Insecure sleep

William Schloss Hochman

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INSECURE SLEEP

By
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B.A., Hobart College, 1974

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

for my parents...
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Always the Possible Dream, Possible Motion-
OR WAKE IT

for John Haines

These two lines
let you see where you are,

streets of people,
rags, cement--

The cold sun
withdraws, the moon
leaves too.

I'm with you even now.
Stop pretending
not to see in this darkness,
thread an owl in your eyes
and open its wings.

Don't worry.
You are still here
and this dream
only sleeps before you.
When you go to leave
don't wake the dream,
or wake it

and start again.
DRIVE FROM BUTTE

The snow comes down hard.  
There's no road, just white,  
and no other car lights  
beyond the reflection on my hood.  
Turn-offs are dark to the right  
or left.  For miles, no red  
tailights, just the on beat  
off beat of wipers  
driving me to sleep in a bed  
of black ice, rocking my gentle skid.  
Two good snow tires aren't enough.  
I think chains could hold  
the road if I had them.  
The steering swerves, no friction  
like smooth moments before a dream.  
The car cradles my senses numb, I wish  
for soft snowbanks to lend a shoulder.  
I've forgotten the sounds of everything  
reviewed in front of me;  
my life snowing, no turn-off now,  
no time to stop on ice.
RETURN FROM THE WOODS

for Larry and Sharon Levinger

Where the tree falls
and no one is there,
you are there.

Ice forms on
branches in a river,
icy on stones.

The flow holds loosely
for a moment
the rocks' watery shadow.

The river runs north
to some star, maybe
Arcturus.

You don't and return
home to chop wood.
Concentrate:

you need to split yourself.
FRESH SNOW FOR THE WINTER

Fresh snow, the moon wanes. Absence of all
I was is here.
I drink from the clear-
water river my eyes have been seeing in.
The trout swims somewhere near the line of my wanting to catch it.
I am not hungry.
I say to the listening trees
--Fishing really needs no strike to be fishing.

My size sounds smaller with echoes.
Trees and rock become twigs and gravel,
the river bed of fresh water that runs past
helps you leave me.
Everything slept in my thirst and awakens.
The wilderness trades waiting, with who I am.
THE VOLUBLE CONVERT

"After all, the young man or young woman who has written a few poems and who wants to read them is merely the voluble convert or the person looking in a mirror who sees suddenly the traces of unexpected genealogy."

--Wallace Stevens

Thousands of ants crawl over my body.  
I think if I could raise my eyelid they will crawl there too--

I have only my tongue to lick away the insects, 
I have my legs to hold me motionless.

I am tied no more to position 
than Gulliver, who was once my friend.

If I knew the blood that mixed, 
or the passion whose laugh conceived or contrived me, 
I would move.
THE OLD CROW

There is an old man in a castle.
He dreams
of being a crow.
Each night
his steps
on the rocky embankment
scratch for the same day,
for his wife.
He will not leave.
He is afraid
others will take
his black hair
and cawing manner of speech
for what it is.
He waits for winds.
APPEARANCE

This performance is the only time to be the person we try always to hide. In a scene, you love her she loves me. As actors for this show we're ourselves. Another scene shows us loving the audience, the ones who never know enough. Let's get real: death on a stage doesn't get through me, this play within. A dead man like you has read it before. Theater exit, night just now takes notice of your absence. You've left the curtains on the stage. It makes no difference. When curtains close they cover your side. This appearance is a continuous trick out of nothing and returning. Your inside voice reminds you it's a show whose words are made of flesh. Children in the dark, you grow old learning people and words are one. You call them by your own name.
HELLO? MISSOULA?

Hello this is New York
late cement night living lights
voice can you hear me here?
Montana makes the sound white,
snow takes the city up
reverse charge
tires, phone dials, fan jets,
distance is no good.
I'm alone in Manhattan
wondering if what was there
won't be again.
-Screenings-
THE FILM

Now, you're in it.
Your character is dirty
and not yet old,
you don't like your lines,
there are no ideas in what you say.

I am directing
but you know
my mind can be changed.
For instance:
the love scene
between dollar bills
fruits, vegetables and the star.
You collect your sex
then change to
another shot.
We continue--nothing is said.

The film has parts
in color that you object to.
Offstage
the lights dim while you dream.
Look at your hands,
there is a gold mine
beneath your fingernails.
You can't clean them.

The wisdom of your movement
looks good.
I'm sorry
in the end you die.
KING KONG GETS A JOB

"Big ape fails to adjust to city life."

Tomorrow morning
I leave the jungle at 6 A.M.
for an interview in a position
I don't want.

I put my bananas on the table,
tonight's poetry, tomorrow's resume.

A firm hand shake and a look
straight in the eye:
it's like this, birds

worms, bees, honey.
I give it to him early
the unnatural me, flattened
on his desk. I'm hired.

After lunch, on top of the skyscraper
I turn and it's true,
a horizon of 1927 Stukas.
WHEREVER YOU MOVE: YOU CAN'T

for Milo

The car removes its wheel
like nailpolish,
turning the red flasher,
undoing the switch until
your hand tears at leather
becoming a saddle
on a horse,
four legs whose shoes
you throw away.
The lights in this scene
have smells and sounds
and a cool touch
that grabs the horse
as he begins his death
without you.
There are four reels
to the day's film.

Orange juice etc.
(that reel was not in focus
due to last night's
sexual performance--see reel four)

The afternoon has a gentle fade-in.
I'm careful with the shadows
and watch the soap operas
until twilight.

Lap dissolved into night,
the person I was
has difficulty.
There is no camera
to switch to.

When she comes to me
we act our essence.
We are the night's constellation
maneuvered by the moon
on the set;
tonight we'll fuck in slow motion.
BEFORE THE LAST TANGO

Things happen
and it's years later
when you understand.

The sun works like that too;
seven years
to change our skin.

In a dream you sail the Nile
but fail to hear yourself
in the river's mirror.

Rocks and sand,
useless particles together here
not useless.

When river comes to waterfall,
you try to think falling water
beautiful, as it falls

through this moment so many times
that beautiful means nothing.
You remain perfectly still.

A light goes off
and the film you were waiting for,
begins years later.
THE FIRST TAKE

There are no lovers of my world, no producers and directors of emotion. Color and frame try to fill in the empty winds, the lonesome tones.

I wanted to swim in the ocean with one woman. I used the angle that she was the ocean, but shooting never got that far. The ocean had never been. There was no water.

My friend is a mountain. Low angles make him tall and respectfully sienna. He turns no head at my lens, no eyes to mine. He's busy waiting for the rains from the sea.

The crust of the earth is 6 miles deep, maybe deeper. There's no scene now in what's beneath. Mountains and oceans leave the world without me.
"only the solitary word
you concealed in the animal night
and you passing by"

--Tristan Tzara
THE RED PERSIAN
for Robinia

"The Chinese can tell time in the eyes of a cat."
-Baudelaire

The red Persian crosses the Atlantic
on paws and wind.
She flies through mists of Presidentialss,
she sinks below the Mission mountains
without the usual wings
at sunset.

Night locks into my lover's
eyes, watching me
from a France of black ink.
The cat shifts her gaze,
the moment crumbles in my
arms around her.

The red Persian blinks her eyes
when the wind leaves for China.
You aren't here,
the empty house
where light
I've tried to save
dies on particles
of dust in the air.
The walls don't want
to look at me,
the plants won't grow
if I am home,
and the refrigerator
smiles stupidly
and hums. No one
wants me to be here
without you,
not even me.
ANYWHERE BUT MISSOULA

Be undone, you say, before you leave.
We are in our bedroom where
the shelves that held your clothes
hold a breath of absence, clear air
or you.

I turn myself into someone else,
a man walking through mountains at dawn.
The first sight of the valley is grey,
there are no people
walking the streets.

I'm still asleep.
You leave Missoula as I watch
standing on bus station cement.
This dream is a struggle
that confronts me like a mirror.

I turn myself into a coyote
in the Northwest,
Montana, late, alone
crossing the highway
and the oncoming lights.
FULL MOON/OCTOBER 1952

for Jan Spiegel

So much comes out, all
the years in clots,
the used faces, love,
your claws are in me.

Your face was there
in your eyes, large
and as far from me
as you could get.

We tried to know more
than the other, that love
could be hate. Always red,
your dark blood ran through me.

Your shape moves
from the bed where memory sleeps,
the music of your body
at night, a shadow.

These wondering years, I've lived
in the labyrinth
you left for me,
through the dark turns of all women.
NIGHTMARES

-The dried plant won't die-

I have dreams like that plant. You are in them. The man in the moon is no longer us. The man in my place is not me.

You leave inside his red windbreaker; our no-regret-rule, Paris, and the years I've looked for your eyes.

Some nights the scenes are more towards twilight. It ruins my view from the other side of the street I live on.

You watch Buicks and Ramblers drive between us and think you're a Rolls, a star about to leave for a better part.

At night, half the world is in its own shadow and I'm dreaming, afraid of myself in sleep.
-Borderlines-
This morning I saw a tree in my yard. What branch of this oak or pine or arm waving to the sky could I write these words on? The leaves laugh, obviously wind. Below, the unseen image-roots, or if I'm sad, dirt. I watch the tree run, pick up trunk, and jump slowly into Autumn.
I SEE WHERE I'VE BEEN

These days my eye passes time differently than the rest of me. It sinks into me in the reflection from an E train window. Then a passing train takes my eye and reflection to Manhattan as I was leaving. My eye returns with the reflection of a bear running in the night. The grizzly stops and rears. Between the ground and the bear's claw--another eye.
IN BIG SKY COUNTRY

In Montana mountains I see uptown alive streets off Fifth Avenue, cars line the streets like trees, as if I see far, but seeing no parking space, I drive on through Missoula's valley. I leave the Buick below and walk up the rocky summit to find I find myself walking down Blvd. Montparnasse for an expresso at Le Dôme. I look up from the café swallowing wind in a crevice, a Coors or Olympia of western culture. At the sidewalk table I sit behind Paris or New York in Montana, snow falls, and I find it's the taste of snow falling everywhere.
REMEMBER HAVING THE FUTURE?

It's on the screen, but you thought of it first at the airport. A waitress looked at you yes you, someone special in her eyes (which were round and large) with you there on them. This is the airport: arrivals, departures. You turn to the waitress and want to take her away. She'd be good with kids. You want to take yourself away. You want the tattoo removed but its your face and besides you know what you want is beyond the eyes and arms of this woman. Your flight is on time.
LABYRINTH IN THE OPEN

In the High Atlas of Morocco, I travel in an air that is almost always snow frozen or scorching in the nearby Sahara. This air that I see and hear, but don't breathe, becomes opaque like Quarzazate, a walled city edging Sahara in the shadows of mountains. The air's hues are green and sienna. They blow over an African plain between the black borderlines of mapped mountains and desert. I am riding an elephant through the streets of Quarzazate. He steps softly on this reflection; his trunk up into his head, my head, and ways out.
A man and a woman and a street cross or accommodate each other. Why, these two people, together, street, is no question. It's a motion brought to the river and spilled. It's true that this couple is only a fork and not the river holding rushing water, but who holds rushing water? The painter takes the paints in the river through a spectrum in part his, and that part is the river and not the motion. The woman sees him, the river, his wet arms on her shoulders, or slightly beyond. Regardless--love, in streets on the way to appointments, holds still, poses. The painter strokes.
THE CHINAMAN IN PARIS

As I began to write, a dog's barking brought the birds to the rooftops; I had been here before. The trees were busy with alphabets of cold wind. The contorted branches looked like calligraphy.

The chinaman dreamed the edge of his grave; a black line from a quiet square in Paris, when would he own his death? Death's reflection was in his face; the stuttered veins of his nose, the yellow whites of his eyes. He looked into a framed mirror with a road passing through the square, past sparse trees in cement, green and gray pigeons, a vague sun. The chinaman looked into the yellow eyes of a cat. He thought death was this cat, a diversity in his failing vision. There were no people passing, no clouds in the rain. With what he thought was a cold realization, the chinaman turned his left side to the cat. The hammering from Rue de l'Abbaye stopped--the chinaman continues throbbling in my head.
FICTION
ELSA
ELSA

The sky was clear in Elsa's nights. The night's clarity gave Elsa the same dream. It was a dream in which a piece of her childhood like a wheelbarrow or next-door neighbor brings her always to a moment when her father grabs her, a moment in which her father's memory of his first and only 16-year-old virgin and Elsa's name turn into each other.

When I arrived at Hotel Albert there were plenty of outsiders, foreigners and strangers there. They were waiting, like I was, near water, tossing year after year into the sand.

Elsa stood behind the bar, serving drinks to people. She had scrappy, braided blond hair and she usually wore flannel shirts and jeans. She had a silver and turquoise ring from Arizona, where she had gone to school and quietly picked up cannibus habits, film habits and some early understandings of eastern thought.

When I arrived at Hotel Albert I had hash for a friend and I was writing. The words were like friends of a friend. I had made and lost all of them through a four year book vacation, learning to use the salesman pitch (even in my dreams) for composition and finally traveling now for long enough segments of the worm so that I can cut off a part without losing myself.
When Elsa was 16, like her name, she met Remy, a French composer and conductor of the Ann Arbor symphony. She was young and full of beautiful long-hair-love. Either Remy was a fool or a very wise man; he took her back to Ann Arbor where she lived for two years, learning to play Bach sonatas and partitas with her violin. Remy was thirty-nine and nothing made him feel years more than her young slim body, nothing but the delight they shared and his knowing it would end. Her parents were surprised to see her again and couldn't deal with her. She was eighteen, but she was older and smarter.

When I arrived at Hotel Albert, Elsa was at the desk or bar, depending on the time of day, which was morning. I thought of lying in the morning sun after waking for hours. But I hadn't had a morning like that from the Paris-Amsterdam night train. I had been waking up through hours to the dark lowlands of France, Belgium and finally the beginnings of sunlight in Holland. I checked into a room, took a hotel pipe for the hash I had just gotten from the house dealer and smoked myself to sleep. Usually smoke makes my dreams hard to remember, but this dream became an unusual death.

I dreamt about writing, or perhaps it was happening, but I remember loving a woman. She was a writer and I loved her words. She was living in Paris and I was in Marienbad, living with my brother. She wrote long letters describing her Paris. Our correspondence was intense, forming a story like a chess-
game through the mails. Her writing pulled me through our story, there was always the right line or idea in her letters. I couldn't stand to be so far away from her, yet I could not live without her letters. I moved to Paris to watch her, and arranged to have my mail forwarded through Marienbad by my brother. His return for this mailing service was the knowledge of each letter's contents, which finally brought him through our labyrinthian words to Paris. I wasn't in my small room there, and so he went to a film. My brother walked in on the middle of a scene in which a man and a woman who were in love share the same dreams. As the film continues this couple find they can not stop being together as sleepers, though they are no longer lovers. The farther apart their lives went, the closer they grew in this strange sleep. Finally she stabbed him in the dream and woke up in a bloody bed beside his corpse. While my brother was watching this movie, so too my lover, only a seat away. My brother looked very much like me and near the end of the film she spoke a surprised hello, thinking he was me. As the lights turned on she noticed my 'change' but they walked out closely together. My brother was happy with this little illusion. His wallet dropped from his coat pocket onto the floor in the seats behind them. It was a wallet I had given him. As my other couple walked out of the theater, a taxi, a white Renault running the light, charged into the couple, missing her but knocking him down. In my
brother's death the girl was next to him, though she was unaware of who had really died. On the day that quickly followed, I read my obituary and rushed off to my funeral. They lowered the body down and as I turned away from his grave, I saw her. Our eyes met and as I started to die, a door slammed in the next room through the thin hotel walls.

In Mexico, where Elsa lived before coming to Amsterdam, she learned about the border. Nogales is a small town, but there was motion. Elsa spent time at customs, watching eyes on nervous faces or steady hands. She learned of safe border crossings on nights when the moon did not shine too brightly. She always returned to Mexico, returning away from her home. Smuggling grass didn't make enough money when the border warmed up with brown heroin, but she was good and cool and made enough to leave Mexico for Europe.

"What brings you here?" she asked me.

"Nothing, but I like your eyes," I said. "What are they trying to say that you won't?" She laughed and began talking about herself.

I listened to her. I thought I could listen to any story of hers, true or not, hearing her ways of talking. Her eyes moved into the territory of her story as she seemed to be looking into my eyes. She was back to where she had finally seduced her conductor at a summer retreat in an awkward attempt at love. He took her seriously. Her mouth was
careful with a steady inflection, her voice was direct but soft, and her tones were liquid.

I found Elsa in this hotel bar, looking back on lovers, remembering the roads of sex they had undone as she undid her braid. The lovers seemed, in her telling, like shadows. They never sounded real enough to hold on to. She learned to travel with empty hands.

Elsa's story grew up to her standing at the bar with several glasses of Giniever and laughing at herself and the blunt approach to love that she had been telling me. I was tired of alcohol and a little on edge from the side of herself she had chosen to talk about. I quietly said goodnight and climbed the stairs to some hash.

I spent the next day drifting in and out of Van Gogh's self-portraits, through his vibrating lines, which were always in motion. I tried to smoke and eat hash around the clock, depending on the bright yellows and blue-green innuendos to keep me moving to the next picture. Occasionally someone would walk by me and through a Van Gogh follow-you-anywhere stare. Usually I could drift out of the picture or further into it with short thoughts of different parts of Elsa's story from the last night.

When I returned from the museum and an Indonesian dinner, Elsa was at the bar. She looked at me. "Heinekein," I said.
"Your eyes are red, not brown like they were when I saw you last night."

"I need this," I said, "Indonesians don't exactly spare the curry."

"Try Dutch food next time or go to the Golden Temple. It's a Kundalini yoga restaurant that's very vegetarian and good and cheap."

"Sure, 'The Golden Temple'," I said, "maybe you think I'm Gunga Din?" We laughed and I finished my beer.

"Another one," I said, nodding my head and muttering about curry. Elsa smiled and handed me a cold glass that was moist with her fingerprints. I put my hand on them and held the glass up to drink. Elsa caught my eye and I stopped.

"Listen, Elsa," I started but she interrupted.

"Listen, Charles, I have some opium in my room, will you smoke some of it with me after work?"

"Sure, anything to get rid of this curry taste," I said and walked over to a chess game. But I wasn't on to the 64 squares and 32 men. I was feeling Elsa's will, maybe her love, and a very thick Amsterdam high.

The opium was dark brown and crusted with a white mold. We smoked it slowly and carefully, leaning into the smoke and motions of smoking, and nothing else. We didn't talk for awhile. Someone nearby had a stereo in the room and Jimi Hendrix found his way through the walls. Her room was small
and painted yellow. She had her mattress on the floor and a mat spread out next to it. She had put a map of the room on one wall. There was one window and a small desk with books on eastern thought scattered on top of it. There were notebooks, too. I guess she had been writing, though she hadn't mentioned it. I felt something at my feet. She had slipped off my clogs and began massaging a foot. I looked at her.

"72,000 nerves in your body and they all have endings in you feet."

"What?" I asked.

"Yeah, you see the way to understand it is that your skin is like a third lung and it's especially important at the bottom of your feet. I can tell by your calluses that you have a bad stomach. Feel for yourself, right below your big toes, see, it's hard. Feel it?" She pressed directly on the calluses and I felt a short pain in my stomach.

"Yes, but don't stop. This massage feels good."

"No, give me one for awhile," she countered. Her feet were small and smooth. I enjoyed having them in my hands. I wasn't too stoned to feel the warmth in our touching. I rolled her legs around and kissed her. We moved to the bed. Later that night I watched Elsa sleep. Her face was calm and passive, like opium.

I woke up alone the next morning. She left only questions from last night's image. How did she feel about me? What was
she doing in this old Dutch house converted into a steep-stepped hotel? Where was she going? I came up with nothing beyond a sluggish penetration of light in my haze.

I smoked hash the following days and nights, seeing Elsa in the afternoons. We made love and played chess. She loved skilled love, but still there were parts of her I could never touch. She usually won the chess games when she was black.

I knew a hungry group of painters on the Blvd. du Montparnasse who never had enough to eat of anything, especially hash. I had decided to work out a hash deal when Elsa's fishing boat turned up filled from Afghanistan. I cut off two kilos of hash, kissed Elsa goodbye for Paris, and promise, her money. The black-brown hash looked like a pair of shoes, a walking substance alive with sleep and dreams. My train to Paris let me fall out of Elsa's world, though I kept a room at Hotel Albert.

I didn't sleep much on the train. The hash and Elsa kept me awake with images of her grey day-work at the hotel, the silence she carries about her without self-importance, or her readiness to laugh at herself or the love which she is the reflection of. She was pale. There was no rhythm to the train, even the constant side show window seemed lost in hash, a hash that was no longer a drug so much as a way, a set of
circumstances with thick dimensions. I was trying to think of what Elsa had been telling me, something about the true psychic reality being the unconscious and there are no words for this territory, no way to translate the silence. Drugs were a medium for her, I thought, maybe a silent translation.

Paris was sleepy and quiet that first Sunday morning. The pigeons were casual and there was still an early morning mist outside of Bare du Montparnasse, a train station beneath Paris' tallest building, I walked down the Blvd. and stopped at a bakery for a 'Batard Court'. The cafes wouldn't be open for another few hours. I walked back to the train station and checked my bag. I was feeling lazy and decided to take a metro to Saint Michel, a hip student section of the left bank. There's a park on the Seine opposite Shakespeare and Co. and behind Notre Dame. I sat there and waited with the pigeons until the bookstore opened. Shakespeare and Co. was an old library-free-university-book store started in Hemingway days by Sylvia Beech. Sam Elliot ran it in my days, and he usually had a bed for me in one of the rooms above the books. I would store-watch in exchange for the room. Sam never got out of bed before noon, and when the store opened a dark haired girl with a green sweater and pineapple breasts was arranging books near the desk.

"Hello," I said, "anyone in room two?"

"Yeah, me," she said.
"Long Island?"

"Yeah," she said, "but this is Paris, so do me a favor and forget Long Island, O.K.?"

"I thought Sam knew I was coming."

"He did."

I was tired from the long train ride. I had eaten some more hash and I didn't feel like sitting down and reading a book, although that's what this bookstore was all about. Educate yourself. Shit. I was tired.

"You gotta work now?" I asked.

"Uh-huh," she said and held up a copy of Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain. She tossed it to me.

"Is that your name?" I asked, "Thomas Mann?"

"Nope, Carol. But I'm German, or at least my parents were."

"Well, if your parents were here they would say I need some sleep. Thanks for sharing your room."

"Huh?...O.K....I guess it's alright," she finally managed.

I went up the stairs, noticing their steepness, like at Hotel Albert. I found my old room and fell asleep.

I was supposed to meet with Guyno the next day. He was head of a painting commune. I walked up Blvd. du Montparnasse to Le Dôme. Guyno was waiting for me. He was shorter than I was, about 5'6". He had short black hair and very dark eyes. His fingers were short and thick, which was unusual for a
painter. He was eating a Croute Monsieur. We had known each other before, when I lived in Paris and it was Spring. We had met once at this very same cafe, the one with a fine view of Rodin's Balzac.

"Bonjour," I managed.

"Merde," he said, "cut the French. How the hell are you?"

"I don't know, Guyno."

"Sounds like maybe you are feeling French for awhile."

"Maybe," I said.

"Charles, my friend, did you bring what we are having a party tonight with?"

"Guyno, you sure have convoluted ways of asking if yes, I did bring the hash."

"You've been eating it and it sounds good."

I handed Buyno a gram chunk of the hash, "Here's a taste" and I paused before saying, "It's here if you want it."

He slapped me on the back and smiled a phony French smile. "Oui, oui, de rein," he said as he slipped into French.

"See ya later," I said in my best New York accent. "Call me tomorrow at Shakespeare's."

I got up from the table and set off to Jardin du Luxembourg. It was a warm Paris fall and there still might be sailboats in the fountain.
I began the life of Hans Castorp thanks to Thomas Mann and Carol, the Long Island Jewish Princess whose room I was sharing. A woman blows Hans Castorp away, but ideas of men blow him apart, in fact they blow him off the mountain. Thomas Mann was good, but this book had too many pages. Guyno had caught on to the hash and insisted I come to tonight's party. "You're the guest of honor," he said, "though only you and I know that."

"O.K., sure, 1031 Blvd. St. Germain, right?"
"Oui."
"So long, slugger."
"Qu'est-ce que c'est."
"Nothing. Around midnight, O.K.?"
"Oui."

Guyno was cool. He painted too well not to be. We had met when I lived with a woman who knew him, a model of his. He would say about me that, "this American, this brown-eyed-Jew, had seen her picture better than I had," and then laugh, though I never believed he was laughing. Anyway, that woman was gone and we both knew it.

Usually I would have avoided Guyno's parties. They were always at a private nightclub called "New Johnny's." The club was very dark, loose and French. I didn't speak French well enough to speak it in Paris, so I tried to drink a lot and be quiet.
Guyno saw me after I walked in and came over to me. "Hey ya," he said, trying to sound American. He was wearing a custom tailored jean jumpsuit.

"Bonjour," I faked and he smiled then straightened and said, "There is someone here who would like to meet you."

"Good," I said, knowing he had a buyer, but I didn't expect the buyer to be a woman. I thought Guyno could have done it himself but she insisted.

"Bonjour," she said. She was German.

"How's the Seine, Guyno?" He glared at me. He paints the Notre Dame on the Seine scene for tourists. It helps with the rent.

"Listen," he said, in hard, slow English. "She turns it over or we drink only wine."

We went into a private office and she brought out a pipe and handed it to me. I looked at Guyno and smiled. He smiled back at me. Shit, he had eaten that gram. I filled the pipe and handed it to this woman who had dyed French red hair and a long Sahara blue dress on. Her eyes were green, she was thirty or at least feeling that way, and still holding on to a good, strong, sexual body. I received the pipe from Guyno and took several long hits on it. Who was at the party? Picasso, Cocteau, Goddard, Breton, Buñuel, Bardot, Moreau, Tristan Tzara, Truffaut, Prévert, Manet (not Monet) and Jean
Paul Belmondo. They were all there, "Yes," she said, "I want your hash" and we smiled. I needed air and espresso.

She helped me onto the street. I didn't want to hit Le Selection or Les Rondes, too big, too bright. We slipped into a small side street café between Blvd. du Raspail and Blvd. du Montparnasse, near Balzac.

"German?" I asked.

"No, Spanish, from Barcelona. I'm studying at La Sorbonne. This deal means my winter tuition."

"Hash, like nuts for the winter, eh?"

"?"

"Nothing," I said, backing out, "what do you study?"

"Egyptian Hieroglyphs," she said, and, "I like Lawrence Durrell a lot. I like his Alexandria."

"Deux espress," I said to the waiter. We were sitting near the sidewalk in a corner that managed a good shadow.

"Ca-Va?" she asked.

"Listen, I know your English exists; use it, O.K.?"

"Yes," she said, "I'm studying it now."

"Hello how are you I am fine," I said.

She laughed and looked at me. "How many Kilos did you bring?"

"Two...for now."

"Let's smoke some more," she said. "My place isn't far."

We smoked ourselves into silence. It was good hash and I
knew she would pay my price. Her name, as it turned out, was not Jean, as everyone had called her, but Jan. Her grandmother had been Norwegian. She put her hand on my leg and left it there. "We can put out smoke together tomorrow," I said, and we left a trail of clothes through her small studio apartment to the bed.

I woke up before Jan, and started to get dressed to leave. Before I could go she was up and about with words like, "coffee?" and "breakfast?"

"I was going to the hash," I said. "I'll bring it back here, Ca-Va?"

"Oui, yes, I think so."

When I returned the ten thousand francs were waiting for me. "Good," I said. "Yes?" she flatly complied.

"Is this it for you, or do you want to try more runs?"

"I don't know. I want to think about it. What about you?"

"If it's there, if I'm there, yeah sure and no never again."

"You make no sense," she said.

"Then you know what I mean," I said and left for Shakespeare's. She watched me leave. Business, I tried to tell myself, but I was lying. Dope, business, women, what did I know about anything except that I was different? My twenty-eight years hadn't shown me much more than a succession of what comes my way, good or bad, with women and without them.
Elsa didn't seem to care that I had brought a ripe camembert and a few baguettes. I had returned on the same night train, reaching into an Amsterdam morning with tired energy. Elsa was glad to have the money and began talking about a new, better deal. I touched her and she kept talking. "Maybe some coke, this time," she said. I said nothing. "I need a pipe and some hash," I finally said, interrupting her and putting her back behind the desk.

"Sure, O.K." she said, nervously. "I guess you're pretty tired. We'll let it go at that and sleep."

Elsa woke me with dinner. She seemed softer and able to remember loving me, though I'd only been gone a few nights.

"Thanks," I said sleepily, "Room service with a personal touch, eh?" She kissed me. It wasn't sex and yet I half knew it wasn't love either. I guess I wanted that kiss to be love and didn't want to look a little farther down the road. She began talking about a coke deal.

"Pharmaceutical snow, it's pure and good."

"Yeah, white," I said.

"Really. It will be just as easy. Sunday mornings, you know how easy that train is."

She was convincing and determined. I wanted to make love to her. She was a direction, a new drug, but mainly she was a risk. I think she knew my seduction of her then was also my yes. I got the details later on in bed. I was to wait in
front of the Van Gogh Museum for Henri, Elsa's connection. He would drop a bag in front of me. I would pick it up and go to the station, wait two hours for the train, cross through Belgium, get off at Brussels, and take the next train to Paris.

Elsa talked of little else during our week together. This deal was important to her and I liked that, but I began to feel more a part of the deal than her lover. She was busy with work, her high, and the coke. I was busy with her and Henri waited for the drop.

I was glad Sunday had come. Last time, I thought to myself. Get this over with and maybe I'll catch a look at India or the Orient. It was a risk, just like Elsa, but I had made it with her, I wanted her and she was there. I felt Elsa through the deal. She can keep it tight, I thought.

Henri dropped off the coke and I made my way through the quiet streets and canals called 'grachts' to the train station. I was surprised to see Elsa there.

"Henri got nervous," she said, "wants to have an eye on the coke, thinks I should go along for the ride."

"What do you think?" I asked.

"Trains are fun," she said.

"Alright, sure, what's the difference? Let's get some wine for the ride."

"We can't. It's Sunday morning and besides, it's not smart."
"I guess you're right."

We took seats in the same car, but in different compartments. I sat with a couple of Spaniards who were generous with their oranges and bread. When we were near the French border, I noticed Elsa smoking outside her compartment. I got up and went to the W.C. and stayed out of my compartment, a few feet from her. We were alone.

"The French border is five minutes away," she began, "and now I must tell you why I am here. Henri had a partner with whom he had various disagreements. There was violence though nothing was resolved. He is afraid his ex-partner will tip off the police, or maybe try for the coke himself. Are you afraid?"

"Yes, no, what does he look like?"

"He's six feet, lean but broad shouldered, his hair is light and short, and he wears a long tan leather coat."

I didn't think of giving the coke to Elsa. I looked around for Henri's partner and nervously fingered my passport. The train pulled into the border station. I handed the conductor my passport and watched him cover our entire car. Then I waited in my compartment with the two Spaniards.

It was worse than I thought. There were French soldiers searching the train. Sunday morning, I thought to myself. I thought I saw a tan leather coat pass by my door and then Elsa whisked by. The door slid open. The Spaniards opened
their suitcases and bags, but the soldiers weren't interested. They looked at me and motioned to my bag. The coke was in it. I had hollowed out my copy of Magic Mountain. They opened my valise and began searching. It occurred to me that they knew about the coke, that I had been fingered. I looked at the door, hoping to catch a glimpse of Elsa, hoping for something to happen in the moments before they found that book, but as they opened the book, everything closed.

I suppose Elsa stayed on the train, stayed in Paris maybe India, or the Orient.
THE DIRECTOR
THE DIRECTOR

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

Start from the ice cubes in her scotch and soda. Her three-year-old kid, Daisy, asks for milk. Her husband is late from work. The few paintings on the wall are from Korvette's Easter art sale. The camera pans across the complete works of Dostoevsky. That's all you see while she talks to her sister-in-law on the phone. She hangs up when her husband comes home from his world, office cuts, blue suits, grey suits, quick cut, it's her film. Clothes for Daisy's doll, Jane, Community Chest, an almost affair with Daisy's nursery school teacher (at least eye contact--direct). She doesn't kill herself. The camera has close-ups of her face. When that happens, there's no music on the soundtrack. She kills her husband and Daisy after dinner. Slow motion stabbing shots with a grainy texture, not too close. She doesn't get caught.

I'm sorry, my name is Jan Kelvin. I came to this business when I was in my early twenties. I was traveling to Spanish Morocco on the ferry from Algeciras and I met Chuck Richards, a well known director. He told me his story; an orphan, no one paid attention to him, he did a lot of push-ups, got hard, knew the cruel world but went to Hollywood anyway. He started out cutting films at cheap, non-union rates. He was careful and concise. The hours with his eye behind a framed image trained his director instincts. He made some fine films, but little of the films' investment returned. He had studio troubles, not wanting to work on the big disaster boom. I didn't know that at the time. He was kind about answering my questions from dreams of film work until I asked about his own work.
"Chuck, what are you doing in Ceuta, a film?"

"No."

It was hard to get him back into film and out of my bed. I think he played along with my curiosity, not willing to believe this woman wanted to make movies, not just be in them. He probably saw me as a slim girl on a trip to Europe her parents gave her upon graduating from Swarthmore. I was conceited and I'm sure he heard my Summa Cum Laude song in the key of English with a minor in Physics. We stayed together for a week.

I remember his dark eyes and chest. He was old enough to do things like lighting my cigarette and door-holding without feeling self-conscious. Every time I tried to talk about books (especially ones by Virginia Woolfe, because I did my senior honors paper on her), he politely listened, saying nothing until I finished and then he'd let on that he'd simply been through it. He didn't go as far as saying he wasn't interested, I guess he was pretty good to me. I remember the day he was heading for Algeria and I was heading North again, back through Spain. I guess he left me more alive, more sure of having found what I was traveling to. I didn't cry that day in Tangier. It was cloudy and the Moroccans were pestering us for a "dirham" in three or four languages. We both kept our tempers, which isn't easy in Northern Morocco. He bought me a pair of sandals that day.
I smiled at him and said, "Thanks. These will be good for walking away from you." He hugged me. I remember his fingers in my back, feeling the ribs and my head against his chest. The sandals were cut to my foot size in a Moroccan souk at Tangier's large market place. I think I still have them.

Chuck helped me get a start in a small production company, doing continuity. I was working on quick, ninety minute T.V. movies where the shooting script was written after the shooting budget. I had fun. My job was where I wanted to be. I never heard from Chuck again, except one Christmas, just after my first film was released. He sent me a postcard with a profile of a huge camel's head, the red camel's eye looking at whoever looked at it. On the back he wrote, "Light is transmitted, completely and without impediment, only through a vacuum. All forms of matter will, to some extent, at least absorb light, and most forms do so. Glad to see you in the stars. Chuck Richards"

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

She goes to a small Mexican town and takes up with a tough guy called Joaquin Salvador. He is the town's best man with a wife. One day, behind a store, she watches Joaquin fight a man from a nearby town, Juan Brown. The camera moves in on Brown, a hulking Mexican mulatto. Joaquin displays his art, dancing and dodging to avoid Juan Brown's dangerous jabs. The camera circles them. Joaquin slips and Brown is on him, at Joaquin's neck. The Housewife walks away. The camera follows her.
"Housewives lose it when you try and get exotic," my first husband, Dylan, had told me. I was mixing for a T.V. quiz show at the time. Dylan was a psychiatrist. I guess we thought of ourselves as a professional couple. We ate out a lot. I really didn't like to cook and still hate too much time in a kitchen.

I had been saving my money for a try at 16 MM shorts, when Dylan got tangled up with Shirley. She was a very beautiful, manic-depressive-blond; a 16-year-old patient of Dylan's. It wasn't hard for me to want to scratch her crazy eyes out of her head. I was glad to get rid of Mr. Pseudo-Freud, anyway, so Dylan and I divorced after a short stay in Mexico City. I closed my California bank account and went to live alone in Queens, N.Y. I lived in an apartment on 108th street, near Jewel Ave. I went to a lot of movies. It was hard to go to bars alone, usually I just felt like drinking and being alone, but for a woman in N.Y., that's almost impossible. Sometimes during the day, I watched cars drive in and out of Manhattan during rush hours.

Eventually, the excitement got to me. I would call a producer I once met at a party. His name was Ruby Kessel. His hand had a fondness for rubbing the blue silk flank of my dress. He tried to tell me he thought I was Faye Dunaway. I had tried to talk intelligently about film.
Then he said, "You have an eye for film," and patted my ass.

"There might be work in New York for a woman film-maker. There are films where that angle makes a difference," I soberly injected, but he just smiled and drank and looked at me. He was drunk, but some people have a clearer sense of things seven scotches later. At least, that's how I had sized him up. That party was still in my mind when I called.

"Hello? Let me speak with Ruby Kessel, please."
"mmmm... When can I reach Mr. Kessel?"
"Faye Dunaway."
"Yes, 2 p.m. Thursday is good."

His secretary was easy. I remember thinking that she probably knew Ruby quite well.

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

She stays in Mexico. This time, the scene is a small town in the southern part of the country. The Indians are singing their Aztec songs in Spanish and everything seems sleepy and normal until the Housewife walks near the guitars. The Indians sing the next verse in English:

"Where are we going oh where are we going are we dead are we still alive is this where time ends is there time somewhere else people are here on earth with pungent flowers and with song and out of the world surely they make truths"*

*Translated by Stephen Berg
The scene is peopled with off-camera voices of her dead family whispering about their day to day lives as she walks through the Mexican marketplace. The camera follows her. Joaquin chatters in Spanish off-camera. The herb seller stops her. The herb seller is an old woman who wears a black dress and a dust shawl. The Housewife walks on, around the old woman, but the old one follows her. The camera follows both of them with deep focus. The Housewife ducks into a hotel and out another door. She loses the old woman and returns to her car.

Ruby Kessel had been in the film business for a long time, starting in silent shorts. He was one of the earliest directors to turn out complete films shot entirely in a studio. He could pull illusion together. He rarely stuck to a script and he liked to use actors who had never acted before. He was pretty wild, but Ruby knew how to tell a story and sell his style with simple plots. As a producer, he was a right combination of business and film.

I got to his office that Thursday, but his secretary caught me before I could even tell her my name.

"He's busy today, Miss," she said.

"I'll wait," I said.

"Well..." and she went back to her typing. Finally Ruby came into his outer office. I stood up.

"Ruby"

"Yes?"

"I'm Jan Kelvin."

"Oh, yeah..."
"I met you one night at Tom Skelton's Labor Day party," I said, "It's nice to see you, Ruby." He turned to his secretary and looked at her as if to say, do I know her? The secretary shrugged.

"You once told me you liked my eye," I said.

"Lots of people have eyes."

"Look, Mr. Kessel, I can make a film for you and no percentage for me," I blurted out, "nothing but the director title. I can do it." Then I handed him a partial treatment to a screenplay I had been writing.

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

She stays in the south. Mexico, in the camera's eye, gets dustier and drier until she comes to the blue Pacific. The camera pans the ocean and beach and the nearby town, Pulato. There are two brothers that live there. They are fishermen like everyone else and live on the beach in a small shack. Hernando is the older and larger. Pablo is the younger but more handsome one and he has been, for a while, in the North, around Nogales. They live alone together, rarely bothering to talk to the other fishermen except for nights at the bar. Hernando tells loud, bawdy jokes. Sometimes the men at the bar circle him and buy drinks for the best jokes. Pablo listens and laughs with the rest, and usually the best jokes are when Pablo turns one of Hernando's around. Just that kind of joke is what attracts the Housewife to their circle. Hernando is taken by this American's hard eyes. The camera catches her profile. The edges are distinct. Hernando stays with her that night in the inn, and the next day he brings her to the shack. Pablo has left to do the fishing and does not return until dinner, but is not surprised or checked by her presence. The sunny glare of the day is gone, and the Mexican night the two brothers and the Housewife in a sunset. That night, hardly a word is spoken. The camera moves from Hernando to the woman to Pablo to the woman. She stays with Pablo that night, and Hernando the next night.
"It's not finished yet," I told Ruby.

"But why don't you step inside?" he said, "I'd like to talk to you about it."

I moved past the secretary typing, trying to figure the tiny grin on her face as anything but an omen of Ruby's intentions. That was ridiculous, because I had been in plenty of 'No' situations that didn't turn everything off.

"Would you like a drink?" he asked.

It was 2:30 and I had a feeling that Kessel was going to take a while to get to his point.

"Sure, I could use one," I said. I was trying to sound strong, maybe too strong for the vodka martini he handed me. He sat behind his desk and I sat by his side, ready to go over my treatment and shooting notes. Instead he started on women directors.

"I like talent, Jan, and maybe you do have some. At least you've got the beginnings of a screenplay, but I need more than that to produce a film and a lot more than that to put you behind the camera."

He was wearing a red cashmere sweater that fit snug against his rounded belly. He looked good for his fifties. His grey hair was full and long and his eyes were alert and clear with a subtle challenge. I didn't try to Daddy him or smile weakly. "I'd have to look over some of your T.V. work first, but maybe
we could work out screenplay salary and writing schedule. You know, see what we can come up with. How's it sound?"

"Woman directors? Mr. Kessel, woman or not, directing isn't easy. I know that. Hell, it's impossible to be free, say what you really want and beneath all that expression is a market. Women in movies have been whores and bitches and that won't change, but the celluloid vision of these women can change, it can be feminine."

"I'll think about that Jan."

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

Each day Hernando and Pablo bring in less and less of a catch. They trade insults, though never in front of their woman. When they return to their shack she has dinner waiting, and then waits for one and sometimes the other in the same night to visit her bed. She carries water from a stream inland a mile from the shack for dinner one night. Hernando kicks her, "Whore!" and spills the water. She looks up at him and he shakes his head in the stream's direction. She knows this man. Pablo picks up the bucket and returns to the stream. That night in bed, Hernando comes and enters her right away. Her nails are deep into his back. The room is rocking, cuts to Pablo on the beach and the waves. As he walks in the moonlight, he hears her moaning and continues walking. The next morning Pablo gives her a shell he found in the night. The brothers leave to fish, but catch nothing.

"It's moving along," Ruby said to me at our next appointment. "But what are you going to do with that brother scene?"

"Easy," I said, "watch the water."

"It has to go somewhere," Ruby started, "and she's already walked away from most of the places that scene can
work in. And besides, I don't know if we can shoot them as brothers. Why not just have them as boat partners?"

I don't remember my exact answer, but I contended that would only lead to the normal jealousies and tensions of a triangle. I didn't want that. I wanted Ruby to stay away from the cement, away from total reason. He knows how to let go but he won't. Enough of this film school shit, I thought.

"Because 'Jules and Jim' has already been made," I finally said. He changed the subject.

"O.K., it's working alright, but I think that housewife in your eye might be too much. You'd shoot the shack scene with her in subtle control, wouldn't you?"

I admitted he was right because that was how I felt the movie could work. He glared at me.

"Ruby, I've put too much into this woman to let her housewife role in Mexico be the same shit she killed in the states."

"She's tough," he admitted, "like you."

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

Pablo hands her a shell necklace. His older brother tells her to put it on and then laughs at her, saying the necklace makes her look like a turtle. The camera is close to Pablo's silent, dark eye. She says nothing. It's Hernando's turn. Later in the night, Pablo wakes her and they leave Hernando asleep in her bed. He tells her he wants to leave Pulato with her. "I love you," he says. "So does Hernando," she tells his young face and drags him to the sand.
Around the time I was working on the screenplay, I heard from Dylan. I still cared about the man. "I left the Freud game," he wrote, "and I'm going to Nairobi for some big game hunting. From there, maybe India. I'm running out of blondes or they are running out on me. I miss you sometimes. Will you meet flight 99 at the American terminal next Thursday at noon? I have a two-hour layover at Kennedy. Love, Dylan."

I called Ruby and tried to change our lunch appointment but his secretary said it was impossible. Ruby had been working on finding a co-producer for the film and needed to talk to me, she said. Escher Wolf was interested in the film.

Escher Wolf was a black bearded, large man in his forties. He looked extremely virile. I knew his name from some of the best films made in the past five years. He was a young star in his twenties. His acting was top notch but he let it go for directing and then, when he got enough money together, began producing his own films. He'd done well and sometimes helped out productions of movies he felt should be made. He wasn't being charitable. He just felt films that were good should be made.

He passed through the fifties exiled in Paris as a communist. He wasn't red, just crazy. He had a wild control in his films. Hollywood finally attracted Wolf out of his
exile in the seventies. I guess the moguls felt Hollywood was getting dull. The first film Escher Wolf made upon his return, ended with the U.S. sacrificing Hollywood to the Russians to balance previous nuclear cold war mistakes. There was a kind of truth in his films that said, "if I don't make this film and make it right, I might die." Hollywood needs its artists. I still feel funny calling film people "artists."

I thought of Dylan then, but decided to see Ruby and find out what was coming together. I left this message for Dylan at the desk gate: Dylan, there are some interesting blondes running around Kennedy. You won't be bored without me. Sorry, I can't break a previous appointment. Luck, J.K.

My meeting with Ruby turned into lunch at Les Pleiaides.

"I must be getting good, Ruby, or you wouldn't bother feeding me." I had been trying to be sharp, hoping to stay on the subject of my screenplay and me directing it.

"Yeah, fine baby," he answered. "Listen, what do you think of Raquel Welch as your housewife?" I almost hated Ruby. He was laughing and I started to leave. He pulled me by my wrist gently and said, "Just a joke, Jan. Really, I'm just joking. The Wolf business is driving me bats. He's looking for a role that won't just get him nominated for an Oscar, he's had six of those. He's a funny guy. Good energy for film. You know
he caught a glimpse of your plot notes. I had to convince him that your housewife had to be a woman. He liked that part."

I caught Ruby off guard by liking Escher Wolf's interest but 'agreeing' with Ruby, the lead had to be a woman. Ruby wanted me to rewrite for Escher and I had smelled the trap.

"Just think what it would mean to your film to have Escher Wolf on both sides of the camera," Ruby said. I smiled and said nothing. "Anyway," Ruby continued, "would you like to meet Escher this weekend? I'm having a party for him at my country club. Come."

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:
She goes out fishing with the brothers and their luck improves. Soon, she goes out with them every day, or is on the beach sewing nets with them. Hernando and Pablo disagree about everything and consequently, she makes the decisions. She guides the boat at the tiller even when there's wind, not just in lulls when each brother takes an oar. Sometimes she jeers them like at the inn at closing time. "Come Pablito and Hernancho, come along."

Ruby's country club was in Eremon, a fat Long Island town somewhere on the Long Island Railroad. It had been spring for a few weeks, but I think I didn't realize winter was over until I was out of the city. Ruby had suggested I meet Escher at the club after their first round of golf. I remember the first thing Escher Wolf said was, "Ruby, I didn't need a caddy as much as a CHEERLEADER," as he winked at me and smiled to Ruby.
"Hello Ruby," I managed.

"This is Jan," he said to Wolf, "the chick with your script."

I turned red and glared at Ruby, then at Escher Wolf. He smiled at me and hammed a grin.

"What do you mean, his script? It's not finished yet, but when it is, there won't be a male lead."

I had started to raise my voice when Escher told me to relax, that he wanted to co-produce it with Ruby. I looked at Ruby who was looking at Escher.

"And direct, Wolf, you said you'd direct."

"I know," he said to Ruby but was looking at me, "but I think she owns too much of the idea to let us do very much."

"Thank you," I said. Escher was kind to me. He was strong that day and his stare when he said, "I owned the film," went right through me. Thanks again, Escher, thanks for the break.

**HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:**

Finally the brothers can't stand her dominance. The camera angle is overhead. The brothers and the Housewife are fishing in the boat. "Who do you love, woman, Pablo or me?" She sees it is no time to laugh but she does anyhow. "Stop that!" Pablo says and hesitates just a second before he hits her. She hits him back with the handle of a sheathed fishing knife across the side of his face. Pablo holds her arms as Hernando unsheathes the knife and holds it to her face. "Which one of us?" But before she answers a large swordfish catches a net
line and begins dragging the boat by its stern. The fish is powerful and the camera follows it for a while after Hernando cuts the line. The brothers are pale from the freak Gulf swordfish in their waters. They look at the woman now with the same respect they learned for the sea years ago. The camera angle lowers back down to eye level.

That night, after Wolf had gone off to one of Ruby's guest rooms to sleep, Ruby and I took a walk on a road edging his country club's gulf course.

"It's gonna work, Ruby. I told you I can do it. Escher will be a good help if he keeps some distance while I'm shooting."

"You still think you can direct it?"

I couldn't figure his tone, but I guessed he wasn't sold on the idea, not yet. Then Ruby put his arm around my shoulder. Friendly, I tried to think, but knew better. He stopped walking and kissed me. I pushed him away, gently.

"You're fighting yourself," he said, and kissed me again.

"Ruby, you old stud, listen. This movie is going to be too good for us to lose it in a night."

"You're fighting--"

"I'm trying not to fight either of us," I said, cutting him off. I pushed his hand from my side and started to walk.

"Come on," I said, "this is my first movie and I don't want to blow it for some guy, not even you. I don't want to upset our working relationship--"
"Blow it? Blow me. God damn it, is there anything in you besides this movie? Another man? Just what's on your mind?"

"There's no other man, Ruby, just the right ending to my film, that's all."

"Don't get technical with me...shit. Save it for Wolf."

Ruby searched for my shoulder, but I turned and started for the house. "Some other time," I said. He grabbed me and I shoved him. I flared. I guess it was good to lose my cool, because Ruby calmed down. It was a hard night for us because I liked Ruby.

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

But Hernando and Pablo grow restless. Though her control is smart, it's hers. The brothers take her one night and tie her hands. They are determined to take her south to Columbia and leave her in a whorehouse in the coastal town, Baudando. In the whorehouse she screams and kicks and curses the brothers. The film divides cuts between the brothers losing their lives in their boat during a storm and the Housewife succumbing to drugs that Senora Roja had injected into her. A good camera technique for time, blue water focus-out focus into white out focus-in focus to beach. Finally, she escapes Baudando and heads inland to Bogota with a customer of hers. At Bogota she tries to convince the American consulate she is American. She has no passport or papers. He runs a teletype check on a computer scan of her federal birth, social security and tax records. She has no place to stay in Bogota while they wait for the report. The consul, at first, was about to direct her to a cheap hotel, but she catches his eye with a short, hard look. He changes his mind and tells her where he lives. He calls to instruct his housekeeper of her brief stay. The consul comes home that night with the police. The Housewife grabs a kitchen knife and slashes at the police. They back off in the moment she turns the knife on herself.
I handed Ruby the finished filmscript, complete with shooting and casting suggestions. I suggested myself to direct it. Ruby leafed through it and began shaking his head. We were in his inner-office. He said nothing for a few moments, then he smiled and said, "How about a drink?"

"Fine," I said. "How about some tequila, a tequila sunrise?"

"Good, we can celebrate. Let's drink to your first movie, Jan. You've got to direct it, I know that now."

By the time we finished toasting all the movies I would make, I could hardly walk.

"Let me give you a hand," Ruby said and put it on my chest.

I let him keep his hand on my breast and began singing in a crazy, drunk soprano, "I want you darling, oh ho oh how I want you to stop trying to get me in bed."

Ruby joined in with his version, "I want you darling, oh ho oh oh oooh I want you now, n-o-w-now!"

"Well, Ruby," I tried to say half soberly, "if we make love like we sing, we're in for a horrible time."

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

But the consul moves quickly, deflecting her knife with the back of his hand. The police were not searching for her but the consulate's housekeeper who they take to jail. The consul comforts the Housewife, who is taken to the hospital for shock and minor lacerations. He rationalizes her fight
with the drugged horrors of her kidnapping and the Columbian whorehouse she fled from. She spends the night in the American hospital. In the morning, the consul comes to visit. His hand is wrapped in gauze, but he sets it on her shoulder. It is her blood, his smile seems to say.

Directing was every bit as fulfilling as I had guessed from my first dreams in the Chuck Richards Days. Ruby had to stay in New York, though I looked for flight numbers on his Friday telegrams. Escher was pleased with production and had agreed to work as an anonymous part-time assistant director. He was good to me and I grew to like him very much.

California had changed, or I had, but it was sunnier than it once was with Dylan. I spent a good part of my nights at Joe's Blow, a small bar with a good live music show. I always got the tables I wanted because Escher knew the Maitre'd and made sure I had no troubles. I didn't need his help, though. My film had centered everything. Young men, with what I'm sure were large cocks, often approached me, aware that as a director I had "film power," a kind of power everyone in Hollywood respects. I was a curiosity, but Hollywood is used to oddballs. Everyone tried to appear as though they didn't think one way or another about me, but once conversations slipped into the two a.m. one-on-one-my-place-or-yours period, most men and women confessed their surprise and curiosity. I like people knowing Jan Kelvin and not Jan Kelvin, who is so and so's wife, lover, monkey, mirror, or whatever, but Jan Kelvin, the director.
HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

She leaves the hospital after several days but not without finding out that she's pregnant. She doesn't tell the consul when she returns to his house but he knows. "You'll need a new housekeeper," she tells him. "I have one," he says and again she reads his smile. It says more than its offer of work.

Escher and I had worked out a swish pan to move the housewife out of her home and to Mexico. It would be cheaper and easier to jump cut, but we agreed that technique would be looked at closely. This was an inverse problem because Hollywood usually worries about content, not how it gets there. I learned a lot from Escher, who was unselfish. He had outlived simple commercial productions by doing them well.

The swish pan moved into a double exposure shot of the housewife alone and then focusing on a shot of her with the tough guy, Joaquin Salvador. The camera man had his own ideas about camera focus. His name was Dalton Charco and he had been the camera man for "Gone With The Wind", but has not been involved in a good film since then. He needed this chance for quality and understood my protective attitude, but he was blocked. I tried not to have to override his decisions, but I had to at times and he resented a woman telling him what to do. This double exposure shot was important to me.

"Dalton, I want the double exposure to move from a soft focus of her alone to a hard focus of her with Joaquin."
"Jan, I already mapped that out with a hard focus from the side. The profile angle usually works better than a straightforward one, even with your silly double exposure trick."

"Well look Dalton, I think it will work better my way. It will look prettier. Those kind of touches are important to me."

"Yeah, sure, so are curtains in your house."

"Look Dalton, if you can't get out of your god damn 'tits-and-slit-not-as-good-as-what-I-got-between-my-legs' thinking, then leave. But you're good with a camera and I want you to stick with us. I have the overview on this film. Believe me."

"I don't. But you're right, I'm good with a camera and I can shoot this film better than anyone else can."

"Good, let's retake this swish pan and don't forget the soft focus."

"Yeah," Dalton said, "soft..."

"No shit, Charko--understand?"

He got behind the camera and worked several more takes.

"You're right, Jan. This shot works better your way."

"Thanks Dalton," I said, "but what changed your mind?"

"I like your tits and slit," he said.
HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

She likes the consul and is willing to play their housekeeping game for awhile. The consul is not unlike most career diplomats. After graduating at the top of his class at Princeton, he worked his way through posts in Delhi, Singapore and New York, to the U.S. consul in Bogota. But he seems unsure of himself with the Housewife. The camera holds a close-up on his face while she relates the household's needs and workings. His face, like most men's, at first appears indifferent. Her details are mundane, but point to her care for him. His face softens and removes its attention from the soundtrack. The shot cuts to her smile as she finishes talking and walks away. The consul begins to follow her out of the room, but she closes the door behind her and he hesitates, then decides to stay behind. The scene lap dissolves to her walking out of her first home. You see only her back. The camera stays in the dining room where her husband and child lie dead. Lap dissolves back to her walking into the consul's garden. The smile has faded. She picks up the shears and cuts flowers for the dinner table. She cuts her index finger. The camera slow zooms to the cut and pans up as she lifts her finger up above her head. This twilight has the noon and the setting sun in the same sky. The camera angle cuts to looking down at her. She puts her finger down and lets her blood drip onto the gray flagstone patio floor.

Ruby cleared his calendar to be in California for the last week of shooting. I met him at the airport.

"Ruby!"

"Hello Jan. Escher told me you're one day up on schedule. You know, he's still enthusiastic," he said with a smile and then we kissed hello.

"Any baggage Ruby?" I asked.

"No, let's get married," he said.

I laughed. "This film is going well, but that well?"

Distance had made it possible for Ruby and me to be casual,
so I wasn't ready for the warm rush of his arrival. We walked down the long airport corridor, talking about the film and whether I would edit or not. At first he agreed, but then he didn't think I should. "Too much running in one step," he said.

HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

As she works for the consul she becomes aware of his shy affection for her, but does nothing. He gets her a passport and she decides to work until she has money for the passage north. He offers her the money but she will not take it. The consul spends his spare time painting her portrait. Her face has a story that he tries to recreate, but it is a story beyond his experience. She is beautiful, but her beauty is hard and strong. She is strangely at ease in this man's home. There is a balance between them when he is painting her. Each other's mystery seems to hold them together with quiet acceptance. She watches him paint, watches his eyes move and knows there is a part of her face he must not see. She decides to leave when the portrait is done.

When it comes to crying at movies I have to confess. But this was different.

"It's in the can," I told Ruby and Escher. "The work print is due back next week."

"What do you think of John Dustan's editing?" Ruby asked.
"Fine." I guess I surprised Ruby by agreeing so easily.
"It's going to be a good film, Jan," Escher said.
"Will you be here much longer?" I asked.
"No," Escher said, "I'm going to Minnesota and rest up at my brother's farm. I'll let you and Ruby clean up the details."
"I'm due back in New York tomorrow, Escher," Ruby said, "Are you going to stay here after the editing, Jan?"

"No, I owe myself a vacation."

"Well, this is probably the last night for us to be together for awhile. Let's celebrate. I have the keys to my cousin's beach house. How's eight o'clock? Good for you Escher?"

"Sure."

"O.K. with you Jan?"

"Why not?" I asked.

But I learned why not. After steaks, too much scotch and a long walk on the beach, Ruby brought out some cocaine. I'd never tried it before, but both Ruby and Escher were insistent that I snort a little. I'm not sure how the three of us ended up in the ocean, thrashing around, or how we returned to the beach house, collapsing together in bed. I didn't feel wrong so much as powerful, holding the love of two men at once. Those things are almost legal in Hollywood. Anyway, Escher left later that night and I took Ruby to the airport early the next morning.

"The New York premiere is in two months. Will you be there?"

"I don't know, Ruby. I'll send you a note."
HOUSEWIFE MOVIE:

After he adds the finishing touches to her portrait, the consul asks her to let him be the father of the child she is pregnant with. She is surprised, he knows. The camera zooms in for a final close-up and fades into a dark screen with credits as she says, "I only know that this child is mine."

I surprised Ruby when he met me at J.F.K. I flew in for the premiere from Montana. I had been living in a small town called, Kalispell, trying to begin pieces of a new film script. He didn't know I'd be alone because the telegram I sent said, "the two of us will arrive at nine on Northwest #471."

"Where's your friend?" Ruby asked.

I patted my stomach and smiled. That was one of the few times Ruby Kessel had nothing to say. He looked at me in disbelief. "Who's the father?" he finally managed.

"You...or Escher," I smiled.

"Why are you smiling?" Then he calmed down. "What the hell, shall we make him legal?"

"How do you know it's a him?" I asked.

"I don't."

"Anyway, no. The child could probably use a father, but I don't need or want a husband."

"Well, what are you going to do?" he asked.

"See the premiere of our film," I said. "That's what I came here for."