Empty rooms and happy dreams

Paul Winslow Harriman
The University of Montana

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EMPTY ROOMS AND HAPPY DREAMS

By
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B.A., University of New Hampshire, 1963

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I. POEMS
THE UC AFTER MIDNIGHT

Moonlight loves the tropics. It shines through two acres of glass to get there. These jungle lilies remind me people never see moonlight unless alone or still. And sometimes stoned. Everyone thinks architects designed this jungle for character, charm, and visitors, but I know they designed it for moonlight. Yes, argue with me. I could tell you how a thousand dancing armies captured Europe after dreams. Of groundhogs, dragons and silver tuned flutes. And more. You cannot answer me. It so happens I'm a great composer of music on the debate team and moonlight argues well. And sings. Moonlight sings. Listen and you can hear its song.

Yes, I'm captain of the debate team living in the tropics, listening to moonlight and arguing from memory a moonlight sonata into silver. The Mona Lisa was painted in moonlight. I lie to you? I would not lie to you. I could tell you stories of fairies
of less substance than a school boy's lisp
dancing round a circle of tears
that turns on tomorrow's light to mushroom hills.
And a lot more. But I would not lie to you.
Please realize, as an eminent somewhat authority
of video phenomena listening to moonlight,
I excel in fencing maskless in the moon night.
I particularly enjoy the exchange
when my stylistically brilliant opponent
argues in lightning silver rapier flashes.

I parry his thrusts with moonlight.
Sometimes it so befalls melons
to slice oranges. I have never lost
a match in moonlight, alone. All things
are possible for debating composers fencing
on moonlight in the UC after midnight.
Rash! Do I speak rashly? Well,
it so happens I'm a Cancer
living by accident in Capricorn
on the tropics composing from memory
the moonlight painted by Mona Lisa
fencing a sonata in Paris.

Moonlight breathes. You say I lie?
I would not lie to you. I could tell you
of the vegetarian cannibal's wildest dream,
of Elysian pixies riding a moonlight beam.
And more! I do not lie. No, my friend,
lies are loves too tender for song,
lies are truths that quiver, go wrong.
But you need not believe my facts. As I say
I am by accident simply a Capricorn
living in Cancer's tropical jungle
observing the wild moonlit breath
of my dancing opponents mad fencing,
and painting the tremor of his jungle sonata.
Yes, it happens I have irrational loves,
but I would not lie to you. But,
if you tire of sportive myths run wild,
plod away on the next plough horse.
For I, with wild harp moonlit strung,
shall go on and go on. And on. And on.
CRAZY MAN

Crazy woman blows through these canyons with the weird sound of wind. She starts in the flats gathering wheat and dust with a soft grain whisper of land and moves through these canyon walls scraping sand and blasting loose stone from the beginning. The timber wolf returns her wail off rock walls, listens to her tales whistle strange and haunting in the moonshade of arroyos, brown grass, and chisled rock. Her time. Yet never would I young stand wild and talk to her.

I have, in times of the gold fever, slept with her by canyon walls, know her for a noisy crazy carving great stones to teeter on wineglass stems. She teases me old, says pardner. Now, dry seasons wither my crops in this country thinned of life. Her whispering sand flows in afternoon valleys, moves her youth over whistling rock, searching, restlessly, this barren earth. She wants someone who will love her noise. Now I'm old and I love her flailing. I talk to her in the afternoon heat and watch her dust devils dance on my failing corn.
THE BOAZ MINE

Nothing is plumb at the Boaz Mine. The shacks are all askew. The gallows hang over a mining hole, the bottom is five hundred feet below. Shafts exit five times in rock: side drifts, the depths an engineer could tell. A fallen fence, broken with weather, once might have kept cattle out. Now there are no cattle. I was there when a scoutmaster once let scouts climb the gallows frame. A foolish thing that came out all right.

No, nothing is plumb at the Boaz Mine, the shacks, the gallows, the iron. Even weeds grow on a bias. The wind blows weather through a fortune in timber compared to the gold they left below. And I don't know where to go. In the war forties they started up again with a fifty ton cyanide mill. Dry yellow waste, sediment melting that wagon, was once a yellow mud. I don't know why I hang around an old place like this. I know there's nothing here. Life, like the teeter board for kids there,
played out with the Josephine, the Grubstake, and the color.
SUNLIGHT

Day comes many places at once.
There is no doubt of this. Eerie swamp
turns its black pools into burnished day
when the sun comes out. The still water
of a darkened cove turns its mirror
into the mountains until standing
on your head you don't know which is real.
The moon shadows of tall, black buildings
become the tar of sour city smells
in the morning. The rooster won't crow
until Sol clears the east. I could tell
many startling facts about sunlight:
like light is energy and sunlight
allows photosynthesis required
for life to take place, but sufficient
to say bright sun will ruin your film.
Happy children laugh into the sun
without squinting. There are many facts
left out to issue this one warning:
don't stare directly into the sun.
This thesis is very serious.
I have attempted to prove the fact:
Day comes many places at once.
TOURIST AT THE MISSION

The mission stands old in an old town. Lovers of history say it deserves repair. The old Indian said that would be wrong. A Flathead boy swings from the chipped rail on cracked cement steps. He looks at cars from Idaho and New Hampshire. On Ignatius lawn three white boys watch grey Sunday spring mud ooze in the road not sure why they are there. Their mother photographs the boy by the church door as the people from Idaho walk by. Across the road natives look, then forget us.

I don't belong here. I want to go to Nine Pipes. Obliged to wait I renew their film. Inside, the colored glass window, broken, reminds me of split grist stone strewn with broken bottles outside. Thick varnish can't hide musty odors of something too long here. Murals redeem the walls. Burning candles keep someone's faith. Postcards are fifteen cents each on trust. And the welded money box of steel is chained and firmly locked. Outside the Flathead boy has gone. The white boys run tag unaware the Mission Mountains are empty white.
PORTSMOUTH BOYS

Sea smells lodge in flaking clapboard houses
waking Saturday boys in dour, grey rooms
to a restless day. In the still light
wet cobblestones drip their step
past hollow clay houses hugging narrow streets.
Beyond shadowless shells of old brick,
shallow merchants, empty sailors, sea vendors,
they pass Strawberry Banke to the sea.
As boys their fathers made the lonely march to the sea
to dream of boy things before inland castles robbed their dreams
and forgotten sea gates swept their vision into the sea.
And now their sons, as sons before,
feel the oboe-sounding sea
stronger than the sound of snow-breasted gulls
or the smell of sea rocks and lobster weed pots.
With the man it shall be forgotten. But for now
wayward boys with tossed clothes and freckled hair
kick at sand and dream into a yellow sea.
PASSING

The blue car goes by the window
followed by the red car. The clouds
sink low and grey, a moving sheet
toward the horizon. The milkman
delivers milk. The postman comes.
The train rattles on the track south.
At the whistle people eat lunch.
The traffic light changes all day,
all night. Men go in and come out.
Only the yellow arrow sign
pointing in remains unmoved.
DIPHTHERIA HILL

In this town two thousand children once grew
laughing along splintered walks, steps of school,
hating soapy tubs and clean ears,
smelling harness leather and cedar smoke,
listening to miners around a black-bellied stove,
eating a Sunday meal, racing a silly dog,
squirming in school chairs, now all still.
All rest in the grass blowing on that hill
where crooked slate teeth still time,
and time, for me, blows in the wind
of a time when this town had life.

Grass-grown streets and weathered wood
speak of fathers and mothers and death,
of anguish where sticking doors,
cold stove burns, and lost unread letters
ring as empty the clang of a tin bell
not heard in the lost sound of children's voices
that echo louder than real the real tears
that charge each new day with the agony
when all colors are silver, and memory,
until you leave this town, to rumors:
of the father who naked rode his sorrel into the sea
as she waited on the quicksand tears of the strand.
Of the mother climbing a mountain to touch the sun
and he, ice in his beard, finding her in the snow.
Of the three children that lived
and the parents that died.

All rest in the grass blowing on that hill
and memory blows in the guessing wind.
What eternity is stuffed in one small town
marked in lamb's blood for a morning mist
that smothered grass, steps, hitching rail, and town,
all but the highest spires cross
and chose with unconscious bacillus strain
to love too soon. Like tomorrow
we breathe and breathe and breathe
until a small germ says hello
and bores, with no thought at all,
caving, without a 'goodby town, goodby friends,'
even the mightiest heart in.
A letter on the glass top reflects 
the circular scrawl of a pebble 
dropped into a dark pool. The pencils 
sprawl in the aimless pattern of twigs 
in a forest. The cup, the spoon lie 
in their own shadow. The desk, its drawers 
open and bare, lie washed in grey light 
from the window. The floor has one mat, 
the wall, a calendar. Nothing more. 
Whose desk? Whose room?
HEAR THE WIND BLOW

"Hear the wind blow,"
ran an old ballad line,
but what kind of wind? where?
Soft wind through jagged
mountain rocks sounds lonely,
a gale there sounds powerful.
A hurricane you feel
in your bones. In a pine
forest you hear a melody,
a symphony, or the
crashing of branches and trees.
On the rocky sandshore
a seabreeze caresses rocks
and laughs with the waves.
A gale stirs grave depths
beyond the horizon, the
greatest wind trembles the sand
and minces spume at sea,
yet in a skyscraper
you must listen to a radio
to know the wind is blowing.
And yet, she knew, when he sang
to her, how the wind blew.
II. STORIES
BLUEBIRD

Reading the casual morning away in the sunny family room, skirting chores and half dreaming, Scott listened to the pleasant buzz of his sons on the patio.

"When you are grown you will take an asiatic wife and marry on China of the sea.

"Oh yes, and you will own two antique cars and treasure them more than 40 acres of castle and all your other possessions." That was Pon.

"Yeah, yeah. I will?" Lonny was laughing excitedly. He thought the essence of comedy was opposition. Scott hadn't been able to penetrate that babish "I will?" with any confidence at all. But then he was younger and always in his brother's shadow. "And you - you will be restless all your life and never find a name for it."

"You will search for the holy ram on the peaks of Mount Shasta in your twentieth year and your third child will be born crossing the Gulf of Mexico to Cartagena, Colombia." Pon had a brilliant mind for ten. Scott felt inadequate to help him be more than just a child. "Crossing the Andes you will experience a bitter defeat."

Scott was enjoying their imagination. How young must you be to think like that, he wondered.

"In another life you were trailmaster driving cattle over the Chisholm Trail from San Antonio to Abilene, Kansas. It was here your weakness caused you trouble with gamblers
"And you," Lonny broke in, "you will die in Rapid City, South Dakota of a broken heart."

Linda was from South Dakota. "Remember when the bluebird first came to our back yard?" that golden summer we first moved here. Blue echoing in the heights of trees, diving in streaks, fluttering on our lawn. Lovely was that first year in our new home. The radiant summer of things done and doing moved us swiftly along, without thought, to the fall.

"But first, --" they were interrupting each other with ideas, "but first you become a famous international tennis player. Then you will die in Rapid City, South Dakota."

Scott remembered watching Lonny through the window hitting at a ball with his old tennis racket. "This racket is yours," he had said, "take care of it. It's worth fifty dollars." Suddenly Lonny had stopped his game, stared at the racket and touched the broken steel in two places. He looked at the ball and back at the strings. Scott had felt pride imagining Lonny's wonder at how a light ball could break steel. The mystery of his father's touch.

"Well, why not? We all have to die sometime. That's better than searching your life away for the fountain of youth."

Scott would have been tired like a suddenly clouded sky choking the ambitious sun but for his sons. He couldn't
generate the energy to see the newly created green beyond the ash-grey world we grow into but for their sense of the splendor in life.

Some girls from down the street had joined them on the patio. A rope, flourescent green, was turning circles through the sun, their voices short and fierce, breath coming in shouts.

Johnny over the ocean
Johnny over the sea ...

"Remember always when we ate breakfast," that magnificent bird feeding on sunshine, gracing our year, seemed always to light on the cedar rail. His loud song was harsh but he was summer blue, the color of sky, and we were glad to have him in our yard.

Broke himself a bottle
And blamed it on me.

Scott watched Pon jump high over the rope cutting the sunshine filtering through spruce branches. Growing up is like the summer of your life if you don't know it's happening, he had once told Linda. Suddenly he had been a man and couldn't remember his childhood. Always trying to catch back some vague memory of sparkling freedom where "cares" were a word and whim was delightful, he fell forever short, the time past. He couldn't experience that delight, misty with time, vague beyond anything more than guessing, in any other way than through enchantment with the idea. The idea of going back once more to feel and
sense those wonderful things when Cops and Robbers was more than a game and girls' misty voices singing their games in the playground air intimated life with something greater than itself.

Take a little boy
Tap him on the shoulder ...

They were singing now and jumping, two in and two out, young voices mingling like whittled wood with the pages of his forgotten book.

He watched a streak of blue arch against the sky and dart gracefully to the bird feeder. The alert black streak of a war bonnet, shaped with careless comb back, emphasized territorial pride.

Bluebird, bluebird,
Through my window ...

Watching the joyous singing and energetic jumping, Scott drank of their jubilation. How like dreams, they seemed, in the rumor of spring. Young is a time of life. Wonderful and rich and missed. Oh, Johnny, I'm tired.

Scott, covered by the shadow of the room, looked out the glass door at the children jumping in the sun and tried to cut away that familiar gnawing feeling he called responsibility. Something always stifles us, he thought. A whisp of thought, an enchanting idea delayed for the instant it should delight the mind and grow is gone forever. Duty, responsibility, whatever it is that blows it away, makes us grow old trying to remember. What is this longing, he
wondered. What bird, arching blue against the sky, could carry you there to hear the songs when your children's voices are forever young.

Gypsy, gypsy, tell me please
Who my future husband will be.

And suddenly they were not jumping anymore. The rope lay in a heap on the patio and they were running away together toward some newly created adventure. The bluebird, too, had flown away. But not forever. It would return, perhaps tomorrow morning at breakfast.
TEMPORARY STAY

I'm not traveling. I've been here two months and plan on staying until snow and that bothers Jonathan. He says I'm not what I say I am but if I really wasn't, he wouldn't be bothered and say that. Like he doesn't get bothered at Robert E., or Louie, or Bill and Pelde. He knows what they are. He converses with the permanent people but he knows they don't understand what he's about, so communication takes place along narrow channels.

He says I'm not what I say I am because if I was I'd be on the road. But that's just so I'll tell him again. Jonathan doesn't know what to make of what I say. He says I'm on a bread trip, hoping I'll say it a new way and he will learn a new thing or be able to forget about it. Jonathan needs bread, too. That's why he's working. But not for long. Next Friday is his last day because he says he never wants more than a hundred dollars in his pocket and his guitar on his back.

But I'm staying. So why am I here? he wonders that and I can see by his eyes he's got me under observation, like some experimental animal, offering me choices once he thinks he has the variables controlled. One test: he tried to get me to hitch up to Calgary with him to the big summer powwow, but I've already waved that off.

So here I am working, the big sky and hitching over the land, temporarily displaced while I earn money and
observe the microcosm. And weed flower beds.

The cemetery is beautiful and not a bad place to work. On a summer day, if you can take all the marble, it's the most beautiful place in the city because of the trees. There's birch, maple, elm, all the non-conifers usually alien to this part of the country. They did this thing to some trees years back, sort of a vasectomy, cutting the tops off so they grow bushy branches spread out and flat like a Japanese landscape. And the grass is green and evenly trimmed as a shag rug with a few long hairs the mower can't get close to the stones. The flowerbeds, in these summer months bushy with geraniums, violets, marigolds, and little mossy sprigs, are scattered throughout the fifty acres of finely cut marble. This place is like a giant terrarium. It's this, as much as the rest, that fascinates me and keeps me here learning what I don't even understand and can't tell Jonathan about.

When I first came here to these acres of measured stone, I kept thinking things like, "In Flanders Field, the poppies grow," and I wouldn't walk over a grave or sit on a stone. I was here about a week before I filled my first grave. Robert E. and Bill already had the coffin in the cement liner and were lowering the cover. I felt stark against a dreamy world of bare trees and a little scared thinking there's a man in there that was alive three days ago. Twenty minutes ago his closest people had been
watching him lowered and now they were gone and strangers were covering up something that near as I could see had no further value.

The March wind was blowing, it was cold and I just wanted to feel last year's leaves blow over the brown grass and through the stones and watch the hole fill up by itself while I thought about the hammer blow of death. But suddenly I realized I was there to work. The first dumper dumped the gravel and I jumped in to level it off. I worked fast, using the jack hammer to pack the earth, and finally laying the sod back and tamping it with a forty-pound tamper. I got a blister. The blister I attribute to my unconditioned association with death.

Everything is different now. When I walk over graves I think only of the grass I'm walking on. Sitting on a stone is because I am tired and that is a seat. This flower bed is just that. I've learned not to associate farther than the thing itself.

Ralph stops with the pickup. It's break time and he offers me a ride up to the barn. I wave him off because I like to walk up through the trees. Ralph is used to this and he's off in a cloud of dust. Ralph is the foreman. Bill once said Ralph is as fine a foreman as you'll find anywhere and he is probably right. One day I was on a crew hot-topping the front drive. There is a half hour wait between trucks and I was nervous, hanging around with no way
to look busy, so when Ralph walked by I said, "Ralph, you want me to help those guys sodding and filling till the next truck comes?" "Aaron," he said, "don't worry so much or you're going to have a heart attack." Then there were other times when we had to work hard and fast. Ralph taught me a lot about time. Sometimes it spreads out like a wide river with too much of it going too slow and other times it scrunches up and narrows down going so fast you never have time to do everything.

So here I am taking the long walk to the barn, enjoying the almost sad air that blows through the trees and is echoed by the crows. It seems to me crows belong here, black against the sky or cawing softly in the tops of trees but Rigg hates them. Rigg is the cemetery superintendent. He is also a hunter. He would be a hunter even if he was a minister. It's in his eyes. One day I was emptying waste barrels into the dumper and the one in the Well Block was half full of crows. They had been there awhile. The stench was terrible and life was oozing through their rotted chest cavities and out the feathers.

Walking among the graves you notice the character of a grave is shaped by the living or by the forgetful nature of crows. Real flowers cared for and growing on a grave reflect the active people who come often. Other graves have plastic flowers sunfaded and kicking around since
Memorial Day. Sometimes plastic flowers are stuck in the ground among real flowers or stolen from other graves and piled up around one stone. One time I saw plastic flowers wrapped tight against the weather in a sheet of cellophane as though it would last forever and imagined that person breathing shallow from the mouth and stifled in old furniture and the dust of ancient rugs. A cut bush of thorns is a symbol that means something I don't understand. Once, spading in a flowerbed, we found an oilskin with something hard and narrow inside. We put it back without looking at what was inside. So when I saw a chicken bone lying on a grave once and then twice, I couldn't understand what that meant either until I saw a crow leave the picked bone and fly to a perch on a high tree. They are sleek black and I love to watch their motion, all part of this observation thing I'm onto.

Bill joins me walking up. We don't talk. We know each other and don't have anything to say right now. He's quiet like a man who spends most of his time in the wilderness. Once when we hiked up to a high mountain lake for fishing earlier in the summer we got to talking about our work and he said the cemetery has a subtle effect on everybody who works there. I've thought about that a lot, and I still can't make up my mind.

We are walking up Marigold Lane and will cross block 5A to the barn. All the streets have names like Blossom
Road or Blue Hill Avenue. There are 49 streets in all. I counted them on the cemetery map once and remembered because there are fifty states. And as the streets have names, the blocks, chopped up by the streets, have names. Their proper designation on the map is by number and letter. There is 10A, 10B, 10C, or 10A, 9A, 8A, depending on the direction you're traveling, and 29A and 57A, but many blocks have developed personalities. There is the Hill block, named because it has the steepest grade. The Greenhill block so named because the wealthiest family and largest stone in the cemetery are here. The Well block because the green wellhouse is situated on the northeast corner. The Triangle block because of shape and the Road block because it lies on the fence line with the dirt road for 3/8ths of a mile. And there's the Railroad block where the thin slate markers of Japanese workers killed on the railroad lean like crooked teeth. The growth of a block from its number and letter to a word and its associations is a slow thing. The newer blocks haven't developed their individuality yet. Even when I was new here, when Ralph ordered the mowers out with "John, start cutting 89A" or "Bill, cut down on the Railroad block," I knew, even before I knew where they were going, whether they would be cutting in a new or old section of the cemetery.

When you have set yourself to the pace here you see it is a vast and marvelous place. You can walk around among
the trees and stones for ten minutes and not find the four other men working somewhere on the grounds. It is like a primeval forest infected at intervals with the ill blue smoke of Van Climb gusting across the grounds and the occasional visitor searching on the dusty lanes for a particular grave. But that's as it should be. I sometimes think I can learn everything there is to know right here.

At the barn we just sit around. Some days we don't say much and other days somebody triggers something and we all get to talking and laughing. Jonathan looks at me and shakes his head. "What's better than to go up Calgary this time of year?" he says.

"Make money," I says. I'm through defending my ideas.

He turns away because I won't take his bait. A moment later he's back. He can't quit. "For a camera."

"Yeah, it hangs from your back by a strap, too."

He looks away with a smile. He won't be baited either because he knows his guitar is for sound and you don't argue sound. Johnny Riddle I really would like to travel with you sometime. I like your eye and the way you move. It's like you have a path, you're walking it and that's enough.

We worked together one day and he knows a lot. He knows not to think. I mean by that he's not full of static. Like take him and Felde. Now Felde's a hard worker, you work hard together with the hand mowers, you sweat and time
passes. Finally, come break, he says, "We been working like hell," and you like him. Then he adds, "I finally got a row up on you," and when you come back the tendency is to work like a bat, keep ahead of him and get that row back. He gets you to judging and comparing and racing. Jonathan Riddle doesn't have that static. When I say he doesn't think, I mean he hasn't been trapped into competitive thinking. He sees and hears and feels and gets miserable like the rest of us but he hasn't been trapped into that kind of thinking.

"So time stops for a picture." He tries to ground us. "There is no time." We're so criptic no one else knows what we're talking about.

It's like I can hear him: so you preserve a scene. Something to keep you from letting go. And you tell how important it is to let go: to let go of memories, particular places, to let go of love when the time comes. You can't preserve and let go. "You contradict yourself."

"Then I contradict myself." He turns away again. He'd like to dismiss me but he can't. I'm sorry but I can't define this with intellection. Jonathan left college because of intellection. Brilliant people play intellection to win, like Felde. I had a blind professor once who said almost all the research he was acquainted with started out with the researcher believing something was true and then designing a study that he hoped would order the facts
to prove he was right. It's funny he should see that.

Jonathan is back to me again. "You know, of course, money is the root of all evil," he says, eyes twinkling.

Felde and a couple of others laugh at this. They think they understand. "Good and evil, Jonathan?"

Johnny doesn't pursue this. Good and evil are concepts and he's moving outside of conceptual thinking. I once told him the ancient Chinese thought opposites are opposing poles of the same thing like up and down. He said how about salt and pepper. And I said that's not a true opposite and he loved it. Again Johnny was just trying to provide a trigger. He wants to understand me because he believes I've seen through roots and possessions and the need to build monuments to yourself when everything is marvelously right there all the time. I take a risk.

"The camera isn't everything."

And this does it. He stares at me. I'm sure he thinks he's been on the wrong track and he hasn't really. It is quiet for awhile then Felde starts in. "Hey, Lou baby, why don't you do some work?"

"I do work."

"If that's work I'd sure like to get paid for it. I could make money while I was sleeping."

"I do my share."

"Sure. But a mouse's share of nothing is more than your share of something."
Felde was at it again. He had found the one thing that bothered Louis and couldn't leave it alone. Lou was in his fifties and had been a hard worker all his life. He believes the purpose of life is to work and his pride is in his ability to work. When he was young he had worked in the mines until he had developed a cough, then he quit and went to work for a rancher. He once said, "Work a little harder than your share, expect nothing and you will have your reward." He was a big, strong man and no fool but there were certain kinds of language that he couldn't play around with. Lou moved away without answering.

"Your share of what? Lou baby." Felde couldn't leave it alone. He was like that. He'd find something on a guy and make him small. A word game. I don't think he knew it hurt because he'd like it alright if someone did the same thing on him, but nobody could get anything on him. He would always smile and talk right back till the words made you weary and still he'd keep on. Maybe he was bored. I don't think he knew how it would get under some people's skin and hurt or make them mad because he'd smile and talk right back like it was an invitation for somebody to try it with him. In a way it would be give-and-take conversation, yet underneath was sarcasm that you maybe couldn't name but could feel if he was fencing with you.

"Hey, Lou." Lou wouldn't answer. He was looking out the garage window into the hills. "Lou." It was like he
didn't hear but you knew he did because his jaws were working like he was chewing and he wasn't eating or chawing. "Guess the man isn't going to talk to me."

Lou jerked in his chair like when you're almost asleep and Felde laughed, pointed. Felde was in his mid-thirties and is going to college part-time trying to finish up what he had started some years before. He was a likable guy once you learned to shed his gaff, his knack. Bill calls it fucking with your mind. It's sort of like prodding you to see if you rise to the bait. It's aggressive only if it gets to you. If you accept it as a game and parry with him it is just morning conversation forgotten in the afternoon. If you can't, it's like he smells blood and turns it into something vicious. Bill said he knew a guy that was like that. Bill doesn't like crowds and he doesn't think much of people that fuck with your mind.

"Hey, Spider," but Lou is lost in the hills beyond the window.

Ralph comes out of the office. "Holy balls," he says looking up at the clock, "LET'S GET TO WORK. I thought it was noon time." We had just had a twenty-five minute break. Walking back to work five of us start in the same direction. Jonathan and I are silent. I feel him trying to push up some unformed thought.

"Your travels sound interesting," says Little John. John is a religious studies student with long hair who is almost where Jonathan is. "Do you thumb everywhere?"
"No, I ride freight, too."

"What kind of people pick you up? Any particular type?"

"No types. I travel with the people that give me rides."

Felde has already started down Rosemary Lane to wherever it was he was working and this strikes him funny. "Whether you want to or not, right?"

Felde doesn't understand Jonathan. Jonathan looks at each person as a treasure. He experiences people the way some people experience a scene. But not from a distance. He travels with them, and this is what he meant.

Bill and Little John cut across the Big Block to wherever they were and Jonathan walks with me. I'd like to be able to say what is still vague in me. "I used to thumb so I wouldn't miss anything. If I saw enough of the big place I thought I'd understand it." He knows all this. "Encompass the large and make it small. But I was too spread out. The flashes didn't give me anything."

"So you decided to anchor yourself."

"Only to see if I can understand large things by observing the small. It's a matter of focus."

"Like a camera." He leaves suddenly, like he's onto it and it is worthless. "Don't forget the funeral at three," he shouts back.

I find I can't really explain about the cemetery.
Bill and I used to be fascinated by the sense of time the graves give as we worked about the grounds. There's a colonel named Christmas somewhere in the Big Block that served in the Spanish American War. And there is a rich family in one block that has six graves shaped like cash registers. One grave has a bronc rider chisled in the stone and I have tried to imagine what his life was like. It's amazing how many stones record as a man's major achievement the war he served in. Like here is one: Samuel Pilsworth, Sgt., 3rd Infantry, World War II. He died in 1957 and that is what they record of his forty-nine years of life. Here under these trees is the record of the importance the living place on their wars. Then there is the Baby Block where the rows are closer together and many of the older stones have lambs or doves finely chisled and chipped by time. There are two stones somewhere on the grounds that have color photographs taped on and sealed from the weather. One is of a young man straddling a Harley Davidson and smiling with a puppy in his arms. The other looks like a class portrait of a high school girl. It's strange how frail the memory is. "Death is only a horizon and horizons are simply the limit of what we can see." That is an inscription on one stone. One stone is just that. It is a stone, big as half a room, natural as it came from the land, with a small face ground flat. "I love these rills and thy templed hills," I think it said, saying a lot about the man, or what the
person who decided on that inscription thought about the man.

I guess in staying here I'm contemplating the frail­ity of man, searching out sorrows. It's like I can take part of a man's life and see it beyond the stone and feel the awe in his past, varied like the dawn in all kinds of weather, and place a value on it.

"While you're weeding you might as well get the tall stuff in the shrubbery, too."

Ralph startled me and if I jumped he didn't appear to notice. "You knock off and work the funeral at three. I have to go into town and get a gear for the lawnmower."

"Okay." This was going to be a fouled-up funeral and Ralph wouldn't be there to straighten it out. Three men usually work a funeral and I knew four guys planning on working this one and Ralph telling me to work it makes five.

"Hey, Ralph." He had already started back to the shed. "Yeah?"

"Nothing. It's alright." It is none of my damn business. All I have to know is that I'm working the funeral. Ralph might not like it put to him straight on. What he don't know about has always been okay and what he does know about he straightens out.

When we come in in the morning the new help is always quiet and Rigg and the permanent crew or Rigg and Ralph talk about local news in the paper or hunting and fishing
but even then the conversation is spotty and I keep coming back to what Bill said about the cemetery having a subtle effect on everybody that works there. We usually don't start work until about ten after eight and then the signal is when Rigg gets out of the pickup truck he has been sitting in and tells Ralph the time of the day's funeral or variations of Well, I've got to get into the office and get my paper work done, as if he would really like to be out working with the crew. Then Ralph gets up and walks about, looking at the cement floor and we know he is thinking about the work that has to be done that day and who he is going to put doing what. And yesterday when he said, "Aaron, you take the hand mower and trim down along the Road Block," like it hurt, I knew he was thinking about those five years that he hadn't done anything but mow out here.

He told us one day over lunch, the day I gave up sandwiches and brought only an orange, how he had rode those old Davidson mowers all one summer with the exhaust blowing from the low stack into his face all day long until between the sun, the heat and the fumes he hated the grass and trees and everything else so much with his headache hammering inside he knew he'd quit if he didn't do something. His boss was a son-of-a-bitch. They didn't have a coffee break in those days and that son-of-a-bitch wouldn't give him a change in jobs or let him switch with the flowerbed man or the sprinkler man or even work a funeral, so one day he came in, lined up all four of the Davidson mowers and
spent the day putting high stacks on them to carry the fumes off over a man's head. The boss told him to get on a mower and cut grass or get fired and Ralph said he was going to put stacks on because the fumes constituted a safety hazard and he didn't know whether he was going to get fired or not and it didn't matter. He's been here eleven years and now he's the foreman.

I used to count the flowerbeds in a block and remember it to tell someone but it served no purpose and I never did tell anyone and now I never bother to count. This 10A block, though, has about ten times as many flowerbeds in it as the Railroad block. It's because 10A is a new block and the people are freshly dead and their relatives are mostly living, while the Railroad block is an old block and most of the people died around the turn of the century. Most of the railroad workers were Japanese and their relatives were poor or maybe not even in this country.

Beyond this block John is mowing on the unnamed block. It is unnamed because there are no graves there yet. It is set up with underground water pipes, new curbing and green grass, all ready for when there are no more plots on the older sections of the cemetery. He is mowing on an old Davidson mower because the John Deere has a broken drive belt. The Davidson has long handlebars, but only for some place to put your hands. The steering is done with the feet and the foot rest is so sensitive that unless you're
going half speed, driving a straight line is impossible and you end up weaving down the field, the cut edge a series of smooth curves. The grass is tall and there is not enough power to pull all the cutters so the two wings are hauled up on the sides, the machine looking like a hulking eagle. John is going wide open, his long hair flowing out behind, weaving a newly cut trench in the wet grass like he was a crippled angel winging through the smooth felt of a well-planned table.

There wasn't one of the crew here that could mow as fast as Little John and according to Rigg nobody could go through machinery as fast either. He tells the story of the time he drove the pickup into the cemetery yard from town half an hour after John was supposed to have quit and gone home, and found him driving around the yard in circles waiting for the gas to run out because the gear shift pin had come loose and he couldn't stop. Drive it right in here he told him and when John did and before he hit the back wall of the garage wide open he yelled for John to shut the key off but he didn't hear or couldn't think fast enough and he smashed the John Deere into the back wall.

John was looking my way so I stood up and waved just as the sun went behind a cloud. He waved back, still in the sun, then the machine got away from him and turned into the high grass until he turned it full circle and came into the same cut again. He waved again and made like he was
riding a wild horse and now we are both cut off from the sun. I look over at the mountains on the south and there's a steady sheet of grey clouds moving in. The blue is being cut off and this loss of the sun has made me feel the cemetery again.

After Memorial Day when the flowers began to rot and mosquitos bred in the stale water of jars, cans and bought cups, it took six men and two trucks three days to haul away all the dead flowers. Forty-two truckloads went to the dump. The dump is privately owned and the cemetery was charged four-fifty a load. We had orders to save the plastic flowers and we laid them carefully up against the stone but as the summer wore on and they faded and pieces got chopped off by the mowers, we began putting them beside the roads where every Monday somebody on the dumper would pick up the papers and branches and flowers that were wilted and haul them to the dump.

I can see how the cemetery is a big business like any other business to Rigg. He has to keep the records, charge for the plots and extra for the flowerbeds, balance the books, and stand accountable to the city for the only department that shows a profit at the end of the year. Like just take the record of who is buried where. There are well over 350,000 stones here, far more than the population of the city itself and they have to be recorded so that the name of the person can be related to the street and finally
to the number and letter of the particular block. Ralph can find any plot in the whole fifty acres within five minutes of being given the name, provided he has the pickup to get him there, because if he had to walk the length of the cemetery it would take him ten minutes. The funny thing is there are two sets of books for the graves older than 1927 and they don't always agree. On occasion one book has someone recorded as buried on a particular plot while the other book has the plot listed as empty. Someday Rigg is going to be in a hurry or just forget and he'll only look in one book, selling a plot to some grieving family and Robert E. will dig up somebody with a backhoe. And then what will they do?

The blue sky is all gone now and I can't see my shadow when I weed. To the south the dark sheets of rain obscure the Longridge peaks and by the looks, the afternoon will bring rain. The cemetery absorbs water like no place I know, as if that multitude under the ground still had a thirst or all the trees and grass and plants always need more to stay green. But perhaps it's just in the mind because there's a lot of greenery between the stones and wherever you are in the cemetery you can always hear in the background the forced whistle of a hundred sprinklers spreading water over the drying land.

The funeral is moving down that long approach about a mile north of the gate, the car lights doubled up and
hunched in the grey light. It is a big funeral by the look of it, with well over a hundred cars coming here. It's going to be a wet funeral with wet clothes, wet faces, and wet words; the people staying their sorrowful interval then going a hundred different ways back to somewhere to dry out and forget.

Some of the guys seeing the procession in the distance and knowing Ralph is gone will leave their job and head for the dumpers, ready to work the funeral even though it's about an hour before they can do more than move the dumpers up a respectful distance away and wait, silently watching the graveside ritual until the last person gets in his car and drives away. But I'll keep weeding until it's near time because this job deals with life and the soil. I can feel this giant terrarium pulsing with a personality I can't quite grasp. Something of the nature of man is almost felt through the crows, the stones and the quiet sound that subtly creeps in, leaving you with the sense that there is something more to be gleaned when you can stop thinking and start feeling what there is to feel.

It is raining lightly now, a gentle rain that leaves the grass a richer shade of green. Half of the cars are through the gate and I can see them moving into an old section of the cemetery. I can see Rigg over the slope of the hill shifting the traffic onto Rosemary Lane because the gravesite street is fully lined with cars. Felde and
Jonathan are up near the gate standing at attention, Felde with his hat in his hand, out of respect because they are cutting wilted geranium stems on flowerbeds beside the same road the procession, weaving like a Chinese dragon, is taking to get to the funeral tent way beyond the hill. I keep working, feeling the light rain strike my windbreaker and the soil turn to mud in my hands as I put the weeds in the pail. The funeral is far away and I don't have to stand, or be a part of it, or feel the sorrow they feel, or the awkwardness of not knowing how to feel, so instead I work, leaving the flowers clean of weeds, with scratched-up, air-eated soil pushed firmly around the roots like a warm blanket to make them grow.

"Let's go up and get the Jacobsen and be ready before someone else gets it." Damn! that's Bill and I didn't hear him coming either. I look over the hill. The cars are settled and the people seemed huddled against the rain but it's a good half hour yet.

"Go on up. I'll be with you when I finish these two beds."

The last bed is a big one. It's at the base of a special stone. I call it rose stone because it looks like mahogany with flakes of white in it. Behind me is a curved bench made of the same stone. The headstone is made in pieces with a hollow square space for flowers in the center. In the winter glass sides fit in the square and heat can be
piped in to warm real flowers. Bill said years ago, while the man still lived, a light used to shine on the plot, turning on automatically when it got dark and heat was piped around the casket and up because the man's wife had been afraid of the dark and sensitive to cold. But now with no one to pay the cost, the light has been taken out and the heat is no longer piped in during the winter. This is part of it, too. The search for eternity, a need we don't know how to let go of that gets expressed in different ways by different people asking What comes after life? and doing things that make them more comfortable even though they don't know. Jonathan doesn't know and he knows enough not to think about it.

When this last is done I go up. My windbreaker is beginning to wet through so I change it for one of the rain-jackets in the garage and walk down to where Bill is sitting on the dumper behind Felde's dumper, over one block from where the funeral is finishing up. Bill has the hood of his rainjacket up and from behind it a whisp of smoke rises into the rain and I know he's smoking a cigar, the kind he likes. He turns as I step on the dumper.

"Felde's still fucking with Louie. He better watch out. Lou is a quiet old bastard. You don't know much what he's thinking but he's a strong bastard and if he reaches that point Felde will wish to hell he'd kept his mouth shut."

That is another thing Bill and I have talked about
before. It's that point where somebody fucks with your mind and needles you until you're almost immobile and that somebody knows it and instead of backing off, fucks with you more, violating your dignity intentionally, making you into a thing, an object to stick words into until anger and pure frenzy pushes you toward destruction of what has almost destroyed your ability to move at all.

"He's a hard-working bastard. You wouldn't think it could bother him."

Bill is looking over at the funeral. Rigg has gone up to the office and only four people are left at the gravesite. He starts the Jacobsen. "Hey, shut down. We don't want to rush them in their misery."

He shuts off the key. "It's their funeral."

I snicker with the density of the rain and Bill doesn't say anything more. Talk is always a little thin when we do a funeral. Felde looks back at us from his dumper and indicates with gestures we ought to run them out and get this job done. He points to his watch. We're supposed to go home at 4:30 and it's 3:30 now.

Seeing Felde on the dumper, hood against the rain and almost sociable, reminds me of a day quite different earlier in the summer. I came in on a sunny day and Ralph said, "It's going to be the shits, Aaron, but it has got to be done. It's like picking fly shit out of pepper but there's no other way." Then we went down to the little terrace
with the white grilled iron seat in the center of an arbor
surrounded by shrubs laid in those loose white pebbles and
I had to pick those twisty maple seeds that blow in the wind
from between the pebbles, and I thought it was the shits un-
til Felde came and we started talking and somehow it came
up and Felde started talking to me about his brother: the
brother normal looking and acting until you start question-
ing him about something or got him going fast in a game like
basketball or football; then you'd know by his exaggerated
excitement or by the way he moved, missing the catch or run-
ing the wrong way just because he was being chased that way.

And Felde finally coming down to what was on his mind:
He's got this beautiful, godlike golden one, it's bigger
soft than mine is up and I don't know but maybe it doesn't
get any bigger but it's still bigger than any I've ever seen
and girls talk to him and hang around and he isn't even in-
terested in them, and I think what a waste, what a waste
for him to have that and him not even conscious of girls or
the difference and me who is and does having one smaller
up than his soft but he doesn't care and that smile drawing
the girls and they staying because they sense there's no
threat and he not caring and ignoring them for the wind
makes them stay more admiring his helpless masculinity and
not really knowing that there's more in me than will ever
be in him.

Finally, when the last two cars leave, Bill and Felde
drive the dumpers over to graveside, but we still have to wait for the trailer to come with the two triangular blocks that are set against the curbing and the plywood sheets that are put out to protect the grass so the dumpers can drive up to the grave and put their dirt in. We think we have to wait but Louie comes right along driving the loader, hauling the trailer, and he pulls in ahead of us and cuts his motor.

"Bout time you got here," Felde says in the silence. "We've been waiting all day for those blocks. Where the hell you been?"

Louie doesn't answer. He swings the two blocks off the trailer, one in each hand, and places them wheel width apart against the curb. He goes back for the plywood, and Bill and I start from the dumper to help him. "Let's lay this plywood first," he says.

"Listen to him," Felde says. "You'd think he was the boss of the job. How come you never talk like that when Ralph's around, Louie baby?"

It makes sense for Lou to take charge. He's the only permanent help working this funeral. The rest of us are parttime workers or temporary help for the summer months when there's extra work like watering, flowerbeds, mowing and construction going on. Lou doesn't say anything and we lay the plywood without saying another word. After, we stand quietly under the canopy, the artificial grass underfoot
watching Louie as he adjusts the crib and turns the lever that starts the bronze casket moving slowly down into the liner. We can hear the rain on the canvas roof and Jonathan pushes up on the canopy where it sags and water spills off into the grass outside but what we watch is the silent motion of the casket lowering into the earth. Lou alone keeps working while the rollers do their work. He folds the artificial grass into a mat revealing the grass sod, the shovels, sledge hammer and the forty-pound tamper resting by the gravel edge of the dark hole.

"You sure you done this before, Louie?"

And Louie, outside in the rain pulling up the rope stakes that hold the canopy firmly like a tent without sides, doesn't answer. Bill and Jonathan hold the poles of the canopy because it would fall without the stakes, and I pull the stake on my end. It is raining hard now and we are going to get soaked and muddy before this grave is filled.

"Hey, Louie, will you get going so we can get this job done without getting soaked to the skin."

Nobody says anything and Felde hasn't done any work yet and it's getting Lou mad or madder because he's working a little too fast for a man who has worked as many funerals as he has, especially when he starts taking the canopy down before the casket is square in the liner and the artificial grass, extra boards, and folding chairs are tucked into the crib, all without getting out in the rain
at all.

"Hey, Bill, wouldn't you say Louie should do some work before any of us do another thing?"

And Bill saying in his slow, measured way, "Why don't you grab that pole before this frame falls down on your head."

He grabs the pole. "If Spider would do the inside work before doing the outside work, we'd all stay dry longer and not get so wet. But since he's the boss and doing it backwards, I ain't gonna say a word."

"Why don't you shut up then," says Jonathan and then we are outside in the rain pulling the canvas from the wood frame. We untie the buckles from the frame and fold the canvas and lift it into the crib. Felde and Lou carry the wood frame off to the side, Felde talking all the time saying something I can't hear, while Jonathan and I finish loading the crib with the ropes, sledge hammer and chairs. Bill drives the tractor up and we hook the crib chain onto the loader hooks and he lifts the loader with the hydraulic. The crib rises, swinging in the air, revealing the dark hole hidden beneath it.

After the liner cover is dropped in place Jonathan backs the first dumper, loaded with the same dirt that came out of this hole in the morning, and leary of the edge, that soft edge that can cave in and draw the dumper in with it for a real mess and god knows how much more work, backs slowly now that he is near the hole. He can't see past the
dumper frame to the wheels, and looks back at us.

"Come on," Felde says, holding his hands a foot apart, "this much. I thought the boss was going to tell ya but since he's not talking, I'll do his job, too." As Johnny backed slowly, Felde narrowed his hands and when they touched, he stopped and set the brake.

"Okay, dump it." Felde looked at Lou. "See how it's done, Spider? Nothing to it."

Lou picked up a shovel and I could see his jaws working and water running in a stream from his matted hair down past the corner of his mouth but he didn't say anything and he looked down into the pit the same way he had looked off into the hills when we were in the garage.

Felde is quick and picks up the other shovel and jumps into the grave on top of the liner and gravel and begins pushing gravel over the sides of the liner, filling the crevices. If you don't, the earth settles, making a sunken grave in the spring. He works quickly for a moment, then looks up into the rain at Lou towering six feet over his head and says, "Come on down here, Spider. I'm not going to do your work and mine, too."

His shoulders were level with the top of the grave and he seemed small and insignificant in the rain that had washed his hair flat over his forehead. Lou looks past the grave into the hills beyond the blue smoke from the Van Climb mill. His jaws are not working and his face is wet
and calm, but his throat, glistening in the rain, is moving as though passing bubbles up and down his windpipe and his breathing, even though seen through the loose rain parka, is heavy and uneven. Felde sees it, too; we all do. It's like his effort to be calm is burning fuel from his body.

Felde looks down into the dirt and half-heartedly moves a shovelful. His body is loose and flip. "You all come down here, Spider Lou." His voice is high and sing-songy like "nigger talk." "You just move on yo feet. The body comes, too."

Felde had been fascinated with the niggers when he was in the South. In a sense he was backing off from Lou, but you had to understand his code to know it. I can remember one day in the hot sun we were cutting the weeds growing in the road with a shovel. We stopped to rest for a minute and he talked: These big black niggers, bare to the waist, lifting one box to my four, scuffing their feet or playing with their belts, talking nonsense with those big silly hats and an exaggerated bounce that say they're not what they are and "this is not what I is but this is what I is in front o you." And when the boss came they'd lift two boxes to my one no matter how hard I worked. These blacks, talking high like a woman, laying on a role, saying with their body and their high pitched voices clearer than words, "Don't take me seriously. I's just passing the day."

And I knew this is what Felde was saying behind his
high-pitched words, his inefficient loose movement and the way his eyes were roving around.

Things were happening at once now. Jonathan had finished backing the second dumper up to the edge and set the brake and Robert E. came from somewhere, probably the garage where he was welding, talking into my shoulder.

"Goddamn big funerals. They should have the gor'ram big ones in the morning. How t'hell d'they expect us ta get home at night? If they want a goddamn big funeral in the afternoon --"

And Felde saying, "Tha's right, too. Move yo head and yo body comes too," until I'm not aware of Robert E. talking in my ear or Jonathan on the dumper or Bill or even Felde because Lou is staring at Felde with an intense calm and I can't see him breathe anymore or find a trace of expression on his face, but I can see him stare at the man he wouldn't even look at all day. Then he moves, steady and sure, jumping lightly as a cat into the hole with Felde, staring at him all the while and then making his shovel push the gravel into the space between the liner and the dirt wall without watching his work.

"Tha's right, Lou. I knew all the time you could do it. You moves yo feet and yo body comes too."

And Lou stops working, still staring at Felde, Felde feeling his eyes but not looking and his words backing off attempts to back off more but they sound to Lou and to
everyone else except me like he's picking at the pieces of something that's already gone too far. "You'se could do good work if you'se ever set yo mind to h'it."

And Lou reaching back slowly, deliberately, for the forty-pound grass tamper with Felde working and talking in that dumb way and Robert E. not here long enough to know what has been going on still droning steadily in my ear. "-- let the sons a'bitches pay for it. I ain't getting paid any overtime for working out here in t'rain burying some rich son of a'bitch while --" Lou has the tamper raised motionless, high over his head, poised as if waiting there for Felde to look at him before -- "We works this job like we's done it befo', Spider Lou." And the heavy tamper off-balance and forward teeters. "Watch out," Jonathan yells, and I don't think Lou would hurt anybody but I just don't know. Johnny's words trigger the whole thing anyway because Felde looks up and Lou, having to do something, swings the tamper down at him. Felde not having time or the momentum to move right or left ducks and a second later it doesn't matter because the tamper with its long handle crashes on the grass above them. The force of the thrust brings Lou up against Felde with the tamper lying on the grass over their heads and forgotten as they grab each other around the body in an almost motionless struggle of strength.

"Wha t'hell," Robert E. says. "What's wrong with 'em
bastards?"

Bill and Jonathan tell them to stop but they don't listen. It was strange with only their heads above ground moving back and forth like two pieces of wood bobbing in the sea. It wasn't a fight with fists because they held each other close, Felde afraid to give Lou room to swing something and Lou not sure what he wanted to do but sure he wanted to do something. The labored pushing back and forth on the casket seemed like a clumsy dance between two awkward bears until you saw the anger and fear in their wet faces.

"Get this bastard off me," Felde shouts, mud streaming down his face but nobody would get down there with them and we watch as Lou pushes Felde against the dirt wall and holds him there pushing harder but not moving because the dirt wall wouldn't give, cave in. Then, expending motionless energy like arm wrestlers, they seem almost lovers in the earth with face against mudsoaked face, washing clean in the rain and then muddy again when they struggled, and finally they came to a motionless stalemate, energy and anger seeming to drain out of them until they began the clumsy dance again.

Robert E. cussing and swearing at the stupid men in the grave tripped the dumper and a square yard of gravel flowed in around them catching their feet like quicksand until they could pull free and still one couldn't stop
because of the other. The rain came in gusts now because of the wind and with the wind the blue smoke of Van Climb sweeps into the mist until one becomes the other and the smell of burnt sawdust tempered by the dampness reminds me of fresh jelly doughnuts. Robert E. still swearing at the men in the grave, threatening to bury them, too, if they don't get out, says, "What th'hail!" and is suddenly silent staring into the grave. The men, too, or the men first, caught in their struggle looking down together, stare at the white rock. Lou loosens his grip and Felde kicks at the rock and it turns over and up with dark holes spaced in a pattern of symmetry grinning into the sky and it seems to dawn on all of us at once what it is.

And knowing we wondered the same as if we had found the ruins of a lost civilization. Suddenly, I knew I wasn't alone in looking at the stones and wondering about the lives and history that had gone before and feeling something pulling me toward answers we can never know. Lou and Felde spading around in the gravel turn up a long, thin bone and then another. Felde, drawing from an anatomy course says, "It's a man. A tall man," and turning the skull in his hands says, "No cavities," not trying to be funny but wondering about dentists and the food eaten in this man's time. "I'd guess he's in his fifties," he says, being the nearest to an authority among us.

"What the hell we gonna do now?" Lou asks and Robert
E. cussing and swearing says, "We're goin' to bury the sons a'bitches -- both of 'em. An' don't nobody say a gordamn word about this an I won't say a word 'bout the fight. That bastard's so old ain't no record nohow. Now get this son of a'bitchin' job done."

We work silently now, leveling the gravel and packing it with the tamper so it won't sink and hollow out in the spring. Wet to the skin and silent we think our own thoughts and work as efficiently as six men can leveling the topsoil, then rolling out the grass sod and tamping it into the soaking earth. Then suddenly he's standing there looking at us work, the casket gone and the grass tamped down like there was never a hole there or a funeral at all but there must have been because of the flowers and the men standing there in the rain. "There's going to be a funeral here today --" He pauses not sure how to put it. "Is this Williamson, Thomas Williamson?" His freshly shaven face is trembling and his words push out his breath forming mist as though everything is wrong and maybe this isn't even the right place and whoever he is he must have been very close.

Robert E. takes his hat off. "Yes, sir. We've just planted the poor bastard." And the man looking wildly about at the flowers and the place we're standing on and then perhaps feeling like we belong here and he is trespassing, he starts back toward his car but changes his mind and comes back to face us. "Wasn't the funeral at three?" And
Robert E., "Yes, sir, it was." He looks at his watch and then away at the trees or perhaps the sky and back at his watch until something grows under his breath and you know something is building up in him and he has to speak. "You vultures," he shouts. "You're vultures—waiting to swoop down—" His breath comes in streaks and the words have to push against his vocal cords until a few of them flood out and relieve the pressure, then there is a break in his speech and his eyes are darting wildly from one to the other of us but not really stopping.

We didn't know what to do and not knowing we just stood there, silent dark shapes, grey in the rain and starring, perhaps like vultures after all, standing on the grave and hunched up against the rain, unable to leave and no sensible reason to stay, shifting our feet in embarrassment, pushing out against our parkas with our hands and staring at this intruder who had more right than we to be here and alone, but we stay, staring, not quite sure what else to do. "And you—you vultures—couldn't wait. And Tom—Tom ..."

He just stood there trying to divine the spot under the ground where the casket was, sort of helpless with his hands at his sides, ignoring the rain as it soaked into his white collar and ran down into his tie like we weren't there anymore. Then his eyes turn up into the rain and he looks wildly around at the trees and grass, finally nodding at something as though answering his own question, and turns
back to his car and drives off without another look at us or another look anywhere except straight ahead.

And we stood until the car passed out of sight among the far stones beyond the Hill block, still not saying or working, not yet even aware how uncomfortable we are in the rain until we looked slowly around for what was left to do. Then slowly we pick up the shovels, the tamper and the plywood sheets and load them onto the trailer and last of all we lay out the flowers. This funeral has more flowers than we can put on one grave, but silently we each take a spread and then another and place them in some sort of careful order over the grave and then heaping them near the end but still carefully, perhaps aware in the back of our minds that the flowers over this grave have more significance than all the other times we'd ever done it. And when we have finished, the sick sweet smell of flowers still permeates the air as we ride the dumpers and tractor up to the garage in the rain and go home for the night.

A week later when Jonathan leaves, I leave, too. I do it on the spur of the moment but Jonathan doesn't seem surprised. We're going up into Canada to see some country neither of us have seen before. After that Johnny is going East. I haven't decided where I'm going yet, but I know I'm not going to the East. The camera? well, I got one. It's not the best like I planned but it will do the job.
The camera is only a tool to keep records and that's the perspective I'll keep it in. The cemetery? well, I've got all I can out of the job. It isn't like I found final answers. I was dealing with feeling, feeling I probably never will understand and now it's time to move on.
WHY MUST A TOP SPIN FOREVER

He heard his wife call him urgently from the top of the cellar stairs. He heard the car idle in the garage and he knew that she had Timmy sitting in the car bundled warmly in his snowsuit and mittens.

"Here, Sam," he said softly to the black Labrador lying quietly on the rug in his cellar study. Carlton Smith bent down fingering a small plastic top belonging to his son. With a deft flick of his thumb and finger, he sent it spinning smoothly, silently on the floor. He wondered if Sam would try to play with this thing of quiet, motionless energy. Sam rose obedient to the call of his name, passed by the cold, spinning plastic and looked into his master's eyes, trying to understand why the man called him.

Perhaps when the top slows down Sam'll play with it, he thought. Why not? He plays with old rags and tennis balls. Perhaps when it begins to wobble he will hear it on the cement floor.

"Carl, we have to leave this minute!"

The vague, familiar voice was calling again. It sounded a great distance away, receding rapidly.

The top spins smoothly, perfectly without motion on the point of its base, a world in itself coerced to spin in an expanding universe by the flick of a thumb. Its red and
white spirals spin a motion invisible to a color-blind dog. When it slows down Sam'll touch it with his nose, he thought. But he wasn't sure. He had to watch this thing. A matter of science. A silly thing really. It isn't that important to know. Who knows what is important to know?

There's that faint voice in the distance again. The man felt he should leave. It was a simple matter of priorities and importance. He'd had these silly little compulsions before. It was getting to be a habit. Like yesterday: He got up late and had to hurry. He told himself if he couldn't shave and brush his teeth in two minutes, he wasn't going to work. He didn't make it, so he called in sick.

He knew about these compulsions. It was a conscious act of his mind. It was a game he played to make life more interesting. It was a clever mechanism that unconsciously placed all situations under his control. Whenever he felt the frustration of events beyond his control, he would concoct a game within the framework of his control. He made the rules and provided the penalties. He needed the penalties or he'd break the rules. It was simple. It gave him discipline. He functioned well with discipline and accomplished a lot that way.

His thoughts blended with the top itself. This top spins with ridiculous ease, he thought, like life itself. It goes on like each day without help for itself. A speck
of dust on its side turns unconsciously like an insignifi-
cant person spinning on the earth itself. We move and are
moved and don't understand at all. Right now this spinning
top is a whole universe, its purpose encompasses a whole
world and even delays a hairdressing appointment.

There's that woman again. In a minute, Doris. Just
wait a minute. Why must a top spin forever? This is silly.
There's no value to this. I should leave, but I want to
stay. A penalty. Make a penalty. Okay. If I don't fin-
ish this thing, I'll stay home no matter how mad Doris gets.

This top spins extremely well. Even after the first
wobble it spins extremely well. It's beautiful when you
watch it. A simple red plastic top moving without preten-
tion in a swirling world of red and white color. Is a top
real? Motion, space, and time suspended in a smaller world
of smaller things. Beautiful simplicity expands the universe
in quiet motion. Total comprehension is in a small spinning
top. Equilibrium succumbs to situations spinning beyond
control and feeling is divested of its origin. There is a
past to remember, but it floats beyond the grasp.

A door opens. "Carl, can't you hear me?"

His wife's strained face appears before him. A coat
is tossed and they walk up the cellar stairs together. A
penalty. There's a penalty to pay.

The garage was cold, but the car was warm and Timmy
was bundled up. His wife was very efficient.
"We're late, Carl. I'm driving straight to the hairdresser's. After you let me off, get the groceries on this list from Stanley's."

He balanced Timmy on his knee and watched the traffic. From somewhere he remembered balancing a little girl on his knee, a light, marvelous being more precious to him than life. Three years ago she had been struck down by a car.

His wife was still talking. "...then get my prescription at Cormier's. I'll be out of the hairdresser's by seven at the latest."

Doris has grown tremendously methodical during the last several years, he thought. She doesn't dare do anything without a plan. We never really look at each other anymore. And when we talk it's only for the sake of efficient cooperation.

He hugged Timmy and spoke through his snowsuit collar, "I'll take Timmy with me."

Doris tightened her grip on the steering wheel. For a moment each enjoyed the silence of their thoughts. "Carl," she said almost tenderly, "why did you open the glass door and jump into the snowbank last night?"

"Oh, that," he said. He was really embarrassed. It was supposed to have been a private thing. A penalty. "I didn't know you noticed."

"Well," she shrugged, trying to go along with him, "there was all this snow on the family room rug and a big hole in the patio snow with your slipper sticking out."
"Kind'a silly wasn't it," he said, bouncing Timmy on his knee. He'd have to be more careful about penalties. "I told Timmy if he beat me in that game we were playing, I'd go jump in a snowbank."

"That was ridiculous! All Timmy did was throw dice. There wasn't any skill involved. Why say a thing like that?"

"Why not jump in a snowbank?" he said. "Timmy liked it."

"The rug got all wet for one thing."

"For God's sake, Doris. That's trivia. What's really wrong with jumping in a snowbank?"

"Carl, it's just stupid. Completely stupid."

"Yeah, stupid. You're a great judge of stupid. Did I hurt myself?" Carl asked angrily. "Did I hurt anybody?"

Doris drove on silently. She hadn't been able to really talk to Carl since Karen died. They still got on, but it had changed their lives. And lately he had been acting so strangely. She was worried.

It began to snow big soft flakes. They were heavy and wet and stuck to the windshield. Doris started the wipers and squinted into the night at the five o'clock traffic.

"Carl," she said, creating her own tenseness, "we're in our late thirties and I think we should begin getting a yearly physical. I'm having mine tomorrow morning."

He looked beyond the night cut by the headlights into
the infinity of his mind and back again to the large, white flakes rushing toward him. Ridding himself of reality, he imagined all the flakes in the night were attracted to him as iron filings are to a magnet. Powerful balls of explosive white steel bent on his destruction were spinning, accelerating toward him. The windshield, a strong, new plastic, was his only protection against these sleek, foreign missiles.

"I took the liberty of making an appointment for you next Monday," Doris tried to be so casual her voice quivered. "I hope you don't mind."

Suddenly the windshield was gone. He was alone in hostile black and white space. White blotches of an alien chemical, sensing his proximity, rushed at him from all directions. Soft, white balls of pollution were attacking him in a negative world. But he had the wonderful power of attraction. His being was filled with wonderful satisfaction as he realized he was creating influence. Things moved because of him. Destruction poured toward him because of his influence. It was a feeling worth dying for.

Doris had stopped the car. They were in front of the hairdresser's. She looked at him tenderly, not sure what to say. "Don't forget the errands," she said as she opened the door.

"Right. Groceries at Stanley's. Prescription at Cormier's. And you'll be ready at seven sharp."

She smiled. Perhaps she didn't have anything to worry
about after all. She kissed him lightly on the cheek and quickly left.

The errands went quickly. At ten of seven Carl and Timmy were parked across the street from the hairdresser's again. It was still snowing heavily. The street grooved from the passing cars made blue-white ruts under the street-lights. The parking meters wore ermine caps over red violation faces, sentinals in the night.

"When is Mommy coming out?" Timmy asked, munching on an almond bar his father had split with him.

"Before the big hand gets on the twelve, I bet'cha. Cause we gotta beat the snow home."

Carl was angry at the patronizing voice he sometimes used with his son. Nothing to say, he thought, excusing himself. Nothing really important. Time passed slowly. He shut the car off knowing they had six minutes to wait.

The sudden silence jumped out at him. He was surprised how quiet it really was on the city street. Only an occasional car passed them. Most shops were closed now and only at intervals did he see the foggy shape of some pedestrian hurrying against the snow to some unknown destination.

Passing time he picked up his wife's prescription. A label with the standard warning, "Use only as directed by physician" was pasted on the clear plastic vial hiding most of the oblong capsules inside. He read the typewritten
directions: "Take one before going to bed at night." Doris hasn't had trouble getting to sleep nights, he thought. She was just being efficient again. Just in case.

"Daddy," Timmy said with a sense of frustration, "when is Mommy coming out?"

"Pretty soon, Timmy." His voice sounded vague and far away. The luminous dial of the car clock showed the long hand past twelve.

"When's that, Daddy?"

The clock ticked loudly, its beat synchronized with different snowflakes striking the windshield. White balls of steel thundered down spinning crazily into his world. Somewhere a top was spinning red and white spirals into an infinite circle. It spins like life itself. Doris is always prompt. Why must a top spin forever? Memory of his own influence comforted him. If Doris doesn't come out by ten after I'll pay a penalty, he thought. It's getting cold.

"I said, when's Mommy coming?"

"Mommy will be out before the long hand is on the two or I'll - I'll go to sleep."

"Daddy," Timmy said laughing, "you're funny."

Timmy watched the long hand of the clock sensing a game.

Snow spins like a top diluting important things like influence, he thought. He heard the beat of his heart, the
beat of the clock, and the drum of snow against the windshield. Adrenalin pumped a new thunder into the veins of his temple. He took out a Coke and opened it. When he concentrated he could see the minute hand move. The long hand was on the two.

He held his wife's barbituates in his hand. Twelve capsules for three seventy-five. That's a hell'va price, he thought, wiggling them in his hand. Giant snowflakes thundered against the car. A top was spinning red and white spirals into the infinite circle of existence. It was spinning with the ridiculous ease of life itself. Why must a top spin forever?

A tiny voice broke the silence of night. "Daddy," Timmy asked not quite sure, "what you gonna do?"
THE DREAM

The bar was full so I didn't stay.

I can't get over the mountains. It's like there is a whole world of freedom and exploration beyond the ridges.

Eight years. Eight years of my best with only four days out for sickness. I don't resent those years. It's like I knew something was happening inside and if I kept on I wouldn't be able to feel it anymore.

It's strange and, now I think, pretty terrible how you feel everyone's influence on you until you're not really sure what you are and what you would do without that influence. It would be nice to know what you would feel without the words and without the people telling you you are this way or that way.

When you're young in the spring, something happens to your stomach, you move over grass sensing the flowers and trees, the smells of field and through the pores of your skin you feel a vague sense telling you there's more. It's like if you just run to the end of the field or reach the top of that mountain in the horizon's haze something wonderful would happen.

He was working on the board. The board was full of names and numbers and when that was worked out they'd mimeograph the classroom numbers and teachers' names with the division numbers and students' names.

"Mr. K, is there any chance of teaching one of the
top eighth divisions this year?" It was a big felt board and he was pinning a penciled-over name sheet under 8C. The board, like a giant crossword maze, would resolve itself into a thousand human beings channeled into specific areas following an orderly pattern by September 7th. He looked up.

"Jim, there's no way at this point. This thing is crystalized now. I wish I'd known your feelings a couple weeks ago."

They never really listen, those people. They look like they listen but all the while you're talking, you can see their minds churning with the problems they think you don't know anything about. They think about that and that you don't understand and remember what they heard in Andrew Carnegie courses and know to be true about listening to people. So they nod and you know they could recite back what you just said but they never really listen or care about what you said because they know their problems are bigger and more complicated. And besides - and besides you've been doing this thing for them for a long time and it's just a small thing you're asking and doesn't really matter because you don't stand there shouting or pleading like a poor soldier. You do your job and over the years you've become a natural part of the scenery. And another year goes by.

I like to believe man is an individual and a part of
society and can be both. No, I don't.

It seems like a man could follow his every inclination without being lazy but I don't know. And when I don't know I just don't dare -- dare to be lazy because somewhere in my training I've learned lazy is bad. I've learned it and learned it until I believe it even when I question it and wonder if it isn't just one of those wonderful things that lie beyond haze on the horizon for those who dare.

Have you ever, have you ever put twenty-four screws into small rings, month after month, building one on the other until you have a four-gang unit composed of tiny wires, weld points, and contacts and you can begin again. It would be boring, you tell yourself, but it's only for eight hours, the sun shines through the dusty window and you'll be out in it before it sets and there's an afternoon break and a morning break and in between each, you go to the john another ten minutes for a cigarette. You really work only six hours and forty minutes and learn things like this unit you make is worth $400.00 in the right place and more than a milliampere of current will burn out the delicate wires and there's a spool of gold wire 1/10,000th of an inch in diameter that's five miles long and worth two grand and that isn't the most expensive roll because there is a special alloy spool only four miles long and worth $3000.00. So it's not boring, that you'll admit, and you take it because you know you're not going to do it forever. You sense
there's something else and you want to do something else
but you don't know what it is so instead of stopping what
you know it isn't, you keep on doing it until you can figure
out what it is.

THAT IS NOT THE WAY TO GO ABOUT IT.

"I don't see how you can break a car down and fix it
without any real training."

"I'm a one, two, three, four man. Same as I built
this house and I'm no carpenter. I don't know the whole
thing, I can't imagine it. But I know a first thing. I
do that thing, then see if I know a second thing. Then I
do it. If ever I get stuck I know what sticks me and I
find out from them that knows."

I had spoken to him in plenty of time and he remem­
bered last year and being a good administrator, I knew he
wouldn't do the same thing because he knew it's basic that
a good administrator never has to be told more than twice
and concern over their personnel is as much their job as
the welfare of the children but what.

There's this feeling you don't know what it is. It
pulls at some primal part of you like you remember from way
back and it don't tell you what but it tells you what not
and you don't dare to go by the what not because you don't
know the what so you keep on doing what it isn't even though
you know it's wrong.

He walked into my room and I thought it was about the
kid I sent down to the office but he came up to me very confidential and about to be helpful about this common problem we share.

"I've talked with the superintendent about this and he's very sympathetic. He's going to be in my office at two this afternoon and he wants to talk with you."

... the movement of a machine is purposeful and inherently directed toward a task and the performance of that task becomes the responsibility of the simple machine designed for a specific purpose and an inherent concept in the complex machine designed for multi-purposes the difference lies in the complex machine being uncontrolled while performing its function except for a new necessary signals keying the tape with reinforcement of basic information and as the complexity of machines and their memory banks continue cybernists are grappling with the problem of at what point their machines conceptualize and when it analyzes its analysis in terms of expected performance will it throw out concepts it had been taught when they are wrong even though these concepts are absolutely essential to the initial purpose of the machine ...

The tiles were polished with six layers of wax like my room but there were no scuff marks here. I sat in the chair and saw the long flag pole with its brass period beyond the window.
You get caught up with the money and the clocks and the pace of others moving along at this artificial rate toward something you believe is right because everybody else believes it is right and you get swept along in its current and it is okay because the whole framework is moving along and only rarely do you get a glimpse beyond the haze enough to know it's only a framework, a great moving framework swept along in its own creation and beyond it for those who dare there is something more.

Those children are difficult ...

"It will be impossible" and it will be impossible to forget the home I live in and the car I drive and like and the way I move dully along forgetting the sharpness of pain and the sense of something more than this.

The sand by the river filtered through my hands easily. When I held it, it was like a rock, and when I opened my fingers a little it crumpled and fell. I was alone and it was a marvelous place. The water covered my feet and I saw the mirrors moving along the surface out where it was dark. There was a gentle tugging on my feet. It was new and strange and wonderful beyond the grass and trees I knew. I wanted to touch the mirrors glittering on the surface and reached for them. They would jump around, wiggle and move away but more mirrors came behind them. The wetness felt
cool on my chest and my feet wouldn't stay. They went and I walked with them the same way the mirrors were going. I stumbled on a rock and my head went under where it was dark and I couldn't breathe and when I tried something heavy and choking went where the breath goes and I was scared, more scared than ever was the wonder. I struggled with my feet and came up in the sun then down into the dark where you can't breathe then up to where the sun freckled in the leaves and I could stand.

The eyes close and instead of just shutting the lids the cheek muscles clench up against the lids squeezing out light and keeping out the world so the dreams will come and the comfort that makes the next day possible will be more than itself and living becomes the waiting for the comfort that comes with sleep and the waiting like the tension of anger pulls the muscles into trembling and sleep won't come until not trying to sleep, not trying to do anything it comes. Eyes move under lids flicking at the world they see and for once there is no doing.

"It's quite a compliment to be offered an additional increment. I'm sure Mr. R. doesn't do that very often." "I've never done it before. Not in my four years here." "And we'll still work on this other thing." "Perhaps another year..."
In the sand looking at the dark where the mirrors were I knew I wouldn't dare -- I wouldn't dare strangeness again even though the wonder was so fine.

Perhaps another year you can remember the what so you can quit doing the what not or more likely you'll lose even knowing what it's not and you won't know the hunger or the pain or even the almost which makes you know there's something out there that would fill this emptiness if you just knew what it was. Or perhaps if you dared to quit the what not even though the security and the responsibility tells you not to you'd be by step one and step two would be another what not closer to something you felt in your stomach when you was young enough to smell the grass and feel the sky move.

I had been sentenced to death. That was real enough. Death by firing squad. And it should be very soon because several of the others had been taken down by elevators. Through the open cage of the elevator one prisoner, in his ragged shirt, was standing passively, whiskered face hung to the side as though life was already ebbing from him. Another, fighting two guards and straining the cords in his neck, was yelling with furious energy. I saw the insane fury in him, the same fury that when twelve slugs ripped into his body would transform anger and motion into
attention, face turned in a twisted knot toward the sky, followed by a slow peaceful collapse into the sand, and decided this was the only way I could stand to go.

Dreams are fantastic, you know. They act out the drama of your inner struggle in symbolic terms. It is not hard to interpret dreams once you get in the habit of writing them down as soon as you wake up. You must write them down right away because they are quickly forgotten and you must think about them and try to understand them before you can understand them. But when you do understand them, you gain some tremendous insights about yourself. But it is work, don't think it's not.

I was going to be shot but I couldn't quite believe it because I hadn't done anything. There must have been a trial I couldn't remember and my only hope was this official who was talking to the guard. He listened to me, this quasi-naval commander, but I can't remember the words because his body was moving away toward something else on his mind and I saw he was just a small cog in a machine already in motion. It was then I noticed I was next to ride down the elevator.

To stop doing what I had been doing and strike out some new way was to throw away some things that had always
seemed pretty valid. To be a productive member of a social community, to subordinate some of my thoughts and feelings for the good of the group, to have roots in a place and perform work so I wouldn't be lazy all seemed kind of like the things I should do but perhaps it is all just propaganda. Perhaps ...

Hey, I was going to die! I always knew I was going to die, I expected to die, but it was always way off in the future. Now I had five minutes. The elevator was coming up and all day it had been five minutes between the elevator and the shots. I knew I had to die and I was scared and scared and knowing made me something else: I was psyched up to die and it was okay because I couldn't do anything about it except be psyched up and being psyched up I was ready and I knew I could take it. I could take the instant before when I knew the bullets were coming and I knew I could take when they hit because I accepted it and there wasn't anything I could do. Two guards came and I stepped into the elevator between them and we started down when the cage closed. I being psyched up talked to them to keep that way because I couldn't dare to die and lose it and as we talked I saw they were regular guys like me doing a job they didn't like and couldn't do anything about.

System is a marvelous thing. It integrates society
and makes possible a complexity of organization and specialization beyond the wildest dreams of a hundred years ago. And it does more.

A machine is a marvelous thing ...

The guards took me to the lower floor where we waited. Looking at the rifles slung on their shoulders I suddenly realized they were part of the squad. I asked where the rest of the squad was and they said they didn't know but they were sure the rest would be back soon. I didn't look because I wanted this readiness and not the fear but I knew behind me at the sandy end of this large room was where I would have to stand. Still we waited and I was finding it hard to stay psyched up with this waiting and not knowing how long the wait.

To dream is the mystery of life. I used to think dreams were simply the imagination but there is an effort to imagining that doesn't exist in a dream. Things happen to you in a dream and you make things happen when you imagine. And yet, and yet I have controlled a dream. You take a channel and if it isn't working you back up and redo the ending. Or is it you. There is something unconscious about us that hints at more than we know.

"I hear you're thinking about leaving us here." "Well, yes, it's in the back of my mind. Actually, I need a change in my job assignment." "I wish I could help you."
"Well, I'll probably stay."

You know what psyched up is, you ever tried to stay psyched up when there's nothing to be psyched up for right away but it is coming and you don't know when it's coming? Automatically, one guard has disappeared. The one guard left is acting less and less like a guard. He is looking around for the rest of the squad and isn't watching me very close. I'm psyched up to die and it doesn't matter. I'm in the maze and the framework has always been fair and honest and I have lived by it but my guard has his back to me looking down the hall and we have talked like old friends working some job together. I couldn't do anything to him because he's part of the maze and innocent as I am but I can't stay psyched up anymore by talking to him or thinking about getting executed because I don't know when anymore and I've seen that last moment as the bullets strike so many times, I can't stay psyched anymore. I can't stay ready because it isn't going to happen yet. And something else is bothering me as I watch my guard's back and the pistol swinging at his hip. I can form the words but they come hard like heresy and new concepts but why -- why am I accepting all this? Is it because I can't do anything anyway? I've always believed in and worked for the system because not to puts you back in nature and the system is social and cares about people but this time the system is wrong so why? I can't do anything, I'm going to die anyway,
why not die trying to get away and free than die accepting the procedure and slow workings of a system. I've been taught trying to get away shows guilt and only criminals try to get away and I'm not a criminal and not guilty so I should prove my innocence by staying like a man. But who is listening and watching and seeing how honest a man I am? If someone would notice I could die a brave man and innocent but for what and for who and I could even do this if I could only stay psyched up for it but now with all this waiting I can't even stay psyched up anymore.

You have to dare the pain of not doing what it's not anymore and when you've stopped doing one thing it is not, you listen inside and hope you'll feel what it is but probably not and then you must listen for what it is not that you are still doing and then you must stop doing that.

Wise men say you can travel the whole world over looking for what is inside you.

He came into the room again with that slow, steady walk that measures part of the intensity teeming in his head. "Have you decided about next year yet?" "Yes, I can't do this same assignment again." He looked hurt. "I'm sorry." "I didn't know you felt so strongly. It seems so sudden."

I have to work at resolving that dream. If I can resolve it and understand it I am one step closer to understanding myself and if I can move these unconscious forces
up where I can see them and cope with them I may be able to smell the trees and feel the sky move again.

When there is something that isn't working and it's disguised from letting yourself know it you begin to operate on a different level without knowing it, but part of you knows it and the deeper in it goes the harder your defenses work to keep it from you but it's there like an infection and although it is hidden it works against you.

Why not fight back? Why subordinate myself to a system for the good of others when I am innocent? Why not die fighting if I must die rather than passively waiting for those bullets to strike like all the firing squads I've ever seen? especially when my guard's gun is so easy to lift from the case. And I do! I have it and force him into a closet. I tell him if he comes out inside of ten minutes I'll shoot and kill him with his own gun and I know he must know I'm going to be gone from the area in ten seconds and I just want the ten-minute start, but I use the system against him because he's not quite sure and I gave him a rule and basically we've learned not to break rules.

Money is running out. Money needed to maintain home, car, possessions and the pleasures you're used to and once you stop performing a service you stop getting paid. And then you begin living in a very different world.

The night janitor came in early same as every Friday. He likes to talk to the teachers because when they go the
building gets quiet for the night and going over the things they talked about and the hay he hauled in during the day are the only things to keep the lonely feeling from creeping into the silent rooms. "Goodnight, Miss Carson." "Not goodnight, but goodbye. I'm quitting today." "Really? But why?" "Those eighth grade boys don't want to learn. I have to fight and yell the whole day."

There's no chance in the middle of this fortress but I didn't have a chance anyway. I take the elevator up two floors. There's even sentries outside on the grounds. I had never been here before but I have a sense of the whole place, where the people are and where they are not; I can feel they have their own lives and are more interested in them than catching me but they will answer a call and do what they are not interested in because they are like me and when they catch the excitement of a chase it will be as though their whole lives are in it and even the guard and I who were buddies talking, he will be brutal and would pummel me to death in the excitement. But that is not now.

I am on the officers' level and one is in the hall. I jam the gun in his ribs and force him back to his room. He says nothing and I say nothing and I exchange my prison leather for his uniform. It does not fit and I must roll up the pants cuff, watching him all the time. It is not neat or close but the authority is there so I don't bother changing his polished shoes for my dirty ones. I must have
used ten minutes but I have a plan now. It won't work yet it doesn't matter because I am in motion and feeling myself in motion exercising this control, even though I suspect the ending, is my sense of life. It's a different kind of psyching and doesn't feel the same in my body. Before the readiness was for what was going to happen to me, and now I am happening and what happens to me doesn't matter. I tell the officer the same thing I told the guard but know the rule won't have the same effect on him because he's an officer and his responsibility is greater and an officer's basic rule is to always do your utmost. When I leave I try the elevator but the elevator isn't working anymore and I know the guard has called in the alarm. I move down the hall and it feels good to control my own motion.

When the janitor erased the blackboard in her room that night he erased some French words and he wondered what they said because no one taught French in the school. Then he remembered: "They don't want to be in school, and I don't want to be in school with them," and wondered if the French didn't help relieve her feelings against them.

That was the most vivid dream I can remember. The details were precise and the vision was as though my eyes were open. Usually I fall back to sleep right after a dream but this was so vivid I could only think about it. It wasn't that I was scared because the dream didn't do that, it was just that it was intense and I couldn't stop
thinking about it. I knew the dream was important. I knew it when I couldn't go back to sleep. And I knew it had meaning but what that meaning was was an awful job digging out and I still don't know. How do you ever know?

"I've talked to the superintendent and he's agreeable. By juggling things we can let you have three regular seventh grade social studies classes and two regular eighth grade English classes next year." "I'll have to think about it." "We'd hate to lose you."

Why is it nobody believes you when you ask something unless you pull your hair out at the same time? Is it because it upsets the balance of ongoing motion and everybody's afraid of changing what seems to be going smooth? I know it isn't the effort because only a little effort and the motion would be balanced and smooth again and, besides, what is that to helping somebody who needs help and has asked you for it. It has to be the change, the same thing that makes me drive a hundred miles beyond the point where I first wanted to stop for a coffee break.

I walked down the stairs planning to leave on the first floor exit. It was funny how I knew where everything was even though I had never been there before. The gold braid on my sleeve was halfway up my thumb and the pants cuff swished against the other where I had them rolled up. This getup would never fool an officer. I had to deal with the enlisted men. And even if I got by everybody inside,
there were still the sentries outside guarding this fortress but I had a plan. If I made it to the gate, if, I would flash his bankbook and keep on going. If the guard asked for identity papers—which he would with the alarm out—I would act like the angry officer and say I didn't have time for any foolishness today, to stand aside and let an officer pass. I would keep walking and walking and wait for the bullets or to be free. I even knew where I would be stopped. I knew the grass and the trees over them and the open space in the trees that was the pass beyond them to the free land. But I didn't know whether I would get by the sentries or not.

I shook hands with a lot of people when I left in June. I won't say a great load fell away when I left that familiar ground, I just know it was one what not I shouldn't do anymore and finally dared to stop doing.

The mountains are really something here. They rise up making a border hiding the other side, telling you that there is more and the more coming at you until you can smell the sky and feel the grass move under your feet.

The bar was full so I didn't stay. It wasn't a drink I wanted so much as the flavor of this town before I move on.