thought, minor official afraid of losing his position or not pleasing his superior. In another millisecond I noticed a stringtied bundle, his poorly kept hair, his poor shoes, and his diffident
attitude--mental and physical. A Bo.

But I flashed no brotherhood in him.

He talked to some of the railroaders, like he was familiar with them, but not like he was inside. He did not smell of liquor.

I was finally sure only of his fear. He traveled with fear. "Where're ya comin from?" I asked when the others had left.

"Salt Lake. Just left." He spoke slowly, like he had trouble formulating the words. "I've come down the coast. Over to Salt Lake. I'm going to Pueblo." His use of language felt stilted. Not inspired. He paused after speaking: ah, yes, this is his information game--volunteer some information, wait for the reciprocal. Elementary--make a statement, wait a pregnant pause, or a period of time that becomes as manifest as a word or question, and the other converser will supply his own equivalent of the same information. What looks like an innocent statement of fact is, in fact, an insidious method of getting information. I consciously decided to give him equivalent data; perhaps, I thought, if he thinks his game is successful he will not become more subtle.

"I'm down from Montana. Headed for Tucson or Phoenix." I don't particularly want to travel with him. I have never felt this way about a fellow traveler in the other wilderness before. I do not trust him.

"Oh, we're headed for Pueblo, then."

We. Maybe I could travel with him. Keep a distance. "Yeah. I've got differing reports about the time for the next train to Pueblo. It seems that 90% of the people working here have no idea of times and trains." I had heard them arguing, even as they looked at the schedules--schedules which also changed frequently.

"No." He looked and spoke to me like he was passing on some profound railroading knowledge. "You must ask around until you find someone that
knows."

"Yeah." I got up and walked to a machine. He made me uncomfortable. A young, redheaded man came up the stairs. "Hi. You hitchin?"

"Yeah. Down south to a job. You work here?"

"Yes. But I was transferred from Salt Lake when the I've forgotten the term--communications technician. "commo tech went on a 2 weeks vacation." He tried the pop machine. Nul program. "I may stay here after he comes back."

I sensed he was going to walk to the pop machines by the back staircase. I moved that way to show him I would walk there, too. He was an innocent, but the presence of a genuine human felt good. I bought a coke too, and we talked about this planet for a half hour or better.

I returned to the lounge. The dark traveler sat alone. The room was empty. I wished he would leave as quickly and quietly as he appeared. I sat down and sketched on old train schedules. The tall quiet man came in again. Handed me a newspaper-like publication, *The Christian Railroader*, then he left. I read every word of *The Christian Railroader*, hoping to find a clue, a catalyst that would cause the potential in my head to go suddenly kinetic and show me the way. I closed my eyes and stirred, waited. No connections.

I remembered a dream I once had, "High atop a mountain, one atom turns to pure energy. ?A what is it. A fountain of energy for this earth. A firecracker. A thermonuclear catalyst that inflagrates earth. A man with perfect sanity An unbreakable synapse with the All. Savior "

A voice like a child sportscaster.

I looked at the dark man, and he was moving about restlessly. I did not care for him. "This is a warm lounge," he said.

"Yep." Cut him off.
You're new to the rails, ain't ya?"

"Yep."

"I can tell. You can tell when you've been on the rails for a long
time. You get to know their faces. See them all over. I just came from
the coast. Seattle. Portland. Going to Huston, Texas, and stay there for
a while." Pause.

Nod.

"I've been on the road nearly 10 years. This is the nicest trainman's
lounge I've seen."

I can't stay very silent long, "Yea, I saw a shower in the corner
over there. I may just stand in if I can discover for certain the hour
and track of the train to Pueblo."

He frowned. His face a caricature and synthesis of parental guidance
and a warning of disaster. "Better not. Best not. They might not mind
you sitting here being quiet and not getting in the way, but you go to
snooping around and they'll chase you out of the yard. Maybe call the police
to take you downtown."

"Does that include a meal?"

"Young men are always doing that. They have no sense about staying
out of sight. Stay 'out of sight, out of mind', and no yarddick is going
to tell you to get the hell out of the yard."

I could see he was dodging some fantastic yard watchman, one that
probably exists today only in Denver. "The bull here only works a partial
shift. 10 or 11 at night." He was on record. He was recording. He
appeared very attentive to my words.

"Maybe we should go wait by the train. There's a yardshack that is one of the places the bull makes sure is empty.

Reliable-looking switchman told me that."
That little warmup with the stove and cardboard nailed to the walls?"

"The same. Seemed it was quite a ways back down the track, maybe there's 2, but I mean the one that has 'Lean or eat it' in chalk on the cardboard." I suspected that no one would object to us staying there if we stayed out of the way of work and harm, and stole or destroyed nothing.

He seemed disappointed. He got up, and said officiously, "Stay here," and set off like Buster Crabb going to free the girl or get the info. I was slightly pissed, but I noticed I waited there.

He returned, "Our train leaves at midnight on track 2."

Once again, data that doesn't correlate. I didn't trust him as a source. I looked at the clock; 10. "I've got to make a phone call. See ya." I left abruptly.

I went downstairs. What's my right to request use of a telephone? I'd call home collect. What is the 5 to 10 minute loss of a line if its for a good cause? I looked around. Asked.

"There's one about a mile north on the highway at the bowling alley."

As I was leaving, I rapped on the dispatcher's window. She was very busy with telephones, businesslike conversations, typewriter, pencil and pad. I waited a long time for a space. "When's the next train for Pueblo?"

Her voice came back muffled, "mumph . sarph . repable . nog obersach ," and she returned immediately to her work.

Could have been 'track 2 at midnight'. "Thank you," I said, feeling like a worthless and hypocritical bo. She did not care to hear. But I didn't believe track 2 at midnight. I shrugged and asked others as they came and went. I got numerous answers. And I found several people agreeing with each answer.

Communication in Southyard functions at quite a basic level--rumor has it.
Probably I had 2 hours until train time. I ran across the tracks, across the highway, and jogged toward the bowling alley. I am a bit masochistic, jogging until I hurt, but I rarely inflict others, and whenever I experience being in condition, I love to run. It's low-level flight. Do it unselfconsciously and the pain goes away and I can breathe easily, look about myself, and cover distances quickly while thinking.

**Thought:** Conditioning. To do what is necessary without thinking much about it. There were times when I would drive home and be aware of my lapse only when I awoke at the door of the house. I had driven home almost automatically. Is OK sometimes. Work a problem. Flesh out a fantasy. Sing. But that auto pilot can take over my life if I let it. Let it do everything? Home. Paper and pipe. Dinner. TV Words sprinkled here and there. Bed. Autolife. And where do I go while my life is on autopilot? It's easy. It's coasting. But Autopilot doesn't want to change. Autopilot can repeat very complex tasks--but Autopilot does little noticing and no thinking. Sometimes it is just what I need, to drive home myself.


And where do you go?

There may be a few things Autopilot cannot handle. If life is change, then life is one of those things. Unique situations. Unique persons. Unique thoughts. Genius.

For the closer I get to the source, the more unique becomes the signal.
Autopilot, damned good at day-to-day, quite able to insulate me from the day-to-day. also defends me from the unusual.

Autopilot fails free choice. Freewill. Autopilot cannot see the wider possibilities. On the way home today I suddenly went down a dirt road. Stopped and drank out of a stream. Saw a fox. Ate a green apple with a worm hole in it. It was great. Got home 90 minutes late. My wife looked different.

Autopilot is a good friend, but he wants to take care of everything. Me, that's his name, is often frightened, especially by the 'crazies you get from havin too much choice'-Joni Mitchell. But where else can I go? I might as well be here.

Jogging toward the bowling alley to call Beverly.

(Writing a memory at home.)

" . accept charges?"

"Yes."

"Go ahead."

"Parris?"

"Yeah."

"Are you in Tucson?"

"No. I'm in Grand Junction. I met a relatively human wino who suggested riding freights. I said I was going to try it sometime. Now is the time. It'll take a while. I have to switch RR lines and go east and west to go south."

"No north-south trains?"

"No. So it may take me days. At least I'm out of Utah. Sure is good to hear your voice."

"How do you feel now?"

"Shitty. I've met 2 I'd consider kin today I mean a deep immediate
resonance. One looked Mexican. We shared a few minutes. One Negro. He seemed hustled by his job, but our eyeballs conversed a while. I also met some decent folks. But mostly I have dealt with.

"Danny came by today."

"He's still in town?"

"Yes. A week's vacation. He says Arlo should have sent you travel expenses."

"I agree. I'd be down there now. But how could he pay to transport me down there if I'm not really working for him until I get there? I could see it if I were a heavy in geophysics, but a dumb grunt."

"Danny says that Arlo has done it before for others."

"I could have flown down."

"I doubt that. But train or bus."

"I spent over half my money on the bus ride to Grand Junction. That got me out of Utah, but not much closer to Tucson or Flagstaff." And how can I go 180° now? I do not have enough money for a return on the bus. Hitch that distance through the desert? Walk? Maybe 180° is now impossible. I may be cut off from God forever. burning bridges behind me.

"I've been acting rather happy, but inside I feel unhappiness, pain, discontent, and fear. Maybe I'll turn around and come back. Forget the whole deal and come back home."

"Come back? Did you call Arlo?"


"I think you'd really like the job. It'd be a shame to miss out on it. Why don't you try to call Arlo again, first?"

"I intend to. I didn't call last night because I camped in the country."
The bowling alley was being prepared for close-up. "The sky was beautiful. So are you."

"How's the trip otherwise?"

"Fine. Beautiful country. A strange continuity in my experiences like it was all one story."

"Maybe something you can write."

"Yes. A true history. It may be boring. Like Tomotem said in the first line of his story, 'This will bore you to tears.' It seems though, that it's the immaterial, the less-than-concrete, that is important. How do I tell the truth about that if I can hardly be certain of my real feelings? Like my anguish . . ." 

A half laugh, "Anguish?"

"My anguish," I continued unruffled, laughing a little at myself, "is not tied to much that is worldly. So must I tell it instead of showing it? The internal trip is most important to me. But it is not all. I'd like to return to the infinite blue void, but my head is scattered like reflections on a pond. I'm not sure this job is right, even if I get a good story. Is 3 minutes up?"

"Yes, I think so. Try to call Arlo first, OK?"

"Yeah. I'll try to call you again tomorrow."

"Bye, honey."

"Later, Bev."

And I did try to call Arlo. The operator was patient and cooperative. We became friends as we conducted our telephone search. We tried many suggestions, ideas, and thoughts. No Arlo. No reservations. If I'd gotten to Safford, I'd be sleeping in the park.

I jogged back to the railyard.

And as I got closer I could hear a train pulling out.
Maybe, after waiting all afternoon, I had missed the train out.

I rushed up to the dispatcher's window. "What train is leaving?"
"Freight to Salt Lake." Eyebrows saying it is foolish to ask after a train.

"Oh." I went upstairs. Maybe I should get my gear and find a boxcar on the Pueblo freight. I got my pack from the corner and set it against the table to resecure lines and buckles.

Dark Bo said, "Maybe we should go outside and wait by our train."

I looked up from my pack and looked at him. It must have been obvious that I was preparing to do that. And my dislike must have also been obvious. "I suppose that's so."

Inside, psychic teeth grind, but I follow.

Outside, in the black of night that is foil to the starry floodlights and gives an infrablack look to even the brightest places, I am reminded of the excavation on the moon in "2001" where the second monolith was uncovered. But the screeee...screeee is more dark ages superstitious fear than sci-fi electronic music.

Strangely enough, I find a calm at this point.

"When I signal, run across the tracks. I've got to go to the control house and get a bundle." He left.

Screeee And from far away, Crash!

I stand close to the tracks to watch and to feel these dinosaurs mount.

"'Clear the yard!'" A sudden voice.

What the hell? I know that voice is directed at me, but I'm not in danger. I care for myself. I'll stand here.

"Hey you, clear the yard!"

Why not identify me--could say 'You with the green packsack, please leave the yard.' Who is 'Hey you'? Fuck em. Sounds like the pig voice.
I turned from the yard. Was I supposed to leave altogether? I walked around the corner of the high tower. I walked all the way around the high tower and back in the door. I felt somehow freed again. I had broken with the Dark Bo. Time to get some things straight, like which track and approximate time. I asked the dispatcher, Mrs Busy, once again. She said track 5 about one. This time I felt she had truthed me.

I went outside. It was quiet as the humpers took a fifteen minute break or were switching another string onto the hump. I walked across the tracks to the point where I could count the fifth track. Found it. Only 10 or 12 cars—probably 13, considering my trip at this point—were on track 5 yet, and it was nearly midnight. No difference, I'd find an open box.

There was Dark Bo, rising up in the shadows on the briar side of the main rail like he'd been waiting for someone. "I lost track of you when I left. Where'd you go?"

"I went back to the yardoffice for a while."

"I found out that our 'Our', eh? I've experienced that ploy before. " train leaves on track 2 ."

"You mean track 5."

"Yeah, track 5, at 1 or 2 this morning." He started walking. Following was implicit. From the lights into the shadows. "We can hole out by the corner of the warehouse."

The warehouse was a flat white building, featureless but for a turquoise lading door set at 90° to the wall. Another 90° corner and the building, now 12' closer to the tracks, continued featurelessly. The door was set halfway from the end of the building and created a windbreak.

Do I recall rusty tracks running into the hard, dry soil several feet from the lading door? That would mean materials would be loaded into the
end of the railcar; an extremely unlikely case. Perhaps trucks backed to the small platform. Within the harbor of this concrete right angle, 8" or 9" above ground level, a 4' square concrete block extruded.

With a short jump, I visualized Dark Bo hiding behind the corner of the semishadow, watching unobserved the movement of men and railcar. He is alone. Time falls from my vision and I see a small fire and soup in a canteen cup. A wind is blowing and the shadows from the fire dance to the low whistle. Now 2 men waiting. Voices low in reverence to the sky.

I sit down on the side of the concrete block facing the trains. Dark Bo leans against the platform facing me. A wind comes up slightly chilly. Dark Bo says, "The new people, you can pick em out, stand in the middle of things. Get in a boxcar and they stand right in the middle of the doorway where the yarddick can see them, without thinking they can be seen. Or in a doorway with the light spilling out behind them. I figure 'Out'a sight; out'a mind'"

I set my pack up and leaned back on it to enjoy the wait. Dark Bo was living back in the pre-enlightenment days when obscurity was thought an asset. He could tell me about those tougher days.

"We can wait here," he continued, "until our train is made up and they come to couple the hoses. Then we can find a boxcar with an open door. Better one open door than 2. 2's too cold at night or over a pass. We can run out and get in an open boxcar. Put our stuff in the far front or back so when they come to check it out with flashlights, we won't be so obvious. I don't have a jacket in my bundle."

Fishing again. "I do," I gratified his question. "You're carrying quite a bit."

He's not going to get an inventory "Survival items for working: socks shorts, 2 pair of bluejeans, a couple shirts. No money, I'm afraid,
or I'd'a taken a bus." I decided to play his game with him. "Do YOU carry a knife?" That I did was strongly implied, and the point of the question, yet without a direct threat. The implicit threat was warning him to keep a distance from my boodle.

"Yeah. I do, too." A lie. I was relieved. He elaborated. "Never hope to use it"--I agree""but a man might climb into a boxcar that's already occupied by someone who objects to company. You should never get into a boxcar already occupied, specially by more than one. You hear of people being made to jump and leave their stuff behind. Or of cutup people being found in a boxcar."

I could lose anything I carried except for my journal. And my canteen. I unhooked the large safety pin, a laundry-bag pin Danny had liberated when he worked for the Missoula Laundry, and drank of the water; a small percentage of home in the water.

"Can I have some of that?" I would have probably offered

"Sure."

He drank deeply. "Ah, good ." He handed it back without closing the top. I drank again. Closed the top. Don't like to drink much from the canteen before an unfamiliar crossing. He said, "Maybe we can get a boxcar with a wooden floor. Softer, quieter, and warmer. Find one with the doors locked open, otherwise a man might get locked in."

As he talked, spinning an image of rodriding that fit my father's time and smacked of cliché and popular romance--yet which could be true, I removed shoes and removed my stripped doubleknit levis. I put on my dirty jeans and retied my boots. He was talking about how boxcar dirt gets ground into your pores 'just like coal dust', as I changed my thin nylon shirt for the blue cotton workshirt. I was ready for dirt, but a bit chilly.

"You got a lot of clothes."
"I know. It should last me at least a summer of work. I wear the clean stuff to get rides in tough places where appearance might matter."

"I do too." A note of commonality. A beam of light. "Got this suit at the Salt Lake Salvation Army for $2. Just fits. And this shirt matches for only 25¢."

We smiled together. Despite the heavy negative he transmitted, I would have been happier knowing him. I drew out my down jacket from the top of the pack. "Is it warm?" he asked as I slipped into the green nylon.

"Yeah. It's warm enough."

We sat quietly a while. I was warm with the unzipped jacket. I could see the silences of the stars overhead. I could hear the crashing of boxcars as our train grew. I've heard the music of a DNA molecule, and I've heard some cell or wave in my body making a rhythmic jingling sound like a complex tambourine doing an uncomplicated rhythm. I wondered how a chemical compound sounds—I heard the crash of boxcars slammed onto the train—as molecules crash together and are locked by electromagnetic forces. Giant proteins rock and roll in the flux of an electromagnetic sea, and crash against invisible piers in invisible electromagnetic storms.

DNA molecules reproduce themselves, riding invisible forces.

"Promenade left. Now doe see doe. All join hands and around we go. Now Alameda right, that's right folks. Now spin your partners off to the moon's bright side." At planetary distances trains must look like very simple chemical chains repetitiously flowing down earth's veins. Those people at the switches, in the Hole, in the tower, on the phone, at the teletype, or coupling hoses are considered, at planetary distances, as invisible forces.

Couplings; gravity, electromagnetism, strong forces, weak forces.

"All join hands as you circle the ring"
Memory: I have a toothache. To ignore it I play concentration games. I'm searching around for an object and decide to focus on the tones in my ears. Maybe my hearing is impaired, so I've got these tones. 'Mild nerves'? I can remember the 2 or 3 times those tones absolutely quieted. Has a lot to do with my mental health. So I pick the tones. I turn my focus across the spectrum of tones to choose a . Whoa! What's that? I back up. Progress slowly across those central tones. That's it. A new tone. And it's connected with the toothache. It IS the toothache. I hear the pain. Pain is only a tone, after all. When I'm focused on the tone, and it's easy to do--only finding the tone is difficult, a stroke of serendipity--my toothache is gone. Such relief. I drift across the tone. Off the tone, my toothache comes back. I can play my toothache like a musical instrument. 2 immediate ways of dealing with a toothache: ignore it, or absorb it. Healing is awareness.

"Watch my package, will you?" says Dark Bo, rising. "I'll see if I can find us an open car." He sets off.

I watch him go, thinking about following as an act. I'm a poor follower. I dislike doors marked IN and OUT. I don't like to follow someone else's path through the snow, or on the hard-packed earth through the grass. I may walk beside the path, but rarely on it. I don't like following other men, especially less-than-perfect men. I can follow wise men--when I am aware enough to recognize them--but that too is difficult. I can follow women--painfully. I can follow situations. Suggestions. Conditioning. But I don't like it.

It works if I have a clear vision of where I want to go. Then I flow from one force to another. Call it climbing, I suppose, but not for the illusion of status or money, the gamble of the dreadfully bored, or for
things, but for a state of clarity. Love. Across some synapses there are no bridges, no stepping stones. Threshold. Then I find out about my motives. If I have little enough guilt I can build a bridge, or, in cases where I have had inspiration, I can fly.

And, even if I never quite get to center, knowing that I am approaching it is enough.

The joy of true direction and flight.

Oh! the endless transport if I could realize and maintain.

Dream: Through the smoky cellar door. Down the wooden stairs. It feels comfortable. Personable magic. Down the smoky stairs. Past the wood furnace. My sister says something above me. I cannot hear her through my glass ceiling. The wall facing me is glass, behind which I can see water clear and bright like the infinite blue void. A strongly illuminated aquarium. There are marine flora and fauna beyond the glass. It's now a river and I flow with it. Beyond the glass. A shining river through a black void. Flowing down, over, up, around massive black rocks, through cascades falling over no cliff, up, unconcernedly through staggering changes of perspective. Calmly watching stars pass. Universes. Bright baubles. I leave the river to observe a scene. I circle down on pine trees and a man in a red suit trimmed in white fur. I recognize Earth.

We are all free souls, teasing matter, matter which can capture and enslave us. ?For how long?

I suppose we follow until we are aware. Creative following? Now there's a doorway. Memory over the telephone:

Me--I must be slow. Maybe I'm weak. I'd do what is right, if it was spelled out for me. I am sometimes slow to understand.

Danny--I had a friend who said that. An indian kid. Said, "Danny Merch, if they spelled it out for me I could do it." Said that often down
at Eddies. Up to the time he committed suicide.

Suicide? Earl says all men must consider that.

Sincere self-hate.

Too easy Too-easy. Sweet Lady Release. Suicide is no answer. The fall is considering myself too small to do my task and avoiding awareness. That's painful suicide.

Do not ignore.

Dark Bo is doing the job his way. I'm too weak, or maybe too gentle. Perhaps I need accept no guilt for following him. Perhaps I need accept no guilt if I tell him to fuck off. Somehow it is easy to be free with the strong ones. "Kiss off" or "I love you." It is more difficult to be incisive with the perfect ones, yet they are not injured at all. They are so strong, yet gentle, and they are so sensitive. Hurt yourself--you cannot hurt them--and watch the sympathetic pain flash deeply on their faces. Faster then light. Frightening. Did I hurt myself that badly? I saw on an angel's face such full experiencing of my pain. All the way to center, then the pain is gone. A pebble strikes clear water and sinks with no splash, no ripples, to the other pebbles on the bottom.

(Message continues.
Absorb.)

But it is most difficult to be free or incisive with the weak or green ones. I feel, despite my knowledge that 'accommodation' is a favor to no one, that I might hurt them. And those that merely act innocent are capitalizing on this.

Accommodation. I am sure that examination of accommodation would disclose that by accommodating someone—for their own good, not to hurt their feelings, or not to insult them—I am actually being psychically lazy, or avoiding a direct look at what transpires.
I cross the dirt road to the track fill. Nearly time to go. I go get my pack and shoulder it. His bundle up by the string. It is light. I cross the tracks to the train.

Voices. The switchmen, sounds like 2 or 3, are coming along my side of the train with a strong light. They don't care who rides the trains, but I'm playing Dark Bo's game--it is artificial excitement--and I wonder if I should duck them, all the while conscious that playing this game can build neural patterns. I could become his miserable self. The switchmen cross to the far side of the train and pass me without seeing. Somehow that's important. 2 cars further they return to my side of the train and continue down the track.

"Over here ." It is Dark Bo. I follow him to an open boxcar with a white ribbon tied to the door. Did he tie it there? Is it bo communications? Dark Bo jars the door latch. "This is the only one I found. No paper in it either I'll look down the line." He walked toward the rear of the train.

I tossed our truck into the boxcar and jogged up the train looking for a better car. An engine revved up and lugged down and the slack was taken up in metallic thunder. I turned and ran back. I jumped into the boxcar.

Dark Bo jogged up and extended his hand. Sympathy for the devil? I held onto the door, caught his hand and helped him on board.

If Dark Bo is attached to my trip, I flashed as I released his hand, it is because, out of weakness or accommodation or conditioning, I had lent him a hand.

In the windy darkness, pummelled by the many metal voices, "Last trip last trip . last trip " and "terminal terminal terminal ." and others barely subliminal and corrosive, I
prepared my bedroll and recalled a dream image.

**Dream:** I am in an arched subterranean passageway. Sourceless light. My colors? The space is ruby red. The arch is red. The manhole cover is red. The acrobats are red. The throbbing is red. Warm. Drum beat too regular and powerful to overlook. I will not go further because the passage slants downward, and because it turns slightly to the right as it turns upward further on, and because the arched ceiling at the lowest point impedes my vision. Past me, one at a time, in precise time, red imps, like impossibly superactive young boys, cartwheel tightly. Compulsively performing acrobats. Driven. As they reach the bottom of the incline, where the curve reaches its nadir, there is a manhole cover. Each of the energetic acrobats strikes it as he passes and continues up the slope without slowing. This, I see, is either the source of the drumbeat, or in perfect time with it. I woke up at that moment.

I feel that is a critical point in dream analysis. Why awake at a particular time in an episode? As I awoke I realized 2 things simultaneously: the drumming was the throbbing idle of the garbage truck outside my window, and that I had looked down a bloodstream.


I drank a swallow. Offered Dark Bo one. Then I laid down. To sleep . . . perchance to dream.

I sat up. Tore a corner from a piece of paper in my pocket, chewed it, plugged my ears. I had done the same thing, remembering the throbbing dream, when I set up camp by Ryder's Truck Stop where the diesels' beat was loud. Laid down.

Sat up. Laid my fishknife close to my hand.
"Got something extra I can cover up with?" asked Dark Bo. He had not offered to share the paper he had found, although I had no need for it. I gave him my plastic ground cover. Laid down.

Slept soundly and deeply.

21 June:
THE MIASMA OF DESPOND

I awoke late the next day to see the sun coming in the door. The train did not travel a constant speed, but slammed and jerked as it ac-and de-celerated.

I watched beautiful country going by. Bo had his bedroll in the front half of the car--exactly where I would have spread mine if I had had the lead.

Lead? Strange, but I felt Dark Bo was a parasite, following my wake as I broke the sea, and I felt he then darted ahead to grab the prizes as he recognized them. Like fishing as a young boy with someone I didn't like who raced me from hole to hole and yet would not get far enough ahead to let the water quiet down again.

Maybe he was trying to teach part of me greed. Get in. Get it. Get out.

Was not so successful. I found the rear half of the car, that I had thought would be windswept, to be as comfortable as any place in the car.

"Can I have a drink of your water?"

Where would you be without me, Dark Bo? Pissed that he would ask. On an indefinite trip I conserve my water. I reluctantly handed my canteen to him. (Don't resist. Genuinely give.) I wished I could enjoy sharing with him.

I sat on my bag as I drank again and replaced the cap. I put the canteen near my head, checked the location of the knife--worrying about
violence is the kind of karmic structuring that can cause violence, but I don't really believe I'll see it—and took a good nap. We stopped, I sensed in my sleep, several times to let northbound trains pass us.

The train splashed through iron waves to come aground in Minturn. I looked from my bag at the sunlit mountains. Minturn, Colorado. Beautiful. I could imagine Heidi yodeling on the western slope behind the train.

Shit, I'll get up. 'Mornings, no matter what time of day they occur, suck.' I litanied to myself, knowing that I occasionally get up feeling good about getting up and the day to follow.

This late morning, though, I had that exhausting hollow in my stomach and chest that I feared might be created by soul-eating guilt for some act of weakness committed a day ago, which I suspected percolated to my physical plane during my sleep last night, and tomorrow, I fear, will be part of my conscious daytime blues.

Maybe I should (You should) turn it around and go north (now you must go through it).

I got up. As I was stowing truck, Dark Go gets up and jumps out. Fuck him. I need some diversion, some exercise to get me off the Dark Bo trip and feeling like I'm into it. It. It. IT rings the big gong. That's a Godthink, but I'm still vibrating and hollow. Somehow my awareness is jumping too fast to focus itself true.

Easy. Easy. Maybe sitting in the sun. Meditate. I got out and did a physical prayer, my yogic exercise, to the new sun. I supposed it would anger the dark one. Man, I must be as crazy as Uncosmos playing this game and, apparently, slowing being ground down. Slowly losing.

A RR dude who has spent the morning replacing signal lights, down the hill where kids have smashed them with rocks, volunteers to show Bo where
he can get a drink.

I'm feeling cerebral. A feeling I dislike, for the cerebating rationalist can think reasonable thought after reasonable thought, yet without that—what is it—signal of intuitive mythos or felt meaning, he has no awareness of where those thoughts are leading and has no method of distinguishing the formally correct structures that are mere thoughts, from thoughts that grow from and reflect his life.

Sheet.

I'm gonna quit thinking and get into the Now as best I can, I decided. Act. Feel. Quit pushing the interior word manufacturer and see what grows up to consciousness of its own.

Losing my mind. Losing my mind. That must have originally expressed the absence of the relevant-irrelevant/true-false signal.

Quit thinking for a while. Act. Feel. Observe how the universe falls into my senses. Stumble across the clue/que that will allow my heart to speak.

"She-it," I said aloud, "you can't decide to do that."

I crossed the train. There was a stream on the other side. I ran to it. Good to run. The stream was high on the grassy banks.

"Spring runoff." I looked at the sky and the strapping sun, "under the summer solstice."

Summer solstice.

I considered taking a quick skinny, but I did not want to chase a train over cinders and sharp ballast with my clothes under my arm and my shoes in my hand. I smiled at the thought. I pulled off my shirt and soaked myself to the waist. I laid back on the cool grass and watched the sky.

Got an understanding smile as I walked back to the boxcar. Remember
those. Tried the door of a deserted section foreman's house. It was open so I walked in. Old bedsprings. Cosmetic bottles. Dust. A newspaper. Drip. Drip. Drip of an open pipe. 2 cups on the table, and beside them a paper can of frozen orange juice, unfrozen for 2 years and black as defeat. Black silk panties lifeless and flat except for the secretion impregnated crotch which struggled against gravity. I looked in the closets. I could use an old hat.

**Fantasy:** "So you take the fucking thing." He grabbed the closet pole and pulled it down. He broke it on the pipe that passed across the middle of the room.

Her hand shook as she opened the orange juice, her voice was level, "I thought you weren't gonna do that again."

He looked at her, shaping claws. "Goddamn you goddamn you. Oh, Jesus" He spun and went out. The door was already broken. She heard the screeendoor break.

She put the orange juice can down. She looked across the room at it. "Oh, well, I'll take it. But I never really wanted it." Lies, lies, lies. She no longer knew if she wanted it or not. But he was gone. This was it.

How to get to Denver? Maybe Boulder. She started shaking again and knocked her purse off the table, scattering the beautification trinkets and amulets. The table caught and pulled her hair as she knelt to pick up the matchbooks, pilfered ballpoint pens, lipsticks, sample bottles of perfume, handlotion bottles, balled up kleenexes, and other sediment of undirected life. As she pulled her hair, a tube of lipstick rolled quietly across the uneven floor. She was having trouble seeing.

He walked to his pickup. He was shaking. 3 years. 3 fucking years. Why couldn't she wait 3 fucking years? I'd be retired by then. We could get out of all the dreary railroad towns and maybe get a place in Boulder.
He started the pickup and backed up without looking, his tires jerking up dust and gravel. He backed over the pole beside the driveway and the pickup bounced. Unaware of the action, he glanced to see if she might have seen. He turned around and drove toward the cafe, his stomach empty with an emptiness beer and burger would never fill. And he knew it.

I walked across the bare room and picked up the lipstick tube. I opened it. Nearly new. I put it in my pocket.

Outside, I drew an angry woman on the side of the boxcar behind ours. The wax melted and ran in the hot sun.

I climbed into our boxcar and wrote on the wall:

- toys: yoyos
- frisbees
- dolls
- and hats
- money
- marbles
- planes
- and boxcars

Where did I leave from last night? Oh, yeah, Grand Junction. Headed for Pablum no, Pablo er, Pueblo. Names so hard to recall.

"Where're ya goin?" I had asked Dark Bo.

"Texas. Fort Worth."

He had said Huston before. "What for?"

"See what's happenin. Look around. Stay a while. Travel on."

Like you looked at Grand Junction, I suppose. My suspicions were confirmed. He didn't know where he was going. He had no home. No one. Where was he living? No where. No geography. When? Sometime back then.

He does it all the old way

I shivered as I sat in the sun, my legs hanging out over the dashing ballast.

There was a certain grandeur in greek hell. Sisyphus. The circle

But to be on the rails all my life. To dodge yarddicks who are not there. To speak often of Salvation Army soup kitchens and Goodwill Store clothing and flophouses, culverts, warmup sheds, boxcars with cardboard, old paper, wooden floors and only one open door. To hide in the shadows and recognize more and more of the faces of the others until they are all familiar and none of them are friends, all as lost as me.

Remember how it was, Parris? Trying to get to the place that offered it, being trapped by all those expectations when you didn't really want to go? You cannot go where you do not want, so the rails twisted and turned and the connections were wrong and the trains left without you, and you got the wrong information or the wrong train. You tried to get there for years, didn't you? And finally you forgot where it was you were supposed to go, or why. Then you discovered that the trains never stopped and that you could never get off. And after a while that stopped hurting, too.

Eternity winding down. Lazy entrophy.

A dying dog. A dying causal dog.

The magic drained, then the manhood, then the stuff you started with. Angels look without compassion. "Slackjaw."

Rain, and the scene smears like muddy watercolors.

Next life. Next life. Always that, right? Born retarded again and again. That magic. You were high when this all started. Remorse is of no use now.

Rain.

Even in the sunlight of solstice, rain.
Dark Bo had his back to me, moving loose with the jolting train that stumbled up the hill. I am sorry Bo, but what can I do? You suck my energy because you let yours slip away with lusts, weaknesses, accommodations, habit, your will going like mist in a sudden breeze.

I am scared. I am Bo. Dark Bo, where is your light?

No. No. I am not Bo. The gravity well. The dark hole. I can still decide. I can have strength. Green indian. White man.

Whew!

It's heavy. that thought. And you know it's true. It's the eternity principle. Eternity can hit you at any time. Forever fighting with your life. Forever sitting in the cabin door alone, the case of beer between your feet. Forever skinning the cat. Helean, sucking you away. thinking he's doing you a favor. Maybe he is. "Say, Freddie, here's your case," or "You can start work tomorrow." Never "Mr Lavoie." The best catskinner in the country. Folks driving up Fishcreek, they see your skid roads, nearly perpindicular over the cutbanks and riverbed cliffs. Skid trails. A mark. You made a mark, Fred. But what happened? Why this erosion? Sitting alone in the forever cabin door with a forever beer in the hand.

Oh, Fred, can I have real compassion? I am afraid of feeling like you do. But something inside me hurts and feels when I see you, or when I hear you trying to flog a dying tongue, or pointing at your ears.

Erosion.


Herbert. Shuffles through Missoula. He graduated cum alude.

The Gibby Brothers. 3 men, 25 paces between them, filing through Missoula.
Jack, not John anymore, eaten up with cancer, trying to forget your wife is sleeping with the boss. A lot. Drinking heavy and still the pain. I could understand the anger.

The hardhearted. The uptight rednecks. Them or Herbert or Dark Bo or Fred or the Gibby Brothers who trained through town.

"Slip is crash's law." Emily wrote that.

Those towns I'm passing through, so hard to name. Because I wasn't there?

But, "I remember every face of every man who put me here," says Dylan. I put myself here. And I know it.

No one to blame. My weights are my own.


Then a slow decay. Repression climbing again. GOOD almost impotent against the nearly exact balance of conditioning. Where's the error?

Outside my boxcar window, black, bent vegetation passes. Herbicides. Litter.

We should know by now.

The few whole men. They are persecuted, not often followed. If followed, then assassinated by the faction otherness. Lincoln. Jesus. Martin Luther King. Kennedy.

Say for a moment this universe is the direct result of me. Who I am. What I see. Say for a moment that if I were absolutely whole I'd see Paradise on earth.
Heaven and Hell, side by side.

Personalized.

Particular.

Say for a moment that I am one with my universe. Always have been. (Question that later.) It was shitty when I came on the scene. My father was a dock worker, never married to my mother.

"You bitch, you say anything about that, and I'll tell them about Seattle," my stepfather would scream.

Mom would cower a moment, "Yeah, you would. My only sin," she'd scream back.

He didn't tell me though. Until I asked him pointblank.

Wars. Mother would read letters from stepfather Loyd. Away. Far away. She was brave and sad, and years later she told me of 'Cactus Pete' "Don't breathe a word of this to your brother and sisters, but you are not Loyd's son. You are Cactus Pete's son. He was," a sigh, the spirit intervening with a sigh too deep for words, of dissolved dreams, "such a beautiful man, Biff, such a beautiful man."

Change. Change. Why is it so hard? Poets struggle against it. The creative act in life is not a book, a work, it is LIFE. Evolution, you are so hard a father. But whole men exist. How do we know? We, who are only men. Nixon, or Lincoln; who do we follow? A man half-asleep perceives but half of the man awake.

"You want leaders, but get gamblers instead." --Dylan.

Maybe we inherit the world of our fathers. Then at maturity we are granted, if we have asked, a chance to change. A vision of the Garden.

"We gotta get ourselves back to the Garden." Mitchell.

Can we change it, even now?

Mother and Loyd reunited after the war. Mother said to me, "Your
father was reported Missing In Action. Loyd was a beautiful man, too, though unlike your father, and Loyd adopted you." Mother so lonely because Loyd was going to stick with the Navy to retirement, and lonely because of her own expectations. Her magic somewhat evaporated. And Loyd drinking too much after they taught him the vision without clearing his mind.

Drinking to drunkenness. Coming home. Mother screaming and being physically violent. Loyd saying, "Quiet. Leave me alone." and trying to hold her hands until she got so wild that he had to hit her. Then she'd lay there and scream murder and bleed all over the kitchen floor, or rug, "Call the Police! Call the Hospital! Kids! Kids!" 3 of us would stand there in shock. Love torn. Pain torn. Minds, hearts, both torn. Catatonic.

"Kids. He's killing me. Call the neighbors." Sometimes we did.

I've seen the Garden. I remember my childhood. Have I chosen?

In the lonely quiet evenings, she'd talk to us, "Your dad's an alcoholic. He is mean when he's drunk. He doesn't really love us."

Until we believed in alcoholism. Then he'd come home and they would find that argument where the love should have been. Violence. After years of separation, in which mother reported the FBI, the CIA, deputies, and death-traps set for her, she told stories of 'The Monster' until we all, rather deeply, believed her.

But not entirely.

Change?

Change. We get our chance.

But change means it can get worse as well as better, doesn't it?

Who can blame those who do not ask for a chance at change? Those who can drift or fight for the status quo?

It's a destiny, riding those rails, forever heading for ?what is it.

A nice destiny to sacrifice.
Change.

Be strong.

Tomotem says meaningfully, "No contribution is too small."
Contribute.

So I sing a song about railroadin and herbicides to myself:

Stumbling--a song:

Ridin the rails
Knapweep, rip tide
Ridin the rods.
  Cold n hot
  Steel singin:
Brown towns
Green towns
Trailer house white.
Rip tide, tumble sighs
Whirlpool sight
  Of that rag leave,
  Mumble weed
Manmade rain.
I see bent-tan
Black canned
Goodbye kitty litter
Mullein litter,
  Manmade mind.
Metal noise
And the pardoned voice
Of a one-flesh oboe sun
  So high
And I'm
  Sooo...
  long.

I probed to glimpse what was going on in my head and downtown mind.
The song coming without much censorship. But the poem was too cute and
the core somewhat fractured. I zipped the lipstick up and did a quick
drawing--no physical thing in mind, no gimmick or image. Make it fast, then
I can look at it and maybe get a clue or see a truth in it. I drew the
picture that follows.
"There is a time in our lives when we have our whole minds--no unconscous. Our task, from that time on, is to keep our unconscious from growing back."--Dexter Roberts.

I finish. I looked at the red lipstick, then at the white paper. I let my eyes jump nervously, then sit still for so long that I could see the paper breathe. I let my eyes remain fixed, yet unstrained, until I could see my field of vision undulate, form, dissolve, and reform as my brain scanned the unchanging data. This area of the drawing came forward, then that. The center of the drawing moved about.

I had an interpretation. Quite strong. Am I going to believe myself, or not?

Dream revelation, visions, they are little if the seer does not act, they are nothing if the seer does not believe.

I tried to change my perspective, "What did I experience this morning? What thoughts? What words have I said?"

Trying to see in the oncoming headlights, the windshield wipers smearing the mud sprayed up by passing cars and trucks.

After all my exploration, a simple objectifying of lines. 3 Objects. A harpy. A hitcher. A heart.

Of course the original drawing is the whole. And that should relate the most.

There is a possibility that I'm seeing what I want to see, but my view looks like a headsdown hiker and his heart being pursued down the RR track by a mindless but vitriolic, corrosive ostrich.

The train entered a long tunnel and I held my breath to avoid the carbon-monoxide and the deisel smell. I pondered my drawing and analysis in the dark.
Let me talk. Talk? Typical whiteman words. Paper man. The scratching of a pen, the rattling of a typewriter, such a tiny voice. About presence, for that is best how to get at Dark Bo. It is similar to bumbling, being constantly aware of another's presence, and feeling that presence influence my inertia and momentum. In bumbling there is shared laughter over the mutual effort not to be an aggressive boss or a cipher. False starts, poor turns, somewhat inefficient motion in this understudy angelhood as 2, or more, sensitives seek the middle way. When the Way is attained, the union is integration and the unit is greater than the sum of the parts. With Dark Bo it was something else. Something like putting molasses on a child's fingers and handing her a feather. It is a time-consuming, attention-directing, study in pointless activity and frustration. I wanted to be free of him. He was so self-conscious that waves of it rolled from him and crashed on my seawall. As long as he was in the area I was onstage before an audience that was trying desperately to imitate me, trying desperately to stay awake, trying not to be bored as I picked my nose, rolled up my sleeping bag, or watched the countryside roll by. I felt dark vibes coming from him--HE WAS NOT SHOWING HIMSELF.

"Want a hotdog?" he asked.

"I'd rather not. But thanks. I'm OK." Hungry is all. But not much of a meat-eater, and hotdogs are largely spice and preservative anyway.

"Go ahead." He thrust it at me.

I looked him in the eye, stood my ground, and shook my head. I was hungry.

"Take the last 2. If you don't I'm just gonna toss em out. They'll be turning bad soon."

Waste? "I'll take em." And as I sat there eating his hotdogs, I felt
he had eroded my 'no.'

A NO that means NO is the cornerstone of a man.

Before Ed Christopherson died, Jan said, "Dad used to be too permissive with us. He'd say 'yes' or 'maybe', because when he said 'no', that was that."

The hotdogs were good. 'He that has more than enough, shares.' But I was certain I would reap little nourishment. First, because they eroded my 'no', second, because the spirit of give-and-receive was absent, and third, because I did not feel good toward him.

I was finding it difficult to be myself around him. A semi-conscious thing, like walking slower for the old man at my side but not mellow. More like being phoney sugar sweet at the church tea. It slammed and bound up inside me. I could feel my ?hostility ?fear ?dislike lying inside of me. A pool of mercury. Heavy Corrosive. Toxic.

I flipped the relationship and looked at it again.

Prejudice from myself. The distance he maintained was a result of my judgments. I disliked him. All my negatives could be springing from myself and reflecting back to me from him. That would make him a cipher. A zero. I'm doing him no favor ascribing all the negative to myself. If his function is mirror, then he must have a viable awareness. Somewhere there. But he is reflecting a roadbed of 10 years ago, at least. And everything he tried to teach is either out-of-date, obvious, or cliche.

Cliche. That's it. He's a stereotype. A stereotype clinging to me for the little strength I still possess.

If I find a middle way with him, I will be slowly eroded until nothing is left. Eaten. My unconscious original acts absorbed by his eyes--hence, made conscious--until I, too, am not aware, but self-conscious of every act.

Reduced to a stereotype of myself. A parody. No more original action.
He is my conscious mind. The flat mirror
I am afraid.
Bite. Chew.
A sawdust hotdog.

I am the positive, the irresistible force. He is the negative, the mirror-immoveable object. If we contact ZAP! Impotence. Zero. The ability to interfere for good--arrested.

I shook my head. That was a long trip. A deep trip into the dark.

(It continues yet.)

I drink a swallow of the water.

Dream: I live underwater I see the bright blue surface just above me. Martha is beside me. Bev and Ashley somewhere nearby. I swim without effort. Twist. Dive. Dart and spin. I put my face close to a large sunfish's yellow face and make faces as he slowly lists and passes. He has several large black spots. Our house is underwater. The water is very like the infinite blue void. A voice, or expectation, or suggestion, comes to me, "Put your head down through the thermocline." I look hard at the surface below the surface. It is frosted like glass. Thermocline. A powdery dark blue grey, like the seacolor under dark skies. I refuse.

Bo asks, "Can I have a drink?"

I would have offered. As much as I dislike him, I would be in extreme circumstances before I would refuse anyone a drink.

The canteen comes back very light.

I cap it and look out the door The sunlit country is beautiful. The dish of space slowly rotates as I watch. I am here. I feel him move to the other door. I turn and look directly at him. He stands loose, used to the railroad earthquake, doing the Boxcar Bounce, but the country passing outside seems to bore him.
I turn to look out. I feel he is waiting to get this side. His side has the sun, but the view is of the bank. My view is of a valley, stream, and forest. He had this space earlier, I'll let him have it after I've had my fair share.

What a peculiar thought to think while looking at a beautiful valley. I see a tunnel coming, so I hyperventilate, then pump air into my lungs with my mouth. Hold Dark. The light fades. Black. The boxcar rocks, clanks, dips, and I think of the subway in New York--looking at the car, or maybe 2 cars ahead or behind, and realizing by their angles and elevations that the subway train is turning, ascending, or descending sharply. A metal earthworm fleeing in panic. Dark. The light returns. Light Explosive exhale. The boxcar is full of blue smoke. I reach my head into the air. The diesel smoke is clotted red in the sun and it hangs along the train, but the air outside the boxcar is much preferable to the air caught in the tunnel.

My turn is over. I go and sit on my pack.

Dark Bo crosses immediately to the door I have vacated.

I walk to his door, then turn and regard him. Now he is bored on the right side of the train.

I sit in the door in the sunlight, my legs flying over the signal switches and cruel ballast.

The train pulls onto a siding and stops. In less than a minute a northbound train rushes by on the main road. That's perfect timing. If all timing comes from Denver, that's impressive.

Our train pulls out and accelerates again.

I wonder if Dark Bo holds his breath in the tunnels.

I sit in the sun and progressively loosen up as the boxcar heats with
the day I remove my down jacket and stash it at the downwind side of the door. I test the wind with a pinch of dust. If the jacket blows at all it will be pushed to the rear of the car. The sun is sinking into my skin.

I remember watching the river below the ranch in Alberton. The water on a rock. Water green to crystal washing up on a watercarved boulder of greenbluegrey only slightly porous argillite. I did not see what my mind knew—a pitcher of this stone would hold water for weeks, cool—rather I could see the rock grow wet ahead of the wave, and the wash would meet surface water brought up by capillary action instead of meeting argillite. Then the wave would run down the rock, followed by the water of the rock. I could see the edge of the wave sharply against the rock. There was no surface tension and the edge of the wave was distinct. The wave would wash up and run down without distortion, meeting no resistance, and the residual water of the rock would breathe in and out to meet the wave. Water friction-proofing. Water protecting the rock from each wave. It seemed the wetness of the rock pulled the wave up onto the rock, and was pulled back down again as the river felt the wave reach some invisible limit of tension. Occasionally an odd wave would come from an unexpected quarter, break, and escape. No matter. The rock would become dark with water ahead of the wave. It anticipated all motion of the river. Immediacy. Mutual being, river and rock. River meeting no resistance in the rock, passing through it like the earth, rain, wind and sunlight pass through the arbitrary lines men draw to divide my property from yours. Or to divide Mexico from Texas. The wave was a miracle, and I sat for some time that sunny afternoon, watching miracle follow miracle.

And now I sit, feeling the miracle of sun into skin and into flesh, giving myself to the warmth. The river the sun. The rock the flesh. I
removed my shirt and tossed it behind my jacket, and removed my boots and
tossed them ontop of the shirt. Sun worshipper. Cathedrals are grand,
tabernacles awe-full, adobe missions, stonehenge. (Insulation.) Insula-
tion like a bureaucracy. "A committee," says Weird Bob, "is a device for
slowing down time." By filtering data, by selection, by resistance. All
that data out there, pervasive as sunlight, could be picked up all at once,
says Aldous Huxley, to look like osterized vegetable soup, or filtered
through the selective resistance of the brain until the true order is re-
duced to a skeletal structure we can understand. Too much of a good thing.
Western history And attempts to repress thought and experience. Dark
Ages and heavy, dark buildings. Massive dark churches shutting down the

Far-off voices echo Gregorian chants, "Ky-ri-eee  

I think of acclimatizing myself to the sun. A little more each day.
I think of evolution. Limit the input with high threshold until the
skeletal structure of the universe is grasped, or till the organism can
react to the critical environmental changes, then progressively reopen as
fast as the organism can survive, until a consciousness evolves that can
encompass all of the data. Now.

I'd call that unification with God.

People who hide from the sun, from the night, from rain, wind, and
each other, behind doors, windows, walls, and their papers, behind their
repressive laws and stern judgments, behind the authoritarian father figure,
those people strive to hide from themselves and they deny themselves, and
they deny God.

All that from sunlight.

I hold my hand up in front of the sun and see the red light through
it. My flesh is an electromagnetic jelly in space--now in glorious light.
The illuminated jelly. My bones, seat of my deepest attachment, are darkest. Thick cathedral walls. My skin is yelloworange. Foliage shading my nerve cells. My eyes are most clear. Resist the sun not at all. Through them I see the jelly of space illuminated by the penetrating sun.

I may intellectually, egotistically resist myself and my God. My flesh does not resist the sun. The source of light. My dumb flesh and its God.

In this, my flesh is Wise.

I open my canteen and take one slow swallow. Mis-SOUL-a. Ah--wiping my mouth with the back of my hand--water and sun. Water and sun. Who needs more?

Evolution of man to that point. Direct use of sunlight. No other source of nourishment/energy necessary, except perhaps water.

Very high indeed.

Creatively integrating all data now.

Finally donating to Terra full consciousness without rapacious appetite.

Revegetating Butte's open cancre pit mine.

Detoxifying both oceans. Air. Water

Sunlight and water.

Riverwater and rock.

Originator-observer awareness, creator from and of

I cannot recall mile markers and the name of the many towns the train slowed for and pulled through. That gives me pause. That is similar to forgetting the name of someone I have just been introduced to because I was so unaware at that moment, similar to passing through life without fast or famine or feast. I do recall high, nearly perpendicular hardrock cliffs
over a fast turquoise stream and the roadbed that aggressively shared the narrow canyon. Dark Bo pointed out the highest cablecar in the world, he said, but a curve and high cliffs covered it. Fishing holes. Green hills. Square fields. Small towns relaxing into ruralurbanity, then into small farms and square fields. It's a scramble. Did we run through Delta and Montrose, or down the Gunnison River? Seems it was all uphill. I watched for highway signs. Seems I remember Aspen.

I do remember Leadville.

I was standing on the opposite side of the car, looseknee looking, when Dark Bo said, "Hey! I'm sorry. Your coat just blew out. I tried to catch it but I was too slow. It just blew out."

No sense getting angry, that's a waste of energy and it moves my mind from center. "Too bad," I understated.

I turned and looked out. A Leadville sign had just passed. I mentally photographed the scene. If, as suggested, we returned to Leadville in a month, I would commandeer a company truck or something and come find it. Sunlight wouldn't hurt it. Rain might, but it'd dry quickly out here.

I did not feel too badly. I had checked the wind though Dark Bo? In his truckbag? Maliciously kicking it out. Watching disinterestedly as a sleeve, an arm, then my jacket, shipped out. Maybe he was the black agent of my death, as I had suspected, sipping my soul like a lazy mint julep.

"Can I have a drink of your water?"

"Yeah. Sure." Can't refuse a man water, if I have any to spare. Still, I brought enough for one and I'm not sure how far we are to go. If I have enough to share, I will. I wondered if I'd have the strength to refuse him a drink if it were a life-and-death issue?
Where are we? I am lost. Aspen? Leadville for sure. A train is nice travelin because I can see river canyons, farmland, and a roadsighnless view of the forest. Trains seem wilder than highway travel. Deer will not run far from a track, but stand a safe distance and watch. But after a trip, after reaching Seattle or Boise or Detroit or whatever, I am never too sure of the route I have traveled. En route, I am never sure of the point I am at upon the earth. For this reason I do not trust trains.

In a bus I am navigator-advisor In a car I am captain. I fix my own position, establish speed and azimuth over established paths. How does a road get where it's going? At this point on the road I cannot see the end. To find the best route, engineers must be at the end of the road as well as at the beginning and the middle. As I travel I estimate miles. Check off towns.


But on a train, on the surface of my earth, my dependable earth that moves with the predictable inexorable slowness of geologic ages, I feel lost. Where am I now? Now? And now? This is an innate fear of train riders. Point A to point B across earth's face. What was in that space?

Next time I'm in a train I want a route map and I want to see landmarks.

True there are few tripmarks on a trip of the mind. Like life, f'instance. Riding through the void on the river--the river is the trip itself--passing the sideshow and Tantalizing Tortuous Tanya. The fly in
the air the spiderweb. A pattern too large to grasp too many decisions too many choices turn left, up, dow. stuck. Does Máya trap me by hypnotism? Center to edge, edge to center to edge to Máya, fascinating as a spiderweb of the mind. Quicksand of the mind.

But here I am. Right here.

I discover I am a fly Here I am. And I know there are spiderwebs out there. I am out there. I stay under my leaf, catatonically safe. Soul in. Soul out. I oscillate between thought and action, a Hamlet fly. I dismally seek a spiderweb to end the dilemma, a suicide fly. I am a fatalist fly--the web may or may not get me, I will not change my flight plan. A traditionalist fly. A reactionary, conservative, liberal, radical fly. A student teacher fly. A parent fly. A student fly. A writer fly. Weild Bob says, "The spider does his art. He makes his web because that's what he is. He makes it as best he can, without thinking of the fly because he knows nothing of flies. The fly flies without fear, not knowing of webs. The art of being a fly demands searching. The art of spider demands a web. If the spider does his art well, he is delighted to find a meal in the middle of his sculpture. These things cannot be separated from each other. Not if they are to have meaning." Pause. "And a bird will eat a spider."

So heres the hitchhiker, trainridin-fly going south on a metallic river, captive of a train, captive companion of a chitinous and bilious dark Bo. Lost on his own planet.

Oh Gyroscope

Oh Inner Director

help this poor homeless white fly.
To Pueblo, never sure of the path I have traveled. 'Burning bridges behind me,' is echoing in my mind. How could I ever retrace my steps if I don't know where I've been?

Is that what a lost soul is? A soul that cannot remember the way back home?

Further and further into the quicksand of the mind. "Where are ya goin?' "Huston." "Where are ya goin?" "Fort Worth." "Where are ya goin?" Denver." "Austin." "Pueblo." "La Junta." "Where are ya headed?"

Hand-over-hand over the abyss.

I was afraid.

So afraid that I nearly escaped into the safety of the intellect.

--Why be so upset over a normal set of incidents? Tomorrow will come and I shall understand my foolishness. Its easy to fool myself into thinking that certain patterns of thought are true, that occurrences of feeling and premonition are significant.

I know what I heard.


I know what I saw. And what I almost saw.

--That's insanity. I suppose I could make any experience 'significant' if I underline only a select portion.

The underlining was the part of the message. That is meaning.

--Sure. Pick any meaning you want. You're playing 'fall' right now. In a year it'll make no difference. No difference at all. You're already on the bus anyway. You can't jump out in Leadville. Just toss out your truck and stay. Ride it out without being afraid. Its a trick of your unformed mind. Soft, spongy, unstructured boogyvision. Make believe--
Belief.

--Cheap parlor trick. I know what'll happen. Tomorrow and tomorrow. You'll be the same. You won't die. You can pick what to believe.

Bullshit. I'll believe my experience.

The train is sidetracked again and stopped. I'm shaken. Insanity is a possibility. Maybe I fear the world. Maybe I fear being on my own. Maybe if I turn tail 180° and run back home, even if I could remember or discover the exact route and walk it if I had to, I would not really be returning out of some desire for higher order, but out of fear for this trip and the job. Maybe I'm afraid to work.

No. I know better than that. Maya. There is a point to life. There must be.

I am being something of an asshole, though.

I unscrewed the lid of my canteen. It was nearly empty. Only a few swallows remained. The boxcar was very hot and dry. We were stopped upon another siding. Maybe I should offer Bo a drink. He is human, although my psyche has made him such a dark player. "Drink?"

"Yeah." He got up and came over as the northbound train passed on the main track. He took the open canteen. I hope he only takes half of the remainder. That's how I'm rationing now. He tips up. 1. 2. 3. Swallows. That must be just about it.

He turns to me with his eyebrows lifted in question.

--Aw, what am I so afraid of?

I shook my hand by my tipped and listening ear, pantomiming half--"There's very little left." (Preserve.) --and half. "Go ahead and finish it."

He tipped it up. Gulp.

Gulp.
He killed it.

Crash! The mechanical lightning as the train unslacked. Deep shock. Shudder.

The noise struck deep. My mind remembered the concussion. Remember the sound and feel of a blow to the head- where the wound actually interferes with thought for a millisecond.

Was that the last of it?

Of me?

He handed me the canteen, lid off, and HE looked into MY eye for a full second--the only time- and said, "Good to the last drop."

The mask of tragedy.

The greek chorus goes, "Ohhh " in a dying fall. In that dropping song of disappointment.

Dark Bo is wearing his smile. A leer. A humorless grin.

The earth shudders as the train begins to move. South.

"You're going to die," it had said.

"Good " Sinister sarcasm. " to the last drop," he had said. Last.

Last drop.

Drop.

The train pulled onto the main, accelerating. South.

I carried the open canteen to my packsack propped against the wall and tossed it in.

Time accelerated south.
I walked to the door in a daze of YesNo, and looked unseeing at the country for a long time. Should I jump? Why not? The train is going too fast. Am I dead?

The water is gone.

(Look to your seeds.)

That last stop. The train going north. My last connection? My chance to change? My chance to get out of the Southbound Sinker and maybe I'd have to wait, but I would be sure to catch a northbound sometime.

For a very long time I look at the scenery without seeing. I will not speak to Dark Bo again on this train.

Remorse is the wisdom that comes too late.

The water is gone.

Is it?
Is it!
A chance!
The ENTIRE game. The WHOLE pattern!
All I need is a seed.
Seed!
I hide my excitement as I walk to the pack. I shelter my motion from Dark Bo as I lift the canteen and put my finger inside.
Its wet!
In my mind I see a mist on the inner canteen wall.
In my eye I see early morning Alabama frost.
I put the lid on and close it tightly.
I return to my open door and see the country once again. No words for Dark Bo.
As we roll into Pueblo I see thick concrete dividing walls 4½-5' tall between each of the tracks. We come in on the westernmost track. I'm looking out the west door on the right. I am very thirsty.

Concrete dividers. "Abandon all hope?"

No. Not yet.

The train stops and we jump down. Dark Bo is talking a lot. "Water is in the switchman's shack. You want the Santa Fe over to the east there." He points. I say nothing.

Then, without prior warning or manifestation of intention, he is leaving, "So long."

He who clung, he is leaving without proper parting. I am not conscious of what proper parting is, but I do know he left without it.

And the clincher

. . . instead of walking away, he grew smaller and smaller he diminished.

Then disappeared.

Dark Bo is gone. I felt an immense relief which comingled with the suspicion that I was now totally superficial and conditioned. Soulless. Could I function on this plane? I scoped around. There the high tower. There a smaller building—sign over the door, 'Railmen Only.' I went in. Empty.

I set my pack down and withdrew the canteen. Lid off, finger in, and I rediscovered the good moisture. I filled it slowly, drank my fill out of it, then retopped it. I sealed it tightly I then drank from the watercooler. Refilled. Refilled. Refreshed.

Here I am, alone in Pueblo, Colorado, and I feel I have been
I looked at my face. Incredibly grimy. I dug in the toiletry pocket of my pack for soap, cloth, toothbrush, and listened to the phone in the attached office scream. Should I answer? I felt I was an interloper. Alien. Intruder. How much of that feeling is true, and how much the projection of my disappointment with myself?

2 big men entered aggressively. Big because I felt small. Aggressive because of my tenuous relationship with myself and with my world. I flashed on that relationship for the time one thought takes, and as I said "Hello," trying to eyeball confidence and honesty right into the immediately disapproving eye of the obvious boss, I was considering my chances of becoming a total zero, impotent, and perhaps even overtly insane. The image I was attempting to communicate--intelligent, alert, innocent, 30-year-old confident young man--failed to create a case for myself.

The tall thin man, with a tight black mustache and tight lips said, too loudly, "What do you want?"

"I'm hitchin through to Tucson to a job. I understand I get on the Santa Fe here for La Junta. Where's the Santa Fe office?" I was having trouble speaking. My tongue heavy and slow.

"Straight over there," he pointed through walls, "about a quarter mile." Then with no hint of apology or kinship, "You can't stay here."

I know. I am an alien. I have no right to be present here, I felt, and I was sure if these dudes had been sensitive they would have felt that vibe. Hell, they were probably transmitting it. I plunged ahead, years of using my innocence lending me impetus, "Can I change clothes here? Quickly."

The heavier shorthair, looking one part middle class christian to four parts of that construction foreman that chased Granny Walton off Walton's Mountain, said, "Do it in the can," then looked at tight lips for
approval. There was no overt disagreement, so I grabbed up my toilet things and the change of clothes and went into the can.

Out of their eyesight I felt better. Disapproving disciplinarian daddy, that might be their game. Each struggling to be the top authority figure. Each trying to be a more efficient machine. Crisp computers. Only objective. Quite unlike me, I mumbled mentally, as I changed in seconds and tried to wash my face. The face was staying dirty.

Dark Bo's face looked stained with years of boxcar soot.

Only minutes down, I came out and repacked my truck. Fresher. Not clean, but cleaner. I wanted to look acceptable. Betting on externals reflects little confidence. The understudy foreman came out to watch. I had some info and a suggestion, so I tried to talk again, "I saw a lot of old ties along the railroad on the way here. It clutters up the landscape. I think if you could suggest that the ties be pulled whole, as they were some years ago, and sold to farmers, even cheaply, as treated fenceposts, you could advertize your environmental efforts and save money."

The words lodged in my mouth. My ears felt no resonance. I realized that despite his clear eyes and alert face, he could not hear me.

--Maybe you are already in hell.

He just stood there like he wanted me to get to the point. So I continued in my own inertia, "Or if its much cheaper to cut them in half, toss them onto a flatcar and advertize the environmental angle and sell 'the wood as fuel.'"

Just words. Nothing happened. A normal voice over a valley gap. I tried to speak flowingly and freely, instead each phrase was a new effort. Chunks and fragments of meaning tumbled down, although my words were enunciated, physiologically, quite well.

Stone face, "We hump em all."
"It's a communicable idea," I stuttered. I lofted my pack. I do not like to see that wood go to waste or mess up the countryside. But it's obvious that I'm not going to change #2 boss while he's on company ground. "Thanks a lot," I sarcasted as I left the lounge.

Railroad can be a strange world. Full of bodies physically heavy and strong and insensitive to psychic energy. Its level #1. Level #1 is the superficial action of looking a man in the eye. If you are a tough man you can browbeat smaller men. Level #2 is knowing what takes place eye-to-eye. Real communication. 2-way. A bully at this level is less able. His karma of violence and physical strength muddies his water. Level #3 is feeling and knowing. Experiencing. Identifying. Equalizing.

The pistol was the 'equalizer' alright. It made the small, the petty man--who may have stood 6'6:"--equal to the big man, although the small man might have to shoot from behind anyway--Lincoln, Crazy Horse--or from a great distance--Kennedy.

Outside the air was clear. Edges were sharp. My mindfield was still quite well integrated.

I walked to the Santa Fe house.

It was quite a small stationhouse. Compact. Clean. Efficient. Perhaps a younger setup. The basic house was the same as any I had seen so far--new red brick, white mortar and concrete, implement-grey handrail piping, aluminum windowframe, slightly green tinted plateglass. U.P. S.P. Santa Fe. Must've been some big contract gone down.

I parked my truck in the small ante room and hit their john. My face was still dirty, so I used paper towels, their water, effort. My special soap--the soap had started cloudy cream and had slowly turned transparent gold; I would like to get more of that soap--and 30 minutes to get pretty.
I brushed my teeth thoroughly. I emerged clean.

I started asking about connections to La Junta. This station was full of younger, intelligent-looking men, but no one could estimate the best ride to Tucson or Phoenix or Flagstaff.

"Well," rubbing a very closely clipped beard, "I'd hit the Santa Fe to La Junta. They remake the trains there, is fact. One there will go to Alburqueque. In Albuquerque, I'd catch "

"get back on that U.P. Get on down to Trinidad "

"little blue train, thats what. Tell ya what, kid, at Trinidad you pick up the Santa Fe to Albuquerque. Santa Fe to Albuquerque. Than "

Oh, shit. At count, 5 connections to Flagstaff, and Flagstaff was not close to point B. I felt massive resistances roll into my path. I could probably overcome them, I've always been able to, but why do it? Why fight through a veil of difficulties when I am not convinced I want what's on the other side? There may be times a difficult obstacle will attract the conditioned man more readily than wide marble steps and red carpet; when crisis is more attractive than paradise. "When does the U.P. to Trinidad leave?"

"In a few minutes on track 6," an engineer spoke up. He had long red hair and a beard, and his face had opened up like the enlightened face. Still he didn't have much time to focus on me. I could see distractions pulled many of his eyes away from me. But he came on quite honest, so I drifted for track 6.

I found an open car. One door locked open. Paper here and there on the floor. Wooden floor I tossed my pack up. Jumped up and around. Sat in the doorway looking south as the late afternoon sun hit me. I relaxed to let feeling come.
It felt bad. I did not like what I was doing.

The boxcars seem massive and real. More real than I. If I fell against the dooredge, it would bite deep as a keen edge into cantaloupe. I would taste the rustbitter steel in the very cells of my brain. Cruelly sharp ballast to puncture. Bouncing boxcar floors to bruise bone deep. Railroad bosses who work like binary computers. And, later, stations where no one really knows which train is leaving when for where.

I might break if this boxcar takes me to Kansas City. That'd be too much. The more I'd push, the more resistance I'd find. Ghost riders on the rails.

I relaxed as I could.

And watched a young dusty walk down the train toward me. A long grey coat. Probably 20 years old. "Is this train going to La Junta?"

"As near as I can learn," I said. I flashed that maybe he'd travel with me, but he had a fearful forlorn look. Nervous. He headshook 'OK' and continued down the track. I thought of calling to him--I'd share a boxcar but I did not speak. The choice was his and I felt sure that he understood this.

In my quiet, contemplative mood I watched him search down the train. Cockroach seeking the dark. Photophobic.

Unthinking, I turned my eyes to the western sun.

Pushing, searching, pulling, kelp and the drowning man. I opened doors impulsively. Waves of feeling, some real, others called up consciously, wash up and over, submerging a fraction of my eye--the calm majority, nearly independent of what I call myself, observes.

Torn ocean surface pounding the slow iceburg tip.

Don't answer those separate waves. Answer only the infinitely longer meter.
Oh God, Oh You who call up infinite order, You who sees the unique order of chaos, please guide me

Argus in pain. Some eyes watching with great calm. Its alright. Some eyes darting in paranoia. Some eyes looking surreptitiously at the bright golden sun and white clouds- and wheres that sign? Eyes closed in sleep. Eyes rolled upon their own opticnerves, recoiled from pain. Eyes hypnotizing eyes. Distracted stargazing. Eyes calmly observing, undistorted and undisturbed even by the vision of their central organism ground in the riptide of indecision, of disintegration.

--This is serious. Mirthless laughter

Voices. Numerous as the eyes of Argus.

Recognize the Truth.

--Fool. Playing at meditation, mentation, who are you fooling?
--Look at me. Look at this. Look! Look out!
(He observes.)

Where am I? Which thought reflects the truth? Which do I act upon? There is no detail in the spume.

--See the actor acting his scene. Laocoon and the serpent on the sand.

Aye, serpent. Into the coils. Predator.

Whistling winds, sea froth. She comes up amid tempestuous waves and draws back the lance. Eternity. The lance is poised in the air. Shaft in crossbow. Rock in sling. Lightning running down the interstices of matter. Past as realization. Sea frozen like a Picasso drawing. She pulls. Muscles draw and her breasts follow like afterimage. The drunken Minotaur is unable to dodge the terrible inevitability of the piercing. Fixed. Transfixed. In the awful calm, he reaches to withdraw the shaft, but she lifts a mirror He looks. He looks. He sees
Sea froth. A serene sky.

--You? Theseus? Feminine wisdom? Humorless laughter

Car horns. Boxcar crashes. The roar of electrons, of nerves, of blood in capillaries, of a deep sea storm.

(That which endures

--Come to Charybdis. Come watch Charybdis. Watch Charybdis go center to edge. To center to edge to

What survives, Parris? What endures?

Some eyes know. Some voices speak. Oh that I could learn the silent language. Is there time? Does the soul vanish leaving the mindless computer in the infinite loop?

Questions. Questions. ?

"Everybody, listen to me/ I'm your captain, oh yeah "

--Some hero, wrapped in himself, playing out some autism. Soul in.

(He's reached the plateau.

This is a chance.)

--It's a joke. A charade. Forget it. Go on south.

Above, the majestic unfolds--slow colorful 3D chemical reaction of the universal life.

Divorced from the day. Put asunder from the harmony of the biosphere.

Guide me. Lead me. Let me know.


Memory: solo: You know you knew you should fly north. Convinced north was right. South was storm.

Reason: solo: My thin shadow, my parody You danced behind my doppel-ganger

Decision: solo: You will listen well.
Memory: solo: South was shapeless, and you sunk. North, I know, is solid form.

Reason: solo: Prove It now. So low, there may be no other time this clear. You see no sign because you look. Go to where Its from.

Decision: solo: You see my darker shadow. You will pray. You see yourself standing in my darker shade.

I change my scene. I pull my pack out of the boxcar and stand in a ballast meadow, surrounded by trains. I cast a furtive eye after the youngster I do not wish to be seen, but no matter I kneel without feeling the shards of stone. Focus. I must get it right. Oh God, guide me to my true heart.

The train crashes as slack is removed. The train, I see without looking behind me, moves slowly ahead as light as a fantasy, as delicate as māya.


Memory: 180° was right, you know.

Reason: You see no heavenly sign because you look. No blindside approach stands unguarded. Therefore listen to Memory, and let me color time.

Decision: Stand. Pick up your kit. And go.

I stood shaking. I would try it.

Behind me the train jerked impatiently, angrily, impotently

Memory, Reason, Decision: Calm. Calm the storm. Look. Look and listen. If you fail and if you die, picked by fish, bones abeach, you can die knowing, knowing you were responding to the last clear direction
you received.

I harnessed myself and strode along the train to La Junta. The train barked and whined, tugging at its chain. It clashed and rattled. I crossed 2 trains to get away from it.

--What are your chances? I remember "Shes come undone" and "Burning bridges behind me." What kind of chance does that leave for you?

I'll do now what I should have done before.

--What chance do you have? 180° from here? You have less than half your money left. 180°? Maybe you'll have to walk from Grand Junction to Price, you certainly can't buy a ticket.

I'll walk if I have to. If I'm required to. Train to Grand Junction. Bus as far as my money will go. Walk from Green River to Price if I can't get a ride.

--No chance, fool. You'll die of thirst out there with no rides. 180°? That way is sealed. Burnt bridges, remember? You'll die to find the road is really out, fool.

I'm going to do it.

--Turn your back on a good job because you fear it. Huge rationalizations, you. Lazy bum. Railroad bum. Turn around, that train ain't gone, yet.

I'm going north.

--You're insane. How'll you explain this? What'll people say?

If I can do the Right Act, if I can do God's Will, if I can live, I need explain to no one. I'm going north.

Notebook pages 120-121: Well, for what it is worth, I've decided.

As I understand my last real vision of my mind--illuminated, as it were, by God--I was supposed to go north. Back home.
But a) a dream of stopping (Oops! I'm out of steam) and
b) residue of an earlier decision

made me go south instead, the following beautiful morning. But I noticed
my mind and heart screaming as I moved south--see that previous picture--
+ much I've read in the Bible:

Hope drawn out makes the heart sick,
But longing come true
Is the tree of life.

--Proverbs 13:12

My mind fools me a great deal. Decisions. Priorities.
I pray this act is my true repentance.

Everything around me--except the earth and sky and God's creatures--
was foreboding. Do we need constant opposition in order to be? I don't
think so. Its quite a jolt however to find constant love and reinforcement.
But if we have the strength to do that, then our lives become
Real

I did not like what I was doing.

I think I feel better

HIGH ROAD NORTH

I walk firmly to the Rio Grande tower, the building beside the
first railman's lounge I visited in Pueblo. Inside I am quaking.

Christians. "Lorelei shows me into the tomb/Innocent Christian/
Your end will come soon" -?Iron Butterfly. I have discovered that true
love requires a true act. Why do so many Christians believe that Jesus
will do everything for them? They plan on denying a few things, being
passive, and having Jesus do it all. Maybe, if they really believe that,
it may work like that for them. And I suppose it does for some. But in
my experience, Godlove requires a personal change at some point, and that
in turn requires an act. Acts are difficult and they are real. Coming to life, awakening. Life is true action. The conditioning, what I am used to, 'the way I always do it', screams that I am forsaking something, screams that I am taking an unnecessary chance, screams that I am being entrapped and led—not if it requires an Act—away from It. It being what?

We are personally responsible for our own salvation.

Jesus makes it possible.

I entered the powerhouse. I was invisible. For a gulp I considered leaving, my experience with my mind must surely have been self-determination. I looked first at the back of a shorthair's head. He wore a blue pullover. Then I looked at a young man who stood like he enjoyed standing. I addressed him, "Can you tell me what time the next train for Grand Junction leaves?"

"I'm not too sure," he shrugged. Then he said someone's name.

The shorthair spun around easily. I did a sudden flash of recognition; WO Lane, a teacher in my innocence. He helped teach me a man can be honest about anything. He had received a deeply intimate interrogation to get his Cosmic security clearance through Army Intelligence. "If you pull your choke and they ask you, tell them." The railroad shorthair had the same easy face. Do we meet the same characters over and over? This Lane spoke easily, "The express leaves in about 30 minutes. Its on the track just southeast of here. Its flagged."

Eyebrows up. "flagged?" I mouthed.

"A blue metal warning sign stuck on the track. Maybe you saw it as you came in."

"a metal flag?" I was quick witted.

He rose easily A man at ease with himself. "I'll show you," with no sign of impatience. At the door he pointed, with a little surprise,
"Huh! It's just outside the door."

A--? what was it, 6" x 10"--

sign in a metal support that bolted
to the track. White letters. Blue
field. 'Danger. Men at work.'

"So that's a flag?" I was recovering.

"Yep. The train leaves in minutes.

We're just waiting for some meat for
the front end. There's a hill to pull."

I could tell by the genuine 'we' that he could do real work. I
thanked him and gave his last statement about half the thought it deserved.

I walked the short distance to the waiting train feeling slightly
reinforced by the way I had been given the accurate information. First
try. Verification unnecessary.

The forces of darkness--my own patterns of weakness--would not be
far behind, although creative action is beyond them. Have I done the
right thing? Would this action make any difference? Yes. I insist, yes,
this is right, and that doubting doublethink is the very metal of death.

I started passing down the north side of the engineless train looking
for the open boxcar. As I walked, doubt washed up then ebbed. I wasn't
buying any, but what if I could find no open boxcar?

So far no luck.

I walked further It felt like a quarter mile.

I looked at the dead bird at my feet, slowly flying behind stone
clouds. His form was recognizable, but melting like lazy ice into porous
soil It stung me to recall a Dream:

I am flying up the hill. Its joyous flight. I am over those
damnable power lines. Those lines that have caused me so much trouble.
But now I clear them. Ah, the trees, how I love them. Great green ghosts that sail down the dimensions through time. Tall, so tall I hang on tight and look down upon a distant earth, down upon lesser tree tops.

Rarified atmosphere.

I am losing altitude. Why? Flying was so easy I urge my steeds drive them onward.

Steeds? 2 white doves.

But I climb. Climb. It does not occur to me to land and rest the fatigued birds.

Suddenly I lose altitude, almost landing. One of the birds has died in my hand. I let it go, saddened.

I coast up the slope of the hill as I steadily lose altitude. I coast to the door of a white cottage and stand on the porch. The sun is golden with afternoon.

The second dove in my hand. Spent. Is she dead?

How can the dark powers know my dreams?

No I'm not turning back.

I continue down the train. No open boxcars. I did pass some truck trailers strapped onto flatcars. I would ride there if necessary. There must be an open boxcar, I insisted.

As I walked beside the train I approached a very high overpass. I suppose its a residual fear of post-and-lintel, but I shivered, thinking I would see written high above my head, 'Abandon all hope ye who enter here.' I suppose that would be at the bottom of the hill, and the dis-integrated walk like rusty resisting robots beneath that stone arch. But what I am aware of does no insidious damage, so I looked carefully at the rain-stained concrete, looking for shapes in those stains my injury could reconfigure into a demonic series of symbols or those letters. This kind
of thinking, I know, is extremely dangerous--what one looks for, one finds. It is insanity to think I will study every underpass and door lintel I pass through the rest of my life. The caveman still lives in me.

And I see the true roots of superstition. Superstition is the chitinous corpse of meaning. The form without the content. I have experienced integration in which a sign, a color, a sound, or the subliminal wording of my people took on unusual weight as my subconscious mind, more able to work from primary data and extremely subtle sensory input, directed my attention--the extra hands the ego can become--to that which is or will become extremely important to my life and work. This is meaning. I look up and see 3 extraordinary blue heron flying together down the river and suddenly know that I will float down that stretch of river with 2 friends. It comes to pass. That is meaning. Not often predictive, but most often illuminating the Now. Talking to a dude procuring land for highway right-of-way who was trying to intimidate me into selling 2 acres I can see he has no legitimate use for, I look from the window of the pickup and see a sparrow chasing a hawk. I can laugh. That is meaning. But if I wait to see a blue heron before I act, or change my act in fear because a chicken hawk flies by. that is superstition. If I see the headman--head=think, vision; headman=the man whose function is to see and think for the tribe; selecting any other kind of leader is self-destructive--study a steaming pile of chicken hawk guts, then stand and report that he knows where the buffalo are, and we find the buffalo there, I might kill a chicken hawk everytime I want insight. Whereas the headman was led by his awareness to the chicken hawk guts and found meaning there, mice corpses full of maggots full of buffalo dung, my conscious seeking of meaning in chicken hawk guts is superstition. If my son observes me studying chicken hawk guts for, he guesses, information--quite different
from meaning—he might do the same unquestioningly. And if my son forces
his son to do the same, ergo, institutionalized religion.

This passes in a flash. Not much time in a thought.

Still no open boxcar door—hey! I jog up to a door. Open 6" I try to open it further—A little hurriedly—Maybe a touch of hysteria. How much time until an engine is located? But no go. The door won't move.

I walk on down the track. Seems I've gone a half mile or more. The train sits on a curved track and I am walking outside the circumference of the circle. I can see only a few cars at a time. No open boxcars. Now I see the caboose. No open boxcars.

I look down at my feet as I am stepping over the second dead bird. Shock. SECOND?

One might have been coincidence. A fluke. How many dead birds have I seen in railyards? But a second along the same train, even if it were a mile long, that's not coincidence.

Ouch, ouch

Fuck it. I've gotta make it. I'll ride on the flatcars if I must.

There is someone in the caboose. A young dude. The youth have more compassion, tolerance, and kinship than hardened old timers. It's illegal, but maybe I can get a ride in the caboose. I walk up projecting collegiate and romantic vibes. I stand and talk, telling him my situation in the flow of bullshit. In the flow of conversation he says he's new to the job and does not want to endanger his position. "If I had my way I'd let you ride here, but" The youth—toady accommodators blindly seeking parental approval at the cost of their humanity. I smile at myself. I shrug. It was worth a try.

I turn to walk back up the train, and see a thin Mexican with a papersack that is nearly the same color as his shirt and slacks.
it said a man makes his own face after a certain age? The man's face was serene and strong. Made me feel good. He was going to try to hitch a ride on the caboose. We smiled this knowledge at one another. Good luck, "Good luck," I said as we passed.

I walked back up the train. I would try that almost-open boxcar again. I walked slowly, hoping for a realization. I looked behind me and saw the mexican following.

At the 6" opening I set my pack down. Using both hands I tried to slide the door Ugh! No go. I inspected the lock latch. Howzat thing work? Oh yeah It was crushed. The roller between door edge, rolling surface, and the metal framing. Maybe thats how it locks. Shove. Nothing. Maybe I could lift the door back onto the track. Ugh! No go. No go.

I stood back. Too bad. Locked out. Locked out. Cold depression stirring down deep. How long can I take this? I stared at the immoveable door for minutes, then turned to pick up my pack. Shouldered. Looks like the flatcar

I turned and looked for the mex. "Paysan," I said aloud, "Paisano." He was not visible. Where has he gone? Well I started back up the train.

"Hey!"

I jumped. "Yeah?" I said to whom?

"Under here."

I squatted. "Yeah?" Paysan was squatting on the other side.

the other side? Oh, yeah the other side.

He had a nice smile. "You going to Salt Lake?"

"Yeah. That way. To Grand Junction."

"Theres an open car over here. Come over."
I climbed over the coupling and jumped down. He was standing 2 cars toward the rear beside an open boxcar. Wooden floor, I could see. Large piece of cardboard.

I smiled at my own foolishness.

The other side, of course.

Hey, I feel not bad. Dare I let myself feel as good as I do? A chance, I know, to feel good. A couple of good breaks and I feel childish-anxious good. A trap? No, I do feel good about this. Maybe its happening. Just like in the prayers.

Oh Lordy, Lordy

Can't be too overt about the joy. you know, that would invite disappointment. Disaster Tragedy is not falling, but knowing where you've fallen from. Easy Slow. I'm walking/tuning on a tightrope.

I want to shout "Thank you" at the sky in joy Both arms up above my head, feet spread, hands horizontal, palms up. To shout "Oh, thank you." Did I?

Even now, as I write this, that transport percolated to and through me. Things are working out. Easy. Easy. Easy. Take it slow. Take time to think. Do it right. Bound to see some troubles, but I should be able to maintain, even now.

Even until now. I rehear Rocket Davey Johnny. "I gotta feeling things are going to get better" 


Joy. Will I have a flying dream? Will I escape?

Quiet. Don't karma-it-up unnaturally.


Gentle. The moment of realization is as critical as the time preceding. Go most slowly.
Joy 0!

I rejoin it. I feel it.

Quiet calm joy.

I carry my pack to the left rear of the car, against the same wall as the door, and lash it to a nail. I am alone now. Paysan is quite unconcerned about my presence. A clean relationship. Upfront. Out of the corner of my eye as I open my pack to draw my boxcar clothes, I see paysan stepping out of his light khaki slacks into a clean, very white pair he has taken out of his papersack. White? I would think the white pair would dirty more easily. He replaces his khaki shirt with a clean white Tshirt. ?National costume--I consider as I step into my levi blue-jeans, blue workshirt, and retie the laces of my righteous vibran sole rockboots.

I restore my show clothes to the pack as Paysan becomes busy with something on the floor and asks, "Can I use your knife?"

I draw my keen edge from the scabbard at the back of my belt. "Here you go," extending it to him. I see he is dividing the 8' piece of cardboard into halves. I am busy at my pack again when he puts half of the cardboard toward me with the knife and states, "That's yours."

No strings.

I have moved to loop my fresh water on another nail in the wooden wall, but first, "Care for a drink?"

He looks up from his work, considers without undue show, "A little later, maybe."

I like that answer very much, his word answers the now completely and reaches into the future. As I hang the canteen against the wall, I think of a second name for Paysan--one that is common among mexicanos.
A quiet man who does his work. I could hear no games in his talk.

"Are you going to Salt Lake?"

"Yes. I have a job up there."

The train began to move. It was accelerating very quickly, I thought, for being in the yard.

"Where are you going?"

"Montana. But I suppose I'll get off at Grand Junction." Nodded his head slowly, looking out the door. "How far does this train go?"

He glanced up, "All the way to Salt Lake City. It's an express."

The train is still accelerating. We were passing other sidetracked trains. I walked over to the door. It was late afternoon and the sun was about to touch down. A sign passed a track or 2 over, "Dead end." I smiled, that sign was not for me.

I felt good.

Paysan walked to the other side of the door. I distinctly felt that he was doing what he would have done with or without my presence. We stood silent, watching the railyard narrow.

A southbound passed in front of my face. I know it was a U.P., but I noticed Rio Grande, Santa Fe, BN and UP cars as they rolled by like flashcards. Then, for a quarter-crazy-second both trains stopped and one card was held that much longer for me to see. Chalked on the rear of a car, as high as a man can reach was

Dbl Rtn. Double Return. That's my message. This dude has gone down twice.

But I just might by God make it this time.

The train slowed down. I looked out and ahead and saw that we were
passing through the concrete dividers. Double Return, Parris, its exactly 180°. Exactly reversing my downward path. The required 180°.

I glanced full face at Paysan. I felt good about him. He gave this leg of the trip, and my decision, positive reinforcement. But it might get tough beyond Grand Junction. Unless--the possibility seemed more than rationalization or chance thought--I had a window on Salt Lake that would meet my almost impossible requirements.

At the reduced speed, chalked on one of the concrete walls, I read, "smudge continued strife and starvation due to your sins."

The dark riders are trying to hang a doubt on me. Guilt is the handle where doubts are hung. I've got enough already, thanks. That smudge, where the Biblical reference should be, hits the thing right in its credibility. I'd check for context--I'm carrying my little red Gideon New Testament and reading a bit each day--but that smudge makes it unnecessary. A putup job. A too-hurried stopgap. Stopgap. Coverup. Watergate.

I watch the landscape flash by the door. I realize my legs are tiring. Maybe I'll sit in a moment. At that moment Paysan sits, signals and ballast flying by his rude boots. I sit too, and wordlessly watch the evening coming on.

The Flying Train: I knew it. I knew it. And it takes time to make it thought. The Flying Train.

It sped up like that in the yard. Slowed for the concrete walls. Then pressed my head back into the naugahide for a mile. The Flying Train.

Never ride a rocket-driven rhinocerous out toward the horizon? Hang on tight and see the shape of continents below. The complex joy of freedom, altitude and acceleration. Like true wit. The Flying Train.

Beyond my boxcar Colorado trees did the picket fence. So fast the
tree trunks whiffed past before the leaves could catch up.

Then the leaves would pass. Thump! Now a round cloud like a sneeze. Now a burst like cannon shot. Thump! Thump! Thump! Bursting like fireworks in a hurricane. Puffed rice shot from guns. Thump! And below this fusillade of foliage, thump! thump!, passing like too fast ducks in a mad shooting gallery, the picket fence of Colorado aspen did wagonwheel trickery in my eyes. Whiff-whiffwhiffthumpwhiff

All the while those train noises, all those jolting and clanking and shakings and low metal screams, rose in pitch and lost their intervals, until I was sitting amid a jet whine in a boxcar stabilized by speed.

"It's an express," stated Paysan, quick as wit.

And I decide to ride it through, to follow Paysan all the way to Salt Lake City.

And out across that Colorado flat, Pegasus had his ears turned back --his nostrils breathing the thunder of his heart like a locomotive in a mountain tunnel.

And I feel too good to be afraid.

Bound for home on The Flying Train.

Stars appeared. The sky grew deep. I was tired, but I did not want to take my eyes from such beauty. Paysan pulled his cardboard up to the door so he could watch while lying down. He had no covering, but curled up on the corrugated paper. I sat looking out for a while, then, at the far wall, directly across from the open door, set up my ground cloth and sleeping bag. I laid on top and watched evening. When I began to get cool, not uncomfortable, I undressed and slipped into the bag. I watched longer.

Paysan was asleep. I thought the hill might be cold, so I pulled
the wool blanket from below my bag and covered him. Then returned to my bag and welcomed rest. I laid back, thinking of the inspectors with their pens and clipboards I had seen in river canyons, on arid plains, and in heavily forested areas checking the moving train. I had not seen any yet on this trip north.

22 JUNE:

I woke up in Grand Junction with a start. But Oh yeah I had decided to take it at least as far as Price. In Price I'd know if I was doing a genuine 180° This is a matter of soul--no self-deception can be tolerated. It feels right. It feels very good.

I watched Green River go by. So far is parallel. Is OK. Outside out door I see an occasional southbound pulled onto sidings to let us fly by. Zip, zip, zip.

Paysan and I sat with our bare feet hanging. We exchanged quiet words, or exclaimed observations. "Look at that cliff" I'd say, or, beside the highway. "She hasn't smiled since the day she got married." He looked at cars waiting at a crossing, "He's very impatient to go somewhere," and at a hitchhiker on the highway, "He's a mexican."

I watched the signs on the track and on the highway, and on the station houses.

We were exactly paralleling. Retracking exactly.

We were on the north side of the river No bridges were necessary

The Flying Train touched down in Helper Maybe I should get off here. But Paysan has been a beautiful and righteous guide. I'll go to Price, at least, possible all the way to Salt Lake. This must be done perfectly--a matter of soul.

I thought the stop in Helper was a crew change, that means several
minutes, so I got off to fill my canteen. Paysan got off beside me, "I'll see if I can get something to eat." He walked down the track. I walked by a small railside, 'roadside', park where 3 old men with constipated eyes watched me in silence from their benches. I was sure they talked to each other. I drank from the brass fountain at the edge of the shaded grass, and at the faucet lower on the pipe I soaked the canteen cover. Hmmn that beautiful but stern woman I had drawn on the cover, that might be Beverly. I filled the canteen with--what southerners must consider cold--water. And ambled back toward our boxcar I rolled my canteen toward my pack. As the canteen rocked toward stillness, the deisel rumbled to a lug and the slack ran out. I jumped in quickly Paysan wasn't back and I thought I might throw his stuff out, then jump with mine. An excellent sign that I should start hitching up the highway.

The train pulled ahead 75 yards, then halted. I watched for Paysan rather anxiously. I saw him coming up the track 100 yards south. Walking leisurely How does he know? He smiled as he passed, then crossed to 2 houses beside the track. The train lurched. I could hear big engines lugging. Switch engines? Down the track I heard couplings come taut. Crash! And a shock ran through our train from behind. I wasn't putting it together

Paysan strolled over the rails and ballast carrying a papersack as the engines revved and the train started to roll ahead. Paysan matched his pace to meet the door as it passed him. He swung up easily and said conversationally, "They put 2 engines in the middle."

He said that at me. At. No fault of his. His timing was right. He opened the papersack. "I went to a TV shop and I asked him if he could give me something to eat," he smiled quickly and quietly, "and the man said, 'What?' And I asked him again, and he said, 'This is an appliance
shop. 'I know. Do you have a sandwich? Or some bread? You must have something for lunch.' He said, 'This is an appliance shop. We have furnishings here.' So I left." He opened a big can of oversized sardines in soybean oil and unwrapped a slice of bread. The smile again. "Better luck here," he body-languaged the food, but he meant the place he got it. "Help yourself. At the first house they only asked, 'You Mexican?' 'Yeah.' 'The people next door. They are Mexican, too.' So I went next door. They spoke Spanish and gave me this." He put 4 of the sardines on a slice of bread and put another slice on top. I was incredibly hungry as I cut a slice of my hot, oily cheese and gestured that he should help himself. I made a cheese-sardine sandwich with the remainder of the sardines as Paysan commented, "They interrupted their own meal to get this and apologized about giving us so little." I set the canteen between us. Even with the soybean oil, the bread was sweet dry, and the oily cheese absorbed moisture. But the food was very good. I ate thankfully and rapidly. I watched the gas station across the valley where I had purchased a bottle of strawberry soda 2 nights ago.

"A resonance?"

"Yes." He smiled again. Tipping the bag, he dumped out a second sardine can. 2 sardines on a single slice of bread. The bread over double. You can have the rest, he signaled.

I ate another sandwich and used the last slice to wipe the oils from the cans. Cheese gone. Fish gone. Bread gone. I am nourished by this righteous meal begged by Paysan from the paisano. I am well satisfied. I rinse my mouth and swallow. Several swallows of the clean cool. I offer Paysan accepts. I put the empty cans and plastic from cheese and bread into the papersack and place it at the top of my pack.

Rounding a curve I look back along our train. Behind us 2 engines
are coupled into the train.

Oh, yeah

Soldier Summit, I think. That divide between Helper and Springville. We are pulling the lesser hills effortlessly with 4 engines and my stomach is well contented. From this side it looks quite different--Helper, Utah.

At the top of Soldier Summit Paysan and I watch as our train stops with a switching track a short distance ahead of the helper engines. The forward train is uncoupled and pulled ahead. The helpers are uncoupled and switched onto the track just south. We watch them accelerate back down toward Helper. The forward train reverses and crashes into the other half. Couple. Back north. No time wasted.

We've climbed a major pass.

Paysan naps and I write him a note:

My Friend-
You seem an honest man.
Should you ever travel to Montana, my family and I would be glad to have you, and your family stay with us as long as you feel its right.
Presently we live in a small house at /address/7, but we can always be reached through my parents-in-law at /address/7.

Love
Parris

A little cowardice. Instead of telling him face-to-face, I slipped the note into his sack.

I sit back to ride the psychically parallel line. I imagine the highway blocked with pitfalls, forcefields designed like fishtraps. An innocent man might be slowed, a righteous man might not notice, and I go around. Nothing about my own towering intellect, purity, or creativity--Creativity=willingly maintaining a higher level of integration--the way
was prepared for me, exactly parallel to my route of descent. Soldier
Summit, Thistle,

we stopped at Thistle--a Thistle stop?--for a while. Paysan and I got off and walked ahead of the train to an irrigation ditch
where we waded and washed in the shade of a tree. A few leisurely minutes
of wash and a stroll back to our boxcar, just as the slack runs out and
the train starts to accelerate. Timing, the critical element

Springville, Orem, Pleasant Grove, Lehi, Midvale--smiling big at people drumming
their fingers on their steering wheels at the crossings--the Flying Train
touches down in Salt Lake City. 'Fantasia'; those winged horses cupping
their wings and settling on the water like apple blossoms. Salt Lake City
Looks different on this side. The Flying Train runs slow, then stops.
Paysan gathers his truck and swings off. He looks up from the yard ballast,
"Salt Lake."

"Yep," I smile. "Good luck."

"Same to you," sincerely, I thought, and he walks purposefully down
the tracks.

The mechanics of Paysan's departure are not so dissimilar from those
of Dark Bo's, but somehow I feel like some invisible crucial courtesy has
been observed/attended. I wish the dark forces would dissolve. Velleity.
usually. And the dark forces use some of this energy to do their sinking
or diminishing tricks. But Paysan and I parted excellent company.

I look from the yard north toward the interstate. I recall the
wino's directions, but I go into the tower, fill my canteen, ask directions,
and bullshit a bit with the people I find, then cross an area of parched,
saline, cracked earth toward a city street that crosses under the interstate.
A salt flat, I realize as I write this, with many areas devoid of vegetation.
I observe the dehydrated soil with detachment, then with wonder. I am a hobbit on the Quest and this is Desert of the Shadow, Salinak. Up ahead is a tower. The tower is 50+ feet high. A red brick chimney several feet thick. I step inside the door and look up at the sky, half expecting to be pleasantly surprised by the stars. Nope. I yell hello up the tower and rush out like the echoes were going to tumble the old bricks. Outside I notice a 10' chainlink fence between me and the street—no matter, I'll walk all the way back to the switching yard and leave like an employee if I must. But, Lo!, there is an open gate. I exit, and read outside the gate, 'No Trespassing.'

Beside the interstate I turn and look back at my crossing. Forlorn view. Salt flat. Railroads. Rusty cars and tumbling deserted towers. The Dark Land. I am reminded of a truth: forgiveness does not undo our past actions, it subtly removes the poison, our guilt, from those actions. The unwed mother, instead of being damned for a moment of weakness or a promiscuous life or sloppy contraception, in the light of forgiveness discovers that she has been blessed with a special child who would not have been born without her action. A life of fragmented fits and starts is changed by forgiveness into a wide foundation upon which a work of good will be built. The sin is not in the act itself, but in our deepest feelings about that act. Not so much in a particular act as in the tone of our lives. I am more amazed by the number of similarities in our personal judgments of ourselves, than by the fact that a sin for one is not necessarily a sin for another. There is no sin for one totally integrated and cleansed except, perhaps, in giving up that state. Jesus has more choices than we, not less. A law unto himself. Because his way led to unification, all of his acts contributed to the whole. Imagine speaking to a man whose every word builds upon his previous word, and
whose meaning is poetry stretching unbroken from profoundly simple mundane truth to the divine. Don't need no wine with him at the party. You can get high on the water When he speaks to you, you are high. That's the miracle. If you are stiffnecked, rednecked, hardened, his acts might disgust you—in fact, they surely would if you were in bondage—because you would be judging. The Day of Last Judgment is when the stiffnecked make their last judgment. And I see where the biblical passage might be overcleansed, "Oh, I'm sure that's not what was meant—must be some muzzy copyist's error," by an overzealous, underenlightened translator. The Innocuous Bible. However, the Bible is still a living work. I've heard some tinderdry interpretations. By those interpretations Jesus would have stayed home with Mom and Dad and spent his evenings in the parlor, or had he been so affluent, his bedroom. Instead he lived—all his lives at once. Instead he loved—every sort of man. Prostitute, Fisherman. Even a tax collector. He would have been intimate with Ambrose Bierce, or even with a Republican. He abhors sin—not the sinner. He is not turned away by the vocabulary of a streeter. He does not jail a streaker. He can listen open-mindedly and speak without indignation to anyone, even to Suzy Slobbersnatch as she performs her most disgusting act filmed for the pornozenith of the decade. Suzy, without his gift, would condemn herself, and her life would become the poetic punishment for itself. Punishment, like mine and yours, is self-imposed. Self-imposed unawareness—death, if you like. Growing insensitivity And therein is the danger. The being, sensing, in this less-than-conscious state, that it is punishing itself, punishes itself for punishing itself. The true vicious cycle. Decreasing awareness. Orestes pursued by the Furies. His eyes crazed. His actions fragmented. Breaking off in midsentence to run in terror from the building. Carlos Casteneda, prior to Don Juan, rarely finished
anything he started. Orestes, as I recall my one reading in 1960, is finally delivered from his self-imposed hell by neophyte human justice. His belief in human justice is a shock to us. Remember those civil rights trials in the 1960's? The courts were tried, and found wanting. And our vice-president, and our president in the early 1970's.

?Who is it, St Paul, that states he is dead to sin. HE CAN DO ANY ACT WITHOUT SIN. Because he had the strength to change, to accept the forgiveness of Jesus. And it takes strength. And it takes will. And, most difficult for us--we live our lives largely in an unarticulated tone; dreams are unrecallable because they are only a tone, the words and pictures are low-level fantasies of normality--it takes an original act.

Creative. Original Creation Origin Genesis Genius. The relationship is not coincidence.

Jesus. St Paul. They could do anything. Without sin. They served a higher order. They did their acts not for the carnal stimulus, but to create a divine stepping stone in the celestial structure.

And, this is the key, they never need repeat an act.

Fresh. Remember the judgment in that word? Raw. Those are the judgments of the cultured/conditioned upon unusual words, views, and patterns of thought.

Around and around. Tangents. Then to center again.

As I turn and hike under and up onto the freeway, I chew an interesting insight. The acts that bum each of us out on ourselves and plunge us into corrosive guilt, are amazingly similar. Moses listed 10 that were right on. Some of those have lost their edge--or have they? Whats adultery? Who is guilty of adultery now? Especially among those just coming of age. --The elder stiffnecked, stiffstomached, stiff jointed, fear and hate those highschoolers who speak and act in freedom. Those
young people are too bright. Too free. The hardhearted fear light.--But
among some married folk, adultery has destroyed many of their works.
Some of the listed sins have become muted, still others are now dangerous
black holes where little previously existed. Was it Timothy Leary who
said, "Thou shalt not fuck with thy neighbor's consciousness."

Now when rapists or terrorists are caught, they often have no cause
other than 'Do your own thing.' I remember when 'Do your own thing' was
not an invitation to self-destruction, but a call to freedom, an exhortation
to achieve our proper genius.

On the freeway I thumb up. Despite my elevated spirits, Salt Lakers
still don't look too kind. I smile and think about genius.

Even Salt Lakers are born genius. That's the truth. Every human
being--those born with birth defects; yeah, in a way that would take a
book to communicate--is born genius. All of us. The trick is realization.

Original sin, I think 3/4 of the time, is our parents' low level of
belief. If they believed we were genius, our realization would be some­
what facilitated. Doubt is deteriorated belief. Fear and hatred grow so
strong trying to avoid the shape of belief, that denial, self-deception
and insensitivity, look good. Most of our parents teach us doubt.

Ah Mary

I have some catholic cells in my body, but I am more than catholic.
Universal. Eclectic.

I see in the relationship of child-to-parent divine justice. Once I
considered myself unlucky to be the child of my mad parents. If my mother
were as Mary, would I not be as Jesus? But I chose my parents. There are
many better parents. And very many worse. Believe. Teach belief. And
my parents next time will believe more strongly.

The other 1/4 of the time I am certain original sin is cultural.
A repressive society imposed on us from without. No freedom. We had some forefathers who were strong enough for freedom. They could be our heritage. But whose forefathers encouraged Tamany Hall? Teapot Dome? Or the mess Watergate uncovered? The evil man is someone nobody knows. We, ourselves and our parents, are striving for freedom. We must do the work ourselves. Bureaucracies are created by paying someone-something to do our work. Ceding our responsibilities/freedom. We must bring down that which dehumanizes. That which conditions. Come to know the people personally. The evil man is the man nobody knows.

And if we are born just once--I suspect the truth is BOTH one birth and continual rebirthing--then our parents' doubts and guilts, which we learn as we allow ourselves to be conditioned, are exactly what we must overcome. We cannot judge our parents without judging ourselves. So we learn to love and respect them. As a child is coerced into doing what is wrong, he remains innocent--that is, he remains innocent unless he learns to violently dislike his parents for the coercion.

Thumbup, I smile at myself, "Tomotem, you're right again, 'Philosophy bores everyone but philosophers.'" Homespun philosophy by the bolt. More fun than pocket pool? eh, Bertrand Russell?

and a grey Rambler pulls over. Saved from my own philosophizing. I climb in. "This Rambler," I say as I sit, "is goin home."

" eh? "

I cannot recall much about this ride from Salt Lake to Bountiful except a feeling of reserved friendliness coming from the driver, and the fact he was sensitive about working on the airforce base, "I'm just working on the base," he'd say I wouldn't have condemned an air force man. He would have, or he felt I would and he was accommodating that assumption.
"Do you like the work?" I asked.

"I like this area. The people are not as friendly as they are up in Washington."

"Which part?"

"Wichitaw." I'm not sure of that. Someplace near Tacoma? Maybe I misheard him. "But this country is just as nice. I will probably go back in a while, though the Salt Lake is beautiful."

"Any fish in it?"

"A few shrimp-like things, and some fish live quite a while before they die."

"I see a lot of seabirds and seagulls, they must eat something."

"Hey yes, that's right. I've only been over there a couple of times. A friend of mine has a sailboat. And we had a beer party on the lake once. The lake is higher this summer than it has been for 20 years. It is into areas it hasn't reached for so long that people have forgotten. Or real estate companies selling shallow areas during a dry season. I like the sky here, too. The sky is big and full of activity."

"Detail."

"Yeah. Detail. And I've met some pretty good people."

I dismounted on the Bountiful exit and did not wait long before a yellow Gremlin pulled up.

A 20 year old, "I'm into education."

"You teach?"

"Well not exactly. I handle educational materials. I distribute an educational magazine. I read it from cover-to-cover every time it comes out."

"Do you like your work?"

"It's OK. I have expanded my district by over 20%." He smiled big.
"I am just returning to work after a 2 week honeymoon. I just got married."

"Congratulations," I hoped. "How old is your wife?"

"She's 18. Nicest girl I ever knew." He pointed at his opened Hamms, "Want the rest of my beer? or here," a gesture at the open bag also on the console, "Have some taco chips."

I drank the beer and eyed the chips suspiciously. Chemicals? Preservatives? I ate 3.

He drove quite rapidly through the light just-after-5 traffic. "Isn't this a good car? Really goes and its real good on gas. Do you really think there's an energy crisis?"

"Sure. And something even the petrol companies don't realize, its a genuinely limited resource and the public knows it. But the big oil companies--ever hear that prayer the Fireside Theatre does on an album?, 'Humble, we carry the Standard of your power across the Gulf of earthly existence, that lines our poor bodily Shell and leads us eternally to that Rich land...'-think they are hustling the people. They assume the people will forget and they'll steadily hike prices up, get a pipeline across Alaska and continue to handle the petrol products like surplus."

I noticed as I spoke he grabbed at every word. He concentrated overtly. Right now it may be a success-insuring technique, but I could see that he was very ready for the impression. The central Impression. I hope he finds someone fulfilled.

I got out at the Riverdale ramp. "You might as well take the rest of these chips. I'm not hungry."

"Thanks, I will," I said. I watched him go, wondering why I didn't take the opportunity to lay some of my genuine good feelings about family and children on him. That would have been conscious, I suppose. An act of ego. And I think he has yet to outgrow his parents.
I stood at that exit a while and a while, playing games to pass the
time. Boot tracks in the dust. Faces at the passers-by. In the late
afternoon sun I removed my sweater and grinned at the largely uptight
parade. "I'll walk all the way to Montana if I have to. I don't care
if 200 cars pass, I'm not going to get bummed out this time."

--I wonder how long I'd have to wait at the south ramp.

Not a chance, asshole, I've been given a chance and I'm not
fucking this one up.

Whoo-ee!

I dance a step or 2 in the roadside dust and gravel, shock an animated,
slightly 'American Gothic' couple and their rigid children. I wouldn't
have gotten a ride there anyway.

I start marking the cars going by on the roadsing. \[ \llll \llll \llll \],
adding a mark each time only for passenger cars or pickups going down my
ramp. I may check the score someday--its on the sign just south of South
Ogden--?Riverdale--beside the furniture store. As I recall, I marked over
50 cars.

I ate the rest of the taco chips, wondered about the toxic dose of
those particular chemicals, and decorated 2 amber highway reflectors with
my rapidograph and india ink. I put on my sweater and stood back to admire
my work in the passing headlights.

Ho hum even feeling good about this trip, I realized there was
no ride north out of Riverdale for this cat.

I got some toilet paper from my bag and strolled into the area of
the right triangle formed by the interstate, the perpendicular highway
over it, and the on-ramp hypoteneuse. Behind a rough sage I ankeled my
trou and, in a small cat hole, I offered my personal creation to the larger
Choreography of light traffic. I polished and planted.

And it is good, he pontificated.

I strolled back to my pack, fractionally enlightened, and resumed the thumbing.

A dude got out across from me. He reminded me of Fergus Quigley, or Mike Grossmeyer—an adventurer slightly subject to fad, perpetually innocent and a bit immature, intelligent, interesting and enthusiastic, not intimate but a friend—as he strolled over. All this from his walk. He's the kind that will wear a natural wool stockingcap and Irish fisherman's sweater, and a peacoat in the Copper Commons in Montana's rainy autumn. Closer, I saw a short neatly trimmed beard, fashionably long hair, and a disarmingly ready smile. I have always been attracted to this admitted stereotype which includes Thor Hyerdahl and maybe Jacques Cousteau.

"Waited long?"

"Only." I made a show of checking my scoreboard, "36 cars. And traffic has been this slow since I have arrived."

"What a place," he smiled and shook his head.

"Doesn't look like the right spot. There is little writing on the sign. And what is there is not particularly inspired. It's not a hot spot."

He glanced absently, but it was too dark. "Well, I'm hungry. Haven't eaten all day. Is there a good restaurant down the hill?"

"I've only visited the garage. I didn't notice a cafe."

"Yeah, I'll walk down and look." He strode off and called back, "Good luck."

"OK," I said. Maybe he has the right idea. Forget this spot awhile. It's a sargasso sea. The Sargasso Sea Adventure. I maybe should follow my flatland sailor into S Ogden.

Strange. I was almost sailing to this point. Now suddenly becalmed.
Almost contrived. A teaching situation. OK, Parris, whatza skinny?

Flotsam drifted together I boasted I would walk if I had to. I am almost at the port of my second southward turning. It may be a half mile up the road. What exit was that? South Ogden? I'll recall if I ever see it again. A test of my determination. A small obstacle to overcome to make me just that little bit larger. These were just thoughts, there was no sense of revelation. But there was a right sort of feel—reason on a right tack. I'd count 10 more cars, then walk. I winged my duffel and walked to the gas station.

I got a couple of candy bars and topped up my canteen. Attendant was hurrying around doing attendant things to a short burst of business. Concluded shortly. He looked hardened. "Yeah?"

"It's been a long wait. No one is stopping."

"Yeah. I saw you up there."

Maybe this dude is friendlier than he looks. His words are full of elbows and sharp things, but he is more than monosyllabic. "Are people usually so unfriendly around here?"

"I wouldn't pick you up either. Am I ugly?" and run a chance on being robbed or getting shot."

"I am a nonviolent man."

"No matter. A man is a fool to take a chance on giving a freeloader a ride."


"I believe in earning my own way. I've run 5 businesses in 5 states. This is my fifth. And I've never asked a free ride from anyone."

If I'd a picked up guilt about that, my trip would have ended miles
past. I admired his apparently successful private business—but 5 in 5 states? Why move so much? I could ask him about man-car, or air pollution, or eminent domain and highways through bottomland, or about traffic accidents and noise pollution, about the energy crisis and gas pumps and oil leaks and oil tins and planned obsolescence, about exploitation of the people by the lickerish corporations, about slavery. But I didn't. I looked at his hardened face and grew up a little. To the degree he is free, he is right. And he is past argument.

At least mine.

"Maybe I'll walk to the next exit. Is there another here?"

He made a smile, "Yeah," pointed down the street, east toward the lights, "Walk that way until you get to the third light    " In the distance I could see the first, silently changing colors. "    then take a left. Just follow that street to the exit."

"How far would you say it is?"

"About," expressionlessly. "5 miles."

"Ouch! Any any closer?"

That's it." He seemed angered by my rather distrustful question. "And don't bother my customers."

"Maybe I'll try it a while longer," I consented, looking at the pavement.

I would wait patiently for 5 more cars to pass.

A pickup screeched by. 4 in the front, 2 in the box. It shot off the road between the guardrail on the mainstreet and the pavement of the on-ramp, banged, jumped, crushed my sage and threw more dirt on my do. It crashed and battled to the barrowpit, crossed at an angle, and stopped like a winded rhino uproad from the merging lane. Everyone except the driver jumped out and checked headlights, springs, tires and fenders--
to establish their score. I did not count that pickup as one of the 5.

Well, that's that. I walked down the grade and wordlessly passed the garage. If I walk to the exit in Ogden where I fell, I know I'll get that ride.

First light behind me. Residential area coming up. Can't even see the second light.

"... all it takes to make me happy is a coupla kids to call me pappy." Rocket Davey Johnny said that.

But the pack and my feet are light. Scuff that gravel. A temporary resistance is a challenge and a joy when I'm doing what I believe in. Inhibition is pulling a punch. Doing something I so believe in that I can use my whole being--bonemusclebloodbrain, mind, dream, and the inertia of knowing--what ecstasy!

"Cap'n, he was all over. First here. Then over there. I tried to shoot em. He came through right over here. By the time I aimed he was already gone. It's like there was 6 of im, Sir, it's no sense shootin that sixth one cause hes only a ghost, Crazy Horse went through first. It's, well... it's like he belonged here, Cap'n."

2 kinds of houses I noticed as I walked. The first was clean and straight lines. Trimmed lawn and hedges. Yard light. Quiet. Through the big windows I could see the bluewhite TV light. The other was dark, or with a yellowred light. Unpainted white house. In the gentle evening mom and dad were on the porch steps--her in a loose print dress, him in a Tshirt and black jeans--giggling like naughty children, but without embarrassment. On some cue I missed, mom turned 180° and yelled through the screendoor, "Close that frige!" A block further and the whole family was outside. Dad in a rocking chair with pads and a cloth on it, smoking his pipe up in the dark of the screened porch. An old overstuffed chair was
beside him. He watched me pass without blinking. Mom and grandma were sitting on the porch steps, talking and watching grandpa. With a shuffling run, grandpa plays with a beautiful darkeyed, darkhaired little girl.

She smiled at me.

2 older children roaring quietly and clanking as they pushed wheelless trucks over dirt roads between patches of grass.

Second light. Quite a ways. I see a patrol car and a cop who is young and still fluid. "Where's the next exit onto I5 headed north?"

Smile. "Take a left at the second light. Where're ya goin?"

"Montana. Missoula, Montana. I'm going home. Is there another exit further north?"

"Yeah." He turned to his plainclothes friend. "?Theres another exit in Ogden, right?" The words were question. Not the inflection. And he did not wait for a response. Back to me, "Yeah. But take care."

I angled my head, "?"

"Walking. Beside the road at night be careful you don't get hit."

"Surely will. I care about my bod." I started footing. "Thanks."

He gave a harmonious thumbsup. (He compares policemen.)

Maybe: As I traveled I thought dangerous thoughts. Maybe going home was giving up. Escaping the real world back to my Mother Surrogate. Escaping. To become a breeder The Domesticated Man. Maybe I'm returning to security Wife. Child. A cat and a dog. Home beside the university in a little rented house. I'll probably find some way of making money--maybe driving a truck, maybe a prof of creative writing. With any luck I'll do a book, maybe royalties--is there such a thing? But more likely I'll teach at an alternative school where children of all ages will be around. Most possibly a home in the country, at the ranch by the turtlepond.
That close to Alberton I'll be able to set up an alternative program in
the highschool--after all, I've had real experience, I'll have an MFA,
and I'll work cheap. It's not work the way I do it--it's my thing. I may
teach 3 classes a week, see the kids more often than that as we sit
around the campfire in the evening and drink a beer or 2 and enjoy each
other. Sounds at once humble and arrogant, idealistic and necessary
Maybe that's the bait. Security

Maybe I'm fleeing from a real place for me. A job outdoors with
teach and a sense of contribution--via oil companies and mining interests,
however--to the culture. Geothermal energy. Smoking lots of good dope.
The free women in each town--that 'free' is not derogatory I mean liber­
ated, self-sufficient, self-propelling women that can touch, love, and go
without strings. After a while I'd be a crew chief. I'd refuse elevated
jobs that would put me indoors.

Still, even working for the Man Money. Exploration. Good
work. Rocks and water. Sounds fulfilling.

Or maybe, the trip at home requires self-knowledge, self-awareness,
and (simultaneous) humility and giving my contribution to the young.

And maybe the geophysical trip is a sensual bait, an ego-feed, and a
lie for me.

It's the old 'or not' philosophy. Turn it over. Turn it over

But I know that this time I am going in the right direction.

Knowing what I'm doing is hard enough. Knowing what I am doing and
feeling good about it is rare for me.

Goin' home.

I stood at the second light and looked toward the freeway. I had
walked a distance directly away from it, taken a long slow curve to the
left, and had traveled parallel a goodly ways, as though I had been
steered off the interstate and around some giant dark guard.

The Moon, as Hecuba, once said to me, "You are a seeker of excitement."

At the time that was an accusation and untrue, but I do have that potential, and I could permit it to become true. It is exciting to duck around dark guards in the dark.

Although I couldn't see the freeway, this exit doesn't feel like my exit. I feel quite certain that I should walk north at least as far as the exit at which I reversed. I crossed to the telephone booth and checked the back of the book--Lo! the map was there. Hmmm doesn't really look residential. It must be the next exit. I'll walk there. Its, lets
see, at 12th street. I am now at 32nd. Thats ah 20 blocks to walk. Lengthwise. Well, I'm a steady pacer, I'll do it.

I did countdown as my feet tired. Walking in the city is foottiring. On grass and stone I can walk all day as my legs slowly wear down. But on pavement, hard roadbed, and concrete, my feet tire first.

I heard boogie music as I passed western bars deep in business. I crossed a stream. (He doesn't recognize it.) It looked a different town. Warehouses. Light industry--I hear a rattling of chains and a clang of metal in those words. At my stop earlier, Ogden was very clean and bright. Now it was suffering from the eastern plague--dirt--not earth, old paper and beercans, clothing, old leather bits, dirty streets, streetlights protecting garbage, and ragged weeds in trashy lots. The Chicago virus.

Finally I took the 90° left on 12th. I passed 6 children with lighted candles. "Ooooo, ahhh, helloooo," they intoned and laughed. (Children in Utah.)

I stood, "Is there a freeway onramp this way?"

They stopped and I felt they were pleased I had laughed with them.

"Yeah. Straight on out."

"How far?"

"Oh, a long ways." "No, its not too far, really."

"Thank you." Of course I recalled the map, but I enjoy touching for whatever reason.

I walked a long way along an enclosed grounds--The Righteous Army of Mormon Ogden, or National Defense Armory hanging on that sign. No trespassing. "Trespassers without due permission of various governmental agencies too obscure and complex and inhuman even to consider, are punishable to an extreme degree. Please." It was a huge enclosure. Locking me out or them in, an 8' woven metal and plastic fence topped with barbed wire--
wired much more tightly than the FM directs--stood between us. Near the end of it I sat down and rested. Ahhhh

I slept 60 seconds. Up refreshed. Jostled up pack. Walk to exit. Hmmm

Wrong exit.

I have traveled one exit too far north. No matter, at least I moved north. I am a little disappointed, but I am keeping my word.

I stuck in my thumb as a solitary car screeched by. That was enough.

I crossed the fence into the tall rye. I walked in until I came up on a small irrigation ditch that divided the green protective circle of rye from the riper crop rye. Under a clear sky and close stars, in tall grain, on damp black earth, I put my bag down.

Closer home by one good day.

I slept well.

Paralleliview: Is a Cancer party. A simple solstice celebration. Weird Bob's birthday party at the turtle pond at the ranch. Mostly people of Mellovibe. Weird Bob, of course, and Gypsy Jenny. Bev and Ashley, Bunny and Jo, Rita and David and Shela, Marty B and Laurie, Loren and Susan, Tom--Patty was in Glasco, Lovely Alette, Steve and his friend, John Warner and his date, Carl, Marty Jr, Cheryllinn and Chris

Bob checked it out at the ranchhouse," 25 people or so. We'll build fires, but watch em closely "

"Gonna be any drugs? I hear of any drugs and I'll call the sheriff."

"Beer, for sure. Probably wine. And I'm not going to dictate to the others. They're responsible to themselves."

"Any drugs and I'll call the sheriff."

"Yeah well come on out if you get a chance." He turned and left.
There was a 16 gallon keg and a couple gallons of wine. And who was it came up with the homegrown? And snorts? What drugs are suitable for observing a solstice? Food? Even organic, its still a drug, I spose. 10 pound roast sirloin tip, 3 roasted chickens, 10 pounds of marinated and baked chinese spareribs. Fresh-ground rye bread. Potato salad. A huge VIP salad. And all the essential minor dishes.

Be nice if Polly and Lee were around the fire too, but they like rafting.

And a mystery roared right up. 3 interlopers, young people. Wasn't one of them the sheriff's son doing infiltration? Wearing outsideness like a costume and never explaining how they came to be a mile into private property. But they got welcomed and sloppy drunk and fed and absorbed without interruption. They laughed at Carl shin deep in turtlepond mud with ropes of seaweed wrapped around his nude self, staggering in the water like a drunken King Kong while monsternoising at the top of his lungs, and at David and Shela and Ashley and the other bareassed kids as they splashed and ran in convincing and highly vocal terror. For an hour and more.

The darkblueblack replaced the colors, except around the fire. Those who had places to go left, and the kids got quiet to hear a storyteller or fall asleep within reaching distance.

23 JUNE:

Awake. Stretching my arms like morning. Looking at that many miles of sky. Hello, morning.

Looking into skies like Arlina's eye. As I looked it expanded. Huge living crystal. Most sought jewel. Infinitely void. Beyond sorrow and fear. Beyond games and pain. Without words they spoke, "Who are we?"
As I look, they expand still further, become more translucent. Light engendering. Located in the center of her face. Her face is inhumanly beautiful. Yet only a foil for the eyes. Serene in anguish. Calm in despair. "What are we?"

Radiant in Beauty.

We are sitting at the kitchen table.

"So what IS most important in your life?"

He answered, "Keeping Tony out of jail. If he breaks his parole he's had it. I've kept him out several times already."

That wasn't the answer I awaited. How to pose the question?

He turned suddenly to Ashley who was coloring a picture at another corner of the table, "What's the most important thing in your life?" He demanded, I thought, a bit aggressively.

She didn't pause. She didn't look up. "Killing," she said evenly.

Jim was shocked into silence. Ashley is 6.

I was gone a long second, "Killing animals?" I said, seeing. "Killing people and animals and each other."

I understood. I looked at Jim. He was still in shock.

6 months earlier, Ashley, Weird Bob and I entered his apartment. We had been harmonizing well. In the front room we found Gypsy Jenny talking to a clean-cut sort. Bob knew him. He looked familiar, but.

There was this sudden wrenching tension. Am I that uptight about Dave?

"I'll get my harmonicas," Bob reported. We were going to do a jam.

I unwrapped the dirty, sticky harmonica Loren had given me. Bob picked off the top of his and began looking for slightly larger nails.

"I'll go home and get mine," Dave probed.

"You do that," Bob said; like, 'I give a shit'
Dave left and it loosened up. Was all that coming from me?

We toyed with the mouthharps a few minutes. I cleaned and Bob cobbled. A few wails. Ashley explored the house.

Dave came back.

A flood of tension. Leave Dave; don't know why, but I'm just incredibly uptight when you're around.

Weird Bob lifted his harp and sounded it.

I tried a couple. It wouldn't come. "Wanna try it against a record?"

Bob shook his head, "I don't care."

We tried again. No harmonies.

Ashley brought a blanket down from upstairs, spread it, sat on part and enveloped herself with the rest. Dave had his harmonica in hand.

"In what key?"

That innocent question was about it. I was up on muscle. Why so uptight?

"2 against one is not fair," Ashley spoke boldly into the universal silence. Looking at Dave.

Seconds down, "She's right, you know." I'm beginning to understand. Its a freeze out. Dave looks pained. How do I loosen toward him? "You can't change your key anyway. I'm not much on theory, lets just play."

I tried a looser tongue.

He shrugged. "Its easy A subtonic, a subdominant, and a tonic. The tonic is usually the main note of the triad, you see, the name of the triad"

"You walk like you've got a board up your ass."--Butte 16-year-old.

Bob said nothing. Gypsy said pleasant words. Ashley said she wanted to go home. Dave asked what we wanted to play. Bob put his harmonica down.

"We're not that grand's musicians, Dave. No songs. No keys. Our
only thing is that we all wail and our feet hit the carpet at the same time. 
(They're putting him out.) If something starts happening, that's what's happening. And even that can change." Too late, Bob is wrapping up his harp. I set mine aside. We're all quite self-conscious, neither Bob nor I have played harmonicas before. Dave is not much different.

Words. Minutes.
Dave gets up and goes to the door, "I guess I'd better ."
"Yeah, well ."
"Glad to have met "
Gone.
I'm not too sure I remember the door opening and closing around him. Gone. Uninvented. Like he was never there. I didn't do that by myself, did I? Am I so uptight that I interrupt Jenny and Dave, Bob and Dave just because I didn't know Dave? No. Bob is usually quite a high dude. It doesn't occur to me for some time that he might have been indulging in jealousy.

It's not fair, is it?
Sandy came in from the other apartment without knocking, and sat on the arm of the overstuffed. Some say she's too intellectual and a bit insensitive. She sat 7 seconds like she was a part of it, then she rose and left, saying over her shoulder, "It's too stuffy in here." Sandy can be strong.

"The times I like you best is when you don't even try."--Joni Mitchell.

What are we, anyway?

Soon you will see us
For we are all around you.
But where we come from
I can't say.
Just don't be alarmed
By our fields and our forests
They're there for only you
To share." --Moody Blues
"We will bury you." - Kruschev

Q: What does the insensitive killer finally kill?
A: Himself.

I stretched deep. Rolled and packed my bag. Drank water. Climbed the fence and read the writing on the 'No nonmotorized traffic beyond this point- including equestrians and pedestrians' sign.

"'Planted some grass. We won't harvest it all.'"
"'Pedestrians and cyclists are niggers in Utah,' 'Chaps Mare, 74.'
"'Filed for homestead,' July 9, 1974."
"'and waiting.'"
"'It's better to copulate than never,' JJ, 10 July, 1974.'"
"'Going to Montana. Counted '"
"'Chickenshit Mormons,' July 15, 1974."

I smiled good. Under the whitewash I could almost read the old writings. "Sally and Sam, 'We ain't got a barrel of money '"

I printed, "Dispite the overwhelming evidence, Mormons are people."
"'Roll it to me,' Sarah and Jim." And, "'Turn your Love lights on.'"
Voom! A car cornered and roared on. 111
I can tell by the quality of the graffitti, the quality of the place. I had come to the right place.

Voom! Voom! I counted the cars but I was not concerned with them.
Traffic wasn't too heavy, but I was no longer hurrying. I've missed the Cancer party anyway. Mizewell sit on my uuhh! pack. There and enjoy the warming sun.

MISSOULA, MONTANA

23 JULY, 1974

I cannot recall this first ride. That doesn't speak highly of my awareness or willingness to communicate. I just feel in memory as in a space dream, that my awareness started moving north at a quickening pace, that the trappings, the scenery began to change rapidly, and although I recall other faces and conversations going home from here, this very important ride remains more karmic than concrete. But it was like an old grey ford that let me off in Willard, I think, within sight of the truck scales and inspectors.

I wasn't there long, scuffing up the gravel and leering at ironbound old women. I winked fit to give em simultaneous hot flashes and heart attacks.

I've met people old and alive at once.

A schoolbus pulled over. Yellow door breaks in half. Climb in. The driver pulls the lever around. Puts on some muscle. Thump! Over center and the door is locked. I'm looking through a window of a school-bus. Through a window at gradeschool and highschool.

Memory: I'm out of breath. I ran an eighth mile, the last 60 yards uphill, to the busstop.

"Well? Your brother wanna keep us waitin?" He was pissed at waiting.

My mind boggled yes, he does no, he doesn't wanna, but but no/yes//yes/no
"Well?" Shouted anger. How can he be angry already? Maybe his time is so critical that 2 minutes makes a difference.

The dirt road is empty. "Go on--" Forever, you asshole. He never knew any of us.

Or Bert in the Bitterroot. Mom used to say "Bert!" everytime she belched, or she would say his name like a belch. I was in the fourth grade.

I looked back. I saw a porpoise frolicking on the worn edges of the sharp rocks and the hard clay of the road. "My cat! You ran over my cat!"

"Too bad," Bert said, without a trace of humanity and without taking his eyes from the road.

The flashes slowed down. The look back almost over. Earlier Recall. Ed is the bus driver and his son, ?Ed, is visiting on the bus as it loaded in front of the Darby school. Whats-his-name, a tall, awkward boy, some years older than me, climbed on the bus and affectionately tosseled Ed jr's hair and head as he went by. Ed was outside. Before we left, Ed walked back in the bus to Awkward, "Stand up!"

Awkward did as commanded. Ed hit Awkward across the face, palm first, then backhand, so hard it shocked us. "Don't you ever touch him again!" Self-righteous. Hysterical.

Awkward sat in silence, alone amid all of us. He never rubbed the purple marks of Ed's ring. Awkward is someone's son, too.

I roll to a stop at the next picture. Eternal. 4th grader going to school on a blue morning. Air. Sky. Earth. Snow. Mist. All in blue. Maryann Dumott sharing my seat:

All the other kids silent somehow. Blue morning. A soundless bus picking up soundless kids at soundless busstops under trees close with snow. Deer
grazing quietly in the fields. Small bright fires at the busstops.

"Where?"


"I always give hitchers rides. Can't see driving this around empty " Gallant in a yellow bus.

"Is this yours?"

"No. No. I wish it was. I just drive it for them in my spare time. I wish it was."

The other hiker spoke, "He heads for Logan. Know where is?"

"Yes. Friend of mine" (Ev.) "spoke of it. A park road?"

"Yellowstone Park. This route is a scenic approach. Good hiking. Good women. Good park. And He remembers going down into this river canyon thats extraterrestrial. High places."

Implicit invitation. It'd be nice to travel with. "Wheres the Logan road start?" But No Thanks. I'm going to Missoula.

"He takes a right at Brigham City ."

"Thats as far as I can take you. Sorry," said the Gallant.

"Every rides a trip," says I.

"And part of the trip," says He.

At the north end of Brigham City, the bus stopped. "Thanks."

Seriously.

"He's gonna hit the Yellowstone Way. Good karma." He waved, took a right, and started hiking northeast on 89.

I took a left and walked west to the sign closest to the intersection. Behind me a 1" head of water flowed down a concrete Uditch. The flat bottom was golden with algae.
I set down my pack and put up my thumb. Golden chariot? I had moved pretty fast this morning. No sense rushing, but I don't wanna miss that chariot.

My situation? Right now I'm heading north, facing south, and my thumb is out for a ride west. That might seem unintegrated energy, but the way is being prepared. It's early in the bright, clear day and already the sun is hot enough to move me into the narrow shade of the 4 x 4" wooden signpost. People are going to work. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone took a summer vacation? Just beyond me is the grey, flat, rocky asphalt. Closer is gravel. Then dry, dark grey crumbly-dusty soil, like ashy gumbo. A little grass and rugged tall, spiny or hardy low, dryland plants. The soil is loose behind me to the lip of the concrete ditch. Up the other side of the ditch there is a fence woven with last year's wild mustard and tall yellow stalks. Beyond the fence is a small park. Looks like part of a trailer court. I jostle my canteen. Low.

Above me the sky is singing its continual majesty--the Light voice, a visible movement in the symphony of matter, space, and time. A weather-vane of the chemical process contained herein. There is chorale Basso Profundo reaching from the dark beat by the first atom, son of Weak Forces, father of Strong Forces, and, coupling with Electromagnetism, the sire of Gravity. A high divinity Atom's beat, Adam's voice, passes up across the lines of earth, air, fire and water, sympathetic--beating a way. Reinforced. Dampened. Being. Being not. Being. Evolution dances. Being Now. Life rises--it perceives itself as theme--buoyed toward pure awareness, contrasted by the apparent fall of dying notes. (A theme, forgotten by the lesser, is called) The infinitesimal particle, the smallest loci, has its own pure voice and unique notes, critical to and

(The theme is now called up.)

I scuff my toe, like Tom Holmes would have dealing with a used-car salesman, making small roads in the dirt. There is a telephone booth across the park behind me. I feel my pockets. A dime. I walk down one wall of the ditch, step across and walk up the other side. Testing my Vibran soles. I leap back. Taking my bag in both hands I swing it 1, 2 on 3 I throw it and leap, using the inertia of the bag and myself to best advantage. 2-stage rocket. I slide the pack under one of those non-descript dusty trees getting a cosmetic suffocation beside a road, and cross the fence. I feel good.

Some children are playing. "Hello." But they look away, afraid. Must be from Utah. Their parents are eating in the shade. I cross the grounds looking for a water fountain. Beside the telephone is a faucet under a metal plate thats at ground level.

I call the house. No answer.

I call the Best Western Motels of Safford and Tucson, to see if an Arlo Furniss or a Parris Young is reserved. "I'm sorry, sir."

The people at Bell are largely OK. Its the company thats a monster. Dehumanizing. Humans can live, love, and work simultaneously together. The company dehumanizes. And some people work for Bell who don't really want to be there. Messes of cable and frame. No one can do quality work when they are unhappy. Living death. Too unaware to see, therefore too unaware to integrate their small part into the whole. There must be those
among us who would be genius of switchboard, frame or line. People fulfilled in part by that work.

If there is a living need for telephone communications, then spontaneously will emerge from the people the necessary number of 'fit'

As there are natural laws of survival for the one, so are there laws of survival for the species.

Among the living, the spirit swells to meet life.

I filled my canteen and soaked the canvas cover. The children, now standing by the picnic table, watched me as I passed. A young girl is talking to an adult that is not listening. I hear her and she knows it.

Back at my post, I sat on my propped up pack and thumbed. Maybe I should wade the ditch. Not really that much into thumbing. I stood and read the hitch-hiking graffitti. Others felt as I did about stiff-necked Mormons. Mormons must not read their Book, or maybe they don't understand the words. Some of the graffitti was pretty rough on them. I would like to see the Mormons earn their liberation also.

Prayer: If I am related to Brigham Young, my words will speak to your blood, Mormons.

O, Salt Lake Mormons, where ever in Utah, look to your seagulls.

I have heard that there is friendship in your families and among your circles. Is there Love? Are your friends too few? Moving toward God makes you kin to all men.

Hope you must have. Faith. Of your Charity I have seen little.

Do you believe in the spirit? Trust in it? There are saints among you now. There are wanderers of the desert in your asphalt wildernesses. Hitchhikers following Him. O, it is good to turn to the soil, to know that by your labors the earth provides. Do not forget Him, for if He is forgotten your sweat only salts the earth.
And where do you see Him? Have you forgotten?

Look to your seagulls. Look to your sky and to your sun. Look to the mountains. Look to the eyes. Of children. Of teenagers. Of young people hiking across the land.

The hiker trusts to God.

And you, you only trust your hands.

See in my words what truth you can.

For Love can exist in the physical making of a quilt. But is Charity in giving that quilt to the church to send to a minister you might thinly know who drives out away from his family on Christmas Eve to interrupt a family he might know by name to give your quilt in the words of Charity—but in the name of Alms—because the Bohunk is stupid, the reservation Indian destitute, Chico irresponsible, or the Mexicano lazy.

Charity has hardened among you. To you it is only a physical movement of materials.

Among the People, Charity is giving of yourself.

Understanding and Kinship follow true Charity:

6 people wait in the blizzard. The hobo has no jacket. He will freeze. The first man is angered by the hobo, and pulls his cloak more tightly and shouts, "If he'd worked, he'd have a coat." He howls like the wind. The first woman ignores the hobo, threatened by the sex she must protect and his unshaven face. She drifts like the snow.

The second man looks upon the hobo, avoids his eye, feels some compassion, but does not act. He darkens like the clouds. The second woman speaks to the hobo and seeks a solution. She abides like the earth.

The third comes forth to cover them with the coat and to lay with the hobo in the snow. For that one is like the sun itself.

Giving your surplus is little charity.
Giving nothing is less.

Giving your coat is charity, but it may also be foolish. You need not be guilty of murder if you do not give your only coat.

You ARE guilty of murder if you do not give your extra coat.

Taking turns with your coat is charity. But sharing coat and body heat is greater charity. If, in addition, you hear his heart and speak your own, unhesitatingly, you have perfected the grace. You have given of yourself as well as of your cloak.

You have achieved Love,

and escaped the storm.

O, Utah Mormons!

Look to your seagulls, for I have read your Book and I see your storm on the edge of the earth. Put not all your faith in the works of your own hands and manmade law, but turn your faith to true man and the Spirit. Practice Charity, that you might perfect it and achieve Love.

Pray. Look to your seagulls.

And, for God's sake, love your children.

I clear my head. Brevity is the soul of graffitti. Can't write about Mormons beyond what I did 2 stops ago. Instead I wrote on the 4 x 4, "Parris Young. Goin home to Missoula, Montana. 23 July 1974." Not curt, but succinct.

I sat on my pack and watched cars pass. A dude dismounted west of me and walked further. A couple of pretties, tall, tanned and lean, scrunched the gravel with their sandals. "Hello," says I.

"Hi," says she, guardedly He grunts and looks away

I'll talk to her. "Where're you going?" Dressed and groomed like from the better school.
"We're hitching  
"  . to Yellowstone," he interrupted, hitching up his pack and taking the little leather suitcase from her and urging her to move on, "to join a tour." He smiled for show and maybe a little for her. They scrunched on. Brave and scared at once.

They stopped to talk to the man west of me. I may look a threat, or maybe he looks kinder

Maybe I should wade the ditch.

I envied those sandals a bit. I'd like to have a quality pair. Tough ones. My vibran soled Redwing rockboots have held together many a rude step, but right now they are overwarm. Cool sandals, ah'

I grinned. Popped the knots and jerked the shoes. Pulled the socks. Over the bank and into the stream.

Oh, fine yeah, yeah.

Slicker'n snot, though, that yellow algae. I shuffled slowly up the inclined concrete floodplane, and into the gravel around a curve at the top. I watched my toes dig around for crawdads, periwinkles, helgramites, and minnows. I turned to descend and saw my footprints ashen brown against the yellow algae. I also saw, for the first time, though I had stepped over it, the work of children, or another hiker, who built a weir of small stones, some of which had been washed downstream. My kin.

I watched Mr & Mrs Liberal Hiker get rides. Is good.

I climbed out of the water and wrote on the post:

Water:

1. Universal: Water vapor makes up the highest clouds.

   And runs over the bedrock.

2. Continuous: A glass of water is one huge molecule with loosely changing bonds.
So is the ocean.

3 Cyclic: A wave between 2 oceans; water and air Tributaries.

Capillary action. Arteries.

As the sun is the earth's heart,

Water is the earth's blood."

Too long for poignant graffitti. I was screwing my rapidograph together as a pickup pulled over. One of the dudes got out and opened the camper door and I tossed in my boots as well as my bag. He was barefoot too.

On the way. Deep Purple and 3 midquality speakers that worked pretty well after the driver stopped and grounded the center one. A lot of tapes.

The dudes had the California look at first. Bare chest, mid length hair, cutoffs, bare feet, and even, dark tans. They both had serene, unblemished faces and smooth features. Greek heroes. Adonis. Their eyes were large and alert, but the upper lids hung low. Straight, clean teeth.

I leaned my head against the padded hole where the rear cab window had been and listened to the tapes. They spoke very little. Friends often talk steadily. "Are you brothers?" I ventured.

4 eyebrows up, "Us?" They looked at each other in mock surprise. Tweedledum and Tweedledee. A few of the usual words, then, "No. Not by blood," with a smile.

Memory: Just an observation. No big deal. Mike Albert and Maryann Roth speaking so closely I could sense their relationship. I wanted to ask if they were brother and sister. I didn't, but found out later that day.

I was 14 and that was the first time I had seen a relationship as close as blood without sexual or social overtones. My first day in the
eighth grade.

Mike, I have been a long time coming to know you.

"How far are you going?"

"To Missoula, Montana. How about you?"

"Pocatello, Idaho, for a couple days. Mark," he jerked his head at the driver, "took some people to Pocatello last week and he met this girl. He's going back to see her."

"What are you going for?"

A bit of silence. (Following a friend.) "Nothing. That is, I'm just messing around."

"I didn't see much of Pocatello, but what I saw I liked. Clean and bright. And I liked the people I met," specifically blonde Pat and 3-year-old Ricky

Mark turned from his driving. "Yeah, I did too. We were there a few days and I really had a good time. I decided I'd come back. Especially after I met a girl I really turned on to. I've got this," pat, pat on the dash, "camper now so we don't have to find a place to crash."

"Though if we found one we'd rather sleep inside than in this. Beds in this are a bit cramped."

"But we've got 25 or 30 good tapes and it beats bagging it in the brush. I met some of the People in Pocatello. You wouldn't think that way out here, I mean, away from population centers and all that, you know, that people would be so open and hip. I'd meet people on the street, just like in Berkeley or Eugene, they'd just stop me right on the street to talk to me, and they'd ask me to spend the night at their place and have I eaten, and I'm the Cisco Kid and this is Poncho and we're long-lost sidekicks and care for a joint?"

"Sounds like Eddies Club in Missoula. A genuine Inn. Hitchhikers
would stop in and the people would talk to them; who are you, where-re ya coming from, where-re ya goin, stay in Missoula a while, can I get you a beer, look at this cartoon strip we made. A hiker got a meal, a party, and a place to stay. If he was human at all." I smiled at those times. "But changes Anyway, people from big centers like New York and San Francisco and L.A. would come up and be amazed that there is a love of place in Missoula, Montana or in Pocatello, Idaho. The little centers have all the media, 'Rolling Tone' er, 'Rolling Stone' and TV and 'Playboy' and radio and the Kawasai Ohman Band that is as deep and wide as any city stuff. And everyone has been everyplace, right?"

"Yeah," said the man in the middle, "The human experience."

"Right on. The human experience. It happens in Pocatello, Idaho and in New York, New York. Ever hear, 'I'm the only living boy in New York?' Don't know who did it. But thats happening in Pocatello, too. If you want the city for culture, clothes, the theatre, cars, spots, excitement, or you want the west coast for surfing and beaches and bikinis and boobs and spots and cars, then you might not be into people."

"Yeah, in California. I went to Berkeley last year, I felt some people there travel faster than their bodies. I mean, 'Lets go there. Lets go here. Then there. Then there.'"

Mark turned down the tape, "but some of them are pretty Be Here Now."

The man in the middle turned and said, "Yeah. If they're into the human experience. It can happen anywhere."

"I think meaning has a lot to do with the personal experience. TV can show you people starving in Bangladesh, but until someone you are identified with is concerned, or someone sits at your table and says, 'I just got back from Bangladesh. Wanna hear some pretty rough stuff? I saw people dying of hunger, man, I've never seen that before. I'm sending
all my bread over there for a month. I'm fasting, see? I saw this mother of 3 , well, then it has meaning and you can change."

"Yeah. What kind of humanity is in someone that says, "its their own fault for fucking so much or not using the pill."

"Judgmental stuff," I said, as much about us at this time as about the 'Its not my fault' people. "But you're right."

"Yeah. When I hear people putting down people because they're starving, its unreal." He tightened his face and a comic voice came out of him, "Yeah, man, well, if they're too stupid to quit having babies, pop!, pop!, pop!, just because their religion says don't use the pill and they're so paranoid they think our technology is the western domination plot, well, then a few of them dying is a natural population control.' Sounds like the ol' 'WE'LL TEACH THEM' disease of the psyche."

Mark said, "Maybe the people dying of starvation are the higher. They are dying, in some degree, for a belief. The ones who are putting them down--pardon me for putting THEM down--are maybe already dead for lack of humanity."

"My father, fat as an old dog someones been feedin instead of lovin, he used to say. 'Clean your plate'--he always gave us too much, food that is, I guess because of the depression--'There are people starving in India.' Those Indians starved from the time I started feeding myself until I left home. Hunger is no fun, but I never did get the connection between the starving Indians and me having to eat more'n I wanted."

"Weird. And I didn't really believe in India until I met an Indian at school."

"All this talk is making me hungry. Any sandwiches left?"

The dude in the middle reached through the padded hole into the camper and withdrew a limp papersack. "Just 2."
"I don't need anything," I volunteered.

They chowed down. "Wish I had a beer to go with this."

"I've got a canteen in the back with cool water."

"Is OK, man, I just get the 'wishes' sometimes."

"Latent consumerism," I accused. We laughed. Somehow our talk, although a bit parental here and there, and maybe just a little stiff at first, loosened up considerably. Where there were stiff silences before, now there were freer associations, observations, remarks, and play. The silences were shared.

"Does your grill, er, girl, live in the city or out in the country?"

Thinking of Pat and Ricky and Soda Springs.

"I don't know," Mark smiled, "I just met her through a friend at a bar and I'm going to look around and see if I can find her."

Strong faith. "You'll find her." Someday.

We rode in silence. I turned to the dude beside me, "Mark's chick, was she blonde with blue eyes?"

"Yeah. ?"

"Tall?"

"She was kinda big, as a matter of fact."

"Her name Pat?" More like a statement. Like I knew.

Zzoot!

Electricity!

Questions all over their faces. Lookin at each other You tell 'im? It was a guess, but it hit 'em. Sometimes I guess right and get a nod, yes. Other times I can feel substance in my guess and in the reception. Once in the 1973 Christmas party at Hillside Manor I was cornered as being clairvoyant--Martha's game. The dude at the other end of the table said, "Where am I from?"

"I can't just pull it out, of the air. Talk about your wife."
I didn't want particularly to even venture a guess, but I'd play. He was newly wed and made tender eyes at his wife as he spoke about meeting her and marrying.

"Miles City." I said it like knowing. Brenda, bless her, was from there, and Plevna. I could tell by the instantaneous changes that I'd hit it perfectly. "Please pass the olives."

Or when Joan Hysall, one of the few examples of the People I met before I knew about them, answered the home question 'California', I flashed on indians and kivas and said, free association and into our mutual air, "Hopi."

Right enough. Shocked both of us.

Mark looked at me in wonder. "How did you know?"

Living in the mystic reál is strange. These 2 brothers, living at 50 ESP, were more shocked by this guess, a random energy surge at maybe 60 ESP, than the mundane 10%ers are by miracles. I suppose the 10%ers see only 10% of the miracle. 10% of a miracle = having a bird fly in your window. The dead, without mystic fire, make laughing noises as the cat catches it against the glass.

"I dreamed I saw Saint Augustine/ Alive as you or me."--Bob Dylan.

I wrote a mental story of the spirit Ms Right that haunts the Pocatello area like the Flying Dutchman, but I said, "I've been picked up by women 3 times in 2 years of hitchin. Only once this trip. Picked up by an unattached girl, pregnant, with a kid. She was a little scattered, but potential and beautiful, loving, and sharing the vision. She talked about acid and the beautiful lava flows"

"I'll say. Those lava formations are just too much out there."

Out here. We were getting into volcanic country already. I could see cones and I could see basalt intrusions in the roadcut.
"Blue eyes. Blonde. Big, not heavy except in the belly. Her name was Pat." Then, almost to myself, thinking of my feeling for her, "I was strongly attracted."

"Wow, man, sounds strong. Pocatello, eh? Maybe I'll find someone right on my wavelength."

"And Mark may find Ms Right, I hope. Anyway, I've had nothing but good experiences in Pocatello. Quick rides. Beautiful country. Beautiful women. Good vibes. It's a good place. My Ms Right may be there. Pat was going camping by herself, with Ricky, of course, and fishing by herself. That looks like genuine interest. A country girl." I shrugged, "Makes Pocatello special somehow."

"It's amazing. This Pat was going camping, too. Could they be the same?"

"I can't remember her last name, but she lives by herself in an apartment in a big house on a shady street, Defoe, or somesuch."

Explosively, "It's not the same Pat," visible signs of relief, "The one I know lives with a family, in a commune-like, with another couple chicks and a dude."

"Whew!" said the dude in the center. "What a string watta string."

From one point of view, the garage in Pocatello was a forest of legs. It was a small forest, say about 42. We walked in and looked around. Mark still outside sweetening the truck engine. I hit the water fountain as an opening in the crowd occurred. Watch my toes. Then as the crowd ran into that low space on the floor, I hit the candy machine on the ebb.

Although I speak of a crowd as an impersonal entity, this crowd was of people, and a crowd only in their choreography. I felt good enough to
make and maintain eyecontact, and I felt that people enjoyed looking into my eyes. My smile was catching. I exchanged words with some 8 and 10-year-old girls who had been working on their father for candy.

I strolled back out to the pickup as Mark was opening the camper door, and I was surprised to see a long round dog jump out onto short, fat, bent legs. "Sally," Mark introduced. Sally waddled off on dog business as I got my boots and socks and my pack. I leaned the pack on the pickup as I dressed my feet. The pavement was hot.

"Thanks alot for the ride, man."

"Is OK. You'd do the same for me."

There, boots on. I clumped back into the melee with my toes protected in weighted strong leather boxes. Look out toes. I spoke to the little girls' mother as she was herding them toward the car. Father was in a good mood although he had had to wait for his money to be taken. His older daughter and son were having a friendly argument in the doorway I got another drink--the water fountain's reserve was exhausted and the water was warm--and loaded my canteen. Mark came in. The 3 of us stood in the doorway to the grease pits drinking cokes or munching skonk. "Here, not much help, but some," I handed Mark $2. He was happy to get it.

I located the can, washed my face, and enjoyed a piss. Got another drink of water, sucked on my red sugar water surrogate nipple strawberry soda mother bottle, and hung out on the cool concrete floor of bay number 1. Mark and our friend came in, "Can't find Sally."

"Not out back dog-doin business?" Mark was concerned.

"No. I've checked."

We looked everyplace and considered where a young fat lady dog might follow her nose. "There's so many smells here, she probably lost our spore." he analyzed-lamented.
The middle dude remarked we should watch the pickup because she would probably return. I felt good about still being 1 of 3, although we had said goodbye twice already.

Sally appeared, unconcerned and smiling. I smiled at 2 good lookin chicks as I threw on my pack and set out for the ramp up and across the street. Mark and the middle dude honked and waved just as I reached the foot of the ramp.

I thought about goodbyes and friendships as I started up the ramp. About halfway up a dusty blue stationwagon slowed down fast and pulled over to stop. I hit my release buckles as I jogged up.

A woman.

She wore a leather hat with a wide slightly bent brim. Her hair was dusty cornsilk. She was braless beneath a purple tiedye Tshirt. She held up her bluejeans with a macrame belt. Sandals. A very nice smile. A bit anxious and hungry for approval. Blue eyes. "Come on, Magee, get in back. Come on."

The irish setter just sat there grinning. I rubbed up against him. Magee, are you the kind of man she wants? Or the kind of woman she thinks she is? I like the irish setter drive--open and loving, innocently seeking approval, anxious or mildly neurotic, playful, sometimes foolishly quick to trust. The happiness of a society might be judged by the number of people with irish setters. I am not so attracted by polished females with grommeted leather, a car to match, and a german shepard. "Hello, Magee," I said as I massaged his neck and head, aware that I extended the greeting to the girl and that she accepted.

We were talking easily in a moment. We shared a beer. Lotsa beer on this trip. She was going home for a few days to regroup, she said, and
to show off her first class radio license. "The other licenses would meet my needs, right?, but I went ahead and got a first class license to show myself I could and because so few women in radio have em. I'd like to have my own show."

Magee shifted again. Sitting up. Curling down. Stretched across our laps. Up again. "He's too hot, but he won't get in back. Thinks he'll miss something."

I put my arm over him, "Maybe if I warm him more, he'll get into the back on his own," I smiled. "I think Missoula needs a woman D.J. Woman's point-of-view. Libber news. A lot of that stuff is high energy"

"A friend of mine is doing a show like that. He's black and he does a black show."

"Missoula needs that, too. We have a NPR FM station starting up soon. KUFM"

"At the university?"

"Yes. Associated with the radio-TV department."

"I thought I heard KUFM had been around a while." Not embarrassed with the presentation of fact.

"You're right. I just haven't listened to them yet. I tried earlier, but they were exchanging equipment and then their antenna blew down or something. And Missoula has another decent station which plays whole albums, pop albums, but the best, after midnight." Come to Missoula with me.

Magee got up and jumped into the back. "I'd like to stop by a stream if we see one, and I could cool him down. Maybe I could pour water on him. If beer wasn't so sticky"

"Would you mind getting your seat wet? I have some water in my canteen."

"Not at all. They're plastic. The seat covers, I mean." She meant
But she was surprised when I reached into the back and unhooked my canteen. Magee came forward with the canteen, laid down, got up and jumped back. I poured my canteen cup half full and gave him what he would drink. "How bout pirate radio?"

"An adventure. The commission'd be all over us. Shut us down immediately. But it'd be fun."

"Inane interviews with local crazies"

"Like Firesign Theatre. Free-form radio."

"We could read local writers' stuff over the air, and interview poets." as I poured small amounts of water into my hand and massaged it into the dog, "or highschool drama and stuff. Kids live on the air."

She smiled. I felt good about her. Going home, eh? So am I. Going to camp a little by herself. Loves her father. "Kids could read their own stories on the air, and their poetry. We could transmit story tellers actually telling their stories to kids"

"...with the interruptions, tangents, questions, and comments included," I massaged another handful into the curly red hair.

I felt good about D.J. Could have called it Love, I suppose. I could feel how she waited for my words and was quite aware of my movement. But this love, I was certain, was to become an integral part of my every human relationship--the feeling that something special was destined for the 2 of us. The feeling that our relationship was unnamed and free to change. That we shared a common experience. I thought of saying something like, "Its a shame to let someone like you just go on down the road. Wanna postpone our goodbyes?" But its greed to pick all the butterflies. And maybe--an old psychic disease--its a temptation to keep me from going north. D.J. and I could have enjoyed each other, but I decided that the relatedness
I was feeling—rather low-level—was my portion of the Universal Love.

Anyone in love, loves everyone equally. It's an angle on the 'no one cared about me until I got engaged, then . . . ' syndrome. Renée, at the Christensons' baby shower, despite all the inhibition, lubricants and practical looseness, was strikingly more real than most of us. I looked at her. Made eyecontact. Prolonged it beyond the 'hello' or 'I am not afraid of you' stages, and into the personal communication spheres. Big eyes. Clean. Sharp. Calm. Alive. We intimately spoke across the party. I am in love, I decided, and flashed fantasy about spending more time with those open eyes. Later I realized she was genuinely in love with Vince Swann, the personal TV weatherman. I had shared a little of that love.

"7 women on my mind/ 4 the ones that own me/ 2 the ones that stone me/ 1 says she's a friend of mine/ Take it easy/ take it easy/ don't let the sound of your own wheels/ drive you crazy." Who sings that?


D.J., it may be greedy to think of permanence. Ache for security and all that. Sue says, "Come when you need to. Don't look for permanence." So I love you for the space I travel with you—thanks for the ride, D.J.—but I'm going home.
Idaho Falls. She lifted her hand and smiled wanely. I watched the dusty blue stationwagon pull out of sight.


Everyone has a trip. To the light. Through the black caverns. Flying in the clear blue. Walking city streets. In the bar Going downstairs under damp plumbing. Climbing the hill. In black, grey, or color. Agony or ecstasy A goodbye and I am no longer sharing the trip.

I am sobered when the party breaks up.


A destination in the future structures the present. Its the California hysteria--common everywhere, but not universal. They come into your living-room like a single frame in a movie. 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' 'Sans Souffle.' Their eyes tear at me in an agonized attempt at the moment. Faces on the train. A passing bus. Oncoming traffic. They go, leaving ghosts in the livingroom an hour in dying.

Its multiple images/transparencies. Lord Krasna and infinite arms and avatars. "Drifting in and out of lifetimes unmentionable by name," sings Dylan. Confusion, Panic, or little sister Hysteria bid me spread myself out--some of me fixing up a future, some of me dragging the past, some of me crutching up the present, some of me right here.

A continuum called Parris.

The 'I wish I'd said' ghosts don't bother me as soon as D.J. is out of sight. Its nice to be here.

Focus, and all those images come together, and my arms grow in number. Being on the time line. Being free of time.

Many of me, spread by karma throughout alternate universes, other dimensions, find it difficult to change destiny--easier to sacrifice choices, easier to be led. A slow serpent in space.

Strangest impression that there are many hitchhikers at the Idaho Falls onramp, but I see only one. Average or short, soft shoulder-length hair, deeply tanned and clean, moustache, no beard, brown eyes, loose contrapasto, duffel in a small pack at his feet. He spoke first, "North?"


"Going to school there? I've boxed around that campus. Beautiful. Most universities are beautiful, but Missoulas got a mountain on campus."

"Mount Sentinel. I've done time on the campus, but I live in Missoula. Where are you going?" Travel together?

"Salmon, Idaho. I've just visited the Sinai. Peninsula. Its rough there. Not much trust. Lots of uniforms and guns and talk of terrorism. Don't like terrorism much--often directed at the populace. But at the same, terrorists are usually the guerillas."

"Aren't most terrorists trained, like CIA or the Green Berets or SSS?"

"I saw none, but it was impossible to get a lift. A 1000 soldiers hitching. People'd pick up a soldier or no one. I was eaten 5 days by giant mosquitoes at the edge of the desert and didn't slow even a car."

I looked at his skin, "Good way to get a tan."

"Or a sunstroke."

"Cheap high."

"Not really that hot. I decided to walk across the Sinai Desert."
No affectations. No boast. "It took me 3 days. I estimated about 30 to 35 miles a day."

At 3 to 4 miles an hour "That's 10 to 12 hours a day."

"Took me more. I traveled easy as I could. Along the road."

Is that a feat? "You carry water? Waters heavy."

He toed his pack. "I had a big canteen, but I stopped a lot at stations and inns and sometimes waited there. Didn't get a ride" anticipating my question, "until I reached the other side."

"How long you been here?"

"4 hours." My brows descended. No gel. He added, "I've passed up a number of short rides. I want one all the way through."

"Oh I was wondering I've had good luck in Idaho, except in the panhandle. On Lost Trail Pass I spent 4 or 5 hours, finally helped the ranger at the information trailer pick up litter, I think he was using litter as an excuse to come over and talk, and he was a teacher too, an appreciator of the Lost Trail country. Salmon's beautiful."

"Yes. Very."

"Finally he called his wife. Talked her into taking the other car into town, I don't know if it was a special trip down the hill or not, but she shopped and the kids hit the municipal pool. It was a kind thing."

"Yeah. I've stopped and talked with him."

"Mighty kind of him to get me unstuck. The mosquitoes had nearly absorbed my attention." I slapped my arm. "Many huge mosquitoes in late June." I looked across the street at the exit ramp I had just traveled. A red panel truck had stopped at the foot to let down 2 young hitchers. The driver had curly blonde hair. A chick, I flashed, and waved casually. Probably lives on the other side of the underpass. I turned back to him,

"You going to travel down through the Bitterroot Valley?"
"Yes. Never have before. Say, if you're from Missoula ."
"Used to live near Darby ." anticipating his offer
"You probably make it to Salmon now and then. Come visit.
I'm Mike Moats. Stop in and I'll put you up a while. Show you fishing."
"Sounds good. Why not come to Missoula on your way?"
"I'm anxious to get home. I'll wait for a through ride."
The red panel, an old jimmy, forgotten since I noticed it, pulled up. Inside a grinner says, "Going north?"
"Say yes, bro," I unburdened.
Mike says, "Going far?"
Grinner says, "This Dog goes to Butte, Montana."
"Just my ride," I shouted in normal voice, as I watched Mike body a 'no thanks'
Tossed my pack into the back. Up and in, "Wow," I fairly gushed, "Didn't raise a thumb. Waved once." Wink at him. "Thought you were a chick."
This Dog grinned, "Sorry 
I nodded my head in mock sorrow. "Yeah. Feel bad. Feel bad."
This Dog slapped the shiny metal clutch to the floor and palmed that old black hard rubber shift ball. I turned to Mike and shrugged, 'fortune  
"If you stop in Missoula, look up Parris Young." I gave him my address. "We'll feed ya if we have it to share."
Mike grinned 'thanks', said, shaking his head, "Going home first."
I sat back as This Dog merged with the interstate. "There's a case of Coors in the back."
Noticed an open can between his thighs, turned and looked. The panel truck had a cockpit. Behind each of the 2 frontseats was a 3/4" plywood panel anchored to the truck on 3 edges and faced with 1/4" plywood lattice
work. Between the 2 plywood panels was a passage about the same width as the aisle between the 2 front seats. The back was fixed up with a red carpet on ceiling and floor, and from the floor to about 1/3 the way up the walls on both sides and on the rear doors. Above the wall carpeting, the plywood lattice work ran to the ceiling. All plywood was stained very lightly. There was stuff on the floor—a spare tire just inside the left rear door upon which my pack rested, an unrolled sleeping bag along one side with a guitar case on top of it, a cardboard box with a cardboard top a little askew, several paperbacks, a couple cans of oil, a scattered Sunday paper, scattered cigarette papers, socks, a boot, a pair of skis—my attention moved to the open center of the rear and to the case of Coors. a 6 pack short. I stood up and walked back.

"It's a little warm," he said.

I knelt and pulled a beer from the plastic keeper, "Is great."

Straightening, "It's been a great day, simply swell." Pop! "I've had easy rides, easy talkin, and beer—even warm—is a treat." I toasted the back of his head. Swallowed. Up front I sat with a satisfied plop, "Your copilot returns."

Chuckle of understanding. A brief nod, "Yeah."

"It's fixed up nice. What year?"

"'53 GMC. It belonged to a friend of mine. He's the kind of dude can just suddenly move, right? Has a job with the telephone company in Sun Valley—er, in Butte, I mean. He gets quiet like he's thinking about something, then just boogies out of town. Got a call this morning about 6, 'Bill, wanta drive me to Sun Valley?' Sure. That's as good as anything I'm doing, right? We'd been together late last night—haven't been so righteously wrecked in a long time. Some of the grass is in the JB. Wanna roll a joint?"
"No thanks." What did Rocket Davey Johnny say about grass? Aside from his message, I wonder how many of his words I should incorporate.

"I'm doing less. I've quit hash altogether, except for one remarkable occasion."

"So much for addiction, right?"

"You know it. And I was into it pretty heavy. 'Ah, yes,' a W.C. Fields imitation, 'fond memories of fair euphoria. Knife slicing off hash bit as slices of bread.' A friend of mine 'ud drop by. 'Can't go home til I smoke this up. Might take 2 days no more crazy than we are.' Good times. Then I stopped."

"Why would you do that?"

"Considered dope as training wheels for flyin'a free mind. Revelations, telepathy, love, a higher vision."

"Perspectives, right?"

"So if I get loose, and yet somehow hold higher values, like love and justice, I can personally evolve. I thought it might be possible without the crutches. And it is. But I have trouble maintaining it."

"This Dog does some meditation." Do you?

"I do too. Often. It's like meditation gets me on, but it's like a hashish high. My eyes open up, I get sensitive to nuance, and I actually hear body language as words."

"Far out. I've done it once like that at a Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks concert in Bozeman. I could hear everything at once, but instead of noise, it was very peaceful."

"That's it. Bums me out to come down. So I am going to see if it's an illusion. If I can get it right without chemical help. I maintained for a month once, high on summertime."

"Like a flashback?"
"I don't know about flashbacks. It's more like having more of my mind available. More aware. Where the straight has maybe an intellectual lazer, he can see a long ways but the incidentals ultimately get him. He doesn't really know what he's doing. Tricky Dick. Very intelligent, but conscious--like self-conscious. Everything he says is so cooked over it sounds like a recording."

"It is. Even his body language is a recording."

"'Ironman,' right?"

"Yeah. Pleistocene man."

"What's 'Pleistocene'?"

"I actually mean Holocene man. Pleistocene is when man showed up. Holocene is when we have record, in myth at least, of the Ironman. Slave to his mind." A little silence.

Then This Dog says, "Nixon can hardly talk. I miss the undertongue."

Undertongue: The message--which in an integrated person may not be reflected by his words. This may actually be verbal, but 'under the breath' Not for conscious, show, communication. Repressed thought, desires, needs, come out audible only to those unafraid of their own subconscious. Love. The conditioned mind is not aware of this language of the spaces, but it is quite audible to an open mind. Thus the prophet can 'speak the mind' of his audience.

In some of those of great intelligence--intelligence that has cost wholeness--there is no undertongue. Repression, fear, and conditioning freeze spontaneous movement. Motion comes from secret motives in that case. The possessor of such a mind does not know his own mind.

Intellection without feeling--'feeling', like emotion, is a great non-recognition word for spontaneous integration activity and feedback, and
this feedback takes a uniquely personal form—is rationalization.

You can think anything.

What 'emotion' usually means is a temporary insanity. Like violent anger, even if unexpressed, like laughing at something that should be humorous, but does not stimulate spontaneous laughter. Like much sadness. Like the watery residual pablum of love-sentimentality.

Beware the intellectual, no matter (in) his words. For implicit always in pure intellect is the assumption that you can know without experience.

Recognizing your experience, living what you sense, allowing thought to grow out of life spontaneously—I use 'spontaneously' a lot, don't I— that's wisdom.

"Start brain before engaging tongue." A popular warning to be careful about what you say. Nothing like genuine free speech to generate fear among the closed minds. And free action might get one crucified.

Those who fear their own subconscious, fear those who live much of their subconscious. Repressed minority 'Civilization and conversion of savages.' You cannot deny yourself and continue to live.

I turn the stone over in my hand. Looking down through the crystal I see the carbon lattice work reconfigured again and again. Like a molecule of water.

"I know." Back outside. "he says what he tried most to avoid saying."

"Double talk."

"Shoo! If you could hear his whole speech at once, it'd fall in halves. Cancel out like an equation."

"Nowhere Man."

"Worse than that," I smiled at him, "Nowhere Man was a friend of mine. But, you know, in a way I identify with him. He feels, I think,
nearly crushing personal responsibility for everything that happens in this country"

He whistled some Beattle, said, "This Dog Smokes."

"Right on. You should then. Maybe marijuana is the tree of life or the tree of knowledge, or the organic compound necessary for Mindlife, like protein is necessary for bodylife. Look at the renaissance the Civil Rights Movement shows. A dude names Huxley woke up with hashish."

A little quieter, "I'm still not certain."

"If I find out, I'll tell you." If I can.

Silence for a moment. A little beer Then he says, "So Michael, that's his name, says 'come on over', and I do and he's got all his stuff in boxes already, hangover or not. I help him load his car and this panel, then he lets me drive the SuperSports and he follows in this. We unload. Then he says, "This is yours." This panel, right? This truck. He built it himself but he's got papers and all, and he just lays it on me. It's mine." Big grin. Slaps the old black rubber gearshift knob affectionately.

"GMC is a fine thing. My dear old stepdad had a jimmy pickup that's sometimes be the only thing that'd start in winter. An old one."

"Bodys in good shape. What do ya think of the engine?"

"Sounds great," remembering the oil cans.

"Only used 2 quarts of oil this whole trip. It'll be a 3 by the time I get back to Butte. Theres a slow rear seal seep."

"Not bad, though." Not quite upfront there, Parris.

"I'm going to take it to the Augusta Rodeo. Clean it up and maybe camp in it at the Augusta Rodeo."

"When is the Augusta Rodeo?"

"Know it? Best one-day rodeo in the northwest. Lots a beer and rodeo. It's this coming weekend, I think."
"Sounds righteous. We've been thinking of going this year." I tried to roll my window up by using my right hand to lift the metal edging of the glass and my left thumb and forefinger to turn the spiny knob.

"Handles in the jockey box. The JB. Slips right on."

I cranked the window up and got the Sunday paper I had been talking since getting into the panel and wanted some quiet. I read the color section, "Most relevant part of the paper." I finished the paper and asked, "Mind if I roll a joint?"

"Thought you weren't going to smoke."

"Not. I'll roll it and leave it in your baggie. I just like to fondle, smell the stuff."

"Go ahead," he laughed.

I did. It was nearly as nice as playing with skin. I finished my beer and tossed the empty into the cardboard case. "Get me one too," he said.

The window went down easily without the handle. The clean Montana air came back in.

A couple beers down the road and we got into conditioning. "I've got this thing about society, ya see, this thing. When I look at the leaders the masses pick, I see a father figure. The most prestigious man is the superintelligent schemer, the one-dimensional man, the hoarder of harvest, the social success. Seeking acceptance is easy with him because he is easy to imitate. Bluff. Bare your fangs. Roll a couple barrels around in front of you and the other monkies, even the stronger ones, will maybe be dazzled. It's the barnyard bully thing. Chickens don't last a winter in the wild, except Banties, but that rooster is hot shit in the pen. Lots of domesticated animals are like that."
Domestication, some dude named Paul Shepard says, is an actual genetic change. He says man is only civilized, not domesticated. He says domestication means less presexual life-meaning and only enough essential social interchange for breeding—not enough for fulfillment. And less ability to recognize species. Its an interesting point, although he writes about domesticated animals like a city boy

"I think man's civilization is domesticating man. How else could you work 8 to 5 in one building? In one room? And big corporations now have legal 'entity' Entity, but not ethics. We give life to bureaucracies and corporations and they domesticate us to make us productive, easy keepers. Look at Boss Tweed. An overfed, overwhelming bully. Nast drew him as a greedy, ?domestic, tiger Tweed could only do his thing in a civilization--he could gather only handful in the forest.

"My presexual life was in large part a series of methodical steps to conquest of an objectified pussy. 'Find em, feel em ' and that progressed like by chart, 'fuck em, forget em.' I was encouraged to forget em. After all 'They all look the same from the bottom.' Conditioning was trying to kill me, man. And 'essential social interchange'? How many marriages do you know are examples of chromosoidal harmony?" (Love.)

"I don't see many. man. But, what the hell?" He mimiced a lecherous leer, "My chromosomes ain't been doin anything lately anyway "

We laughed and jived about some other shit, then I picked up my topic at a pause, like I had something to teach, "Most marriages are a mutual minimal contact social relationship--food and shelter, money, security, in exchange for tight slick pussy and the ghost of companionship--and I don't see many marriages where the partners even like each other or enjoy meaningful communication. Its a set-up to produce other workers and breeders.
And to generate money and market for the 'entity' "

"Jesus, you're really down on marriage," he frowned.

"Those things are largely true, but you're right, it does seem to be coming out of my mouth pretty vituperatively."

"Hows zat?"

"Too strongly caustic. Theres hope for all of us."

"Hey, lets hope so."

"Like cows. A cow may be trained, but rarely broken. But I've seen 2 cows that weren't tame. And how many generations have gone down? One was always with her head up, looking wild and crazy and frustrated and distrustful. When the other cows--even big ol Betsy, my ol sacred cow--ran from overgrazed pasture through the gate where they'd been crying for hours, into new grass, and started eating right off, this one angus cow stood and stared at me with her head up. She was real. And once a cow wouldn't bunch for old Bill Daigle, the gasoline cowboy, so he said we could half-it if we shot it. There was, lets see, me, Cy, Ray. my brother, Dan, who is an excellent hunter, Jerry, all of us with game rifles and huntin experience. And we jumped it right off. We spread out then and seriously hunted it, but Well, we never caught up. We didn't see it again for a week. By that time it got in Norman Schmidt's corral--I don't know if she was lonely or hungry or what, there was still autumnal feed in the foothills--but Norman trapped her. Did you ever hear that cowboy song, I don't know the name, but it goes:

Then the foreman sniffed and snorted,
"We'll let the wild brute go, he'll feel the need of shelter and feed then he'll come below."
But in the winter months that followed we saw him once or twice.
His great horned head grew starkly red against the darkening skies
He never comes down. Kills a cougar, then dies in a blizzard or somesuch."

"Never heard of it. I heard 'The Devil with the Knot tied in his Tail' though."

"Yep, that's the sort of thing. My mother was badlands bred. She used to sing me that sort of thing. Anyways, when we saw this heifer, she was a 2-year-old, she was running at us through Norman's corral fence blowing blood out of both nostrils. Mad as a bull, she was. A bacchante. Mad with sanity. We'd run across the pen and fly over the rails just before she'd stiff-leg up a cloud of dust or whang into the rails, just to tease her. Finally." I finished my Coors, 'we shot her.'

"Her freedom didn't do her much good."

"Nope." I opened another beer, feeling like a chauvinist winner. Tough, pragmatic, and wise in a cowman fashion. I woke a bit, "But I understand what she was into. And I respect her for it. She was right, you know. And sometimes, when I see how conditioned my own behavior is, I feel like I'm in a corral."

We rode in silence for a half beer. "You know, both those examples were cows. Maybe the female is less easily broken. Oh, yeah! I remember a third one. A bum steer or range bull up at the Havre ranch--in the badlands--that was blowing bloody froth. We teased that one, too, and we got it into the chute and into the truck by Mark running through the pen, through the chute, through the stockrack, and up and over the cab of the truck. Fuckin bull was right behind im. Lee kicked the gate and it fell and we had him in the truck. I thought the fucker was goin to come right through the rack and so did Lee and Mark. We had planned on truckin him to the slaughterhouse after lunch, but instead we grabbed a rifle, in case he upset the truck or broke out, and took off. Lee was driving crazy, jerky turns and going like hell and bouncing on the brakes,
"I'm going to keep him off his feet,' he said." More Coors.

"I don't know. We had the old chevy truck and it would wobble in the front end pretty damned bad now and then anyway. maybe he wasn't doing all of that crazy drivin on purpose. I've noticed that the decaying front end is pretty typical on those old chevy trucks, just like bad latches on old ford truck doors. The choice is, you fall out of the ford, or be thrown out of the chevy."

We laughed and I finished my beer. I popped another top and dropped the tab into the can. "We got him to the slaughterhouse and started to run him across the scales--he was really easy to get outa that truck--and the fucker got so crazy we had to shoot him on the scales. We left him there for the slaughterhouse people to drag off. I remember Mark and Lee coming toward me in the truck grinnin like a halloween prank. I respected that bull, too." Swallow. "He weighed 1600 pounds."

"Zat big?"

"They get bigger"

We rode in silence. I felt the nag "What was I talkin about?" We reassociated, "Oh, yeah, tame people." I looked out the window at the plains.

"Get me another beer, will ya?"

"Sure." I moved the case up between us. "Horses. Any good horse has to be broke. And I think 'broke' means breaking their spirit so they don't mind bit or cinch or a dude up on top."

"Except in a symbiotic relationship, a good man and a good horse."

I looked at him, "Know horses?"

"Nope. Just what I see."

"I'm not too great on horses, but I've seen that. Pretty high."

"Same with a good man and anything. Man and dog. Man and woman."

A little chauvinism? "It's a symbiotic relationship. The whole greater than the sum of the parts. I read a story, "The Game of Rat and Dragon," by Gordon Dicks or someone, about malevolent electromagnetic lifeforms in space that would fly almost light speed and wipe out spaceships full of people with chaotic mental waves, then gobble their life patterns. The men on hunterships saw them as dragons and the cats, they had a symbiotic-telepathic relationship with the cats."

"Yeah, I remember reading that."

"...and the cats saw them as giant rats?"

"That's the one."

"Men would do the technology and the cats would aim and fire the lazer guns because of their faster reaction time."

"That was a very good idea, not tremendous fiction, but an excellent idea. Wasn't there sexual?"

"Yeah," he said, "The man never married and the female cat never mated because they felt that the other was the perfect mate. Maybe they were disappointed with the opposite sex of their own species. The ship was the only place where telepathic contact, artificially induced, of course," he turned and winked, "was possible."

"Science fiction and sex. Pretty sexual story. No dammit--more humanistic than sexual. Romeo and Juliet. We get enlightenment with genuine cross-cultural communication--just think of the enlightenment possible through communication between species."

"Yeah. Sure you don't want a joint?"

"No thanks. I'm semiserious about laying off for a while. This beer," I tossed some, "is a good temporary substitute."

"How about cross-Kingdom communication?"

"Hows at?"
"Animal with plant? Thats something, eh? Pretty much undeveloped yet, I mean technologically. Communication has always gone on there somewhere. Think of the possibilities. And I can't but help, er, help but "Help butt."

"Help but think of Mescalito. Or of Buddha and the Bo tree. And maybe grass."

"And yeast products, " I swallowed, "You are what you eat."

We rode in silence a moment. I finished my beer and cracked another "And species recognition. The straights don't have much, but we can do excellent imitations of them. I see juice freaks hanging out together. And heads can communicate over a great distance. And I felt a harmony with you." As I do with people when I'm high. Kindred soul. Kind. Kin. "Its like Tom Wolfe asking one of the Hell's Angels at Kesey's place, 'How do you choose a prospective Hell's Angel,' and being told, 'We don't choose em. We recognize em.'"

"Yeah man, I've felt that."


"Doesn't sound like a real choice."

"Would you trade Freedom for Security?"

"Coors ees good stuff, si?"
"Si. Ees too bad ees so warm."

"Used to drink my beer at room temperature in Germany. Better bouquet at room temperature."

"No american beer is drinkable at room temperature. We drink it warm because we must. 'Good for thee lee-ver.'"

"Potable. Potability. The Great American Potability Problem. We drink it because we must."

"4 superbreweries handle 90% of american beer brewing. Limiting our choice."

"No shit? Which 4?"

"I can't remember. Like Pabst, and Busch for sure. Then Schlitz, I think."

"Schlitz. Weird. In Germany almost every burg has its own brewery. They brew to local taste and to meet local demand. Not far away from Butzbach, where I was stationed, was a town named Lich. Brewed Licher Bier. Made deliveries like a milk truck. Twice a week fancy little red or green plastic cases full of 24 one-liter bottles. 24 bottles with porcelain caps on wire that resealed your beer airtight. Flippies. Drink 3/4 of a bottle—a liter is a decent drink—on any impulse."

"Sounds. Potent potables?"

"Yeah. No 3.2 law in Germanland. The US 3.2 trip is designed to keep quality down, I think. No real competition to the big volume breweries. Butte had a brewery, right?"

"Uh-huh. Lost many coins. Probition near did em in, then some economic disaster or another. Missoula had a Highlander brewery?"

"Yeah. Our own local brewery. Didn't care for the stuff at all. Probably reverse prejudice. The only can of it I ever enjoyed was when Paul and I were working for Caras, trimming a 14' hedge in back of where
Angelo used to live. I was up on this ladder, hotter'n hell. I had sweat in my eyes and I was mopping my beleaguered brow with my red kerchief. And out comes this beslacked

"Beslacked?" Laugh.

"I tell you true. This beslacked, besweatered woman, beautiful in a cold sort of way, pings the top of this beer can with the church key--ever ping your beer with the can opener before opening it? Ping! Ping! To settle the beer or to fizz it up, I never knew. Ping! Ping! Like Pavlov's bell. Ping! Ping! Ppfizz!--and she opened em one at a time. One each. Handed em up to us. God, what a good beer. First really good beer I ever drank, and I'd done volume before that."

"I never did any Butte beer. I always do Oly or Pabst or, now, I do almost all Coors. And even Coors ain't so good hot."

I looked ahead. Someone walking rapidly and doing an intermittent thumb. Looked like a straight in some sort of trouble. "Pick im up," I transmitted into This Dog's space. I hadn't suggested--too weak a word--commanded--too strong a word--into another consciousness for a very long time. Held in check by guilt or whatever. Now I did it without feeling dirty or greedy or egofreak. This Dog could resist my push if he had a genuine reason to do so. He might have stopped anyway. This Dog slowed and pulled over. He had thoughts about no extra space, in front, but I was already climbing from shotgun. By the time he stopped I was sitting between the seats on the remains of the case of Coors.

I encouraged the hitchhiker to talk about himself.

Straight'd been on a 2 day fishing trip with a friend and had a limit or 2, "Going to smoke some," and his faithful fishing pickup had had some Phase III trouble. He had a smudge on his cheek and black grease on his knuckles. "Busted a rear axel."
Why get greasy if a rear axle is broken? "How far you have to walk?"

"About 2 miles this far. I had just reached the road. You're the third car to pass. I was going to walk to town. If I had to. My girl will pull me back."

Dah-dah dah-dah-dah. Strange rhythm of Straight's sentences.

"Fishing in a mountain lake. Doesn't show on maps. Salmon as well as trout," like he was incredibly nervous. But he felt he was eminently capable of handling any contingency

We let him out at the gas station. A sign in the window read 'Coors.'

I offered This Dog $2 for gas. "No thanks. Michael gave me $20 for gas and oil. I gotta use that first."

I watched Straight charge inside, place a businesslike call, hang up with a decisive move, and set out on firm feet. I can remember trying to look like my every move was critical and premeditated, and like I was sublimely on top of it--when I was a kid. "He'll meet her halfway," This Dog observed, implicitly winking.

The gasman was fumbling with a car or 2 and This Dog felt he had to hold his post. "Say," he said. "Why don't we see if they'll trade this hot 6pack for a cold one. Wanna frequent that place?"

"Genius. That's who." I grabbed the remaining 6pack and carried it inside. "I have a strange request, but we'd love it if " He said OK and got a crescent wrench from beneath the counter. He started undoing a chain across the cooler. "They don't want to sell that indiscriminately, do they. Do they have this incredibly accurate inventory?"

He laughed a little. "Not really. It's Sunday. I'm not supposed to sell beer at all today." Slide. Grab. Present. Trade. I noticed the price, "Wow! This is a damned good trade for me." He stopped and turned with question. Were mine loaded with urine and resealed? "The price. The price, man. My 6pack was worth only $1.35. Yours is worth $1.75."
Says so right here."

"Oh yeah. Thanks."

"Thank you," I said seriously. Then over my shoulder as I went out, "We drink cold ones because we can."

Back on the road we popped cold ones. "It gets more expensive as you get nearer Montana," he said.

"If we'd a waited, we'd a got more for our 6pack." Pause. "So most Montanans drink Grain Belt or Bud or Oly. Remember White Label?" ("a couple of kids to call me Pappy.")

"Black Label?"

"No, White. Was a good brew. Ain't seen it for years. A North Dakota beer, maybe," I reminisced slightly.

"I'm surprised about the number of good things coming out of North Dakota. Do you know Red Cap?"

"In little cans?"

"Yes sah like 12%. Called it ale or something to get around percentage laws."

"I've seen the little cans laying around. Never drank any. Theres really a Tree Frog beer, you know."

"Yes sah"

"Welcome to Montana" said the sign.

"Hey. this outfit is running a lot better suddenly." I played.

He smiled. Said nothing.

"Home. Home. This much closer home. Next the sad valley of smoke and arsenic, and Fearful Smog--the great Drag-in of the west. Then the mountains."

"Yeah. Is OK. Even if you gotta go to Idaho to purchase your potables."
"Filling station. Or frequent a filling station and trade a 6pack of potable. Refilling station."

"And make, ah 40¢ on the trade. Montana horsetrader."

"Freetrader Furtrapper. HunkPapa Dakota. Montana timberline tiger."

"Bulldog. Treefrog. Anaconda eatin timberline alligator."

"Filling station frequenter!"

"Pourer of potables!"

"Imbiber of brew!" he fair shouted.

"Lightning rider," I smiled at the Flying Train.

"Horsetradin Montana man."

We ripped down the asphalt at a wound-out 50 MPH. "Yes sah," he agreed, "That Coors is all-right."

Back on Interstate 90. Familiar to my feet. Some words about the Augusta Rodeo. Maybe school in Missoula later. See ya later, This Dog. Choose Life.

"There comes a point in love—once and no more—which later the soul seeks—yes, the soul seeks in vain—to surpass. I believe that happiness wears out in the effort to recapture it; that nothing is more fatal to happiness than the remembrance of happiness."—Andre Gide.

"After the final NO, there is a YES which determines the world to follow."—Wallace Stevens.

My pack is light. My crude boots are light. I'm singing Donovan's 'Sunshine Superman' and my own music. I could walk to Missoula from here. Theres clean, free water by the road. I don't need to eat. 3 days. 4 days.

When you make your mind up/ you're going to be mine

I toy with passing cars, dancing like a dervish, bowing deeply,

If he buys me with broken promises, if I sell myself for naught, then there's no guilt, my word remains intact, if I bring myself back.

"No deal."

Hows it go? 'Hope without relief is sickness of the heart. Yearning fulfilled is the tree of life.'

'Gonna be a bright, bright/ sunshiney day'

Easy. Easy Ain't it dangerous to feel so good? Marriage of wisdom and ecstasy Attitude, yeah, that's it. Airplanes and soul.

Tucked my jacket under the top flap. Retightened the nylon cords. Not so easy--that tightening. My pack is an Everest by Seaway and it was sewn without one of the necessary tiedown grommets, so I jury-rigged an extra loop. Up on my back again. Long firm steps. Mind full of amusing anecdotes. Sci-fi or the mind. I walk.

Sci-fi: I'm teaching at a modern university, looks like the UC at the U of M, but the students are highschool and junior high age. Students and I have rapport and we both grow in our relationship. Marvin disappears.

Marvin is the brightest boy in class. He shares all our projects. Does projects of his own. Time to spare. He disappears.

He would be in trouble if he disappeared in other classes. I keep the secret. I am trusted. At some time or another the entire class disappears. Jane is gone 30 seconds every 2 minutes. Terry and Suzan go 15 seconds every 4 minutes. Alice, Jolynn, Timothy and Jeoffry go 15 seconds about every 4.5 minutes. All of them. Even Sally. She goes for 4 seconds every 12 hours. Whump! A silent but visual explosion. A hole in the fabric. Sewn closed with Tinkerbell sparks that fall but never hit the floor. Sally's slow, a little bit clumsy, but she'll be captured by nothing earthly.
Marvin is gone 30 seconds every 30 seconds.
None of them ever miss a thing.
Perfect recall.
Life, where others have space

It's some open-door project. Students drift in and out.

Jolynn asks me in the quiet, "Where do you go?"

Very few adults can do it. Only the whole. And their reality is different. "I can see you go, Jolynn. And I can see down the waves a little. And I understand. But I don't go."

"Oh!" Her beautiful young face sobers with surprise. A question.
No words.

"No, Jolynn, I am not sad. And I am not envious. And how can I miss what I have never known? I am glad to help all I can from here."
I look out at the sky. "I am a little sad though, that," abbreviated gesture—no external movement—meaning 'they' 'have so rarely imagined it. And maybe wistful," I smile wanly. "But I still live."

"Oh." So quiet. "We all thought you did." (You seem happy.)

"I am fairly happy," a real smile. I toy with her hair. "And Marvin has always known."

She smiles. It's OK. "Isn't he beautiful?"

Even they don't have absolute control in choosing to go or not, in the duration of the trip. Once they maneuvered so they all left at once.

They were gone 4 seconds.

Beautiful.

I am not too sorrowful. A few tears at the glimpses at the wider spectrum. A few tears at the staggeringly real reality. A few tears like prayers at the beauty they live.

'You know what's wrong with the children of today A sociological
study shows they think of death every 5 minutes.'--paraphrase of Billy Graham.

Yes, I'd say thats the average period. But you call it death, Bill?

Don't forget--its all in The Eye of the Beholder.

4 seconds. All of them. Marvin came back--from That--just for her.
So did Jolynn. And Terry. And Suzan and Jeffry And Alice. Timothy. All of them.

I've never seen Sally so happy.

I enjoy a tear Compassion, I guess.

And sometimes sometimes--I haven't figured the period yet--sometimes I find myself beside a high mountain lake.

And sometimes, sometimes--Oh God!--sometimes I almost get it right.

Up into the pickup bed. I see 2 other packs in it. There are 2 riders and a dog in the cab. A rider is in back. He reminds me of Danny Merchant. This is an intellectual recognition, not a wholistic realization. His complexion is smoother. His hair darker. Same eyes. Same smile--like hes onto the cosmic joke, its fourth grade humor, he knows it, and that gives the joke resonance.

"How far ya goin?"

"Bob and I are hitchin, too. We'd like to make it to Spokane by tonight."

I felt there was 4 or 5 hours of daylight left. "That adds up to a long day from here." Meaning from this time in the afternoon.

"We're good travelers," he smiled, understanding.

"Travelin pretty fast. But it is your trip. Where're ya from?"

"Lynchberg, Virginia."

"That's quite a ways."

Smile. "There you are. Its been easy travelin. Bob," nod at the
passenger in front, "has traveled before, but I've never been out of the state before this trip. We haven't actually waited long, because when we did we were into something else. People. Or the place."

"Good rides, then?"

"Yeah. Real good. This is our fourth from home. We got this ride in Bozeman. He's taking us to Spokane."

"Straight through. OK." Not many chances for changes of direction.

"There you have it. I suppose we are moving fast, but that means more time on the west coast. Seattle. Maybe Canada. Down through California for sure. Back home in time for school."

"School. Majoring in anything?"

"Anything. Mostly sociology and psychology. I like people. I study them or forget studying them and just enjoy them."

"I do too, although I've had some rough spots on this trip."

Slightly cocked his eyebrow. "In Utah. People were very uptight. Children with their natural curiosity squelched. Afraid even to look. Lotsa long waits. Short rides. I was disjointed, discouraged and disillusioned. I found very few of the People--none from Ogden south. Further I went, worse it got. Finally turned around and came back. One of the best things I ever did. Not easy either. My discipline gets a little"

"I held out my hand like I was going to shake hands with him, but with my fingers spread wide. I quivered the hand. Only the forefinger remained fairly still. Axis."

"I've been thinking a lot about discipline, too. Discipline and silence."

"Some things are easy for me. I laid down hashish, which I thought I liked"

"Grass too?"

"No. I do a bit, time to time. Also enjoy my wine. They called my
father an alcoholic, but, its like Weird Bob says, "Theres no such thing as an alcoholic. Some drunks are happy. Some are not. Call the unhappy ones alcoholics." With my old man, everyone around him, especially my mother in these terrific fights, used to call him an alcoholic until they convinced him too. Years after, he quit. Doesn't touch a thing now."

"Takes some strength. I have trouble doing what I should. Like eating natural foods. I see a greasy burger and the mouth waters, the fingers flex and bakery cakes. What is that chemical, anyway? I can taste it in several things. Especially in bakery cakes." I nodded. I know it well. "But I quit smoking."

"Beautiful."

"Want some gorp?" he smiled, "Speaking of mouthjoy."

"Grope? Glop?"

"Gorp."

"What's that? Sounds like a skin disease. Sounds worse than the heartbreak of seborrhea, psoriasis, and eczema."

Twinkle. "No. Its good. Its our pack food." He fumbled with one of the packs. Drew out a plastic sack. Looked like coarse granola. "We started out with 3 pounds. Got this left. We've been eating it all along, and still a lot is left."


"There you are again. Bob and I I'm Jack," he extended his hand palm down.

Brotherhood grip. "I'm Parris."

"Bob and I are old friends. Go back a long way--we found this receipt in a People's publication." Another handful. "Its delicious," he mouthed
and grinned, "Except the chocolate chips and butterscotch chips should be like... ah, M&M's or something so they don't get sticky in the heat."

"Chocolate. I kicked my chocolate habit once."

"That'd be tough. Chocolates everywhere."

"Don't you know it. I struggled for a month quitting. Those candy bar machines are worse than hot-eyed temptresses. And much more available. I can walk right by 'em now. I don't know if I quit or developed a counter-habit. Reach. Stop and think. Withdraw hand."

"Counter habit? Like over-the counter?"


"Counterhabit. That's an idea. Almost as bad as the first."

"Right, I spose. I spose an enlightened dude wouldn't substitute a habit for a habit. He'd just eat it when he felt it was right and not eat it the rest of the time. No prejudice. Me, I've made a game of thinking about what I eat."

"I don't know if I could quit chocolate."

"Strange thing, though. About 3 months after I stopped buying candy, the price shot up 50%. I think the law of supply and demand is so much shit."

"Price control and that?"

"Monopolies."

"Ah, so. Like price fixing and artificial market manipulation."

"That's why the revolution. One reason. About '70 or so I quit buying meat. Not 100% quit or 100% vegetarian," eyebrows up like a cartoon character, "You understand, but close. Quite a few of the people I knew or met were also onto vegetarianism. In a year or 2 the meat price skyrockets. From my point of view, supply and demand is bullshit. Maybe I'll experiment and pick something and quit buying. Watch the price."
"Bob and I are loose vegetarians. We still do milk products and eggs."

"Eggs and milk. So do I. There’s little bad karma in milk--it’s like a gift from the animal. The bad karma comes from the way the animals are kept and treated and killed. It’s like my wife said when we passed a huge stockyard, near Helena I think, where the animals were overcrowded and laying on drainage heaps higher’n the fence. ‘I could never keep an animal like that, and I won’t pay someone else to do it for me.’ And I feel the same way about the way they’re killed."

"Full of adrenalin and stuff?"

"Partly. Mostly they are killed without love by unfeeling slaughterers."

"That’s it! I read that butchers are the lowest caste in India, but I didn’t know why. How do you kill with love? Isn’t that a contradiction?"


"Care for some water?"

"Love some."

Water ceremony Aquarius.

"I think water is the ultimate drug. You never get into an area until you drink the local water." Wiping my mouth. Missoula water, hmmm

Possibly I was never really into the Tucson trip. "Local water is different everywhere you go. Minerals. Mineral proportion. Hydrohistory."

He cocked his eyebrow again, "Hydrohistory? How the water gets to you?"

I shrugged with a grin, "I ah, just made that up, but that’s what I mean. Artesian wells, deep wells, streams from the snowline, ground water on granite bedrock or a particular clay. You drink the water, your consciousness is altered to fit the country. You become the country."

"I like that, man. Tourists in Mexico aren’t part of Mexico until they can eat and drink like a native. Imagine eating like an Esquimaux--frozen raw fish, whale blubber, or once I read a receipt book that said
fish was mixed with blubber and buried until it rotted, then it was dug up and eaten. There was a remark added by some child, the book was written by Esquimau schoolchildren, that said, 'Kids don't like this, but grownups eat it.'"

"Right on. It's an acquired taste. Until you eat it, you ain't part of it."

"'You are what you eat.'"

"The truth," I said as I rescrewed the cap. I meant that. "And drink. All kinds of neuroses crop up when modern man, with his fetish for the proven superficial and his disrespect for what teleology can teach about the unknown."

"Hold it. Teleology? You use some words I don't know."

"Excuse me. I thought I was an intellectual once and I still carry around some habits from that period. I use teleology like looking at nature and copying her processes or learning from her patterns. Any thought that's true, I think, has its pattern in nature."

"Ah so. A bird's wing tells you all about lift. A . . . ah, dewdrop tells you about surface tension and capillary action."

"Communication with nature can give you the biggest patterns. Tomotem, a very close friend "

"Like Bob."

"Like Bob. Said he could learn it all looking at a blade of grass. I thought he was copying the old enlightenment stories, but he said it without ego. Scientists look at a leaf. Cut it up. Tell you about chlorophyll and photosynthesis. Even duplicate photosynthesis in the lab . . ."

"For 1 point 5 million dollars." Twinkle.

"They get so far into little models of molecules and atoms that they
"I looked over my waving hands and into his eyes. Amusement. I sounded so serious. " they forget to lose themselves contemplating a leaf."

"Einstein could do it. 'A sense of wonder' he called it."

"You know it. You can actually see color inside a leaf. The color IS the leaf. It fits against the air just so. And the sun goes inside and illuminates it. Like flesh. Or relax all analytic process and concentration and dilate the eye. Super attentive."

"Aware." He was leaning forward, partly to hear me against the steady incidental wind, mostly because he was picking up on something from my talk. I've talked this stuff before, but he was in it. I got my impetus from him.

"Aware, yeah, but not directing it consciously. Not concentrating it. Concentrating, but not ah Seeing it all, but ah."

"How to say it?"

"Seeing the whole tree at once," he stated.

I was struck. That came right out of my experience. "Right on. I mean seeing photosynthesis work, then finding words later to describe it. Once, on acid, I watched a tree. Instead of seeing a branch or limb or twig--it was winter and the leaves were gone--I saw it all at once. I saw the color gradations from the trunk at the ground to the ends of the twigs. I realized the tree was alive, even in winter I know that tree. I don't know the name of the tree, but I'll recognize it if I ever see it again. But more, I saw the space it filled. I saw the structure--how the weight of leaves would bend them down and open the tree up to more sunlight. Its built for that weight."

"I just had a flash. Limbs up in winter. Down in summer A pump handle. A pendulum with one year in a cycle. Big in summer to catch sun
and rain. Small in winter to resist the wind. And that pumping, that's why transpiration doesn't explain why a tree can pull water up over 33 feet. They, the cells I mean, just have to be more permeable in one direction and the distortion of those cells by the movement of the tree would pump the water up."

"And snow. The wind wow!" I gush when I'm excited. "The wind is part of the process of Tree. A gale was blowing as I watched, see, or it seemed like a gale, and it'd hit the front of the tree and the first limbs would rise high, floating on the air, then the limbs within the tree would lift and the first ones would start to fall. Then the center of the tree would move over and the limbs within would start falling and the first limb that was lifted would fall below the original position and start back up to that position. On the other side of the tree the inward branches would blow down instead of up. The farside branches bent low. The whole tree in motion. Waves. Breaking the wind. I could see it all at once. The first branches, those that lifted, doing an antigravity thing, had strength to spare because of the reduced gravity, and they broke the wind for the rest of the tree."

"Winter is a season of the tree." Like a quote. Then, "If I was a tree, I'd surely have valves in my cells to use that motion to pump water. Hydraulics. Everyone knows trees use water to move themselves."

"Turgor pressure," I edified. "And all this time I could see the whole tree. How each branch did the same thing as the whole, just on a smaller scale. Clarity. Space. I could even see the shape of the wind." Pause. I'll never forget that. "Systems. Whole systems."

"The tree of life." I looked at him. My trip? Then he said, as normally as he could in the pickup's noise, "So that's teleology."

"Yes. In all the history we have of man, I haven't seen evidence
hes gotten any more intelligent." It felt weird to be shouting that against the wind. "His changes seem to be about the wholeness of his mind. And our environment has always had the entire lesson available for us."

"I don't know about that. What about spaceflight?"

"Point." Maybe. "Maybe thats man trying to do on the outside what he has always wanted to do on the inside."

Jack smiled broadly "Go to heaven." Shook his head, "Something about those stars, allright." Then up again, "What about old sciences? Alchemy and astrology. I hear astrology is way off."

"About 30° The astrological signs have rotated 30° eastward. And there are 12. Total 360° So 30° puts each sign in the position of the constellation just ahead of it." Not clear. "So the sign Leo is against the constellation Cancer and Cancer's sign is against the constellation Gemini. Approximately. The signs go the full circle and line up with their constellations every 25,800 years or so. Thats much beyond my experience. I think of Stonehenge."

"So astrology is bullshit? I find it works for me. Sometimes."

He was a warm person. My feelings toward him, good at first, improved. Nothing we said, just his interest and freedom from feeling he had to defend any ideas he professed.

"Well, not really. It ain't that simple. Those guys were bright as anyone today. They observed with the same degree of prejudice maybe, but they also had only fuzzy groundwork. The apprentice idea is great, but still its a limited frame." I was shouting a little, an activity that seemed to put some humor in my pseudointellection. I wondered what we were really talking about. "Its a problem of local tongues. Universal languages were rare, so when an astrologer integrated his 2 major interests, the courses of stars and people, he had to communicate that experience."
— Stonehenge. Heroic Language. A stone word and thousands of years.—
The effort to communicate is where the science got humorous. Cabalistic
symbols. Myths and stories. Some archetypal, and in that degree, true.
It's not so difficult to cut a leaf up and relate what you find. We have
many words--many more tools--than those early scientists. Imagine trying
to grab something solid from the unknown when you haven't got words."

He looked at me with clear eyes. A pleasant feeling like he was
leading me. Like he was saying, "That's why we're here."

In the back of the pickup. In Montana. On this continent. On this
planet. In this solar system. Galaxy. Universe. Words are easy. Often
illusions. It's the wordless--the unknown--that surrounds my life and gives
it form. Like space. Does Adam mean 'the namer of things?' I said,
"Maybe creativity is perceiving that which is nameless, the unknown, and
naming it so others can say. 'Yeah! That's right! Wow! I know what you
mean!'"

"That's communication," Jack stated.

"Energy. The best name--which could be a painting, you understand"

"I understand," with a twinkle. We laughed. So like Danny.

"The best name has the most energy. The greatest impact of I-know-
what-you-mean-ness, right?" Realization. "Women's lib. Read some of
their stuff. A messiah is a liberator, you know."

"I know. And I have. Lots of energy. It's communication."

"Communication. Its alchemy. Like alchemists. They climbed up
from the wordless--synthesized chemistry, enlightenment, and the language
of time and place. Sculpture and painting were--still are, in fact--
sciences. If you understand their entire language, their environment,
and the entire science--of alchemy, let's say--that whole trip of the
Philosophers' Stone would look different. The man-are-they-stupid-for-trying-to-create-gold-from-baser-metals trip, reflects no understanding of what real alchemists were all about. The we're-smart-now trip is historic egoism." I thought of silence. It drifted through my head like thistle down on the breeze. From where? Egoism? Maybe I should be quiet awhile.

Jack spoke up, "I learn a lot teleologically by watching people. Every area creates a character. I feel a New Yorker. I feel an Australian. I listen to them a minute and I know I'm right. Be around them."

I mused, 'the area creates the character.' Environment. I picked up my stream, "Water"

"There you have it."

"Drinking this Montana water, eating Montana deer and fish and a change starts to occur in the sensitive mind. The mythos. The magic. The history."

"Hydrohistory."

"All of it. It grows from the earth, just like everything else. You know what it is?" His eyebrow again. "Its Indian. American. They are the Americans. They belong here. Those first integrated whites turned on to freedom because its in America's water. 'The land of the free. That's the truth. The free belong here. Teleology. The environment teaches you how to live in that environment."

"In Virginia, but more in the northern states, the water is so polluted that it teaches men only death and how to kill the host." Jack frowned a little, "What does pollution teach? Did you know the Hudson River used to be a fire hazard?"

"The worst of the white man. The Indian was at balance with the whole. His rivers ran clean."

"Because there were fewer. He polluted, too. I heard that one
reason he was nomadic was because his camps started smelling." He
sparkled with playfulness.

"So he moved and the earth was fertilized. Even a sacred cow shits
on the lawn." Laughter

"But the indians threw garbage into the rivers, too."

"Yeah. A point." Was the difference population? Partly, I suppose.
In large degree? I don't think so, but population could be one of their
strongest lessons. "It was biodegradable though."

"No reason. An excuse. They had no metals culture. No glass
Say, what about flint and pottery?"

"Just rocks."

"Isn't an iron gear a rock, then? And what about boneyards and
natural shelters where ash, bone, stone tools, pottery. and musselshells
are over 8' thick?"

"Hold on. All those things become part of the earth. The indian
made no river you could set fire to. He might overfish a hole, but he
didn't dynamite any. The indians didn't extinguish the carrier pigeon.
Or almost erase the sea otter. Millions of salmon used to go up from
Bristol Bay in Alaska--once the best fishing in the world--and last year
no fishing. No fish. Indians honored the eagle. Didn't shotgun em out
of helicopters. Did you know Yellowstone Park has about 3 million acres?"

"No. I didn't."

"I'm just rapping. I don't mean to be pushy. I heard this from a
dude in a laundromat. I think he could truth. Said he'd been 2 summers
in Alaska. Says they don't care about their state. Maybe there are no
Alaskans left. Said they are only into exploitation. Animals and fish.
Copper Land speculation. Timber They sold a timber sale, the dude says,
for an 8 million acre clear-cut. Thats 2 and 2/3 the size of Yellowstone
"No shit?"

"He seemed like a solid source. I hope he's wrong."

"Why are they so blind? That's stupid."

"They have beautiful land, but it's fragile. Look at the next pictures carefully. And Indians lived off that land a long time. They have been long up there. These homeless whites, although they may have houses, have no home there. Thieves. Pigs. They eat past full. Leave nothing for their own children. They even are against the creation of natural parks."

"I know. I've noticed some Alaskan cars with 'Sierra go home' or 'Alaska for Alaskans' signs plastered on them," he said.

"I could get embittered. People can be beautiful. Even wise. Gut greed wow. Eat the earth. The Alaskans, just the pipeliners, I hope, say 'Sure. Make a national park. But make it above the timberline.' Above the timberline! How about that? Some interest in ecology, alright. It's critical they realize that we all are living off the land."

"We are, aren't we. Living off the land."

"Treat it like life. 'The meek shall inherit the earth.' Know who the meek are? That's no biblical promise of pie in the sky, man. Which powers want a man that is weak, meek, or impotent? Men who yield to the taste of money. $40,000 or $50,000 a year salmon fishing. $600 a month and room and board for pipeline work."

"I heard that it's twice that."

"I don't know. But they're eating it like there's no tomorrow. Imagine the earth they bequeath. The Indian didn't bulldoze roads to every village or along every river. We have a chance, though. Young people. Young people thinking for themselves. Some growing into great men. There
is coming a time when they must all be great men or homo sap won't be around. The New Frontier is still there. There is a place for the New Pioneer. Not the old pioneer who gobbled-bled the earth, rip-tear-rend style. But for the New Pioneer who rejects consumerism and accepts the responsibility of place."

"You talk a lot." Grin. "But you said a lot."

"Yeah." I took a breath. Its easy to get speedy from my own words. "I've said a few things for effect there. Actually I harbor a disappointment. I was certain the northerners appreciated their land. Loved it. Its a beautiful, fragile, and often harsh land "

"Like a travelogue," almost under his breath. No judgement.

"but there are only a few genuine northerners. Maybe the fuss is from temporary Alaskans. I am almost certain the 'Alaska for Alaskans' and 'Sierra go home' are the newcomers. 5 years or less."

"Maybe. I know. Is the whiteman all that bad?"

"I say 'whiteman' That means anyone without a genuine sense of belonging to a place or a community."

"But is the whiteman all that evil? Manifest destiny and all that?"

"No. Its just that to the degree hes enslaved, he is homeless. "

"Jesus," he said. "You say alot of things like ah conclusions, you know?" Shrug. "Slavery. Then what about the negro?"

"Hows about mental slavery, then? The man enslaved to greed, lust, objectification, or," a theatrical flourish, "the concrete manifestation of all that--dah-dah! the establishment."

"Social man. Noman," he said. "I agree that the negro has a sense of place. There you have him in stories--or telling stories like Uncle Remus--or in music, sex, sports, almost everywhere, he is somewhere behind the scenes."
"at root. Because he is freer than 'whiteman', he's got roots. As much as the indian, maybe . . ." "Not so much in writing."

"Whiteman's bag. The indians tell a story about how everyone in heaven was the same. Then some braves, just for fun, tried to capture the sun. They were toasted red. Some chickenshit—what, not braves for sure—just sat around playing with paper. So they didn't tan and were the color of their papers. Reading and calculating and writing. Whiteman had a corner on information of 'educational' sort. Insensitive data. The insensitive culture overwhelmed the minority—but whites are the real minority. Indians and negroes are getting educated. They don't like it, usually—I'm dealing with a stereotype that isn't exactly true, but the same things can be said of young people anywhere, whites too—because they sense the irrelevance of established education in terms of life."

"Kids. Indians. Negroes. All together."

"Yep. And the People." I was ready to discourse further. "The sensitive. Undeadened, undulled by defensive insensitivity. The People."

He smiled and nodded. "You sure hold forth." A statement of fact, not judgemental. I might have been put off, but he had come with me—leading at times—all the way.

I laughed, then mock embarrassment, "Yeah. I know everything. I've been holding forth like this since I started back north from Ogden."

Again that thought of silence like a lazy unconscious gesture with meaning for me. Be still a moment.

Jack spoke again, "The indian killed animals."

I picked it up again. "Sensitivity. In the insensitive whiteman culture, full of repression and hate—I suspect the greatest fear is fear of sensitivity, so repression and insensitivity fit together—whiteman
"There we have it. The bad karma." Full circle.

"Right on. You must genuinely love what you kill. Then you eat it and acquire its attributes. Every time I catch a fish, I thank God. Every time I kill a fish by smacking it against a stone, I fancy I feel the blow a little. Every time I eat my own fish, I learn about the water." Circles.

"Jesus, I sure get into babbling easy, don't I?"

"I'm learning a lot. It just takes a word to set you off."

"Ah, yes, the Word. I've led people around like that. I give a key word. They flesh it out, then run down. Another key word. They flesh it out again, then run down. I can make a nice circular conversation with a few well-chosen key words." He was smiling at me. "Oh, yeah."

"Silence," I repeated aloud, almost to myself.

"And discipline," he heavied.

We rode in silence awhile. I watched the country grow more familiar. The dog stood up with his paws on the back of the front seat, his nose against the glass and studied me. Now and then his nose would bump the glass—sometimes with quite a solid thump—but the dog made no show of pain for sympathy. In face he was laughing mildly.

"You remind me of a very good friend. Danny. Danny and I used to enjoy a little self-righteousness together about crimes against the environment. We'd gush about it. We were close enough that we could rap for hours about nothing and get somewhere."

"Same as Bob and I. We've been together about 3 years now. We knew each other as kids and played together, but didn't even particularly like each other. We are talking now." I took that personally. "Something
happened to us. Instead of acting like we made no difference to each other, we started talking. I don't know what the difference is. Instead of saying 'I think this' or 'I think that' and arguing until we were saying things we didn't believe, I said things like, "I want to tell you how I feel about you.' He did the same. Pretty soon--I don't know how to say it--we quit talking about it and started talking It." I nodded. He knew I knew what he meant. "Really loose talk. But personal somehow. And important. We got to some things we had never thought about before. Like enemas. I found myself telling him about my mother killing me with an enema--something I didn't remember and never knew I feared so much. And he . " And I. " understood. And he told me about how he felt about masturbation and I had felt the same things."

I laughed. "I remember my dear ol stepdad tearing the bathroom door open--he tore the latchplate right out of the jamb--and finding me probing in my prick with a piece of string. 'I thought so!' he shouted. So I assumed I was a pervert until Danny said, without any hint of embarrassment, 'Yeah. I beat off on a Greyhound bus once.' Did I understand that. I've always had that thought when riding buses. Of course that asshole went on to lie. He told me that he was sitting by a pretty girl, maybe a nun, and got it all over her leg and that she woke up and he was cleaning it off with his bandana and she was pretty upset."

Jack laughed and the wind spread our laughter all over the right of way. I had told it pretty well.

"Talking out the taboos," he said, "pretty soon you can say anything and no one will get upset. Bob hears what I'm sayin instead of the words."

"Words are just the vehicle. We have a home daycare and take care of children. I like the 'problem' children best because they are upfront. The worst one we had was Donny. He said 'Thank you, sir' or 'Hello, Mr Young' or 'Thank you, Mrs. Young' and all the other kids'd yell '
hey, Bev!' or only 'Get me more orange juice.' Donny'd be doing something destructive, he broke toys and the tip off my fishing pole—the little asshole—and Bev'd say, 'Donny, don't do that,' and he'd look wide-eyed at her and keep doing it. Or if he knew we knew he'd heard, he'd quit immediately and apologize profusely and go on to something else like it was nothing to him. 'Good morning, Mr Young.' Never did like that. Poisonous as hell. Started fights with his face like an angel."

"Yeah, that's it. His 'Please pass the milk' and 'Thank you' were not what he was saying. He was really saying 'I hate your guts.' That's hard to climb over.

"You know it. Once, as we were getting in the VW bus, he deliberately broke my Garcia casting pole. I was pretty damned pissed. I yelled 'Who broke my pole?' He denied it, but all the other ratfink kids, most of them disliked him, pointed and shouted, 'Donny did it! Donny did it!' They had nothing to lose. I pretended I didn't hear his denial and asked, as softly as I could without being blatantly phoney, 'Did you really break it, Donny?' He gave me that wide-eyed look and said quietly and firmly. 'Yes.'

"Far out," Jack smiled.

"That's the truth. Despite his training to the contrary, the truth would fall right out of his mouth. Under the false politeness he was hostile and destructive. Under that he was rebellious. That rebelliousness is the connection to the beautiful, brave and beautiful, soul. I let my anger dissipate and smiled and said, 'I'm impressed, Donny. Many people are afraid to tell the truth,' and I turned to my driving." I showed a mixed grin and a snarl to Jack. "When I was actually saying, 'I'd like to hit you in the mouth.'

We laughed a moment. We laughed a lot on that trip.
"But after that he opened up to me a hell of a lot more. I'd come home from the U and he'd see me coming across the street and he'd come running, mostly because the other kids did, or he'd look up from his play and shout, 'Hi, Poopie-old Parris.' Shit, I felt good about that. In spite of calling me Poop or Poophead, he was actually addressing me in a term of endearment. He was actually glad to see me."

"His words were almost opposite of what he meant."

"You know it. We were getting somewhere when his parents took him out. On the external the other kids were glad to see him go. But we all missed him and Debby. His presence, even after 6 months of mellowing, still was pretty untight. But, you know " I gestured my regret.

"I know. Seems like I've heard kids talk much more honestly than I did as a child. Bob and I have gotten pretty good at it "

"I've noticed," thinking of his observations about my talk.

He grinned. "Still ain't easy. Can do it just a little with my mother. Not at all with dad. Wish there was some way I could tell them

You know, Bob and I have talked about everything. Things didn't seem so important before. Now it seems everything is. Its all so alive and changing." I know that feeling. Communication. Communication. I've been thinking alot about friendship. How long should you be friends?"

"As long as you are."

"I mean. How long should you stay together?"

"At one time?"

"Yeah. We live together. Have for a year and a half. I don't want to cling. But we're still deep friends."

"Homosexual?"

"No. It's not necessary. We have girlfriends and that. Go out separately. And I am close to some of those girls. We ain't married to
each other. I'm no virgin but I'm a little slower talking to girls like I talk with Bob."


"That's it. I can talk to others a lot better now. Bob and I are doing this trip together and then maybe he'll stay in California and I'll go back to school. We'll see. I'm not even sorry, you know. I'll find someone else and it'll start over. Be different."

"Getting to know someone else."

"Really know them," he emphasized.

"Without that ego bullshit."

"Games. You can learn someone's games and that's the end of that. Variations, but nothing new."

"People are afraid of being 'known' because they are so into their own games they don't know themselves beyond that."

"'They"

"Me. I do it occasionally."

"Me, too. It's a bummer"

"Especially when self-knowledge shows us such a wild universe."

"Change. Life. Experience." He gestured wide with his hand, "This is all starting to mean something to me. Self-knowledge is people knowledge."

"The 'Hall of Mirrors' trick."

"'There's heroes in the seaweed/ and children in the morning""

"'When Suzan holds the mirror' " I finished.

"That's the thing. You think you know the reality until you get in someone else's head, then phiz-zazz! It's all new."

"The hybrid is exciting."

"That's what's in common. That's maybe all that's true."

"You never know where it's gonna go. Danny came over one evening
and we sat in his '50 ford and threw a blanket over the windshield so
the frost wouldn't build up. That car turned into an airplane and we had
a weird flight and visited some strange places."

"Like earth."

"And more. Much more. Here I was, a 30 year old man, playing like
a kid. And feeling it. It wasn't even pretending. Pretending like
adults say it is too much an intellectual thing. It was a cosmic trip.
Strange realizations. Unexpected and hilariously funny things."

"Yeah. I know. I know. Its a little frightening. You go up and up
together until you see things differently"

"Not just words, right. We actually SAW things differently
Actually HEARD things differently. It was very windy and that wind started
to sound just like the incidental wind that tears at the airspeed indicator."

"Ghost stories. I've been so scared as a kid that mist coming up
in the headlights kept us in the car. Doors locked and windows up."

"Ever hear the story of 'The Claw'?"

"'The Hook'? Lovers' Lane and all that?"

"Yeah. Thats the one. They drove home and found the hook in her
doorhandle."

"He twinkled, "Everyone has Poe in their library. Can you imagine
actually getting stoned out with him on a long winter's evening?"

"Way out in the country someplace with the roads snowed closed?"

"And your big Black Forest coo-coo clock the loudest thing in your
front room." We started laughing, sensing where that one would go.

"The power fails once. Twice. Then the lights go out."

"You start thinking about the 'black' of 'Black Forest.'" He added
the variable.

"Heavy stuff. You let yourself get suggestable "
"And the 'Pit and the Pendulum' happens right in your own frontroom."
We laughed very hard. There was something humorous in that.

"Or Alice in Wonderland."

"Say, ever notice that hooka-smoking caterpillar in Alice? Improves suggestability, I'd say."

"Sure. Was a caterpillar once. Or the Lord of the Rings trilogy. That actually happened to Tolkein and his friends."

"Wouldn't that be wild?"

"Its the power of belief. I kept saying, 'Is it true? Is it really True?' and Tomotem said, 'If you believe it, what difference does it make?'"

"Bob and I believe together."
Far out. "If everyone did, if most everyone believed this was becoming the Garden of Eden again."

"Or that things were improving miraculously" I took that personally.

"Or that men could teleport and telepath," I said.

"Endless possibilities."

"Creativity Believing so strongly that others catch it from you."

"Now you have it. Communicable Life."

"I like it so much that sometimes I act like I'm getting excited when I ain't."

"Oh." The meter suddenly stuck.

A second. Then it started again.

"I do that sometimes, too."

Whew. "Its a communicative orgasm when its good."

"Hey! Thats right."


"I've felt that. And to someone just listening, an outsider, or maybe you could say an alienated observer, it might be gibberish. Like the Tower of Babel."

"Right. Brand new ground. Firsttimeness. Then simultaneously you both make the same realization. Ka-chong! Communicative orgasm. Realization nearly at revelatory levels. Both talking and listening at once. Not missing a thing. Getting more."

"Headfuck."

"Without the negative stuff. Not someone getting fucked. People making love."

"Wow, yes," Jack beamed, "That's how it is. And I hate to see him go home."

"Seeds of community."

"You'd never need gasoline then. Or electricity"

"You wouldn't have to go to Spokane," I said, "Or Tucson. Or to a movie."

"You could talk all through a movie with your friend. I can hear Bob even in the noisiest places. We have a wavelength."

We have a wavelength. "And you wouldn't disturb the Egoteurs. They filter it out. But the People."

"We live Here." He spread his wings, "Earth."

And much more.

"All you need is love. La-la la-la la
All you need is love. Yea-a-ah
Love is all you need.
Love is all you need." --Beatles
"If you open up your heart." — John Lennon

"Let it be." — Beatles

"See that cliff?" The flattening sunrays created high contrast. Great visual texture. "There's a local tale around here that some outlaws stole a strongbox of gold from the Gold Crick station and made it this far. Sharpshooters picked 'em off the face of the cliff from way down here, the probably-apocalyptic story goes. But not before they had time to ditch the strongbox. Never found it. Story says it's still up there. Or buried in the old streambed just below the cliff."

"Ever look for it?"

"No. It'd be a nice place to look though." Goldenred cliff showing through sparse brown or green vegetation. Clear blue Clark Fork River down below.

"I've been thinking about what you said about the wordless. Life is love without words. We learn first to be aware of it. Then, or maybe at the same time, we learn to relate to it. Finally, we learn to change things. To contribute to life. To move things for which there are no words."

"I just finished reading Okla Hannali by R. A. Lafferty. He says a whole man can tell you how the field mice are moving by watching the sky and the flight of the hawk."

"How?"

"I thought about that, too. He doesn't say, but a hawk that isn't aware of mouse movement is gonna get mighty lean."

"Oh, yeah. And I suppose a mouse that doesn't see the hawk is going to make his contribution. Reading the signs."

"You know it. The toughest thing in my life is learning my way Knowing my heart."
"That's what my discipline thing is all about. Doing what is right for me."

"You know it. I got my clues from the seagulls. If I know myself well enough, the sky, the earth, animals, can tell me what I need to know about myself."

"And discipline is doing that."

"You know it. Sometimes it's so good my guilt is yelling, 'This is not for you. It's too good. It's a temptation to reward yourself.' But shee-it, everyone is genius, finally. I suppose if a man is a pimp, being anything else is denying himself and God."

"I don't know if I believe in God. My family is Catholic, but I don't have much use for that. It's unreal. This," a gesture at the quaking aspen and doug fir, "is where I find it."

"Good. Me, too. But I dig a high mass with good music and colors and ceremony. I liked latinate masses."

"Yeah. I do, too. But it's a show. It's unreal."

"I guess you're right. Church folk are the most anti-life folk around. Established churches, that is. There are some churches full of young people, new ideas, exuberance and life. And Missoula had a fine, creative Catholic priest, but he was maybe exiled. They talk about Jesus, but they fear Life."

"And death."

"Ain't it true. They talk about faith, but they don't have enough faith in others to realize legislative morality is discipline imposed from outside. How could anyone be offended by porno? It's bad art, or it ain't porno. If it's bad art, why waste your attention on it? Illegalizing it merely puts a statement of value on it. In the public schools they have more faith in an educational system and achievement tests than in their
own child's motivation to learn.

"You believe in God?"

"Not the same as churches. I believe that all things, wind, stars, men, earth, colors .... It's a beautiful chemical reaction and we are it. And even in the spaces between atoms. It's all Him/Her/It. It's all God. I'm going to do His will, because in myself, that's my will."

"I know Jesus freaks I am pretty close to. At least, even the most Bible-rigid stiffs have that in common. It gives them something to talk about. Maybe rigid Bible quoters are at last saved by having some, however tenuous, link with other men."

"I think Jesus was a man. He did exactly His highest will. HIS will. What a show."

"Superstar."

"Weird Bob says, 'If he was so high, why did he get himself crucified? Why not do it all and get away alive?' Jesus was so high that he knew the value of dying. Jesus believed. He did it right. ALL right. Shee-it, we all know the impulse to do a higher thing. He did it. Moved the nameless cosmos. Shook it. 2000 years for us temporal beings. I mean, if one man did, what man cannot?"

"I don't know, man. I get onto it sometimes, then I get freaked out a little. Sometimes it's really grand. Really grand. This trip. The last year or so "

"My going north. Doing what I felt was best. Since I moved north I've gotten good rides quickly. Waiting is fun again. The sun's been warm. I've seen the People"--You, for instance--"with almost every ride. I've felt so good I've talked almost constantly--not afraid that I'll spread the germ of anti-life. Whooop!" I yelled. "I feel good!" He smiled. He did, too. "The signs have all been good."
I pointed out the Bearmouth swimming hole. Told him about Don Easthouse and I catching a good bass meal. "A pleasant change from trout."

"I love trout."

"So do I. But if you eat fresh trout all the time, you forget about fresh bass or fresh catfish." I told him about the 2 hikers from Michigan who stopped at the ranch. We gave them fresh trout and they asked for catsup, and poured it thick all over the trout.

"Maybe its a Michigan habit, to kill the pollutants," Jack observed.

I told him of the rumor that says the reststop was stocked. "Stocked with trout that include some 4 and 5 pounders, they say."

I told him about stopping at the Rock Creek bar and having a beer or 2. "The Lady with the Talking Face, she is," I reported. "She's a strange listener. Every word you say registers on her face with a twitch, an eyebrow, a movement of nostril. Its like every word has an association that stimulates a circuit that makes her forehead wrinkle or her lips purse. She's unconscious of the movement. Talking Face. The face is saying, 'I'm listening attentively.' but I wonder if she is. Most people nod, smile, or raise a quizzical eyebrow"--like you do--"but her face goes rapidly and constantly. If you talked to her long enough you'd learn the associations. You could play her face like an instrument. Maybe get her face to feel really good. Or even give it a rest."

"Say." Jack shifted, "I hope you aren't TOO heavy into signs." He indicated the gathering shadow. Clouds. "It looks like we're going to get rained on. A storm, I'd say."

I looked ahead. Dark and grey. Heavy clouds. I was a little disappointed somehow, but "Is OK," I truthed, "There is nothing wrong with rain. All life needs water."
"There you have it. I like the smell. Ever see the little puffs of dust come up? Ever smell the dust? Comes up and goes back down."

"Washes the air." Which was becoming colder

Jack unbuckled his pack. Withdrew an army blanket. Covered himself and the 3 packs. "Care for a corner?"

"No, thanks. I'll just be washed."

Somewhere around Poor Henry's, you know, where the strange roadsigns are, it started to rain. A gentle rain. But up on the hills lightning walked around. I remembered the lightning of the summer of '72.

There was water on the highway, coming up in spherical fragments. Raindrops broke and water ran over my face. I tasted it.

Jack and I shouted innanities at each other. He looked like a benched footballer in the rain. I wore no jacket. We smiled steadily—internally or overtly. Our smiles caught most passersby. Children would point and laugh and make faces as cars overtook us. They turned and pressed noses to the rear windows for a long time ahead of us. Father was usually too busy driving to give us much mind. Mother would prepare a face, 'Hippies don't know enough to come out of the rain,' or 'Colds will serve you right,' or 'You should know better,' or 'Oh, you poor boys.' Even 'How is it?' Even, 'Looks like you are enjoying it.' Our genuine joy spread. 99% return on any smile.

A brown supercar passed. He didn't see us. She looked like she ironed her face. My smile was caught in the slipstream and flew like a newspaper to be pasted down by the rain. How much pain until even vicarious joy is denied? She doesn't get a laugh out of George Carlin. Hurt.

No matter. It's her trip. Let it pass.

I feel genuinely good. Grinning and waving. Smiling and winking.
Showing off a little. Feeling right and knowing it. Knowing that my flamboyance was not hypocrisy.

Grandmother turned away as soon as I caught her eye.

But she smiled as she passed.

At Bonner I looked ahead. West there was no rainbow, but I could see the edge of the stormcloud. I expected that.

I tapped Jack, "Look. Then tell me about signs." He looked.

The light fractured between cloud and mountain. Through the saddle the sun spilled toward us. Lake Missoula was afire with golden light.

In Missoula it was bright and clear. The air had that just-washed feeling.

Everyone got out of the pickup at the Orange Street Conoco station. "Bob," Jack tossed his head up, "This is Parris. We've had some high communication. He's offered us a meal and a turn in his bathtub. Even a ride back to the interstate afterwards. I vote Yes."

Pause. Smile, "You're on."

I called Bev.

"Parris! Where are you?"

"At the Orange Street Conoco. Gonna come get me?"

"Oh, yes. We just got home. We were going to spend the night out at the ranch but decided finally not to. I heard the phone as I was coming in the door. Did you tell Arlo?"

"Nope. Made several conscientious attempts. I felt a little betrayed, but that's passed. I'll tell him as soon as I am able. Say, we've got a couple of friends who'd relish the tub and some food."

"OK. I'll turn a burner on. Wait there."

So we lounged in the wet grass and golden sun in that triangle just off the interstate.
I can't recall the meal exactly, so I'll present the likely one.

**Fancy:** That mushroom soup that is so rich. Lots of fresh mushrooms, nearly full-sized, butter, milk and cream, celery limp and luscious, light spices, a shot of wine. It should cook a day, so lets say Bev prepared it Sunday and had it ready to reheat over a campfire. Thats probably true, anyway. And lets say we drank homemade tomato soup out of blooddark melmack coffeecups while we waited for the butter to melt into reheated fresh bread. And it may be true. Sometimes we have 2 kinds of soup at the same meal. I know for a fact there was a mixture of toasted almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, and cashew chips in a bowl--salted slightly by my secret process. We munched.

And talked. Ashley had spent the time from first sight to home talking and touching, now she mostly listened to talk about God, organic foods, gardens, compost heaps and self-reliance. About communication, always about communication. Children know the essence of any talk--they are only unfamiliar with specifics. Data. Jargon. Data is finally pretty damned boring anyway. But they're right there on tone, moment, movement, and depth. They lack only experience. So do some adults. Occasionally we listened as Ashley gave us some of the essential elixir

*Both Jack and Bob can hear children.*

We talked about age and youth. About that force that tries to keep our elders away from us. About the force that tried to keep me acting like a 25-year-old-in-1967 for the rest of my lives.

While Jack was taking a bath we found we could talk to Bob easily and fluidly. He was not Jack, but love was there too. We talked about changes and our preferences in wildernesses. Manhood. The *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Initiation--real and established. The Carlos Casteneda series.
Bob hit the tub. Still hot water. The 4 of us talked about Nixon--trapped in 'inoperable statements', proving that a man could do anything if he set his mind to it--even be president--even if it meant denying much of himself. "Nixon'd look right at me and say, 'This office...'' Jack laughed. Of political corruption. Of the unnecessity of government--within a free and uniformly well-informed community. Unnecessity even of law making. Global village. Third world. Age of Aquarius.

"I have a feeling," Jack remarked, "That things are going to get a lot better" He looked right into me.

Those eyes. That smile. That eye. He stated, "Exponential rise."

Up. Sedate and deep. Up. ... Slowly, Oh Lord, let it be slow.

Jack gave us the receipt for Gorp:

1 pkg M & M's
1 pkg butterscotch chips
1 pkg (how much is zat?) peanuts, shelled
1 pkg raisins
+
other stuff as necessary, but balance above is fine.

So we gave them our receipt for Munchroom Soup:

Gather and slice into large slices
1/2 pound whole mushrooms. Then let em age in the air.
Gather and dice
1/2 cup celery
1/4 cup onion
1/8 cup parsley
Saute all those things in
2 tablespoons butter

Real butter, of course, but margarine or even shortening would work.

Saute until the mushrooms are done. And how do you know when theyre done? Thats innate knowledge given to all people.

Add the saute to
2 cups chicken bouillon. Or cream. Or even water.

Cover and cook slowly til you think the flavors are well saturated. A good cook will lift the lid and snitch. So will interested observers and any children in the area.
While this preparation has been going on, you have prepared a cream sauce, right? No? Well, it's not too late. Bev says everybody knows how to make a cream sauce. Maybe I'm the only one who needs a reminder each time.

Make a paste of
2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons butter
Add slowly, while mixing carefully
1 cup cream, or milk
To this batter add
1 small onion with 3 cloves stuck in it. Bev says the onion is to keep the cloves from being lost.
1/2 bay leaf
Cook very slowly--that's a secret of good cooking--at about 350° for 20 minutes or so.

That's cream sauce. I'm surprised by its simplicity every time.

Now
Pour the soup into the cream sauce while stirring.
Pour in
1/2 cup wine
Cook this combination, hereinafter called soup, slowly, until it nearly reaches a boil. Continue heat at this temperature. Give it an hour

Now add
1 1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon paprika
1/2 cup wine
Add lightly to the top--garnish, I guess
paprika
parsley sprigs

If you make enough of this to last for several days, you'll notice it improves with slow simmering. Like hunters' stew.

CAUTION: This soup is mildly addictive and you might find yourself preparing it when you have no Auspicious Occasion as excuse.

We traded addresses as Bob came out of the bathroom in clean jeans.

Jack said, "I've been wondering a lot lately about friends. I mean real friends. People who see you nude. People who see you cry or laugh or with your hair messed up."

"Or with my false teeth out," I said.

"There you are. Real friends who share the real you. I meet them. Love them. Then I move on. It's hard to say goodbye."

"Don't I know. The afterparty depression. The talking in the kitchen
or the studio or in the den until 6 in the morning because you love him or her or them and it's all new." Glanced to meet Bev's eyes.

"Or waking up beside her in the morning with the bedroom full of golden sunlight and gentle talk and quiet loving and feeling there's no need to get out of bed." He smiled, "That's it. Maybe the ego is merely a tool (Hear this well.) of the greater consciousness. If you're not truly in love or love has died and you need to move on to something else, the ego might swell up and make contention to tell you. It is only attachment that makes parting messy Ego itself. Freedom is the stuff of love. And if parting is clean ."

Pause. " . When do you finish with friends?"

And mostly we talked about us.

Anticlimaxes:

When do you finish with friends? With a lover? With your life? Are you finished when you get married and get that job and have those kids and they go and you've paid for the house? Is it over then? Is it over when you are 65 and retired? Or, just as inane, when does it start?

Can you remember not being?

God --meeting me at the Gate: Did you enjoy yourself?


God: You answer that yourself. Answer very carefully.

Me --now in terror, remembering my sin: Am I going to Hell?

God --smiling gently: I won't tell you. With some it is justice to allow them to live their lives over and over--each time with greater understanding. Some understand fully and so are free to go out no more.
Some create other things.

So here I am again, saying goodbye at the back door of the bus as Jack and Bob drag out their packs. Judging by the way I feel, I must have developed just a little attachment.

"Monday is come-as-you-are day," Jack said.

"What?" My ear has stumbled.

"Monday is come-as-you-are day."

Driving home. Its still going on. Steadfast.

Walking up to the front door. Sunlight just leaving the windows to move up the roof. Delicate pink gold of the last light on the tall trees. It stays light in Missoula a long time as the sunlight climbs Mt Sentinel to the east.

We live at the foot of a mountain.

Inside I am singing shouting:

Oh God

Oh Tomotem

Oh Ashley and Beverly

Oh Michele and Jeannie and Sarah and Weird Bob and Gypsy Jenny and Danny and Lyno and Julie and Bunny and Lynette and Dan and Earl and Nik and Dick and Packy and Nanda and all of us

It can be done

Oh God

It can be done.