1973

Raids on Apple Valley

Steven Dale Chamberlain

The University of Montana

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RAIDS ON APPLE VALLEY

By

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I'm Chamberlain, poet. You would never have heard of me, never have seen my name if it hadn't been for the Taylor incident. Terrence Taylor, fifth cousin to the English Tudors; Professor Taylor, the English Renaissance. He was out of print; and students, worshipers, during the fifties had stolen his books out of the libraries. He wasn't being read anymore. It had destroyed him.

For three and a half years I had been sleeping, an intellectual whore, from classroom to classroom.

I went to his office, begging a passing grade. Taylor looked me over critically, weighing, checking and balancing. "You're a poet aren't you, Chamberlain?" he asked.

"How did you know?" I asked, a hot potato man.

"I could tell by your name."

He waved his hand. "That was all I needed," he explained. He chuckled as if he had recovered a lost manuscript.

I laughed knowingly.

"May I call you Steve, then?" he asked. He sat back. "You've got a good English name there. Norman background, I believe. The first Chamberlain came over with William
the Conqueror from Normandy. William gave the Chamberlains their name after the Norman Conquest. They have always been loyal to the king."

A historian.

"That name. Could William have made a mistake?" He leaned over toward me confidentially. "Only the English are poets anymore." He wiped the sweat from beneath his right sideburn with a handkerchief. He smiled.

"That is the problem, Steve. That is why I had to talk to you, poet to poet, like this." His voice became urgent. I waited my chance to reassure him, my mind racing for words, for nods of agreement.

He looked at the group picture of Shakespeare, Donne and Milton on his desk. He crushed his handkerchief into a ball. "It's the foreigners," he blurted. "They don't respect our language. After all, it is English. So much the worse for our poetry. Yours and mine, Chamberlain!"

I sensed that he was about to devulge some great secret. I forgot the grade.

"Why do you think poetry has become so unpopular, so misunderstood?" he continued. "They despise it. These Polaks. The Ukaranians, Czechs, Hungarians. It's just mass confusion, Chamberlain. You know it as well as I; you're an English major for Christ's sake. The Italians?
The Greeks? Do they care? No Chamberlain, they'd as soon have a polka as poetry. They'd let poetry die. They're just immigrants and they're jealous."

I nodded my head. This was a terrible secret; probably talked about by only a few of the greatest minds in the country. I repeated my name mentally. I sang it to myself, running scales with it, jumping octaves, climbing Jacob's ladders.

He looked at me sharply. "Who was your mother?" he demanded suddenly, as if he had just been tricked.

"Uber," I apologized. "They dropped the umlat over the U in 1941."

"German then. You could have done worse." His face softened a little, then turned sober again, warning. "But it just illustrates my point. The Germans have their music; but who cares about it but the Germans. We misuse it, we English. The only real musicians are German. Mozart. Bach. Beethoven. Do you begin to see what I'm getting at, Chamberlain?"

He gained momentum. "I'll tell you. They're scared to death. Montgomery. Stuart. Pinch. All of them. They're so frightened that no one will even face the problem in the journals. (Maybe even the journals are controlled by the foreigners?) Do you see? It's us, the English-Americans that have to save poetry in America."
It made sense. Impromptu, I created a truism: obscure minds create obscure poetry, the populus is alienated. I liked it.

"How can a Slav work in an English mode," Taylor was saying.

He told me about immigration patterns to America from Southern Europe (Northern Europeans being more acceptable due to the historical background of the British Isles). When he was done, he looked directly at me. "You and I, Chamberlain. We have to save poetry - write the perfect poem."

I felt like a man who has just found religion. I might have been made an honorary member of the Elks or Masons or the Kiwanians.

"The strain is great, Chamberlain," Taylor warned, but obviously pleased. Then he gestured toward the world outside his office. Something new, unseen before, came into his countenance. He fumbled. "I-I can't carry on too much longer. I can just give you the advice that I have spent a lifetime finding out."

"What is that?" I asked. I spiritually took his burden unto myself like some Cheyenne chief accepting the sacred bundle of the tribe.
"Write sonnets, only Petrarchan sonnets. Sonnets are the supreme mode of expression. And, Chamberlain, stay away from Hallmark after you graduate. They'll corrupt you."

I wrote sonnets all summer after graduation, sending out several weekly. The Southern Michigan Quarterly. The Raisin River Review. But getting as many rejections. The state of American poetry was, indeed, in bad shape. Taylor was right. But I was not discouraged. I sent letters of intention, manifestos, to all of the minor poets in the country. New blood. New enthusiasm. The change I effected that first summer was tremendous. You could almost see a visible difference in the main literary reviews by fall. The major poets, if any had been alive, would have been impressed.

After Taylor had given me his advice, I shook hands with him. He placed his left hand affectionately over our locked right hands. "I have always felt the same way, Sir," I said.

Taylor made me see things in their true light. One minute you are nothing, you're looking, insecure; the next you walk amongst mankind and contend. You are a force in the world. You are a poet. Taylor was the catalyst.

I worked on my poetry until the start of school the next fall. Then I, myself, became a teacher. High school. If I were to save poetry, I must also instill the spirit of
poetry in my students as Taylor had in me. A complete program. But what should I have expected from a public school? No cultured, well-to-do school. No William Cullen Bryant, or Thomas Edison High. Just, Robert Rice Bennet (Superintendent 1945-59). But I tried anyway. I told Gleason, the department head, I told him a thousand times that we could make Bennet into the finest liberal arts school in the midwest if we tried. But I was the only one who tried. Chamberlain, loyal subject to the king.

I went to Kowalski, the principal. I suggested a student poetry contest.

"What shall we give as prize," he asked. "Your tie?" The administration was bad, the students worse.

Taylor, would could you expect in a world of insensitive boors? You drag these punks around all semester, trying to make the breakthrough into poetry - the existential leap into the real world. You even let your own work go. But they're not interested. They'd rather concentrate on electric can opener technology. More money in it. The faculty encourages them.

I've studied Taylor's notes. From a lecture: 'Surrendering to poetry is like surrendering to God (simile)' I've put the main quotations in my journal. A person knows nothing if he doesn't know poetry. From March 5: 'Poetry
is the direct grasp of reality, a reconciliation of man and nature; the world's salvation.'

After the summer, I departed from sonnets experimentally. Taylor died and my sonnets weren't selling. (He lay in bed for five days. At the last, his breathing rhythm was in trochees, then he gurgled an incoherent apology to Yeats and died. I was holding his hand, his spittle dried on my face.) In his memory, I wrote an epic poem. My gift to the world. This young, starving poet meets a rich lady at a party. She is bored with her husband, a senior partner in one of those degenerate corporate law firms. She takes the poet home with her and they become lovers. But after a month or so of rich erotic love, she begins to try to tame him down and make a civilized man of him. He tires of this quickly. He steals her husband's motorcycle and bikes down to Cicero where he is killed in a knife fight with a member of the Chicago Outlaws M.C. I send the manuscript in. They send it back, disheveled, the erasable type smeared.

At school, I catch Frost and Appleton punching each other in the shoulder. They are standing in the middle of the hall. Appleton has a goatee inked in on his chin. "You've got nothing better to do?" I ask them. "Memorize 'Byzantium.' Recite it to me after school tomorrow." I walk on. Will they get anything out of it though? I doubt it. Poetry is dying.
I teach the class. I work them intensely. Like a Zen master. I drive the bastards toward satori. (It was Steinbeck who said teaching was the greatest of arts.) Two weeks. I work them slowly; performing my own Odyssey in American Lit. (For me, two weeks is slow, because life is urgent. Poetry is urgent. Waste time, another poet dies before you have read him.) I go through aliteration and assonance with them. Easy. Metaphor and simile are a bit harder - they get them mixed up. Can opener mechanics.

I experiment further, deeper in poetics. I send a collection of short poetry to the publishers. It is all handwritten, giving it a great sense of immediacy and intimacy with the reader. (An idea I borrowed from the Chinese). A revolution in western poetry. The publishers send it back, stating, formally, that they do not accept untyped manuscripts. Taylor was right. The publisher's name is Jewish. I become bitterly anti-Semitic.

But I lift my head. I move on to onomatopoeia with the class. I still have this left. I drum it into their craniums, packing those Cro-magnon skulls with the spelling, the definition. Then I give them a living example. I read Edgar Allen Poe's, 'Bells' aloud to them. I give it my own interpretation, bringing to it special effects born of a well developed aesthetic sensitivity for the material.
When I am done, I pause a moment to let the full impact of the poem sink in and then I look up. "Can anyone give me an example of onomatopoeia?" I ask.

Lancaster, in the back of the room, raises his hand. I nod.

"I wanna pee-a," he says in an Italian accent.

Detention for a week for Lancaster.

But he's not at fault. I tell myself this. It's society. I go down to the teacher's lounge during my prep period, trembling. It's the same thing here. It's all a farce, a horrible joke.

I sit at the liberal arts table. I am thankful that the arts and the sciences segregate themselves - that is the way it should be. I must be preserved from Broderick's track times, McCloskey's loathsome equations, his brain twisters. And they are brain twisters; they have no basis in reality. ("If locomotive #1 leaves station A at 30 mph, and locomotive #2 leaves station B at the same time traveling 60 mph, and, considering point A is 450 miles from B, how long will it take locomotive #1 to reach locomotive #2?") God knew what he was doing at the tower of Babel; when all men can understand Broderick and McCloskey, the world is lost.

Just the week before, taking concrete poetry to its logical, creative conclusion, I sent a pine cone to a magazine. I entitled it 'Birth of a Forest.' I pushed to the
limits of human imagination; the very brink. But they sent me back a rejection slip and they kept my poem. The American Federation of Teachers' lawyer laughed at me when I asked him if I could sue.

Don't I drive the army surplus jeep? The one I paid eight hundred for. Even in winter I drive it. A 1948 model, it's authentic army surplus - it's got no heater. I even have the same kind of tires the army had. Who could be more poetic? I'm perfect for it. I've planned it down to the last detail.

The wild stares? Sure, I've got them. I make people shudder.

But something is horribly wrong. Rejection slips. I write. More rejection slips. In dark moments they make me doubt my own gift. Taylor was right. They refuse to recognize me. Would Jesus have been Christ if no one had recognized him? Would he goddamn it?

I sag into a chair at the liberal arts table.

"Steve," they say. "You don't look so well today."

Maybe they will see my pain. They are creative, sensitive people. Can they see the Grendel in me? They will not harass me as Broderick does with his loud, blaring shop talk, his drumming on the table with fingers, his agitation, his desire for action, for experience, for sweat. I need sane subjects and soft voices now, not a news analysis.
Pierce, the effeminate English Lit teacher looks up and tries to console me. The students rumor he is queer. "If it will make you feel better," he says, "I'll give you Baltimore and three points on Sunday's game."

"Foreigners!" I blurt, like I was vomiting oyster soup. Pierce, the last I would have expected.


I surge back out into the hall.

McCloskey has come from the teachers' lounge. He tries to tackle me. I side-step him. He crashes into Kowalski who has just come out the door. They drop to the floor and huddle.

Now they begin to recognize me. Now! Perhaps violence is my poetry. I brace myself for their acknowledgement, fists clenched.

But Frazer, the stupid kid who does nothing but roam the halls and take pictures for the yearbook, runs up and snaps their picture. They lunge to their feet and pursue him. I am left - my retirement uncontested. I stumble to the door. A hostile group of students encircle me. I see Appleton.
"Scrub off that goatee, Appleton," I snarl. "Scrub it off and see me after school."

He just grins at me. Some girls giggle. I glare at them.

I grab Appleton. I jostle him. I push him up against the wall. I feel the fabric of his shirt begin to rip under the pressure of my hand. I press his head back against the cement. "I am wise to you now, punk," I tell him. He looks at me, terrified.

I throw him away like a cigarette.

I walk away, indifferent, aloof. I turn back quickly and look at Appleton. As I suspected, after fear, he is disappointed that I have left him.

I run back into the office now. "Everyone will read me," I tell Mrs. Benson. She is sitting in a swivel chair, her head back, a handkerchief to her nose. "Effect? Importance?" I laugh at her.

I grab a pen, snatch her memo pad. I write a poem that the public will understand:

'72 Cad, factory sir,
P.S, P.P, P.W, \textit{M.J.} tires
Leather Uph. Excel Con.
First \$450 takes.

I rip out the page. I fold it up. I will take it to the newspaper office.
The public will jump. They'll call up - I'll tell them already sold. I'll slam the receiver in their ears. Want ads, the perfect poem. Everyone will read me. Wordsworth's dream - poetry for the common man.

I'll run more ads. Refrigerators, dishwashers, ranges. 'Must sell.' 'Give away.' 'Steal!' No one will be able to resist. With each call they will acknowledge me. But they won't be able to buy. Never. I'll thwart them. I'll be the most effective poet ever. Their greed, their want is their vulnerability. A metaphysic of universal denial. I will save poetry.

My confidence is back. I am calm. I walk out of the school building, free. Elated. I feel the power. It is like the feeling you get when you have made a great discovery, when you've seized a vision and have left it with mankind for all time. Newton must have felt it. Shakespeare.
THIEVES AND CROOKS AND SNEAKS AND LIARS

After he slaughtered the giant bison in Mrs. Clark's bed of rhododendrons, Russell Meyers became insecure.

Meyer's parents were students of twentieth century psychology. They read everything; the serials, the magazine articles, the special editions from Life. They cataloged the publications and kept them on shelves in the living room for instant reference. They conferred with their friends, their friends' friends, talked to college graduates, caucussed in a neighbor's living room, emerged, and pronounced it an identity crisis.

"Russell is just trying to find out who he is," they said.

In secret moments Meyers ransacked the bottom drawer of his parents' dresser, looking for the adoption papers. He jimmed the lock on his father's file cabinet, sure that he was an orphan. There was talk of military school.

The problem arose because Russell thought he was a Crow Indian. He had visions. He spent his time concerned with horse stealing raids, became a Crazy Dog, and imagined that he had forgotten the English language. Meyers medicine was good. He gained status, prestige, and a buffalo pony, its ears cropped, from the lodge of a sleeping Cheyenne.
But then his power deserted him. Meyers was speaking in sign language to an interpreter, the interpreter was translating to a cavalry officer when Donald Krieger interrupted American History.

He cut the teacher short, mid-sentence, at the map as she was pointing out a red colored colonial Georgia. Only Krieger could have gotten away with it. "Mrs. Brown," he said. "Russell Meyers is sending sign."

"Signs?" The teacher leaned forward, hawklike, the pointer veering to Tennessee.

"Yes. Dirty signs. You know, with his hands."

The teacher, Mrs. Brown, went calm all over. She stood like a dish of jello that has been sharply placed on the table. Her face drained, then refilled with blood. Meyers scribbled an R.M. on his paper, garlanded it with flowers and tapestries, then shot it with arrows.

"I want you to go to the cloak room," she said. "This minute," like she was pronouncing a spelling word.

Meyers got up from his desk. He was as confused as anyone that his gesture should be taken as an obscenity. He had always considered himself a noble savage. He shrugged his shoulders, turned up palms in dismay.

"I will see you at recess," the teacher said, still unnaturally calm. The girls in the class looked bewildered and confused by it all. "Until that time I want to hear nothing from you," she said. "Nothing."
She had gathered her violent bulk into her shoulders, hunching slightly, ready to erupt. Meyers nastily went into the cloak room.

"Now," she pretended as if nothing had happened. "In what year was the barrier of the Appalachian Mountains crossed?" She rubbed the back of her neck, pressing vertebrae with her finger tips.

Meyers sat on the floor, folded his legs, his arms, tried to pick from among excuses and lies, fought tears. Outside, Mrs. Brown stressed citizenship and cooperation among the colonies. Behind her, a Crow brave got up and went along the row of hooks in the cloak room, checking the spring jackets and sweaters for money.

He could have told, if they had asked him. He could have explained to them easily. It was their identity crisis, not his. It was his parents who did not know who they were. Meyers knew who all kids were. Kids were thieves and crooks and sneaks and liars. Just like you saw a tree, you climbed it; you saw a marble, you stole it. All of his friends were criminals. Enbody, who smelled funny, Ferguson and Thomas and Wheaton. Dealing in stolen pencils and embezzled milk money. No one did it on purpose; you outgrew the monkey bars, you fell into stealing naturally. They had not yet been initiated by the rightful demands of society.
Occasionally, a special kid was born into the world. An Abraham Lincoln, a George Washington, a John Paul Jones, a Donald Krieger. In Krieger, the fifth grade class had one of their own. He was called a prodigy, a kid, one in ten thousand, who knew right from wrong without being kept after school. Mrs. Brown told Donald's parents. Donald's mother never ceased to encourage him.

But Meyers was no prodigy. For starters, Mrs. Brown cancelled his turn in the display window at Penny's for the Spring Festival. "Jonathan Loomis will take your place," she said, her arms crossed at recess.

Meyers looked bewildered. He had been chosen to solve long division problems with Gloria Hausmann. They were supposed to be working on one of the new green black boards, the kind you didn't have to wash.

"It is too late now," Mrs. Brown said. "You might have demonstrated some responsibility earlier." She made a face. She was pushing foresight at the time.

Mrs. Brown said that she was sorry, pressed her face close to his, talked abstractly of law and order. But no yelling, no screaming. She released him. Meyers did not know what it meant. If you wrote in your book or threw a piece of paper into the basket from your seat, Mrs. Brown flew into a rage. But this time she did not even mention the crime.
It worried Meyers, and to show that he was not worried, he led his friends secretly across the street to Giovanni's candy store, where he magically produced a nickel. The playground monitor was not in sight. They went into the store. Wheaton and Enbody wanted to buy a pack of baseball cards with the nickel. Meyers protested that Giovanni carried the wrong kind of cards; the statistics weren't as complete on Giovanni's as on Rexall's. Giovanni looked cross. Ferguson looked at the red licorice. Thomas looked at the black licorice. Meyers quickly bought a pack of the new space cards that were coming out.

They snuck back across to the playground and became involved in a fourth grade game of smear. In the safety of the confusion Meyers gave a card apiece to himself and his friends, popping the gum into his mouth.

Enbody said that Meyers was dumb for getting the space cards because there were two of the same card in the pack. "Stupid!" he yelled.

A fourth grader shrank in fear, thinking that he had been summoned by the upper classman.

Meyers shrugged his shoulders indifferently, as if to discount what Enbody had said because he smelled. The story was that Enbody's mother did not buy soap. Meyers could believe it.
A teacher raised her hand in the doorway, Meyers spit his gum at Enbody's ear as they went in. Enbody pushed Meyers. The fourth grader, who had been standing at attention, ran gratefully toward his door at the opposite end of the building. Meyers pushed Enbody. They raced through the hall. As Meyers bent to scoop a drink of water at the fountain, Enbody scored a rabbit punch. Enbody dribbled an imaginary basketball into the room ahead of Meyers, carefully maneuvering past Thomas and Wheaton, leaping, kicking, finally scoring. Meyers said Enbody was a turd. They both sat down.

Bertha Fullbright raised her hand as they started geography, the maps had not even been passed out. Mrs. Brown gave her the go-ahead with a nod. "I have lost my milk money, Mrs. Brown."

Mrs. Brown took a deep breath, put her hand on her hip and motioned that the maps should be kept moving. "Where did you put it?"

"It was in my sweater this morning. But at recess it was gone." Bertha began to breath faster, hitching her breath.

Meyers rolled a note-book paper cigarette, licked it, and stuck it between his lips. He slouched down in his seat insolently, put his feet on the forbidden rungs of the chair in front of him.
"Russell Meyers snuck off the playground at recess."
The class turned to look at him, dumbfounded. But he was
cool. Wheaton, Enbody, Ferguson, Thomas - his fellow cul­
prits were as surprised as anyone, Enbody dropped his pen­
cil. You never left the playground at recess, that was an
infraction tantamount to receiving candy from strangers.
"He bought some space cards, Mrs. Brown."
"Bertha lies!"
Mrs. Brown advanced to the front of his aisle with the
nimbleness of outrage. "Did you, Russell?"
He threw his cigarette aside. "No!"
"Russell?"
"No, honest."
"Would you come with me to the hall for a moment?"
"Yummmm."

He tried to pass the card from his shirt pocket to his
underpants as he went through the doorway, but she caught
him. She snatched the card away from him and looked at it.
Captain Marvelous fought the giant ants of Mars, in the
background a peanut earth revolved. She held him by the
arm.

"I want you to go and tell Mr. Cunningham what you
have done," she said.

Old man Cunningham was the principal. What had hap­
pened to bad man Schiller? He was never heard of again
after he went into Cunningham's office. Cunningham and
his secretary had even made the infamous Bradley McCormick break down and cry, although it had taken both of them to do it. "I didn't do anything," Meyers pleaded.

"I think I'd better go with you," Mrs. Brown said.

When he was safely away from the classroom, Meyers cried. He got the hiccups. The hiccups gave him a headache. The headache gave him a stomach ache. He asked to see the school nurse, was refused, and wondered what was wrong with the world. The Crow stole horses and it was honorable, it showed you had skill, courage. You were an athlete. If you're a Crow, it's dishonorable if you don't steal a horse. But Meyers, he stole a lousy nickel and they made a federal case of it. Mrs. Brown was not speaking.

"You know this is very, very serious, Russell," Cunningham gesticulated.

Meyers conceded that it was. Cunningham had clean finger nails.

"It will be easier on you if you tell the truth." Cunningham paused, elbows on the desk, finger tips of one hand pressing the finger tips of the other hand, two spiders screwing. "Stealing is one offense, but lying is another. Did you steal Bertha's milk money?" he leaned over his desk toward Meyers.

Meyers sniffled no.
Cunningham drew his head back onto his shoulders. He folded his hands in front of him on the desk. Meyers shook his head. Cunningham tried to look wise, a chess pro. "Very well, Meyers," he said, finally. "Go out in the hall and think about it for awhile." But he refused to say what he was going to do.

He left Meyers in the hall for weeks, alone, existential, the single chair against the cement block wall. An undercover agent came by, posing as a Weekly Reader salesman. But Meyers was too clever for the sneak, he cried, he faked hysteria, the agent left him alone. Others came to break him. Mrs. Boyd, he saw her coming, started to cry, she left him alone too. One of the janitors, Meyers was not fooled by the broom, cried quickly before the janitor had a chance to stare at him and accuse him. Months later, the secretary dragged him back before Cunningham.

"Have you anything to tell me now, Russell?" Cunningham was like some evil French prime minister out of the movies, watching, almost supernaturally, from behind veiled eyelids. Meyers shook his head. No, he would never confess.

Cunningham sighed, shuffled important papers nonchalantly. "Very well then," he said. "I am tired. We'll just have to call your mother and father into school." Then Meyers knew what the papers were and what Cunningham had planned.
Meyers started to cry again.

Cunningham bore in ruthlessly. "Did you leave the playground at recess?"

Meyers submitted. He shook his head yes. But he would die before he admitted stealing the milk money.

"And did you buy space cards with Bertha's nickel?"

"Yes! But Ferguson and Wheaton and those guys were in on it too!"

Cunningham smiled. He called his secretary on the intercom. "Miss Perkins, would you pull Meyers' card and telephone Mr. and Mrs. Meyers. I want them to come in to school this afternoon."

Meyer's father easily slipped into bad moods anyway. "By God, Joan, this time we should send him to military school." He gouged tar out of his pipe, scraped it off in the ashtray, then looked back at Meyers' mother. "I've warned. I've threatened. It is time we did something."

Meyers might not have been sitting on the footstool in front of his father's chair. Sometimes his father became unrecognizable; Meyers got into a kite fight with another kid and Meyers' crashed, his father wept.

Joan nodded her head affirmatively. She looked at Meyers, disgusted. He was grateful to her for that. "Why did you do it; what is your excuse?"

There was never any excuse. What could you tell her? Meyers shrugged his shoulders.
"You'd better think of one, buddy," his father said. "Before you go to bed tonight I want a full accounting of your actions. And I want reasons, this time, not that, 'I don't know,' crap."

"Who will you write, Frank?" Joan asked.

"Swainson's. Colonel Pratt's." He looked at his son. "Sit in that chair right; keep that back straight." Then turned back to his wife. "Either one of them should be able to keep him in line."

Meyers sat up, painfully straight. Bosco had gone to the dog pound under fire of that same tone of voice.

Ferguson was always in trouble with his parents. Money trouble. He stole their cancelled checks and tried to spend them. He pilfered his mother's jewelry box. He traded his father's Moose cufflinks for a bottle of pop, a black cow. He was a born felon, a criminal. No one trusted Ferguson. But his parents were humane. They grounded him for six months; they made him burn the trash for a year.

Wheaton, Mrs. Brown sends him home with a note telling his parents that young Bob has been cheating on tests. If his parents were lucky enough to get the note (among other things, Bob was an excellent forger of reply notes) his parents would just tell him that he was too stupid to get through school any other way.
Enbody? He is reported for stealing pencils. His parents cut off his allowance for two months. Now he is justified; he steals more pencils.

Meyer's own parents were unreasonable; they wanted more. They looked at him expectantly, staring finally. But his nose was chapped, he could not cry any more, it was ten hours after the original infraction. "I won't use your woodworking tools anymore," he offered.

It did no good. They stared at him. Silent. Threatening.

He turned to his mother. "I'll pick up my underwear. I promise."

Still, like great and awful judges they sat and stared. They waited for him to blunder, to wiggle in his seat, to burp. But he was like stone. He held his back rigid, enjoying the pain.

Finally, they relented. His mother sent him to take a bath.

He walked cautiously up the stairs to the bathroom, making sure that they did not see any happiness in his footsteps. But inside the bathroom he relaxed. The water was warm, soothing. His knotted muscles uncoiled. He turned the faucets fully open. He held his feet under the spigot and let the hot water gush over them. The callous on his feet loosened. He tried to explain to his father against the noise of the water.
The water ran deeper than usual. Meyers cupped water in his hands and made a whale-spout. The water got deeper, he sat back in the tub, the water swirled around his neck. He opened his washcloth and layed it over his penis - a primitive loincloth. He was an Indian. He closed his eyes. The cavalry retreated.

Joan, alarmed by the continual running water, came into the bathroom to see what was wrong. She saw his washcloth-loincloth. "Stop playing with yourself!" she shrieked. He choked and opened his eyes. She was horrified.

He tried quickly to explain. "That time I saw grandmother sitting on the toilet - I didn't even know she was in the bathroom."

But she didn't hear him. She had moved to the sink to grab a bar of soap for his mouth, but then remembered that it wasn't what he had said that was dirty. "You wretched little boy," she screamed.

Meyers did feel wretched.

"Get up," she demanded.

He moved the washcloth off his penis.

"I said get up!" She lifted him by the arm, jerked him out of the tub, and marched him downstairs to his father.
Meyers stood in front of him, dripping. "An Indian are you?" Frank said. "I'll give you red skin!" Joan handed Frank a wooden ruler. Meyers could never look at her again.

Meyers knew it was military school for sure. His father put him across his knees. Bags would be packed. Military crests would be sewn onto sports coats. New socks would be bought, probably navy blue.

But instead, after the spanking, his father sat back in his armchair, his face red, as if he had been drinking and was feeling pleasant. He packed his pipe, lit it, picked up the newspaper and put his feet up on the footstool. Joan went into the kitchen, she hummed a popular love ballad.

"We'll give you one last chance," Frank said. He lowered his newspaper and smiled, considered Russell's steaming flanks. "Go put some clothes on, son." He lit his pipe again, replaced the Frueidian primer in the bookshelf.

It was not a good spring. It rained a lot and Meyers stayed indoors at home. And when he stayed indoors he had to hide from them. They could not be trusted.

Meyers became the Invisible Man. He wore camouflage clothing to school. He hid behind Thompson, the fat kid in front of him. Mrs. Brown saw little of him. When she did see him, he smiled at her like you did to a minister after
church. He was sure not to score too high on tests. He didn't talk to anybody, didn't raise his hand, didn't dream anymore about being an Indian.

In June, near the end of school, the weather cleared and the class went on a field trip. Mrs. Brown was always one to have the class collect leaves in the fall, and dead weeds and cattails which you could have a fight with but she wouldn't let you. And she was always telling how lousy it was that the playground was paved with asphalt. The whole field trip was her idea.

They went to the country, to some state owned land, and acted like morons. Complete morons. Running after butterflies (the common yellow ones and the white ones), throwing rocks in a pond, trying to skip them; they were all misbehaving according to the rules. You didn't run. When you went to the big music festivals at the colleges you didn't run; you stayed in line, you stayed with your partner. Nobody was behaving. They were all running around yelling and screaming. Mrs. Brown acted like some torch drive woman, the full red lips of an aunt.

The children enjoyed themselves. And they acted like pigs. They stuffed themselves on watermelon and hershey bars and hostess twinkies. They sat at the picnic tables and spit watermelon seeds at each other. She sanctioned it all. Meyers saw it.
Meyers got out his rubber band to snap a fly. She gave him a dirty look. Meyers wouldn't cause trouble, he turned the rubber band over to her. He didn't need it.

Fatso Thompson ate too much. He got a stomach ache. Mrs. Brown let him sit on the bus. She didn't get mad at him. She just said that all the kids had better stop eating so much sweets. But they didn't listen to her. They gorged themselves. Meyers didn't.

Mrs. Brown started the class on a hike, to get them away from the feed troughs. They moved off down a small ravine on the edge of the woods. Meyers went up the side of the hill away from them.

But before he had gotten very far away from the class, their activity caught his eye. The whole bunch of them suddenly gathered in a tight circle around Mrs. Brown. Meyers cut zig-zags down the hill to where they were.

"How do you know what it is, Donald?" Mrs. Brown was asking Krieger. They were hanging on his response.

"Well, because I've seen them before. I've seen them lots of times." He turned away from Mrs. Brown to his classmates. "You can tell because of the way they're shaped."

Mrs. Brown left the circle so that the class could get a closer look. The kids tightened the circle around it. But no one would get too close. It was oval, about the shape of a guitar pick, and about a half an inch long. It
was just an average brown color; a little lighter than a hershey bar. Nothing spectacular about it at all.

Mrs. Brown caught Meyers and smiled at him, happy that he had come back to join the class, to rejoin society. Meyers pushed himself past, to the inside of the crowd. Fuck her.

The bug looked helpless. It was on its back and its feet were treading the air. It looked like a turtle that could not right itself. Mrs. Brown walked off a ways.

"I wouldn't get too near now," Krieger was saying. "Might get us." Appropriately, at that moment the insect made a heroic attempt to regain its feet, the class gasped and moved back. It was like some dracula dying.

"What is it?" Meyers asked.

"Stink bug," Krieger said tersely. The class agreed with his declaration.

"Stink bug, huh?"

"Yes. My dad's showed me plenty of them." He looked at the group teutonically. "They're nothing to mess with either. He could get us all."

"I don't know," Meyers said. "It don't stink as far as I can tell."

"Of course it don't, now."

Some boys and some girls laughed nervously.

"Well, why don't it?"
Krieger laughed at Meyers. "Everybody knows that," he said.

"You ever smelled a stink bug?"

"No. Of course not. Don't you know that you have to **squash** the stink bug before he will stink?"

"Well, if he don't stink till he's squashed, why would anybody be stupid enough to - ."

Krieger laughed at him. The class laughed. "Well, I don't know why, but that's the way they stink." The class laughed again. It seemed profoundly apparent to everybody there.

Enbody made his way through the crowd to see. They glared at him and stepped aside to let him through. Enbody ignored them, like always.

But Meyers saw them make the faces. He picked up the struggling stink bug, put it on his mouth. Rebecca Caldwell sobbed from behind shielding hands. The stink bug tried to escape. It crawled across Meyers' lips. Silvia Cushman screamed. Meyers flicked his tongue out, froglike, and stopped the bug. He chased it back between his front teeth. Its wings thrashed like an electric razor against his lips, then stopped, waiting.

Meyers smiled at them, their stomachs cringing against their diaphragms, so that they could all get a clear look. Then he bit the stink bug in two. The bug crackled in his
mouth as it collapsed. It tasted bland, like vanilla pudding with no sugar.

Someone in the middle threw up his watermelon. Others moving to escape ran into his line of fire.

Meyers chewed the stink bug. He ground the wings, the legs. The bug tasted bitter now, it did stink. Meyers swallowed him; scraped him off the roof of his mouth and swallowed the rest of him. Someone else added his watermelon to the watermelon of the first, this spiced with chocolate. They all started puking then and Mrs. Brown ran away.

Colonel Pratt? A meat head. Meyers told him so to his face. Meyers told Pratt's lousy counselor that, too. The prick tried to sympathize with him. Meyers told him to eat some shit.
RAIDS ON APPL. VALLEY

The week before she was accosted by the man who stank, Bob was sick.

On Tuesday, Bob began plucking the soft feathers from beneath his wing. He looked like he was wearing a workman's T-shirt, the armpits gone. He faded from royal blue and became naked. One of the two women who moved into the apartment Friday night had auburn hair dyed black. Both of the women, divorcees, were indifferent toward parakeets.

Mrs. Davenport sprayed Bob with an anti-bacterial disinfectant.

On Saturday, during dinner, Bob died. Mrs. Davenport put the brussels sprouts on her husband's plate, and Bob jumped from his swing, screaming. Bob jumped down from his swing and circled the cage three times, like an Indian dancer. He held his wings outstretched like eagles on quarters, danced sideways, reversed himself, danced sideways the other way, encircled his home three times, screamed again, jumped up, then collapsed. He could not be revived.

Mrs. Davenport rented 4E to the women. They went to see how they would arrange the furniture. Mr. Davenport went to clean the pool. The evening thunder of cars on the expressway penetrated her office/apartment. There was the added harshness of brakes and nerves - the ball game was
letting out. She put damp bath towels against the base of the door to block the fumes. The two women, it turned out, had five children.

The next day or the day after, in the afternoon, when Mrs. Davenport took her shopping cart down the service drive from the apartments to the supermarket at the expressway interchange, the man was there too. This time she was conscious of him. He walked a hundred yards behind her, parallel to the cyclone fence separating them from the expressway. The man stopped at the corner Gulf station and she went into the supermarket. He was a drunkard.

He talked to the man beneath the car on the hydraulic lift, borrowed a cigarette, and loitered outside beside the Coca Cola machine. He read the sale posters on the window of the supermarket.

When she was at the check-out stand, the man brought in an empty pop bottle and received a deposit for it. He followed her home from the supermarket. He was vile, although he made no attempt to contact her in any way. The sun was hot on the edge of the walk, but there were no shadows.

Not five. The women had eight children. Edward was the worst. He ran outside the apartment doors, swearing loudly at the other children. He pushed Ronald Abler into the cactus plant. He pushed his sister Rebecca into the pool. Mr. Davenport rescued Rebecca and Mrs. Davenport
gave her a pair of old high heeled shoes. She did not know who's child Rebecca was. Mrs. Lavenport could not keep them separated. She asked her husband to have the two women move out.

The Brussel sprouts would not come out of the tablecloth. She washed it again and met the woman beside the tub in the laundry room. The woman with dyed hair was putting underwear into the machine, the articles were cotton but not children's. The woman closed the door and put a quarter in the slot and shoved the lever forward. Water spurted into the machine. The woman looked at Mrs. Davenport. She was wearing a black skirt, a wrinkled white blouse. The woman poured bleach through the hole in the top of the machine and then left.

After her husband didn't tell her why he hadn't evicted the two women and their children, Mrs. Davenport took her cart in hand and walked to the supermarket. He was waiting for her, loitering in front of Bayshore Apartments. He was mumbling as she walked past, chanting to himself. He smelled like a child does who has played outdoors all day. He followed her again to the supermarket, his eyes on her. There was no longer any doubt; he was following her.

There were scars on the money boxes on top of the machines in the laundry room, chisel marks and screwdriver marks, and she thought, little boy's fingerprints. Edward
was sulking behind the garbage cans. She asked her husband to keep an eye on Edward, if nothing else.

He went out to add chlorine to the pool.

Mrs. Davenport went to the supermarket.

He was in the squad car. They were asking questions, writing answers, staring back at him. She walked by. He ignored them and stared at her while they talked. She could not help herself, she stared back. The beard, lice, disease. The officer in the passenger seat tapped the screen in back of the front seat to get the man's attention. The man stared after her for a moment longer, his lips moving. She could not tell whether he was answering the police or saying something to her. She hurried past.

She was happy that the police had apprehended the man. She had not wanted to report him. She was frightened. He might come back at night. It might have been him in the laundry room trying to rifle her coin machines. She pulled her sweater around her tighter and looked back at the man. He seemed to be looking after her.

She stayed inside the supermarket longer than usual. She studied the bananas, she cataloged the cheeses. She restocked the milk, reversing the cartons in the cooler, putting the old ones back on the bottom shelves. She calculated what the price of beans were a pound, the different brands, the different sizes of cans, and then she bought an 18¢ can with hickory smoked pork chunks. She picked up
tomatoes, pears, carrots, and then replaced them on the shelves and picked up onions, apples, and an avocado. She bought a package of Canarapride bird seed.

Still she was reluctant to leave the supermarket. She looked out. The squad car was gone. They could have taken him, charged him with something, or they might have let him go. He might be waiting. She had only reported the attempted burglarization of her washing machines. That and the malicious scattering of garbage cans. But she had looked at the man in the squad car and he would think she had reported him. His skin had been dark brown, an olive color.

She took the long way back to the apartments for safety, walking nearly a mile, and her feet hurt.

Her husband taught Edward how to swim in the pool. Mrs. Davenport was left to clean the apartment Ronald and Mr. and Mrs. Abler had just left. Her husband taught all of the children how to swim, in the sun, his flesh kept the look of curdling milk.

He demanded she do something with the remains of Bob. He threw Bob into the sink, on top of the dishes.

Mrs. Hart appeared at her front door with her suitcases, tickets for Pittsburg sticking out of the top of her purse. She threw the keys on Mrs. Davenport's desk. The owner would be angry the apartments were not full - two moving in one week.
As she came down the clover leaf ramp to the expressway, she saw the metallic blue Ford out of the corner of her eye. She was taking Bob to the mortician's. She pressed her foot down on the gas pedal. But the Ford went faster. She slowed down, her lane running out. She could see the driver in her mirror now. He slowed down for her. But she could not accelerate. She braked. He braked. Bob fell off the seat as she went over the curb with her tire. He bounced under the seat for a moment, lost amongst crumpled Doral Cigarette wrappers, and napkins from drive-in restaurants. Then, as she slid to a halt, Bob rolled out from beneath the seat on two straws, sticky from vanilla malts. The man in the metallic blue Ford smiled victoriously at her. She was too sick to notice.

She got out and inspected the right front tire. At first she only sensed his presence, she could not hear him over the din of the passing traffic. She ignored him. He was behind her, his fingers through the cyclone fence, calling her, mouthing her name. She tried to ignore him. He tried clumsily to climb over the fence, fell back, picked himself up again. She was confused and ran back to the car. She looked at him. He motioned her to approach the fence again. She started the car. He pressed his face to the fence, his mouth distorted. She pulled out into traffic without looking.
The man at the mortician's put Bob in a canvas envelope lined with neoprene and took him out of the room.

Her husband was not there and Kr. Rizowski called about the people moving out of the apartments. He was understanding. The Pavey's were moving out in a week. The two divorcees had three husbands. One man rode a Harley Davidson motorcycle that said Drag Glide on the side of it. It had an enormous windshield on the front, lights, and a magnetic ashtray sitting on the gas tank.

The woman with red hair dyed black was sitting beside the pool as Mrs. Davenport went to clean the Dobson's apartment. She stared at Mrs. Davenport with affected curiosity, her eyes too wide, too innocent. Mrs. Davenport said nothing to her. The woman was unkempt. She was more dangerous than a good looking woman might have been. Her legs were unshaven, their appearance of neglect giving them a carnal, lawless look.

Mrs. Davenport sprayed the inside of the oven, closed the door, and turned the broiler on. Inside, behind the couch, washing the baseboards, Mrs. Davenport heard footsteps outside. Fast footsteps. They passed. She looked out to see Rebecca running down the passageway toward the upstairs laundry room, a hammer and chisel in her hands.

Mrs. Davenport rushed out of the apartment, down the corridor, to get her husband, to show him, sure that he would finally do something. She abruptly ran into Mr. and
Mrs. Gaston, the woman carrying suitcases, the husband an aquarium. It sloshed madly, half full, the cardinal tatra blazing back and forth in the murk as Mrs. Davenport brushed past him. She needn't ask him, didn't pause for him to tell her. Mrs. Gaston scowled at her.

Across the way, old Mr. Holman was moving out too, grocery sacks filled with pin striped suits.

The sky belched. Brown haze above the bay turned green-gray as if cardboard placards had suddenly been raised in the stands of a football stadium. The vapor trails of jets turned royal blue as if in black light.

The dirty man with a beard got up from his camp fire. The wind swirled in a small whirlwind of dust through his camp. He put his wrapper of crackers into the pocket of his overcoat, kicked dirt over the fire, and left for the city. He walked out of the forest, off from the mountain, down into the valley.

She came down before the pool and saw her husband beside the woman with red hair dyed black. He was teaching her to swim, ignored Mrs. Davenport as she approached the pool. He held the woman's left breast in his right hand, firmly, pushing up; it bulged toward the outer perimeter of her halter. The woman smiled at him crookedly, lawless, her leg wrapped around him in the water.

The night streets were wet from the rain. The atmosphere washed down gutters in rainbow streaks. The stars
shone. Mrs. Davenport continued through the streets, the sandals she was wearing hurting her feet. She pulled her sweater tighter around her.

He was there too. The barbarian. Behind her.

She stopped and waited for him.

He came out into the open on the deserted street, his eyes sullen. The man paused. She turned to walk away, calmly this time. He quickly caught up to her, pulling at her white sweater with his filthy hand, leaving a smudge on its dampness as she turned to face him.

He demanded something of her, incoherently.

She shook her head.

He shouted something hideous, speaking Sanskrit or Arabic, wanting something neither understood.

She could smell the sauterne wine in his breath.

He could smell apartments on her damp clothing.

She did not comprehend. She looked aside. She needed to vomit.

He turned away suddenly, a filthy derelict, ashamed.

Mrs. Davenport followed.
DELORES

I brood. They laugh at me. Ferret stays safely away.
I sleep with a revolver.
I sleep with Delores.

Ferret tells them and they laugh at me. Pensacola, Jacksonville, Corpus Christi, Key West; we are a Navy family.

Ferret snaps his wrists like a bowler; her nose crumples, enlarges.

Swearing oaths, riding a black Studebaker through the night streets of Pensacola, I search for him endlessly. Across the hangar, in daylight, he is safe. The unwritten creed; the old cliches. MINE. If I catch Ferret away from the base, if I catch him in Pensacola he is mine. The squadron watches us. I salve my fists, spit into corners, change omni's in aircraft.

She calls me to dinner.

I light incense.

She apologizes.

She is married to a squid on the Lexington. A Phillipino mess cook, off the Ticondorogo, taught her how to cook when she was fifteen. Cantonese Fruitwood covers the flagrant odor of her rice. I contemplate Nirvana.

McGuire advises me to leave her.
I had just come from the Nashville Club, walking back to the USO. Delores had just come from the USO, walking back to the Nashville Club. We met. My eyes accused her of church affiliation. She was supposed to take offense, glare back at me, we would be forced to demonstrate proofs. I accentuated the movement of loins. She glanced away, afraid. The gestapo in a passing shore patrol van glared at me.

I was bored. I stopped anyway. For the easy lay.

McGuire looks at me in the mirror. He is brushing his upper teeth. His lowers sit on the edge of the sink. "You've got to keep yourself up," he says. McGuire brushes his teeth faithfully every morning, but he cannot make his gums match color. He glares at my stubble which I will not shave until tomorrow, at my work shirt which I will not change until Friday. "You've got no pride, Corwin," he says. "No pride at all." He sticks his index finger into his mouth, runs it between his cheeks and gums, then snaps his finger out of his mouth making a healthy popping sound with his cheek.


I pull my Studebaker into the parking lot at Rob Roy's, the hillbilly bar. The letters on the sign above the cement
block building are all intact, each one blinking in its turn. Mercury pours light over the parking lot, there is no vandalism here. The band has talent. The women are vivaciously French, their hair dyed black and bleached blond. I get my hand stamped, order Schlitz. There is a pause in the music, a frosted window breaks, Ferret escapes through the bathroom. He is nimble, gliding with perfect muscle control, leaving only footprints on the sink.

Delores sat, her legs tucked under her in the chair, to one side, nearly elegantly, bawling like a Tzar's daughter. She was beautiful. I caressed her brown hair. She turned her head violently. I reached out again, ardent with love. She leaped from the chair and ran to the bedroom. I pursued. From the door she swan dived onto the plump mattress. She sank as if in feathers, momentarily bounced free, sank again. She buried her nose in the mattress, sobbed into it. I danced in the doorway, the backs of her knees exposed before me, her skirt turned up awkwardly, sensually over the backs of her thighs. I plummeted to the mattress beside her like an eagle, lay there, my eyes closed.

I made the sound of a pigeon. She sobbed convulsively.

"Flied lice?" I mimmick at the table.

She says nothing. She slouches. She will inherit her mother's hunchback and love of knives. She is a deaf-mute before me, leaning one elbow into the checkerboard oil cloth
on the table. She lifts up momentarily, the oil cloth pulls up with her, then frees. She brushes her elbow absently, then sets it down again in a new position. Her hand pushes her cheek up, almost closing one eye, grotesque.

McGuire demands someone better for me. But there is something enormously sexual in her walk, in the set of her hips. You cannot see how she does not have children hanging from them.

Every man since she was thirteen has felt this same thing. But she has no children. A paradox.

The Lexington came into New York at Christmas. Her husband flew down to Pensacola. Delores apologized to me and let him have his rights, he and his seasick cock. At the New Year's Eve party I stayed purposely away; Ferret went in my place. He stayed for months.

I taped pictures to my locker door.

I smother her porridge with parmesan cheese. I stir it then smother it again.

I was new, a country boy. A guy from the First Lieutenant's was at the sink. He had a sloping head. I had not seen him before. He dipped his comb under the faucet, then slapped it deftly to his hair without losing water from the teeth of the comb. I moved past him to the end urinal.

"How is Delores?" he asked, as if he knew me.

I muttered something dumb, leaned forward against the wall with my hand, looked nonchalant, tried to piss.
She pulls her elbow up, it sticks again. She gets up from the table as her cheek regains its shape. She turns on the radio. Easy Bart, disc jockey with the Big K, advises Preston's Clothing; flairs for fools. I backhand her with my eyes, push a tomato aside, spear hamburger. We do not talk of the letter.

A short man, built like a gymnast, came up to me in the chow hall. I was carrying my tray to a table. "Watch it, fucker," he said.

"His name is Ferret," McGuire tells me, gloating. He throws her dossier down in front of me.

I was confused.

The gestapo stationed at the exit glared at me.

"Kick your ass," the stout man said, mean. He shoved me, my carrots fell into gravy. "Delores!" he howled.

At the name, others turned from eating. Twenty. Thirty of them.

Shit, man.

"Why, Ferret?" I yell. "Why?" I scramble octaves. "Why a deadbeat like that?" My eyes strain to protrude from their sockets.

She is silent. She looks away, does not say anything.

"Jesus Christ!" I scream, ripping throat filaments. Blood from my larynx splatters her face, but she will not reply, will not defend herself. "He's a greaser, a rocker, a slob. Me, I've got a GCT/ARI of 132." I swing my fist.
downward like a bludgeon for her head, stop mid-air, consider my act, swing past her, try to re-accelerate to viciously split the table, but end with only a firm press, my hand sticks to the oil cloth. I flee the room, the house.

I pull my Studebaker up the block. I turn it around facing her house. I maintain surveillance. The lousy whore. The pig.

I ask around.

Bishop and Tanner and Sikorski. Williams from AKJ, and Taber and Sykes. The McCory brothers, McAuliffe, and Cramer. Davis from my own squadron, who would not tell me, and Miller and Olson who told everyone. Then Belgard who had left, then Ferret and me taking turns. Not to mention her husband.

I am sick with genesis.

Pulling the linkage forward, letting it snap back. The air cleaner off. The throat of the carburetor howling for air, resting, howling for air again. Looking up at McGuire looking down at me. My black Studebaker leaning forward like a track runner. I paint a white skull on the dashboard.

"Tell me about Ferret," I hiss.

"He lifts weights on weekends; she's a whore."

"HIM, McGuire, you bastard."

He shuffles the dossier papers, restacks them, turns the corners on the more important sheets. He is like an accountant, crisp, efficient, superior. "I warned you," he says. He places his dirty shirts out flat on his rack, one on top of the other, then tucks the corners up in a ball. He ties the corners of the outside shirt together to form a bundle, attaches a directive for the laundry.

"Your letter was wonderful," she says, finally. "It was shit," I say.

I began to step off on the ball of my foot as I walked. It gave me an awkward gait, like a rare African animal. I paced continually, the habitual hunter. My calves became enormous. McGuire pressed me to go to Panama City. I pressed Ferret to meet me.

"Anywhere!" I screamed at him across the hangar. He ducked out of sight.

Delores tried to be kind, bought a fillet of red snapper, cooked it with lemon juice and almonds.

"Anytime," I shouted at Ferret again across the hangar. He skulked through a passageway.

The watch posted at the LDO's scowled, turned aside, wrote something down. They called me to the Leading Chief's for a disciplinary lecture.
Delores slouched even more; her breasts sagging, hanging limply from the bottom of her rib cage. Her dresses hung ungainly from her body, suddenly three sizes too large. I checked my revolver. I oiled it, spun the cylinder, checked the tension on the trigger. Then placed it under socks.

I kicked over her garbage cans on the way out.

McGuire slapped my shoulders. We crossed the bridge coming back from Panama City. The chicks giggled. I showed them another trick - we passed the headlight beams on the wet night pavement. McGuire slapped my shoulders again. The chicks were hysterical. We all were; laughing, slapping the dashboard, choking. The headlight beams caught up. I passed them again. We scanned tidal marshes like an insane mobile beacon. The Studebaker performed each maneuver perfectly, riding free and gleaming across the Florida panhandle. Ruby pressed my thigh, kneaded it like bread.

Then McGuire was screaming, pointing to our right. A giant boar crashed out of the swamp toward our car. It was the rutting season. I swerved the machine to meet him, deftly whipping the steering wheel around at the last instant to hamstring him. But he was too quick, he lashed out with his hooves as we went by, smashed our headlights. The Studebaker plunged into the ditch, then on through. The boar approached again, wet, his back steaming, something awful in his eyes. He galloped beside us, slashing with
tusks, ripping through black lacquer. McGuire threw his chick on the floor in back to protect her, threw himself over her.

The authorities said we were drunk. The girls, they said, were only sixteen. We (they looked at me) were in trouble, they said. A mother was shrieking at officers and doctors. I was behind fence.

The boar had pitched off the bridge, fallen into the river and drowned after I had rammed him into the abutment.

I wrote a letter.

Delores,

My studebaker is smashed. The sentry has taken my razor blades, I don't know what to do. This girl, Ruby, and McGuire were hurt.

They have been after me. The gestapo has me under light and the mother wants to kill me.

They are all here, the Duty Officer, the Legal Officer, the State Police. The Commanding Officer came in at 0300. The Legal Officer says that I will be charged with manslaughter if the girl dies.

I cherish you more than anything now.

The Commanding Officer was mad. The Duty Officer told him, Seelsworth Corwin, a trouble maker, a chronic offender. A killer, the mother said. Everyone was looking at me except the Chaplin. The Commanding Officer countersigned
the forms to the service. He assured the mother there will be no delay in justice. She tried to scratch my face.

I am not hurt, but I am sick. They all have night sticks; one tells me to stand up, another tells me to sit down.

The Legal Officer tells me that manslaughter is a minimum of seven years. But for me they will see if they can get more. They used cutting torches to open the car.

Jesus, I love you. I should never have listened to what those bastards said.

But I am in the head now, on a shitter. It is all over. I am being sent to Kansas. To prison. They will not let me see you before I go. Good bye.

S. Corwin

I weigh ninety-eight pounds. They release me from the brig.

I sign McGuire's cast. I sign Ruby's casts.

I am reduced two pay grades, and restricted to the base for three months. It is all over. Ferret. I call Delores, whimper, hang up disgusted with myself.

I wait for Ferret in the bushes at night outside the barracks. He does not return to the base.

I do not call her.

They laugh at me.
They applaud: Ferret rides by the barracks on one wheel. He is rich with a $3000 re-enlistment bonus. He turns around and rides by the barracks again, alternating between one and two wheels, the BSA snapping rigidly at his command. The front and rear fenders have been removed, tuned exhaust pipes installed - a racer. Oil from the chain speckles the back of his BSA t-shirt. He is wearing one of Delores's scarves around his neck. He waves, leans hard into a turn, disappears toward town.

McGuire pulls down his starched night shirt. The snake crawls up the sword. "You'll just get in more trouble if you break restriction," McGuire says. "Don't go to see her."

"See her! I'm going to kill her!"

"She isn't worth it."

"Ha!"

"I'm telling you, Corwin." He pulls himself up in bed, straightens his pillow, rubs his cast. "I try to keep you straight, but you're stupid. You always have been." He shakes his head. "You're a slob, too."

I pour India ink over my name on McGuire's cast. It splashes. I walk out.

"Good!" he yells after me. "Goddam fucking good!"

I ignore him. I ride through the gate in the trunk of a car. I go to Pensacola.
The envelope is on display beside my San Diego picture. "I loved the letter. You really cared," she says. She runs to me, grabs my body. She is several inches taller now, not slouching.

"It was shit," I say. I push her off. I check the back door, look over back yards. I go to the dresser drawer, check my revolver. The hair I stuck to it with spit is missing. It has been removed.

"Come to dinner," she says, animal in her confidence.

"Bullshit," I say. I light incense. She turns on the radio, Bart picks a hit. I clean my nails with an electrician's knife.

She crosses her legs, leans into the table. She has the legs of a healthy peasant. They are turbulent, fleshy, uncontrollably desirable.

But I was lying. I hate her. I was drunk.

"Your letter was beautiful," she says to torture me.

"I was lying," I say. "It was bullshit."

She looks at me, dreaming. She presses her hands together like she is praying or something, clamps them between her legs. "Nonsense."

"I'll tear the son of a bitch up," I threaten.

She rocks back and forth in the chair. She looks up at me, stretching her neck on the forward swing. Her legs stand out beneath the skirt like they have been carved by Michelangelo.
I am not fooled by their appearance of purity. Never again. "I was drunk when I wrote it. I thought I was going to Leavenworth."

She ignores me, smiling inanely.

I run to the buffet, grab the letter and shred it. I dance over the carcass. I sing the dirge. I laugh. I praise the Lord.

"The letter was not in the envelope," she says.

My fists blush.

Easy Bart throws on a golden. Her porridge blanches and turns against me in my stomach. "Why don't you grow up," she says.

I do a double back flip, land miraculously on my feet, crouching like an animal. "Hillbilly bitch!" I scream.

"Shut up, Seely."

I lunge at her.

Her throat looms large and white, jumping up and down as I grope for it. My thumbs tremble in anticipation. There are tendons on either side running down beneath her collar bone. I press my thumb into the hollow there, looking for the pressure points that will kill.

But my ear turns warm and liquid under her teeth, and my body is jerked away like a puppet toward her mouth.

I tumble from the top of the table, throwing her chair backwards. I dislodge my face from hers as she screams and
throw my shoulder against her jaw. We scramble for supremacy in tomatoes and rice.

Her fist crudgels my eye.

Bart puts on number five this week, eight last.

We take our rhythm from the song, swapping punches.

I search her features more closely than if making love, combing the contours for new vulnerabilities. She plucks me like a fowl, my body all pinfeathers and cauliflower.

I hate the sight of her, the sound of her, the smell of her. Bart puts on a slow record, I improvise a death waltz, leaning far out over her body. I vow to finish her.

We fall down and twirl across the floor. We crash like Stravinsky against the wall. The bruise on her cheek inflates with fresh blood. Her eye closes like a man falling off a building.

Her entire life flashes before me in mere seconds.

I take it as a sign. I drop my guard. I disdain caution. I coil. I blunder in.

Swiftly, deftly, like a professional assassin, her arms move to break my back, her legs scissor lock around me. My vertebrae grate together, my rib cage makes a hideous sound, like an expansion bridge before it collapses.

"Seely! she demands.

I grin like an asshole.

"We'll have a child."
Sure. I know I'm a dud; I got my first tattoo in the Navy. Eighteen or nineteen at the time. Drunk of course. Nobody gets a tattoo when they're sober.

You take Praeder, the Texas cowboy. Payday came, he started thinking about his sweetheart back home. That was the way of his demise. Before he turned to the rodeo he was a high school football star. A huge kid. Texas is famous for their football players. Did you know that? Praeder told me that millions of times. Oil comes second in Texas. They want huge bruising babies now. One of the first things they ask the doctor when a child is born is about his knees. Are his knees good? In Praeder they realized their dream.

He played the middle of the line. Guard or tackle or something. Offense, I think. 'Stonewall Praeder' they called him. He might have gone all the way. (Praeder never had a single knee operation during high school — a chipped elbow, a dislocated shoulder, but perfect knees.) He might have made the pros. Might have gotten the big shaving lotion endorsements. But he fell in love with Carol, the equipment manager's sister.

And that was Praeder's downfall. You looked at him in the eyes, you could tell. If you caught him when he didn't
think you were watching, you could see that the fire was
gone out of them. He lost the desire to kill, to maim.
Two weeks after they graduated from high school, Carol mar-
ried someone from the high school chess team.

So he ran away and joined the rodeo. He rode the
Brahma bulls mostly. At least that's what he most enjoyed,
was most challenged with. I asked him why once.

"Horses?" he said. "It would be like you riding a
house dog, Scofield." Praeder was a big man.

That's why they threw him out of the rodeo and why he
joined the Navy, where I ran into him. At least that's
what Praeder said. He was too big, they told him. The
bulls, he was crushing their ribs when he wrapped his legs
around them. Those strong knees. He jumps on a bull's
back and all of the fight is gone out of it. So they made
him quit. There was something else strange about Praeder
too.

We'd be sitting in a restaurant in Pensacola at night.
Drinking coffee at Murphy's. Praeder would pick up a glass
ashtray and place it in the palm of his hand, face up, over
the middle of the table.

He looks at me and McGuire. "I'll crush it," he says.
"Praeder, you can't crush that," McGuire says to him.
"Bet? I'll disintegrate it."
"Come on, Praeder."
"No. I will disintegrate it. Watch your eyes."
'"Come on, stop it," I say.

His paw closes over the ashtray. His fingers turn white around the knuckles where they are pressed against the edge of the glass. The rest of his fingers and hand turns red and puffy.

"Stop it. You can do it. We believe you, Praeder!" McGuire and I climb up on the table to get enough leverage to pry his fingers apart. But we can't move them. Finally, McGuire knocks over a coffee cup and the scalding coffee spills into Praeder's lap and he lets go. Praeder wanted us to bet him. He wanted to drive the broken glass into his hand.

So Praeder gets drunk. He starts thinking of Carol. The next thing you know, he's left the base and headed for the tattoo parlor. No feat of strength here - no muscle show. Real Praeder. The tattoo, a controlled rorschach ink blot. The Navy psychiatrists were beginning to use this in analysis during my enlistment.

Praeder gets up in the morning after his drunk. He runs to the drinking fountain to down some aspirin and comes back. He shakes McGuire's rack, still in his skivies.

"Why'd you let me do it," he demands.

McGuire looks up at him out of red eyes, trying to wake up.

"You should have stopped me, McGuire. Why'd you let me do it?" He sits down on McGuire's rack and leans over
toward the floor. "I hate myself." (You always hate yourself the morning after you get a tattoo. You thank God for punishing you with a hangover.)

I look over at him. On his huge, mammoth chest there's one tiny band-aid. It's the kind of bandage that you put on a kid's finger when he scratches himself. (Me and McGuire always come back with the large gauze bandages that are held on with about four feet of adhesive tape.)

"What did you get this time?" I ask him. "That band-aid looks ridiculous."

"I didn't get nothing," Praeder is touchy about his tattoos.

McGuire sits up in his rack. "Come on, let's see." He catches the edge of the band-aid with his finger nail and rips it off Praeder's chest.

"Hey, it'll get infected!" Praeder puts his hand over it.


"Are you crazy, Praeder?" I ask. Praeder has a very small fly tattooed on his chest, caught just as it is about to step on his left nipple.

"That big chest? And all you put on it is a fly?" McGuire scolds. "With a chest like that you should have a battleship, Praeder, a huge eagle, an Uncle Sam pointing his finger at us."
Praeder hangs his head. He is ashamed of himself. And it’s true. Here is the big man, the strong man; and the only tattoos he gets are the tiny ones. A mouse. A parakeet sitting on his shoulder. A roach crawling out from his armpit. A spider hiding in the hair on his chest. Rorschach could write a book on Praeder.

Praeder is an elephant man. He should have horses stampeding across his back, boa constrictors coiled around each arm. He's big; he should tattoo big. He should have freight trains colliding on his chest. You look at Praeder in the flesh, you have to shudder. The most hideous is the tattooed red heart with a scar in the middle of it, where he had 'Carol' removed.

"I get blood poisoning, it's your fault, McGuire," Praeder threatens. He hits McGuire on the ball of the shoulder so that McGuire's arm will be sore for the next two or three weeks.

This is a device that goes back to the time before McGuire moved into the barracks. Praeder and I would walk the streets of Pensacola looking for guys just out of boot camp. 'Boots' they called them in the Navy. We'd catch them when they were inexperienced, before they'd had their uniform tailored, when they were young and maybe wouldn't have to shave more than once a week. Praeder and I used to nab them. We'd make an honest person out of them the way Praeder had just made an honest person out of McGuire.
McGuire rubbed his arm. It was the last time he would rip a bandage off Praeder.

With McGuire it was girls. He had all sorts of girls tattooed on his chest, his arms, his back. The Spanish dancer hiding behind her transparent fan, dressed in cas- tanets and high heeled shoes. Wonder woman. The hula girl and the other exotic beauty queens. His favorite was the naked girl on his left bicep. She wiggled provocatively when he flexed the muscle on his arm. A boring night, he'd take off his shirt and we'd all sit around and watch him like a dirty movie.

Brenda didn't mind his tattoos so much when she married McGuire, but she did make him cover the naked girl. It was the only time that McGuire ever got a tattoo when he was sober. He had her clad in a blue bikini, but pubic hair still showed through.

When Kurt Sikorski shipped out to the West Coast, and took Brenda with him, McGuire threatened to have a coffin tattooed over the now dressed girl on his arm. Praeder and I spent all of one night talking him out of it, which finally ended up in Praeder getting his spider to appease McGuire. But shortly after he moved back into the barracks, McGuire snuck into town by himself anyway and came back with a girl spread-eagled obscenely astraddle his right thigh. After Brenda left him, his tattoos began to take on a macabre quality.
You can always tell the men who've led the most tragic lives in the Navy; they've got the most tattoos.

Me? I lean mostly to sayings. I've got lots of scroll work, ribbons with slogans. You know, 'Don't Tread On Me,' and the rest. My first was an anchor with 'U.S.N.' under it which is more or less standard, depending on which branch of the service you're in. (It always takes a while to develop your own style.) I got that first one high up on my arm so my mother wouldn't see it when I went home on leave. My grandfather always said that he never knew a tattooed person who was worth a damn.

And I suppose he was right. But they have their religious aspect too. Tattoos are not a whim - they are a vocation. Tattoos are a statement on life. A St. Christopher's medal of the flesh. In the streets of Pensacola, Praeder and I used to try to win converts. Your street preachers so to speak.

In our odd, salvation army way we'd walk up to a boot on the street and give him a psychological punch on the ball of the shoulder. We'd put some religious fear into him. We'd walk up to the boot like we recognized him.

"Buffalo?"

The boot looks puzzled.

"No, not up-state," Praeder says to me. "He's from the city. I can always tell a guy that's from the city."

"Are you from New York City?" I ask the boot.
"Me?"

"Yes. You are from New York aren't you?"

"N-no."

Praeder looks at him. "You sure look like you're from New York. I could have sworn."

The boot is thinking now. The sharpest people in the Navy, the best dressed, the most progressive come from New York. It's a well-known fact that ninety percent of the personnel in the Navy come from New York, Chicago, L.A., Detroit or Youngstown. Anybody west of the Mississippi comes from L.A. or at least L.A.'s suburb, Denver. Only your officers come from the hick towns.

"I was born there," the boot says.

"New York?"

"Yes. Lived there till I was five."

"Well that explains it." I turn to Praeder. "I told you."

"Live just outside of Chicago now."

You can tell by the naive way that he wears his white hat on his head that he probably lives about five hundred miles just outside of Chicago.

"Gary?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"You look like a stealer."

"Been to Jake's?" I ask.

"Jake's?"
"Eddie's?"  
"Ya, Eddie's."  
"San Francisco Chin's?"  
"Chin's."  
"Praeder's?"

He tells us about his Corvette back home. We tell him about the girls. Everyone's got a Corvette back home in his garage. I do. Praeder does. But they use too much gas for a sailor's pay so we leave them at home. All of us. The ten thousands. The kid has sealed his own doom. I'd like to meet one honest person. We tell him about the three girls we've got at the hotel. Everyone has an extra girl when there is a boot with money. We paid for the hotel room but we don't have enough money for the gin.  

"Look, you supply the booze, we'll supply the girls," Praeder says. "Who knows, we all go in together to get your 'vet' down here we can really do some dealing. These girls tonight, they're just skags. We get a car, me and Scofield will really show you some girls."

The boot didn't quite trust us. But he was horny, maybe virgin. It always comes back to the same thing—girls. I was like the rest. I was like McGuire and Praeder. I've got one of those fancy English scrolls, the
kind with the two rollers. 'Ruth Love' is written on the scroll in German lettering on my right arm. (Only, I got it years later when I could look back and be objective about the situation.) I've had my girl; she's had me. I was still a marginal tattoo-ee when I met her. My style not solid yet.

So, we know we are hitting the boot in the one place where he is sure to be vulnerable. It was only a matter of time. Because even when they don't believe, they'll believe anyway for the sake of a girl. They'll do anything for a girl. And the uglier she is the more they'll do - a universal truth among sailors.

"You don't trust us?" I asked. "Christ, we've been telling the truth; haven't you? Show him your wallet, Praeder."

Praeder shows us his empty wallet. I show the boot mine. But the boot camp doesn't show us his. This means that it is full. He probably hoardes his pay checks. Sends them home for his mother to put in the bank and then borrows cigarettes. We know the type. We spend ours as fast as we make it - we really are broke. We buy the pair of ten dollar levis on credit at the local department store. We pay fifteen cash for them in the end.

"We aren't tryin' to take you," Praeder explains. "But you've got to have booze if you want a party. We've got the room. What the hell?"
Still the boot balks.

"Well look man," I say, checking my watch. "The girls are coming up at eight; it's five-thirty now. We've got to find somebody in only two and a half hours. If you don't want in just say so... We don't want any of your money; we just want the booze. You buy and keep it till the party."

Finally he decides to take a chance. "Okay."

"Good. There's a liquor store just up the street. We'll wait for you outside. Get whatever you like."

"But I'm not twenty-one."

"No? You sure look like it."

"I guess we'll have to find somebody else, eh Scofield?"

"Ya, guess so. Too bad; a Corvette too."

He breaks. "Here." He holds out two fives. "You go get it."

Praeder takes the money. He's big enough to pass for twenty-one. Who would argue with him anyway? "What do you want, kid?"

"Whiskey. Seagrams I guess."

"Okay, be right back."

Praeder goes into the liquor store.

He comes back out; two pints of gin. "They didn't have no Seagrams," he explains. "Sold out." He puts one of the pints under his shirt and gives me the other to do the same. "Now we go to the show."

"The show?"
"Yes," I tell the boot. "The girls won't get there till eight."

Now he's scared again. Especially since we've got the booze. We go to see "Machine Gun Tate." 'Perry Cranbrook is Machine Gun Tate.'

"Guess you'll have to pay," I say to the boot at the cashier's window. I symbolically turn my pockets inside out. He is very unhappy now.

"But my change from the liquor?"

"Popcorn," Praeder says. "And mixer too."

We go into the movie, Praeder with his pint, I with mine. We drink the kid's gin in a dark section of the seats. (We know just where to go, we have been there before.)

"Relax kid," I tell the boot, drunkenly. "We've got plenty of time." I pour a little gin in his orange. But he doesn't drink it; he can't enjoy himself. Perry Cranbrook takes over the Russian sub, and rescues Washington from nuclear disaster and the boot is worried about his money.

Towards the end of the first run he shakes me. "It's seven-thirty."

"Plenty of time kid. Plenty of time." Praeder is asleep beside me. I pour some gin in the boot's orange.

He drinks this. In a hurry.

"It's a quarter to eight."
"Hey Praeder, hear that? It's a quarter to eight." I shake Praeder. "Wake up fool; it's time to go." But Praeder is dead to the world.

I shake him a couple more times. But he doesn't wake up. "Look, I can't wake the son of a bitch up. You go on ahead."

The boot nods, still hoping that his ten dollars hasn't gone for nothing.

"But remember," I grab the kid by the arm. "Cynthia is mine. The blond. Yours is Kathy. Got that?"

"Kathy."

"Yes, you stay away from Cynthia. We'll be up there in a few minutes. Yours is Kathy. Room 208. Just knock."

I'd like to see his tattoos. I send him up to the Siminole. The queer hotel.

But sure. I was dumb as the kid was, as Praeder, as McGuire. She was a USO girl. I met her during a USO dance. A convention of the priggish; the dance of shrews. Security is there for the prim (nothing disgraceful is ever allowed to happen in a USO ballroom.) There is safety in the darkness for the timid. They come after dark, they leave carefully guarded by chaperons. Only boots frequent the USO dances. A perfect match. So I could have anticipated what McGuire would say when he found out.

But she wasn't like the other girls in the USO. At least she didn't act it. She came out into the light where
you could have a good look at who you were talking to. I was sitting in the reading lounge of the USO trying to read about these guys who went to South America to dig some gold in Ecuador. They were archeologists or something. They found a lost city up in the mountains. An American pilot (ex-World War II) had crashed in his small plane while dropping anti-communist leaflets over mountain villages. He met a group of Indians while making his way out of the mountain jungle. He married the chief's daughter and she told him about the city. It was supposed to be the home of one of their ancient gods. So the pilot got together an expedition of anthropologists and went back for the gold, the jewel encrusted idols.

"Pardon me?"

I didn't hear her. Next door in the TV lounge they are fighting whether to watch the movie or the football game.

"Pardon me?" She says it louder.

I look up. She sits in the chair beside me. I am surprised; she does it gracefully.

"Do you happen to know how long the dance lasts?" she asks.

"No, I don't. Really." I look out the door of the lounge toward the USO ballroom. "I don't go to the dances myself. Eleven or twelve or so, I suppose." You learn
early to stay away from USO dances. If the girls aren't bad enough; the shore patrol is there to intimidate you.

"My girl friend is in the dance."

"Oh?"

"This is the first time I've been here. I'm visiting from Hattiesburg, Mississippi."

"I've been to Biloxi a couple of times." I decide not to say any more about that though. I got 'Born to Lose' in Biloxi, the skull and crossbones. You don't tell a girl you've just met about that sort of thing, especially a girl with a hint of grace.

We pause a moment. I'm thinking of the barmaid that cut Praeder in Biloxi.

"What are you reading?" she finally asks.

"Me? Nothing." I shut the magazine before she can look at the article. They had a picture of a native girl (the author's common-law wife) sitting on the ground in her loin cloth, nursing a baby. (I always have been a poor reader.)

Of course it is a scientific magazine. I mean, with the anthropologists and the archeologists. But she might misunderstand. You've got to watch out how you present yourself to a girl when you first meet her. I look down at the front cover of the magazine. There is this girl standing spread legged in Army fatigue shorts (torn away, the shirt has no buttons). She is holding a smoking sub-machine
gun, saliva speckles the corner of her mouth. There are a half dozen North Koreans lying dead in the background. I flip the magazine over to its back cover. A cigarette advertisement - I am safe.

"Reading," she continues. "Not many of the guys do that around here. An intellectual I bet?"

"Not really." She hasn't seen then. "But I have read the complete Tarzan series. A lot of books there."

"All of them?"

I nod my head.

"I go to college myself and I don't read that much."

"You don't? You are?"

"Yes. I go to the University of Southern Mississippi. In Hattiesburg. But I'm an art major, that's why I don't have to read so much."

"An art major? An artist?"

"Yes," she says modestly. "I'm just visiting my girl friend here in Pensacola." She looks back toward the door to the dance floor. "She brought me here."

"Ya. When I first saw you I didn't think you belonged here. I was wondering about you. They're not too squared away in there."

"That's why I wanted to know how long it would be before it would end."

"It'll be a long time. Why don't you and I go get a cup of coffee or something while you're waiting?"
She nods affirmatively and I get up and put the magazine face down in the chair and we leave the "SO."

We walk down to the cafe. I'd get McGuire to let me use his car later on. McGuire was my friend; he'd only charge me five dollars. Others he charged ten.

We were in one of the back booths at Murphy's. "Yes," she was saying. "I hope to become a commercial artist after I graduate."

A professional person, hear that Scofield? "My sister is doing the same thing at Columbia," I said. "But we don't get along so well." I add this so she won't ask me too many questions. I don't have a sister.

"Oh, that is nice," she says.

"Artists are very creative people. I only wish I was that creative."

"Oh you are, Lonnie. You are."

"I can make a flower."

"You can?"

I get out the crispest dollar bill I have in my wallet. I fold it into a flower. Well, really it is a hat - like you make out of newspaper. But I make it out of a dollar bill and call it a flower. A flower is more artistic than a hat.

"That is very nice, Lonnie."

"I write poetry sometimes too, Ruth." (I do. On tables in the mess hall, on bathroom walls.)
Now it is she who is impressed. We talk more, drinking cups, gallons of coffee.

"I come to town every weekend from Hattiesburg to visit Grace. She is like my sister."

"Yes, but you ought to stay away from the U30, Ruth. It's no place for a girl with finesse and intelligence."

She is flattered.

I excuse myself and go to the restroom.

I come back and sit down. "Ruth, I've got a friend. He's got a car. I can use it on weekends sometimes."

We make a date for the next weekend.

"But Ruth, there is something you should know about me," I tell her after she has consented to a date.

"What is it, Lonnie?" Her eyes are full of tenderness.

I take a deep breath. "Tattoos, Ruth."

"Tattoos?"

"I have tattoos. But I regret the day I ever got one."

"Lonnie." She puts her two hands over my right hand.

"No Ruth. My grandfather said that people with tattoos are no good. My own grandfather."

"Lonnie," she reassures.

"You don't understand." I roll up my right sleeve to the elbow. I always wear long sleeves, even in the Florida summer. I show her the ribbon with 'Mother' on it. "Look. I'm a freak, Ruth."
"You love your mother, Lonnie." She understands.

"I love you, Ruth. I'll never get another tattoo - I promise." I roll my sleeve down again. No sense in showing all my tattoos to her at once.

She blushes.

I go to the bathroom again and then I cab her up to her friend Grace's, apartment.

I get back to the barracks, one, two in the morning. "Love," I shout at the top of my lungs. The fire watch looks at me. "Love! Love! Love," I scream.

I enter the snoring dorm. I grope my way to Praeder's rack. I shake him violently. He wakes up with a start, frightened. "Love," I shout at him.

He lets go of his hard-on.

I go to McGuire's rack. I shake him. He groans.

"Your car, McGuire. I need your car."

"Huh?"

"Wake up fool, the god of love is here." I shake his rack. "The second coming."

"Go to bed, Scofield."

"Love! Did you hear? Love!"

"You're drunk."

"With love, McGuire. True, everlasting, passionate, sexual, holy love."

"Bull."
"I need your car."
"Now?"
"Next weekend."
"Go to hell, Scofield."
"Come on."
"We'll talk about it tomorrow. I'm tired."
"Now! Love beckons."
"You don't let me sleep, you don't get the car."
"Okay. Okay. Don't get mad." I go to bed myself, but I can't sleep. I think how great it all worked out.

We're sitting on Grace's couch together. Ruth is holding my hand. But what I really feel is her leg rubbing against mine.

She holds my hand open with one hand and with the other she scribes soft circles on my open palm. "Lonnie Scofield," she says.

"Mmm." "Lonnie Scofield." She scribes another erotic circle. "Lonnie Scofield. You've got a nice hand Lonnie Scofield."

"But I've got a lousy bladder, Ruth." I get up. "I'm sorry, it's that goddamn coffee. Where's the head?" I slip and use the navy term for bathroom.

"Through the hall, first door on your left."

"I'm really sorry, Ruth."
She smiles at me as I leave.
I come back and sit down. She is serious. "Lonnie," she says, "why are you so apologetic? I mean, you don't have to be with me." She looks up at me. "I don't care about your bladder or your tattoo. I like you the way you are."

"I shouldn't drink coffee." Sure, I think to myself. You don't really know. "I'm a loser, Ruth."

"No Lonnie, I don't believe it."

"I'm a dead beat." Her leg is becoming agitated beneath the skirt.

"We're none of us perfect. What do you know about me?"

I know I'd love to run my hand up under your skirt, I think. To soothe your trembling thigh, to make it tremble even more. "Look. You want the truth? You really want the truth?"

"Lonnie, I love you."

"That tattoo I showed you in the restaurant. That tattoo? Do you know what it really is?"

"I don't care about the tattoo, Lonnie."

"That tattoo isn't what you think." I roll up my sleeve. I point to the tattoo I have shown her. "Mother. Do you think that 'Mother' is my mother?"

She stares at me.

"No, it's not my mother," I cry. "It's the Virgin Mother. You know the one. Mary. The Virgin Mother."
Her hand gets sticky in mine.

"That's right, I'm a catholic. I was almost a priest, Ruth. I came that far." I hold up my thumb and index finger to show her. "But I couldn't make it all the way, Ruth."

Her eyes are wet.

"I couldn't make the priesthood, Ruth." What does she know about it? Nobody in the South is a catholic. I am safe.

"That's why I got the tattoo."

She kisses me. I kiss her, forcing her spine against the back of the couch. Should I tell her that I was thrown out on a morals charge? No. I throw my leg over hers. I run my hand over her outstretched neck. She shivers.

"Do you know what it means to drop out of the priesthood? To take off the cloth, the collar? To be a slave to the flesh?"

She shakes her head, no, with her eyes closed.

"Find out sometime. Paint that in one of your pictures, Ruth," I say, anguished.

We kiss and rub bodies some more. She has the firm back, the lovely curve.

"That's not the worst of it, though," I confess. She looks at me now, her eyes full of love. Mine too are full of love, holy passion.

"Are you ready for this one?"
She nods.

"I'm still a virgin, Ruth. I still want to be a priest. Chaste. You must think I'm a clod; you an artist and all." I've read the reports; the ones that say eight of ten married women desire their priest or minister more than their own husband. I've read the stories. I know how all women secretly desire to tempt, to dispoil the celibate, the pure. 'The apple complex' Cromwell called it in his article in 'Erection' (June 1962, if you want to look it up). Ruth might utterly destroy me with lust if she tries hard enough.

She winks at me mischievously.

We're walking to the chow hall next morning. I am still glowing.

"Did you dip your wick, Scofield?" Praeder asks. "Win your wings?"

"Don't talk like that, she is a decent girl. An artist."

"Yes. Some let you, some help you. That's the only difference." Praeder winks at McGuire.

"That's an old joke, Praeder. Real old. This is a college girl."

Praeder laughs. "Any girl that had been to college would know better than to love you."

"She's from Hattiesburg. University of Southern Mississippi. She's none of the local talent, I'll tell you."
"Sure," McGuire says.
"Sure," I return.
"A hillbilly."
"Fuck you, McGuire."
"What's her name? Bet I know her."
"You know nobody, McGuire."
"My old lady is from Pensacola."
"She's in San Diego now."
McGuire shrugs his shoulders. "Sure. Sure, Scofield. You're just afraid that I know her, that I've laid her before."
"You don't know anybody, McGuire. Everybody knows that you hate women. You're just talking that way because you got screwed by Brenda."
"What's her name?"
"Ruth."
"Ruth what?"
"Ruth Ferris."
"Ruthie Ferris?"
"Ruthie?"
"I do know her," he confesses.
"Don't give me that shit, McGuire. I'll break your goddamn neck."
"I never went out with her though. Honest."

McGuire backs up.

"No, honest, Scofield. Hell, I wish I were lying. But I'm not. You've been had, buddy. Ask 'radley in the parachute loft. She works out at the milk depot. Ask Schrieber in the pain shop. Ask Wilson. Ask Brooks. She works out at the milk depot. You know, where they've got the three story milk bottle. She works behind the counter."

I remember, then, about Wilson telling me one night when we were on watch together. Him and Schrieber and the two snakes they were shacking with. One of them named Grace, married to a guy on the Lexington.

"1426 East Baltimore," McGuire says. "Right?"

I punch him in the solar-plexus.

Sure. I knew I was a dud. I kept punching the wall. McGuire was pleading with Praeder to put down the juke box before he slipped on the ice cream. Praeder threw it against the wall where he'd thrown the cigarette machine.

The ceiling sagged, the plaster split. Milk was splattered everywhere. We'd get the brig. They'd talk about us for a long time around the barracks. We'd had our drunk. And I'd gotten my tattoo; the one with the dagger and serpent - 'Death Before Dishonor.'
UPRISING

May 25, 1970: Wayne State University, Detroit.

The students were outraged, called for action, uprooted maple saplings in Mad Anthony Square.

The president of the University, Bradford Keast, left his McKenzie Hall office, white hair sparkling aurorally. The rock band in the square surrendered their pavilion to him. The students heckled President Keast, then quieted and listened so that they might hear grounds for new violence. The president stood before the Kresge library and talked to the crowd logically, reasoning, using the rock band's amplifier system. He had been a professor of English before becoming president.

He spoke with dignity, gave the mob dignity, implied God and justice. He stopped talking just as they wanted to hear more, before boredom set in, a genius in crowd control. As the last tone died in the loud speakers, another sound gained everyone's attention. The jets. Four Air Force blue, F4 Phantoms barrel looped overhead in diamond formation. The students looked up, the jets disappeared. They circled the city, regrouped high over Saginaw, then swept down upon Detroit again. The students could hear them. The jets plunged arrogantly, insanely for the Wayne State campus, wing to wing. They nearly decapitated the
Fischer Building, but turned over on wingtip at the last micro second to clear it. They vanished into the stratosphere again. Detroit City and Detroit Metropolitan airports closed all air traffic over the city.

The jets swung under the Maumee River bridge in Toledo, turning around for another run. Blue Devil, flight leader, spoke urgently to his wing men. They rose nearly vertically to twenty thousand feet, dropped nearly vertically to five hundred feet, broke the sound barrier, leveled off for the campus again. As they came into sight, the right wing-man seemed to shudder. He dropped back momentarily, veering to the left, his tail nearly on top of the tailman's canopy. The tailman dropped desperately away; all of the jets wavered erratically for a moment, the city of Monroe passed, they were over the lower suburbs of Detroit. Then the right wing man regained control, they tightened up, became a single, powerful unit. They catapulted on to the campus with clockwork precision. They crisscrossed at the engineering building organically and vanished, blanketing the city with their sonic booms.

Dust swirled wildly through the plaza. Windows rattled. Plum pressed Crazy Barbara's breast urgently, then left it, angered that he had forgotten his anger. The president had disappeared. The jets returned to Columbus.

"Fuck!" Plum swore.
Barbara's pupils enlarged, glazed over. She tried to pull Plum back down on the lawn beside her.

The rebellion was crushed.

Plum's group fell back. They consulted doctrine. They called for a public emasculation of the president. They would seize his McKenzie Hall office. They would trap him inside. They would attract national attention. They would take the power of his office away from the president. They would depants him.

Plum looked at Crazy Barbara; this was childish.

(Plum was born Alcott Adams, a descendant of John and Quincy Adams, an heir to leadership. He was born on August 14, 1945, on VJ day, the last of the war babies. At a Washington ball, several months after his birth, Mrs. Roosevelt had kissed him on the forehead.)

It was time not to tear the nation apart, not to recreate a boyscout jamboree. It was time to tear apart and to rebuild. Plum looked at Barbara; she would agree. But she was working on a difficult orchestration of dactyls and was not listening to the discussion. Crazy Barbara was a poet and journalist.

President Keast went to lunch with several members of the Board of Governors. Hanson, also on the board at General Motors, was worried. The president reassured Hanson; they were only children he said. There was no reason to worry, Keast had everything under control. He was
thinking about that night several months after Coleridge had broken with Wordsworth. The campus disorders were inconsequential.

May 26, 1970: Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The man from New York was lean. He wore blue denims. He had the hardened muscles of a track runner, the sunken cheeks of an Abraham Lincoln (but not the beard - he had gone underground). He carried a brief case off the plane, walking fast, he might have been a business man but for the blue jeans. He was reputed to have money, to have personally set up a complete bomb factory. The people from Ann Arbor knew of him and spoke of him highly. Plum distrusted him. There were counter movements. Plum was honest, straight forward, longhaired and bearded. They did not shake hands.

Arthur tried to, but fell back, lying down again in the back seat of the Oldsmobile, drunk.

"They thought I should have someone with me when I picked you up," Plum explained.

The man from New York nodded his head.

Arthur tried to respond, grabbed the back of the front seat, pulled himself upright, wavered.

Plum introduced them, stopping at the man's name.
"Prescott," the man from New York filled in. "But they call me the Professor. That's why I'm here - a revolutionary engineer. I'll plan your gig for you. I've been to Algeria."

Arthur frowned politely, coming alert at the professor's powerful voice. He nodded, brows knit disdainfully together, attempting revolutionary discipline - a virtue of higher scale than friendship. "Professor," Arthur acknowledged.

(There was a full dress inspection on the parade field. The Secretary of the Navy had come to the base where Alcott was stationed. Alcott recognized him from the party at his high school graduation a few months before - not a man of sound thinking, but a man of dignity. Alcott respected him. The Secretary gave a speech as thousands stood at parade rest. Alcott was called to the podium beside the Secretary; he was awarded Warrant Officer's bars - it was an unprecedented move, from Seaman Apprentice to Warrant Officer. It was probably the happiest day of Alcott's life. Five thousand sailors snapped to attention. Three thousand marines spun their guns, stopping in unison at order arms.

Duty in Biafra, Istanbul and Venezuela after that. Dining with ambassadors.)

Plum and Prescott got into the front of the cream colored Oldsmobile. The professor had no luggage, only the briefcase.
"Junk, isn't it?" Arthur said. "The car."

Prescott shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

Arthur leaned forward, drew the bottle of Gallo from the seat behind him and offered it to Prescott. "A green fender, a cracked windshield; not a very good car for a professor. Drink some of this," he laughed, drooling on the back of the front seat. "You won't mind the fucking car at all."

The professor shrugged his shoulders negatively, politely.

Arthur stopped laughing, became more sober. "We don't use dope here, or any of that mind destroying crap," he explained.

Plum was uneasy too. He didn't like to be out disciplined. No. You were probably impressed by Big Mary from Ann Arbor?" He looked over at the professor.

The professor remained impassive.

"But don't worry. Them Ann Arbor pricks haven't got anything on Detroit. You'll see. We've got class. They're just amateurs, those Ann Arbor bastards." Plum thumped the dashboard with his fist.

Arthur slapped the back of the front seat.

The professor looked through the smudged windshield.

"Do you think we could go to Detroit?" he asked. "I would like to talk to Sugarman; I have to be back in New York tomorrow to plan for the conference in Chicago."
(Schweitzer was there that day, in the crowd; and at the reception that night at Admiral Nimitz's house. One of the astronauts had winked knowingly at Alcott in the reception line. Alcott had become suspicious.)

Plum gunned the car back out of its parking space and slammed the brakes on. The car lurched to a stop, wheels locked, the body swaying. The professor's head snapped sharply over his neck. "Look!" Plum said. He pointed to the white line marking the parking space. It ran beneath the hood ornament, the center of the car. "We're all anarchists here in Detroit," he laughed.

Arthur laughed.

The professor looked at Plum.

"No one tells anyone what to do in Detroit," Plum said.

Arthur nodded solemnly.

Plum laughed.

Then he was angry. The red light at the gate to the parking lot was blinking. They were always pushing.

(Alcott had just become a civilian. The Secretary of the Navy had begged him to stay, had taken him on a cruise aboard the USS Sequoia to the Grand Bahamas. Alcott had politely refused another commission.

The President had invited Alcott to his Catskill Mountain hideaway. The President wanted to make Alcott a test pilot.
Alcott was amazed at the smallness of the man.

The President had explained that it was just a first step. Alcott would enter the space program. After he had been to the moon a couple of times, he would be moved into the White House, Secretary of State. Or Congress.

Alcott had walked out. He had slammed the door rudely behind him.)

The attendant was holding their time stub, demanding seventy-five cents again. The red light was flashing on the gate. The letters on the lense that told Plum to stop were black. The attendant was black.

"Show some goddamned solidarity," Plum growled.

"I got to have seventy-five cents," the attendant said.

The professor reached into his pocket to pay the attendant. Plum stopped him.

"I run this show," he said. "The workers, the blacks, the students; we're all united for the revolution."

"I got to have seventy-five cents or I call security."

"Show the son-of-a-bitch security, Arthur."

Arthur produced the pistol from his waistband.

The professor was outraged. He leaned forward to protest. Arthur wavered, the gun pointed at the professor's ear. Plum pushed the professor viciously back into the seat.

The light on the gate turned green.
The Oldsmobile proceeded through. "This is a revolution," Plum said, "not a shop picnic. Save your mind Professor."

The Oldsmobile was in poor condition. It did not accelerate well. Arthur leaned out the window and fired a warning shot over the attendant's booth. It struck the radiator of the car behind them. The report was deafening. The professor was trying to say something. Plum calmly kept the accelerator to the floor heading toward the expressway.

The professor was rubbing his ears, shivering. He said there was no reason for it. He said he assumed Arthur had not meant to point the gun at him, that Arthur was just drunk.

Plum said nothing. He hated the professor's whining. He hated the professor.

They approached the ramp to the expressway. The Oldsmobile was vibrating, doing sixty miles an hour, tracking sideways like an aircraft in a crosswind. It leaned into its right front tire, chirping and wailing. Plum kept the accelerator against the firewall. The machine lurched into the cloverleaf, hit the curb, went up on its side. They grazed the guardrails, were re-directed onto the pavement by them. The body rocked wildly over A-frames and axles. Arthur flapped out the window, lost the western style six shooter.
"Bad shocks," Plum explained.

The professor was not listening. He was staring at the railings blipping past, the crumpled door next to him. His face was blank, tinged with fear, his revolutionary guard dropped. Plum felt better.

They straightened out onto the expressway, the car dropped down, rocked up on the other side. The tires squealed as the extra weight was thrown, like English, on their wrong side. Arthur fell back inside the car. The professor's head hit Plum's shoulder, bounced off, hit the window in the door. "There was no reason for it," he cried.

Arthur leaned forward, puked between his legs, felt better and asked about pipe bombs.

The professor began weeping.

Plum backhanded him from the driver's seat.

At the meeting in Detroit, in the back of Benny's Restaurant, everyone was angry. Sugarman, Barney, Lois, Cline, Gibson. Crazy Barbara looked away.

"They were insane," the professor said.

"Revolutionary," Plum countered.

Arthur was asleep in the back of the Mercury.

"They asked me if I had piped bombs in the brief case," the professor said, hopelessly.

"He had anti-capitalist leaflets," Plum sneered. Everyone was angry at Plum. He was angry too. "We've got printers of our own. Why send to New York?"
Sugarman was the leader of the Detroit faction. He tried to calm everyone down. He pressed his palms flat on the table as if holding it in place.

Plum knew he was right. This time they would listen to him. The professor was a fool. Plum suppressed a smirk. He pressed Barbara's thigh with his knee.

She did not respond. He looked at her. She was watching Benny, behind the grill. Benny was fat; he was forty-eight years old. He encouraged local poets. He was sweating over the steam of ground beef. His special coney island sauce had made him moderately rich.

The professor slammed his fist down on the table in front of Sugarman. "The drunk fired a shot at the parking lot attendant."

Plum thought Prescott sounded especially effeminate at that moment. He could no longer suppress a smile.

Then Benny was looking at Barbara.

Barbara was crazy. Everyone knew it. Most of the time she was calm, sedate. She worked it out in her poetry, in the student newspaper, in bed. She wore her hair in a Jewish Afro. She wore faded jeans, bright red cloth patches in the crack of her jeans' ass. She looked like a gibbon, walking away. She wanted too. She bent over, spoke in grunts to strangers. She was carnal. Crazy Barbara would only have intercourse dog style.
Plum put his arm around her, felt the flesh of her back through the chambray shirt. She ignored him.

Benny was cleaning tables in front of them.

The professor was pacing. His leaflets, done in three colors, were on the table. "They said the gun was stolen. They said the car was stolen," he cried.

No one said anything.

"Don't you get it?" he laughed, verging on hysteria again. "They said we couldn't be traced. They stopped at a rest area and stole another car. A Mercury."

"The restrooms stank," Plum laughed.

"Yes! He pulled a knife on a man in the restroom. Took his keys. Took his pants. Police helicopters were going back and forth over the expressway." The professor's eyes watered. "It was insane."

Plum was tired of being called insane.

Benny moved up wind from their table. He smelled of tomato sauce, onion and raw hamburger. Barbara turned half around toward him. Benny was smiling at her. Plum gouged her with his knee again.

"There was no reason for any of it," the professor said.

"Chicken shit!"

Sugarman looked at Plum. Oline looked at Plum. Saline, Melby and Crosse, who had just come in, looked at Plum. They were all mad. He had jeopardized the revolution.
Crazy Barbara looked at Plum; he would not look at her. He got up stalked around the table.

"We should have gotten Striker in the first place," Plum said. "Who asked for this creep? Ann Arbor knows nothing."

"Striker was wounded last week," Barbara said. "And you know it."

"They were insane," the professor said.

Sugarman was calm, cold. "You know damn well we decided no violence."

Plum said nothing, sucked the sides of his cheeks in between his teeth.

"No vi-o-lence." Sugarman spelled it out. "You and Arthur could have blown it all. Stealing cars - that's horseshit."

"The FBI photographing us everytime we sneeze," Cline said.

Even Crazy Barbara was against him. His own woman. "The police could close Benny's down. Where would we meet?" she said.

"You mean where would you read your goddamn poetry."

She looked at Plum. "You're not a revolutionary; you're just a show off."

"Why does Benny let you read your poetry, bitch?"
"Why do you always piss with the bathroom door open?" Barbara turned and looked at Benny again. Then Plum began to say something to her she said, "fuck you," absently.

Plum hesitated a moment. "You don't even know who I am," he said to everybody. "You don't even know."

Everyone was embarrassed, looked away from Plum. Plum hated them. He was the only anarchist, real anarchist, left in the world.

Plum pointed at the professor. "He went to pieces!" Plum smashed the table more viciously than the professor had. He took a handful of the professor's leaflets, held them up in the air above his head, hurled them to the floor. "I wanted war paint," he screamed, "a fighter, a revolutionary! Keast needs killing. The board of Governors, all of them."

He stomped to the door, pushing Benny aside. "They'll get the killing they need, too," he promised. And then he left.

Crazy Barbara smiled sympathetically at Benny as he picked himself up from the table where Plum had shoved him. Then she turned to the professor. He detailed his plans for the coup against the president of the university.

President Keast left his twelfth floor office early in the afternoon and drove home. He was bored. He had been in touch with Parker at Columbia earlier in the morning,
explaining options, reassuring. He was in touch with Clifford at Arkansas, Schnieder at Chicago. They were all crying. Keast was laughing.

He went home and continued work on his formation of acanthus plants. He struck the chisel with the mallet, wood chips churled away from his hands. Later he would blend in a grapevine. He had become expert at this work, in his basement.

Plum took Arthur home. Then he drove several blocks away and parked the Mercury and locked it. He walked back to Arthur's, dropping the keys for the Mercury off at the barber shop, being paid fifty dollars for them, on the way. He could use the money.

Arthur woke up. He dragged out more wine and his scrapbook. He sat full lotus on the floor and showed Plum the newspaper clippings of his action. A cherry bomb flushed down the toilet at a McDonald's restaurant: the authorities said in the report that it was an act of teenage vandalism. Arthur had thought so too, at the time. Now he recognized it as his first act of terrorism, the starting point of his career.

He had next put the head of a hammer through the windshield of the principal's car. He had stolen record albums from K-mart. He got a motorcycle. He stole beer from beer trucks. He had helped in the liberation of Palmer Park. He sold drugs. He was arrested. He had poured tar in mail
boxes, aided in the burning of police cars. And he had been there the night Carlotta Williams pulled a train for fifteen members of the Detroit Renegades.

Plum was drunk. He decided to tell Arthur who he was.

"Look Art," he said, drawing Arthur up close to him. "Look beneath the beard. I wear it so people won't know who I am. I'm incognito. But I'll tell you. My real name is Alcott Adams. I got out of the Navy in 1966." But Arthur was asleep and his mouth was bubbling quietly. He didn't hear Plum.

(Kazantzakis had come to Alcott in Colorado. He came on behalf of Schwietzer who was sick at the time. Alcott was living in an abandoned mineshaft outside of Leadville. No one was supposed to have known Alcott was there.

Kazantzakis begged, Alcott refused. Kazantzakis went away.

A week later Kazantzakis returned with Schwietzer himself. Schwietzer begged Alcott to attend the international peace conference in Geneva. As Schwietzer's personal guest, Schwietzer was in a wheel chair, two attendants pushed him across the mine tailings following Alcott, arguing.

Nobel prize winners would be in attendance.

Alcott steadfastly refused.

Then said he'd consider - Schwietzer was failing, someone was needed to take his place. Alcott left Leadville and
hitch-hiked to St. Louis to think it over and to see his wife.)

Plum drank the last of Arthur's wine and then went back to his own apartment. But the door was locked. He knocked. Barbara answered but held the door open just enough to show her face. Plum drunkenly pushed the door open past her. He saw Prescott sitting in his own chair looking at some record albums. Plum knew what was up.

"Well, he had to stay someplace tonight," Barbara said.

"Shut up."

"Marianne was staying with Sugarman and I didn't know whether you would be home tonight. You seemed upset."

"I bet you didn't think I'd be home tonight. You think I don't know what's going on?"

"Plum?"

"I saw you looking at him at the meeting this afternoon." He walked up to Prescott who had straightened himself in the chair. "You think I don't know what's going on, Bud?"

"I was going to sleep in the living room," Prescott said. "On the sleeping bag."

"Sure."

"We didn't know whether you'd be home. I would have told you but you left," Barbara said.
"Sure. You think I'm crazy. You're the crazy one Barbara. You think this dip shit is slick because he comes from New York? He's nothing. A talker. You want action? Excitement? I'll bet this dude is queer."

Prescott got up. "I'm sorry if we upset you. We had not intend -.

"Shut up." Plum was mad. Prescott was being too nice. "You think I can't get another gun?"

Crazy Barbara got in between them. She was taking Prescott's side. Plum could see it. He laughed. "Look, Professor, why do you think they call her Crazy Barbara? You want to see pictures? I've got polaroids."

"Just a minute there," Prescott said.

Plum knew he was right. "Did she tell you that five months ago she was laying Ashley and Cline? Both at the same time?"

Prescott pushed Barbara out of the way. Plum swung for Prescott's head, but his teeth stung and he never completed the swing. His mouth was full of bloom. Judo! he thought and lunged for Barbara's waists. But a hammer struck him in the ear and spun him around. He lay dazed on the floor. Then Prescott was standing above him, poised with a two hundred pound anvil above his head. Plum ran out the door. He heard the anvil crash through the floor into the apartment below. He yelled up the stairs from the landing. "Benny
just lets you read your poetry there because you fuck him." Plum ran out of the apartment house.

They chased him all night. They had sewn direction finders into his jacket. Plum found a wino, beat him up and put the transistorized jacket on him.

Plum approached a woman at a bus stop.

"Who is he?" Plum demanded.

"Pardon me?"

"What's his name, goddamn it?" He shoved her against a light post roughly. "Your pimp. I want to know who he is." He slapped her across the face. "I'm taking over this territory. I'm moving in. You're working for me now. Understand?" He slapped her again. He took the money out of her purse and bought some wine.

When he left the liquor store, they were waiting for him. He ran through alleys and parking lots, he jumped over hedges to elude them. He crossed streets against the light.

He rested in back of a blind pig. He sat down. A shoe shine boy stole his shoes.

They sent dogs; blood hounds, German shepherds, rabid doberman pinschers.

Plum climbed a tree, ran out on its largest limb, jumped to the other side of a creek.

He ran into a theater, got a seat in the balcony, leaped superhumanely for the stage curtain, caught it and slid down. He ducked out the exit.
He fled to the bus depot. He walked straight through the lobby and into the men's restroom. He was a man in a tan trenchcoat and walked up to him.

"I need a gun," he said.

The man shook his head, no.

"You're black aren't you?"

"Yes."

Plum eyed the trench coat suspiciously. "Then you've got guns."

"No. I've got watches and rings."

"You're lying."

The man shook his head again. He pointed to the man by the nickel comb machine. "Packard," he said. "He has guns."

Plum bought a sporting Smith and Wesson from Packard. It took all of his money from the car and his newly acquired prostitute. But now he was ready for the professor and the president. And any others, if they needed killing too.

Plum walked back out onto the street. They were gone. They knew he was armed. Plum walked back to the campus. He crawled into the bushes beneath the Mad Anthony Memorial and fell asleep, his head on the footstone.

(Alcott had arrived in St. Louis late at night. Irwina, his wife, sat him at the kitchen table while she fixed him dinner. The twins, Johnny and Quince, were
asleep. Alcott hadn't eaten anything since Denver. He was tired from hitch-hiking.

But he noticed that the apartment was fixed up, plush in fact. He asked her how she managed so well.

She told him about the grant from the foundation. The Daughters of the American Revolution had recommended them. Actually, the grant was in Quince and Johnny's names.

Schwietzer had had something to do with it. He had come the year before.

Alcott was sick. He was mad. They had always been interested in his name, not in himself. He had never even had a nickname. No one had ever cared about him. He had never been teased, never hated. Eleanor Roosevelt, Secretaries of Navies, Presidents, diplomats. No one had ever seen him as a human being. Not even Irwina he suspected.

Alcott left. This time forever.

Schwietzer died a month later. Kazantzakis was passed over for the nobel prize. Irwina abandoned the children and moved to Cincinnati. And the last home for peace in the world was lost.

Alcott changed his name, dedicated himself to anarchy.

President Keast slept easily through the night. His wife took pills to fight her insomnia.
May 27, 1970: Wayne State University, Detroit.

Plum's head hurt when he awoke in the morning. His side hurt from where he had slept on the sun. The pain made him feel good. He waited for them in McKenzie Hall. When they came in, he grabbed Crazy Barbara by the arm. They were sneaking up the backstairs.

"I'm in," he said. "I'm in or I warn everyone." He rubbed his split lip, pushed it together with his thumb and forefinger. He tasted the blood in his mouth.

Sugarman came up. He looked at Plum. "Okay," he said. "But no violence. It goes as we have planned."

Plum smiled. He nodded. He hated Sugarman's lousy guts.

Crazy Barbara pulled her arm out of his grip. She stepped back, looked at his bare feet.

"The crabs," he explained. "I slept on the beach. They ate my shoes."

She smiled at Plum sympathetically, like a sister. Plum laughed unnaturally, looking at her mouth.

She ran ahead, to ascend the staircase with the professor. No one saw the Smith and Wesson in Plum's waistband.

"I went to the theater last night," Plum said. "I listened to a good jazz band afterward." But no one was listening, no one looked, they were going ahead. Plum hated them.

The professor had planned it superbly. The sign on the door said walk in, they kicked the door down. They
swarmed the secretary, locked her in a closet. They opened the door to the inner office, ran in and locked it behind them. The room was crowded.

The president remained cool, demanded that they state their reasons for busting in. Demanded that they each put their name on a paper for disciplinary action.

The president was struck in the face. He tried to rise from his desk, they shoved him back into his chair. Flum held back, watching.

They had planned it so classes were letting out. Cline and Ashley and others were announcing on the street below what was about to take place. And why.

The president saw Plum's gun. He demanded that they come to order, that they explain themselves. He was pulled from the chair. They took his suit coat off. He resisted. The professor choked him with his tie, hit him in the mouth. The president was docile. They threw the suit coat out the window to get the crowd's attention. Everyone was sweating. There was a great roar of approval from below.

Plum did not know who to kill.

Prescott opened his briefcase and released the pamphlets.

"Children, children," pleaded the President.

Prescott glared at him from the window. Barbara was watching her.
The president was quiet. They took off his shoes, then his pants. They dangled the pants out the window, waving them at the crowd. The campus police charged the front of the building. The students let the pants go. They dropped. Then an updraft between buildings caught them and swept them upward. Change fell out of the pockets, car keys. The pants floated up the block. The crowd cheered deliriously.

They had made a carnival of the revolution. Plum sank to the floor in a corner. He knew what he must do.

The police entered the building. Reporters with cameras came after them. The Detroit faction congratulated themselves and left.

But Plum stayed behind. Sugarman grabbed him by the arm to bring him along.

"No, I'm not done," Plum said.

The police were coming up the staircase.

Sugarman pulled his arm again. "We've got an escape; a cable across to the parking structure. They can't get us."

"I stay," Plum said.

The president was weeping.

They could hear the police and the reporters now. Sugarman ran out. Plum locked the door behind him. He turned to the president smiling.
"Quick," he said. "Put these on." Plum quickly took off his own trousers and gave them to the old man.

The old man cried. He touched Plum on the shoulder. "Thank you," he said.

Plum pushed him away.

The police were outside the door.

"But I can get you amnesty," the president said. "A scholarship. Put the gun away."

"I'm an anarchist," Plum laughed. He slapped the president across the cheek with the pistol. He tucked his shirt into his underwear, shot the lock off the door, and ran out firing.