

PERSONAL
ENCOUNTERS
WITH
YOUNG
EXTREMISTS

STEPPING OVER

BY
MALCOLM
McCONNELL

\$17.50 FPT

STEPPING OVER

Personal Encounters with Young Extremists

by Malcolm McConnell

Two decades of unprecedented change and social disruption have wracked the lives of young people around the world. This book illuminates these troubled decades by weaving a tapestry of compelling stories that embody, first-hand, the confusing cultural upheavals of the past twenty years. McConnell probes his subjects, interacts with them, and reveals why they—young terrorists, fanatics, murderers, teen-age hookers, religious zealots, extremists of the left and the right—stepped over the line of normal behavior.

Some of the accounts in this book are heroically tragic; others are inspiring examples of young people emerging from their struggles with their characters tempered by the fires they have been through. One chapter parallels the odysseys of two troubled teenage runaways—one saved by the dedication of others, the other lost in the destructive centrifuge of the commercial sex industry. Other chapters chronicle a young man's descent into madness amid the glittery confusion of the Sun Belt's boom years; another youth's journey from confused adolescence to revolutionary violence during the Vietnam war; the unhappy career of a would-be Ku Klux Klan leader; the strange journey of a squeaky-clean young couple, down through a drug-filled hell and up through religious redemption, from one "normality" to another; the lost life of an Italian terrorist; the chilling beliefs of an Iranian fanatic; and the heartbreak of a father who loses his daughter to the evils of Jonestown.

These accounts, all true and previously untold, bring a confused era back to vivid life and give it new meaning. From its opening pages to its inspiring conclusion this remarkably moving book stirs the reader to a new understanding of the turbulence in the minds and hearts of a profoundly troubled generation.

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Personal Encounters

with

Young Extremists

by

Malcolm McConnell

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Author's Note:

Throughout this book, I have tried to protect the privacy of those people I have profiled whose lives are not part of the public record. In order to do this—and also to shield several of them from possible violent reprisal—I have sometimes altered names, biographic details, as well as the settings and sequences of certain events portrayed.

Individuals whose lives are already well-documented have not been disguised.

A few people profiled have been engaged in criminal activities; their identities have also been sufficiently altered to assure anonymity. Most importantly, I do not want the selflessness of the people who cooperated with me to be the cause of any additional problems in their already troubled lives.

MALCOLM MCCONNELL

*“Take the potion like they used to take
in Ancient Greece, and step over quietly
because we are not committing suicide—
it’s a revolutionary act. . . . Lay down your
life with dignity. Don’t lay down with
tears and agony. It’s nothing to death . . .
it’s just stepping over to another plane.”*

The Reverend Jim Jones
Jonestown, Guyana
November 18, 1978

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Prologue

Indiana, Summer, 1977

IN JULY, 1977, Carol and I returned to America after having lived overseas for 14 years. We had left Washington on that hot August afternoon in 1963 when Martin Luther King, the American prophet of nonviolence, had stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and proclaimed, "I have a dream." In 1977, we landed at JFK—a memorial to another assassinated president—on the day that the Son of Sam murderer shot his final victim. When I followed the skycap with our bags out through the crowds at the International Arrivals terminal, a grinning Hare Krishna girl, whose head was shaved beneath her curly blond wig, thrust a flower at me. Instinctively, I took it, and she then proceeded to badger me for a contribution to her cult all the way to the taxi stand.

During the years between those two widely separated summer afternoons, we had lived and worked in Africa, Europe and Asia. I had first been a Foreign Service officer, then a Peace Corps director, a novelist and a free-lance journalist.

By chance, I'd been witness to a variety of undeclared wars

and unexpected rebellions, to political upheaval and social chaos on a global and historically unprecedented scale.

For a few years, we had tried to build a quiet sanctuary from these events in a Greek island village. But we soon learned that there were few places of pleasant exile in the Mediterranean secure from mass tourism and the cultural pollution that it spreads.

Now we were back in the United States to spend several consecutive years, much longer than our previous business trips and vacations home. We were coming back to a country that was both familiar and exotic. I had taken a position as a visiting writer at a branch of the University of Wisconsin. And the prospect of returning to the same state, to the same school at which I'd studied 20 years before, was both appealing and a little frightening.

I was looking forward to the quiet stability of a regular teaching schedule, after the years of free-lance writing overseas. But I was also apprehensive about my students. In the 20 years that had passed since I'd been a freshman at the University of Wisconsin, young people all over the world had undergone a seemingly fundamental transformation, a sea-change shift of startling proportions in values and behavior, even of appearance. Living the transient life of an expatriate writer, I'd had my own share of encounters with weird young people, ranging from prototypical European hippies to political extremists of various stripes and colorations. Basically, however, I'd worked and socialized with members of my own generation.

Now I was back in America to teach, and that would put me in direct contact with young people whose generation was separated from my own by a chasm much deeper and wider than the 20 years that divided our ages. I was curious to discover what this new career would bring. But I was also a little frightened.

* * *

We finally reached Joe and Helen Ryan's neighborhood

around nine that night, having taken the wrong exit off I-70 and gotten lost in the Burger Chef-Donut Hut maze of suburban Indianapolis. It was a cloying August night, with heat lightning all around the horizon and a windshield full of squashed bugs. Both Carol and I were worn out and more than a little grubby after a 16-hour day on the road, all the way from New York in our overburdened, red Chevette. With our collection of typewriter cases, cardboard cartons, suitcases and duffle bags on the roof rack, we looked like refugees.

Like actual refugees, we were probably undergoing culture shock; I know *I* certainly was. It had been years since we had actually lived in the States for any length of time, and the suburban fast-food strips metastasizing around every town and city were especially disagreeable to my eye. Mile after flat, glaring mile of franchised mediocrity: Long John Silver's, Dairy Queen, Taco Bell, Waffle House . . . I sat in the slow-moving Friday traffic and stared at the passing ugliness. Around us, gigantic cars full of teen-agers careened from lane to lane, as if they could actually get someplace faster by jockeying for better position, as if they actually had someplace to go. For perhaps the 20th time that day, I wondered what the world must look like to kids growing up in these suburban developments. A standard world, for standard-issue kids: A burrito from Taco Bell tasted exactly the same—and *was* almost molecularly identical—in San Diego or Camden, Maine; the Cinema II in the mall was assembly line prefab, and, once you were inside watching the orchestrated mayhem of *Star Wars*, it didn't matter if you were in Atlanta or Seattle.

"There," Carol said, pointing to a confusing array of red lights and turn arrows dangling over a wide intersection. "Jefferson Street. Turn left . . . fast."

I managed the turn amid a cacophony of horns, and ten minutes later the car was safely parked in Joe's driveway. Looking down the curving, treeless streets as we unloaded our bags, I felt a quiet sadness. These sprawling, split-level houses were also all the *same*, despite the alternating trims of brick or redwood. This neighborhood was like some kind of

base housing, like Married Officers' Quarters. Culture shock, I silently reminded myself; I've just been overseas too long.

* * *

We had first met Joe and Helen Ryan 20 years before, in Madison, when Carol and I had been undergraduates at the university. Joe was struggling to complete his engineering degree before his GI benefits ran out. At that point they had two children—Joe, Jr., and Karen—and a third on the way. Supplying their kids with sneakers and Wheaties kept the Ryans about as broke as Carol and I, so we had sometimes combined our resources by splurging on a couple of quarts of Black Label beer and a discount pizza.

Having no children of our own, Carol and I had taken an interest in Joe and Helen's kids over the years, especially in Karen, the oldest girl, who was four when we first met the family. On our various Foreign Service assignments in Africa, we'd always made a point of sending her colorful postcards and descriptive letters. As a child, Karen had shown an unusual curiosity about geography and exotic cultures, and by age 12 had announced that she would become either a journalist or a novelist. In the late '60s, when she was a high school senior, she wrote me to ask what books she should read and what college courses she should take to prepare her for a career as a writer. In 1969, I was back in the Midwest doing a magazine story and had visited Karen at her freshman dorm.

Karen impressed me then as being an especially serious young person; she insisted on taking notes when I mentioned writers like Günter Grass and Doris Lessing, and when I talked about the Peace Corps. Short and buxom, she had gingerbread Irish coloring and active green eyes. From the little time I spent with her that evening, it was clear that she had deeply held feelings about all the usual 1960s issues: the War, the Third World, and the Women's Movement. It was also clear that she had a real hunger for information, an impatience to learn a lot, quickly. When I left her dorm lounge

that windy evening in October, I felt quite good, proud that I might have helped shape her character.

Now, eight years later, Karen lived at home again, and I was curious to see her. She had been through a fair amount of "heavy numbers," as the kids called trouble: a divorce, a bitter child-custody suit involving welfare officials and her ex-in-laws, some crazy time living with dopers out in Montana, and, reading between the lines of Helen's letters, apparently some severe medical problems. In the course of all this, she had naturally dropped out of college. But—again, according to Helen—she still wanted to write. I thought that the cataclysmic events of her life just might make interesting reading, and I was eager to talk to her about this, to encourage her. In my mind, I still pictured the freckled, bouncy girl in a cardigan sweater, holding a neatly organized notebook on the lap of her pleated skirt.

That memory of Karen did not last long in the presence of the real person. The appropriate word, of course, is *travesty*, but it's too painful to use that term when describing someone you love. She met us at the door, and in the flurry of kisses and unloading the car in the dark driveway, she almost looked like the same girl I'd seen in the college dorm. But in the full light of the family room, with the side color screen of the Zenith glaring disconcertingly on the opposite wall, I was taken aback by her appearance. She was skeletal, with lank red hair falling over stretched vellum cheeks and protruding collar bones. Her eyes, however, told the full story. I had lived long enough in Tangier in the late '60s and seen enough people "headin' East" to Afghanistan and Nepal to recognize the eyes of a burnt-out doper.

At the supper table Karen continually interrupted as Carol and I tried to discuss our recent trip to the Far East with Jeanie, her younger sister. Karen had obviously been stoned on something when we arrived, probably just grass by the languid way she spoke, but she had disappeared up to her bedroom for ten minutes while we were all having a beer, and when she reappeared, she was jangly fast, finger-snapping

speedy. Now she sat opposite me, worrying potato salad on her plate with her fork, her eyes jumping around the table. Her family were unsuccessfully trying to ignore her condition, to present a unified façade as if there were nothing unusual going on.

I tried not to stare at her eyes; I tried to answer Jeanie's questions about students we'd met in Pakistan and Malaysia. ". . . A lot of them are older," I said, keeping my face turned away from Karen. "They get married in their villages, have kids, *then* begin university. They. . . ."

"What about Brautigan?" Karen snapped, her voice flat, rattling in her mouth.

We all looked at her now. She snickered, then frowned. I had a nasty internal flash of the young women in the Charles Manson trial. "I'm sorry, Karen," I said slowly, forcing myself to engage her pulsing eyes. "I'm not sure I know what. . . ."

"Brautigan. Richard Brautigan. Confederate . . . Confederate . . . from. . . ." She looked desperately at her younger brother Jimmy, as would a forgetful ambassador searching out his interpreter in mid-speech.

Joe Ryan stared down at his plate, shaking his head. Helen's eyes teared up and she sighed. Beside me, Carol gazed at the wall. From the open door to the family room, I could hear an echoing laugh track on the television.

"*Confederate General from Big Sur*," Jimmy said, hardly trying to disguise the contempt in his voice.

"What the heck's *that* got to do with students in Malaysia?" Jeanie asked, blatantly indignant.

"One of Karen's little time warps," Jim said, giggling.

"Jimmy!" Helen scolded. "I've asked you not to. . . ."

"What the hell kind of *lecture* tour was it if you didn't talk about Richard Brautigan?" Karen's voice was still flat, oddly low in timbre.

Jeanie rolled her eyes. "Karen. . . . We were talking about students now. It's only been about fifteen minutes since Mal was talking about authors." Again, Jim giggled. Jeanie smiled thinly at Carol and me. "Sorry, old Karen has these, well . . .

these little lapses."

Joe cleared his throat and thrust his plate away. Helen wiped her eyes with a paper napkin. Somehow, we all got through the next ten brittle minutes at the dinner table.

Later, Jeanie came outside as I was locking up the car. She was tall, unlike Joe and Helen's other kids, a pretty, long-legged girl with darker hair than either Karen or Jim. She leaned against the garage door in the glow of the yellow security light as I rearranged bags inside the Chevette.

"Sorry about Karen, Mal," she finally said, speaking softly.

I closed up a duffle bag and slammed the hatchback. "You don't have to be sorry, Jeanie." I tried to choose my words carefully. "How long . . . ah, how long's she been like this?"

Jeanie tugged at the frayed edge of her cut-offs. "Since she came back from Montana last year. She's, well . . . not in real good shape."

"Yeah?"

Jeanie shrugged and stared out into the dark suburban street. "Those people she was with out there, they were big dealers . . . like wholesalers. They used to cap this really strong acid and speed and sell it to street dealers." Jeanie gazed down at the smooth concrete of the driveway, at the translucent flying bugs and powder-white moths. "Karen told me once . . . she kind of *brags* about it sometimes. . . . She told me she got wrecked *every day* for like a year."

"Every day?"

Jeanie made a throw-away gesture. "On loose acid, or speed, sometimes ludes . . . whatever . . . you know, the stuff they were capping to sell. She said they used to sort of wet the tips of their fingers and lick it off."

"Every day on LSD? On speed or Quaaludes? For a year?"

"Yep. I'm afraid so. Booze, too . . . with the ludes."

I sighed. "Jesus Christ. What do your parents think about all this?"

Now Jeanie sighed, an uncanny replication of her mother. "I don't know for sure. Sometimes Dad says she's getting better . . . but I don't know. At least she's home now where we

can all sort of watch her." She glanced over her shoulder, into the bright garage. "Dad . . . well, he doesn't like to talk about it. He never had anything like this when he was young. He can't handle it . . . you know, he doesn't know *what* to do."

I closed my eyes, and negative images of interstate highways rolled by on my dark retinas. Time for some sleep. I would worry about Karen in the morning.

"Malcolm?" Jeanie was choked up now. "You've seen real bad acid heads overseas. Do they get over it? Do they, like, recover?"

"I don't know, Jeanie. Honest I don't. I think some of them do, if there's no real brain damage. What's she taking now?"

"Downers and speed sometimes . . . grass and booze, like a lot of kids."

"Karen's not a kid, Jeanie. She's twenty-six years old. She's got a four-year-old son . . . *somewhere*." I rubbed my cheek hard. "Does she work? Does she ever read a book anymore?"

Jeanie sensed the bitterness in my voice and sidled away to the middle of the driveway. "She works when she can, but she has these flashbacks sometimes. Then . . . you know, it's a problem. She was on welfare a while, but Dad didn't like *that*, so she's just back at home now."

"Has she tried to write anything?" I shook my head, my anger giving way to sadness. "She used to say she wanted so badly to become a writer."

"No," Jeanie whispered. "Karen has a hard time with anything like that now. She plays her stereo up in her room. Sometimes she comes down and watches the late movies all night."

Jeanie and I stared at each other a moment. We had been speaking in a near whisper, in tones usually reserved for a discussion of a terminally ill family member.

I glanced at my watch. Almost midnight. Down the block a dog was barking. All the houses had on bright security lights—front, sides, and back. The crickets were noisy. For a moment, I felt like I was back in the suburbs of some raw, sprawling African capital like Kinshasa.

"Go to bed, Jeanie," I said. "I'll just stretch my legs a little."

Jeanie went back through the garage, and I leaned against the car while the bugs smacked into the floodlight above my head. I didn't really feel like walking; I just wanted to be alone for a while. When Jeanie and I had come outside, Karen had been slouched on a Naugahyde recliner in the family room, giggling hollowly at a "Star Trek" rerun. In order to reach the guest room, I would have to walk past her, and I was not ready to confront her again.

As I stared out at the quiet street, I recognized the nature of my reluctance to face Karen. It was as if she were ill or had been crippled in a terrible automobile accident. On the surface, she was still the same young woman I had known and cared about since her childhood, but now she had undergone an irrevocable inner change.

Suddenly, I remembered Nancy, a girl who had grown up on my block in Milwaukee. Nancy had caught polio in 1948, the terrible summer the beaches were closed and we were all quarantined to our own backyards. When Nancy came back to Fernwood School that fall, she had changed. Her left leg was withered. She dragged her foot in a steel brace that clanked on the cement steps. We all avoided her; she was unlucky, proof of our own vulnerability to the unpredictable danger that could strike out of nowhere and kill or cripple us. Nancy represented chaos, and, like all kids, we longed for stability.

Now, nearly 30 years later, I had just encountered a similar pariah, a young woman whose very presence served to remind me of the dangerous and unpredictable forces loose in the world. We no longer had to fear the poliomyelitis virus which had drifted unseen into Nancy's shady backyard on Delaware Avenue, but there were other invisible and equally destructive agents threatening contemporary society. Nancy had overcome her paralysis and eventually became a music teacher, a happy and productive adult.

Karen Ryan had led a healthy, untroubled childhood. Her parents had seen that she was immunized against not only

polio, but also every other threatening childhood illness. She had been raised in times of unparalleled and peaceful prosperity. But now, at age 26, she was hardly a happy, productive adult. She lived at home; she worked when she was able. In the years since she had graduated from high school, Karen had experienced at first-hand one of the most socially disruptive and chaotic periods in human history. She had been swept up in a cyclonic culture storm and dropped back eight years later, crippled in ways no one could have foreseen when her parents had taken her to the pediatrician for her polio vaccination.

The gray matter of her nervous system had not been damaged by any virus, but by strange, powerful chemicals such as LSD, methamphetamine, and PCP. Her perceptions of marriage and parenthood, of filling a productive role in a stable society, had taken such a battering that she had simply opted out of her adult identity, surrendering with it her unwanted child, her hopes for a profession, and her personal accountability. She lived at home, sheltered by parents who loved her, but who had no hope of understanding her.

From across the flat neighborhood, I was assaulted by the doomsday warble of a new-fangled police siren. Somebody, probably a young person, was in trouble out there in the wilderness between the Taco Bell and Long John Silver's. Maybe a high school girl had OD'd in the back of a van; perhaps a teenage boy had felt compelled to trash a laundromat. The possibilities for speculation were wide and varied.

Again, I could picture Karen's scrambled eyes as she glared at me across the dinner table. She was simply not the same young person who had sat so primly on the sofa of the college dorm only eight years before, thoughtfully taking notes as our conversation ranged over literature, politics and the problems of the developing world. Now, Karen would have trouble carrying on a coherent conversation about the comics in the morning paper.

But I also knew that Karen was not an isolated aberration. Drug abuse had reached pandemic proportions, not only in America, but all across the world. Here in the States, I'd just

read, nearly 20 percent of Americans reported illicit drug use, or used drugs illicitly, in the past month.

Several million were said to be members of cults.

Suicide was now the third-ranking cause of death among young Americans, right behind car accidents and homicides.

Tens of thousands of young Europeans had either joined or actively supported armed terrorist bands.

Random street crime—most of it committed by young people—was on the rise everywhere in the world.

And on my recent lecture tour of the Middle East and Southeast Asia, I had encountered young political and religious extremists of truly frightening fanaticism.

But these bloodless statistics quickly gave way to more evocative mental pictures, the unconscious distillation of a troubled decade's media images. I seemed to gaze at grainy, clandestine snapshots from "liberated" Cambodia, photos of the execution pits and crucifixion racks constructed by the smirking soldiers of the Khmer Rouge. In Lebanon, Muslim and Christian relief workers dug sooty limbs and torsos from the blasted ruins of one more village or refugee camp.

In my imagined landscape, images of blasted embassies seemed to abound, and flames shot from chancery windows in The Hague and *neutral* Stockholm. I could picture the murdered ambassadors, oddly formal in their bloody summer suits, and lesser diplomats, livestock in a slaughter pen, herded under the muzzle of the inevitable Kalashnikov in the hands of the inevitably masked "freedom fighter." In my mind, hospitals blazed in Belfast; kibbutz nurseries exploded, and airport terminals stood gutted by *plastique*, altars to atavistic violence.

But, now, there were also more domestic images: another urban murder victim was lowered into a floppy plastic body bag while the dazed cops and paramedics stared into the TV lights of the mini-cams. A young, white, middle-class body hunched in some stairwell, a heroin needle dangling from its tied-off arm. Goggle-eyed young robots, Moonies, and Hare Krishnas marched in lockstep across my vision, followed by a

clutch of frantic parents, dragging their overgrown adolescents down the driveway of a cult house, assisted by a publicity-hungry deprogrammer.

In all these nightmare pictures there was a strange, disturbing new presence either explicit or implied: a young extremist, a young person who had somehow been transformed, like Karen, into a travesty of his or her former self. I had always associated early adulthood with optimistic expansion, with enrichment and building. Now, for so many, this period seemed to have become a time of narrow and destructive extremism.

I listened to the crazy sirens near the shopping mall. It sounded as if an ambulance had joined the police car. From out of my depression, I had a memory flash of another young person with jangling, chaotic eyes. He had been an Iranian *madrasah* teacher named Mehdi. I knew that I was overtired and disturbed, but standing there in Joe and Helen's driveway, hearing those sirens, it seemed to me quite plausible that there was some unseen but tangible connection between the events that had crippled Karen Ryan and those that had maimed the young zealot who called himself Mehdi.

I also knew from experience that such late-night insights were often spurious. But I had been deeply troubled by my confrontations with both Karen and Mehdi. And I was beginning to feel obsessed with the notion that there was, in fact, an invisible link of causation connecting their lives, as well as the lives of so many other troubled, violently self-destructive young people in the world today.

In the next few years, I would be alternating assignments as a writer-in-residence with periods of traveling and writing overseas. If there were any connection between the forces that had sent Karen Ryan careening from her defeat at a child-custody hearing to the dope ranches of the New West and those that had driven Mehdi to dreams of bloody martyrdom, I might be in a good position to find and reveal them. Such a project might be overly ambitious and destined for incomplete success, but encountering the travesty of Karen Ryan

had deeply affected me. I was determined to search out those connections and let the search lead me where it would.

Another neighbor dog was yapping now. There seemed to be more sirens in the distance. But nobody on the quiet suburban street seemed unduly alarmed. The voodoo wail of the sirens must have been quite familiar to them. The noise certainly troubled me, though.

Again, I saw the mirrored instability of Karen and Mehdi's eyes.

Part I

Chapter One

Mashhad, Iran

March 1977

THE LECTURE was going badly, but I really didn't care. I just wanted to get the damn thing over with, hack through the inevitable, embarrassing ten minutes of pidgin question-and-answer, then go back to the hotel. This was my 23rd lecture in 29 days; Iran was the fourth Asian country I had "swung" through in four weeks. John Updike once satirized such cultural-exchange junkets as "Third Worlding it": the academic equivalent of a Congressional fact-finding boondoggle. Updike knew what he was talking about. Certainly my lecture here in Mashhad had about as much *program* value for USIS as a film strip on saving the snail darter.

Out before my rostrum, the narrow classroom in the Iran-American Society held perhaps 20 teenagers and a handful of sullen adult teachers. The local employee who'd set up this room had insisted with Persian hauteur on using a new amplification system, the intricacy of which he had obviously not

yet mastered. So, my secondhand insights on contemporary American literature were alternately punctuated by whining feedback and booming Darth Vader echoes.

Several of the younger boys giggled. They were seated by Shi'ite auto-segregation well away from the clutch of adolescent girls, who were half-hidden beneath kerchiefs and bulky sweaters, a sort of hybrid Woolworth *chador*, typical of Iran's ambivalent relationship to the 20th century. The girls, however, must have appeared wildly seductive to the boys, who were obviously much more absorbed by the proximity of living, breathing female flesh than they were by my sage comments on Saul Bellow and the survival of the individual human spirit in the face of bewildering technological and social change.

Sleet clicked unpleasantly on the windowpanes, the heating pipes clanked in response. I turned a note card, lowered my face and began the discussion of Thomas Pynchon and *Gravity's Rainbow*. As my electronically warped voice rumbled on, I let my mind drift. Here I was in the extreme northeast corner of Iran—in an area that evoked for me memories of Tamerlane and Ghengis Khan—haranguing a handful of bored Iranian kids on the glories of Bellow, Styron and Joyce Carol Oates . . . not to mention Thomas Pynchon. What the hell would they make of Pynchon if the Shah's censors ever allowed his books to be sold? An unlikely possibility at best; there wasn't much actual literature that made it past the paranoid scrutiny of SAVAK. I looked up quickly, trying once again to guess who the SAVAK agent was at this lecture. No one out there tonight seemed a likely candidate. In my other programs during the past week, the secret police watchdog had been obvious. At the university program in Khuzistan province, the SAVAK man had been brazen enough to stroll to the front of the modern hall and set up his own tape-recorder microphone. Not that the thug had been interested in my remarks; he just wanted to intimidate the students, to keep them from discussing the relevance of my lecture as it pertained to their own lives, their own country. Those were

topics that were not discussed. If anyone were to comment on the survival of the individual human spirit in modern Iran, it would be an official representative of the Shah's government. Everyone else was forbidden. Period.

After the talk that night, I questioned one of my American counterparts about the obvious intimidation tactics of the SAVAK man. I was told that the government used them to discourage "provocateurs," and that the Shah was very worried about the students being "distracted" from their main responsibility—study—by outside agitators.

I interrupted, trying to discern the actual effect of having a secret police force on a campus. Well, he said, there had been this rather unpleasant *incident*. In a rhetoric class, he and his students were discussing Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as a persuasive model. Asked to comment on the meaning of the speech, a student—an adult petroleum engineer taking humanities courses—said Lincoln obviously meant that democratic freedoms were worth fighting for, even worth the horror of a protracted civil war. The next day, this student was absent from class, and he didn't return for over a month. When he did come back, my young colleague added, he was all "messed up": bruised about the head and face, and the fingers of his left hand bandaged. The student reported that he'd had an accident at work.

"Do you think," the young American professor asked, "that the SAVAK actually, well . . . *got* him for what he said about Lincoln?"

I stared at him, then knocked back the rest of my cloying orange soda. "I really don't know," I lied. "I'm a stranger here myself."

Now, six days later, I was eager to finish up this sham of a literature lecture and this larger sham of a speaking tour. I wanted to get out of Iran. The hectic travel schedule was exhausting, certainly, but there was more to it than fatigue and jet lag. For anyone who walked around with his eyes open, this country was horrifying, grotesque. It was not simply the clotted traffic of the cities, the shallowly submerged xenopho-

bia of the people in the streets, or the shoddy, ersatz western architecture spreading like prefab concrete fungus across the medieval Persian cities of Isfahan and Shiraz. The distaste I felt was provoked by the palpable presence of something much more fundamental: terror and hatred. The boyish American academic might wonder aloud if the SAVAK would actually kidnap and torture a student for paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, but I didn't have to ask. I'd lived too long in the dictatorships of the Third World as a Foreign Service officer not to recognize the pattern. The Shah and his secret police were simply less subtle than Mobutu in Zaire or Assad in Syria.

But beyond the obvious atmosphere of police state repression—exemplified by the thuggish SAVAK agents in their predictable rat-gray “plainclothes” business suits in every hotel lobby or restaurant—there was a darker and even more troubling presence: a fierce and widespread loathing for all things modern and Western. I'd encountered it our first day in central Teheran, walking up the cold and windy boulevards. In the crush of pedestrians squeezing through one of the regular blaring gridlocks at an intersection, Carol and I had sought the protection of a traffic-light stanchion while the crowd elbowed and shoved around the stalled cars. It was a cloudless, smoggy winter morning and the weak sun glinted from acres of motionless vehicles.

We were near the university and many of the people on the streets were students, or at least appeared to be of university age. As we clutched the steel pole to keep from being bowled over and trampled, we witnessed as nasty a display of fundamentalist aggression as any I'd seen while living in the Muslim world. Two girl students—tastefully dressed in fur-trimmed jackets, mid-calf skirts, and boots—were caught in the crush, facing us halfway across the intersection. One girl had a bright, almost preppy, striped scarf loosely wrapped about her throat. Her head was back as she laughed at some comment made by her girlfriend.

They were confronted by four young men in dark, mis-

matched suit coats and mud-spattered trousers: obviously displaced country boys, more troops in the brigades of uprooted peasants that had been marching into Iran's cities in the past ten years, searching for jobs. The girls tried to side-step the young men; words, then insults, were exchanged. The girl with the scarf clutched her books closely to her chest and shook her head, vigorously denying some accusation. Then, with the spastic clarity that always sharpens street violence, there was an explosion of flailing limbs and blows. On either side, a boy held the girl, pinning her arms. Her schoolbooks careened down into the muddy slush. The other girl was screaming, and the crowd had formed a tense, isolating wall around them. As I stared, dry-mouthed with outrage, the largest boy raised his clenched right fist—like a club of calloused bone—and slammed it between the girl's legs. She doubled over, her face white, only to be jerked upright. He struck her again, but she pulled free, and his companions dropped the girl. The four shouldered their way into the anonymous crowd.

Ten meters off, in the middle of the intersection, a stylishly uniformed policeman lounged on a little wedding cake of a traffic platform. The girl's friend screamed at him, but the cop turned away from her with slow disdain. Around our steel-pole sanctuary, I saw the faces of the men, many leering with unashamed sexual excitement, others laughing at the punishment the middle-class student girl had just received for wearing her provocatively tight sweater and the swishing flannel skirt and boots of some French television whore. The men around us, many students themselves, only seemed to be sorry that the chastisement had been so mild and so brief.

Hundreds of immobile vehicles shimmered in the smoggy sunlight, radiating out from this knot of violence. Hondas and small, whining scooters jerked and twisted along this metal reef. Far away to the north, I could see a hazy line of snow on the mountains. The air stank of diesel and of sooty, poorly refined heating oil. Carol had moved close beside me, unconsciously billowing out her green Tyrolean coat to mask the

contours of her body. I had heard only bad reports on Iran from Foreign Service friends who had served here. Now I was beginning to understand why.

This was an emotionally sick country, a wounded society. In the next seven days, I lectured in Khuzistan, Shiraz and Isfahan, crisscrossing the country in dirty old Air Iran Boeings. By the end of that week, I was truly tired of Iran, repulsed and depressed by the atmosphere of distrust, anger, and repression. Dispossessed Shi'ite peasants assaulted a girl on the streets of downtown Teheran. The SAVAK ripped out a young man's fingernails for commenting on the Gettysburg Address. At the sprawling Isfahan airport, where we changed planes three times in four days, I counted 76 Cobra helicopter gunships, like drowsing prehistoric insects in their desert-tan camouflage. Eleven huge C-130 transports squatted in the winter sunlight further off the runway. In the rusty shanty town surrounding Shiraz, I saw peasant women washing cooking pots in a foul ditch. I had been three years removed from the Third World; in that period the global economy had been sabotaged by OPEC, and the contrasts between the very poor and the opulent, between the angry, dispossessed peasants in the cities and the arrogant elite, had become more pronounced. Or perhaps I had unconsciously relinquished some of my former protective cynicism and was more vulnerable.

Whatever the reasons, Iran troubled me. Underneath the obvious social and political dislocation, I sensed a more fundamental psychological turmoil, what sociologists call anomie. These people hated the modern world with the passion of avenging zealots, yet they were dependent on a modern political and economic system literally for their daily bread—which in Iran was made from imported Nebraska wheat, paid for by the same petro-dollars that brought in the Western clothes, the soft-core Italian porn films and the Cobra gunships, and also paid the salaries of the SAVAK torturers. The Shah's White Revolution had convulsed the vast, arid countryside, creating an illiterate, underemployed urban proletariat and an outraged body of Shi'ite clergy, now deprived of their

former judicial power and ownership of huge tracts of farmland. The newly created Western banks and economic institutions had taken away the former moneylending function of the traditional *bazaari* merchants. Families that had been teetering on the edge of the Westernized middle class were torn asunder by the prospect of their children, especially their daughters, leaving home to enter the frightening one-way tunnel of secular, Western education. And to this turbulent situation the inexorably corrosive force of inflation had recently been added.

One result of this upheaval was a ubiquitous ambivalence; people I met flaunted their sometimes fractured Western education and their lopsided understanding of the modern world, while simultaneously praising the values of medieval Shi'ite wisdom and even their own improbable, ancient Persian ancestry. At a dinner party following my lecture in Khuzistan, I was buttonholed by a pudgy Iranian professor with pale Aryan features. He proceeded to barrage me with a name-dropping chronicle of Western writers whom he purported to be his close friends. He then leaned across the restaurant table in a conspiratorial manner and flashed me the Montgomery Ward label of his beige double-knit sport coat. It appeared that he had carried out a speaking tour in America very similar to my own junket in Iran. Egg McMuffins, he said, apropos of nothing, were fine for breakfast; of course, he ate ham and pork all the time. He drank Booth's Gin, as well; could I perhaps buy him a case from the American PX in Isfahan and send it down to him here?

When I tried to explain that I did not have PX privileges, his manner abruptly changed. No longer was he the fraternal pseudo-sophisticate. Americans, he loudly proclaimed, thought Iranians were primitive children; we constantly confused Iran, *Persia*, with the Arab world; we dismissed Islam as idolatry, somehow connected to the repulsive practices of Hindu India. America was a civilization crippled by its own greed and sexual obsessions. Most American college girls were no better than prostitutes; their fees were simply higher:

marriage. They were trained like Renaissance courtesans to be alluring—here he lowered his head, and spoke in a bitter whisper of braless waitresses in cheerleader shorts and cowboy boots in some Kansas City cocktail lounge—but they were too ignorant and greedy to accept the sincere friendship of a traveling foreign scholar. Above all, he hissed, America hated historical tradition: our vulgar compulsion to celebrate our two-hundredth anniversary as a civilization was proof of our shallow jealousy.

Around the table, small groups of students and professors were making gibbering, embarrassed small talk, unsuccessfully trying not to react to the Iranian's diatribe. I could see that the evening was balancing on the edge of disaster, so I did my best to be conciliatory. On the contrary, I said softly, producing my most diplomatic smile, Americans were awed by history—our juvenile bicentennial excesses were actually proof of this. He should read Henry James; Americans felt unqualified respect for cultures older than our own. I, myself, I said as earnestly as I could manage, was overawed by visiting a country like Iran, which could point to a continuous civilization 2500 years old.

His eyes took on a hooded glare. He rose ponderously, then slammed his fist down on the table, upsetting a bottle of red wine onto the linen tablecloth. "*Two* thousand years," he yelled, his voice nearly hysterical. "The Persian civilization is *three* thousand seven hundred years old."

His ample hip displaced his chair as he spun away; then he strode through the startled guests, and out the open glass doors of the dining room. Across the muddy width of the Khersan River, the concrete-and-glass buildings of the university rose into the salmon sky of the Mesopotamian dusk. My self-appointed alter ego had stalked away into the night, to march home with his bitter anger, probably to one of the ugly prefab apartment blocks on an unpaved street, a home crowded with children and dominated by a shrill, stout wife. There would be no Booth's Gin or blond cowgirl waitress to appease his anger or his self-disgust.

As the fawning waiters cleaned up the table, I sat alone, considering this professor's plight. It was obvious that he was facing a personal crisis deeper than those common in the West. Beneath that beige double-knit coat lived a man who was threatened in his sexual and spiritual identity by the changes convulsing his country. He desperately wanted out, to retreat to a utopia where austere Muslim male dominance would somehow meld with the ancient grandeur of the Persian Empire. But he also had to realize that his longing was absurd, and he must have hated himself for harboring it. This was the frightening core of modern Iran. My outraged professor and the peasant thugs on the Teheran streets all knew that there was no return to the comforting past; deep down, they probably accepted this, and therefore wanted only to destroy the present, and with it, perhaps, themselves.

Reza Baraheni, a former dean of the University of Teheran—himself a victim of inhuman SAVAK torture—has written eloquently about the self-devouring and schizophrenic torment that exists within the modern Iranian soul. The sadism of the SAVAK and the rapturous surge toward martyrdom by the Shi'ite extremists thus were, in my view, related. The secret-police torturers resorted to crudities far in excess of the brutality needed to extract confessions from terrified student dissidents. When these professional sadists literally ripped apart the bodies of their young victims, they were, perhaps, symbolically tearing apart the threatening confusion of the modern world, which these boys and girls represented. A teen-age son with his spine and skull smashed by steel bars would never again dispute the authority of either the Shah or some bearded family patriarch in the home village. A young woman with her genitals and breasts horribly burnt by electric irons would never again flaunt lipstick and miniskirt and brazenly insist on choosing her own career and husband.

Although the Shi'ite fundamentalists—starting 20 years earlier with the suicidal Islamic *Feday'i* and Islamic *Mujahidin*—professed irreconcilable animosity toward the Shah, they meted out retrograde and atavistic brutality just as horrendous as that

of the SAVAK. Four *hundred* innocent spectators were burned to death when the Rex Cinema in Abadan was firebombed. Shi'ite extremists were believed responsible by most impartial observers. Their motive in this outrage? A protest against Western films in which women appeared in scanty dress and physical contact occurred between the sexes.

* * *

I turned a note card and looked up at my audience. The substrata of my mind were troubled by these thoughts as I finished mouthing the glib truisms of my "personal-survival-in-confusing-modern-times" lecture. Rousing myself to full involvement, I folded my notes before me on the rostrum and tried to look into the faces of the audience as I concluded my remarks. As I expected, most of the kids were still preoccupied with boy-girl longings and embarrassments. A couple of the older teachers seemed to be following my comments, but the rest looked bored. I thrust down the gooseneck of the microphone and called for questions. Again predictably, there were none, just a flurry of feet-and-chair shuffling.

Then, from the rear of the badly lit room, a bearded young man in a shabby black suit got to his feet. He adjusted a pair of glasses and stared down at the mimeographed bibliography that I had distributed before the lecture. When he spoke, his voice was steady but his English choppy.

"Professor, some questions please. Are not so many of these American writers first Jews?"

Heads in the audience swung around to stare at him. I guessed from the expressions of the older students that he and his question were both exciting and embarrassing.

"In America," I said, keeping my voice even, "a person's religion has nothing to do with his nationality. A citizen is never 'first' one thing or another. He is just a citizen."

Halfway back in the room, a dark-jowled teacher had his hand up, an apparent attempt to ask an innocent question and defuse the tension the boy had created. Before I could call on

the teacher, the bearded boy spoke again.

"But many Jews make control of cultural and politics life in America." This was no question; his voice had acquired the timbre of an experienced debater. "Here in Iran, many, many Jews come with mission for military, with American Embassy." He sneered at me, "... with Iran-American Society."

Those who had been turned in their chairs to gaze at him now spun around to face the front, to stare in shocked fear at the wall above my head. No one spoke this way in public; no one criticized the allies of the Shah. Only a suicidal fool would publicly tempt the retribution of the unseen SAVAK. At this point I realized that I was dealing with some kind of an extremist, so I made a firm display of turning away from him to speak to the teacher, who now stood before me with a clearly stricken expression on his pocked face. Guilt by association with this treasonous maniac was obviously on people's minds.

The question period was therefore briefer than usual; no young men were eager to show off their English to impress the girls. After two or three desultory exchanges, the bearded fellow in the back of the room seemed to realize that I wasn't going to call on him again, and he carefully folded the mimeographed bibliography lengthwise, thrust it inside his suit coat and left quietly by the rear exit.

Ten minutes later I was outside on the gritty pavement, waiting for the USIS local employee to bring the car around and drive me back to the hotel. It was a damp, chilly night, with charcoal and diesel heater fumes heavy in the dark air. The sleet had stopped, and there was a pale wedge of moon up there in the breaking overcast. Across the street, an open sewer was flooded by swirling meltwater from the mountains. For the first time since entering Iran, I felt that I was in the medieval heart of Central Asia. The street before me was wide and empty of cars and people, bordered by leafless trees and lit by occasional lamps on rusty metal girders. In the distance I could see the floodlit Kufic tile dome of the Shrine of Imam Ali Reza. This was one of the holiest pilgrimage sites for Shi'ite Muslims, a vast and ornate complex of domed

mosques, tiled courtyards, and graceful medieval *madrasahs*: religious schools run by mullahs and scholarly ayatollahs. From this site, Mashhad—"the Tomb of the Holy Martyr"—took its name.

Ali Reza was the Eighth Imam in the Shi'ite line. He died in the ninth century, victim of poison at the hands of his Sunni rival, the Caliph Ma'mun. To devout Shi'ite Iranians, this martyrdom, when coupled with that of the earlier Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, and Imam Hussein, Ali's son, provided them both a *raison d'être* and, more importantly, a *raison de mourir*: a sacred tradition of sacrifice, a collective longing for persecution and death while defending the cause of their faith. This deeply felt emotion is epitomized in the rituals of *ta'ziyeh*: a public demonstration of faith through symbolic martyrdom, which dramatizes the zealots' readiness for actual martyrdom. When we visited the Shrine that morning—with Carol carefully shrouded in a black *chador*—our guide had spoken gleefully of the faithful who flocked to Mashhad for the holy month of Moharram. On Ashura, the climactic day of Moharram, the faithful re-enacted the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. Huge, swaying processions of fanatical *datsa* would erupt from the Shrine's precincts and into the modern city, forming lines of twenty, or thirty, or *fifty* thousand men and boys, chanting prayers in unison and flagellating themselves with chains until "... you have blood on the streets like rain."

As I stood listening to our guide, uncomfortable in the glare of Shi'ite pilgrims in the Shrine courtyard, this obsession with blood and martyrdom seemed just another odd and repulsive aspect of Iran's alien civilization. The events of the next two years, however, made me realize just how fundamental this death obsession had become in the Iranian revolution. Many of the street rioters who faced the Shah's tanks and stormed his prisons actually longed for a real-life Ashura, for martyrdom that would replace the troubling uncertainties of the modern world with the reliable and familiar cipher of death.

That insight was, of course, a long time coming. Waiting for my ride in the chill, smoky darkness, I didn't want to be

burdened with any deep thinking. I wanted to go back to the Hyatt Omar Khayyam, drink a strong whiskey, take a hot bath, and blank out before the television set. The hotel was literally an oasis of Western luxury in this austere Shi'ite bastion. A few years before, the Shah had commissioned the building of the Hyatt so that it would serve as a comfortable hostel for members of the royal family, government officials, and supporters when they made obligatory pilgrimages to Mashhad. What the Shah apparently never realized—although many thought he *meant* to outrage conservative Shi'ites—was that this ornate modern structure, with its bars, swimming pool, and boutiques, stood as a taunting and insulting rival to the nearby Shrine.

Pilgrims who frequented the Hyatt Omar Khayyam were not frenzied peasants from Kerman or Yazd Provinces, men and boys in dusty, mismatched suits who'd ridden days in the backs of trucks to reach the Shrine. Guests of the Hyatt Omar Khayyam wore Pierre Cardin safari suits and Gucci loafers; they drank Bloody Marys and breakfasted on Eggs Benedict; they boogied to the amplified dissonance of the Bee Gees late at night, and they flaunted as hungry and as predatory a sexuality as anything I'd seen in the Clubs Med of North Africa or the singles bars of Second Avenue.

Despite this blatant vulgarity, I was eager to return to the Hyatt. It was crass and garish, but it was indeed Western, familiar. I wanted some whiskey, and I wanted to go numb before the colorful, mindless flicker of "Kojak." I wasn't therefore prepared for what next happened. From the wet shadows behind the Iran-American Society a figure slipped into the half-light of the sidewalk. It was the bearded questioner. I fought back an adrenaline rush of panic: after all, a number of American military and civilian technicians in Iran had recently been victim of terrorist attacks. But this young man was not there to assault me, not physically at least.

"Professor," he said with the same echoing voice. "Do you want to know what is the situation now for Muslims in Iran?" He fixed his heavy, unyielding eyes on me. "Do you want to

know what is really?"

Stepping away from him, I looked around nervously for the USIS driver. Here I was on some dark street in Mashhad at ten o'clock at night with a Shi'ite crazy man. "I don't think I should get involved with anything political," I managed. "I am a guest of the Iran-American Society, and I've been asked not to discuss political issues." This was the standard response, of course, the ace I'd kept in the hole to use if anyone were deranged enough to raise embarrassing political questions after a lecture. But for some reason tonight, there was no ubiquitous SAVAK thug lingering in the shadows to spy on any student who wished to speak with me privately. Perhaps this was why the boy had extended his invitation. Maybe he actually *did* have something interesting to tell me.

Again, I gazed out at the wide, empty street, at the swaying lamps and the blank shop fronts shuttered with steel curtains. The Hyatt Omar Khayyam was a transplanted corner of America; it could have been a luxurious appendage of the St. Louis airport. Out beyond the dark rows of shops were warrens of medieval caravanserai and coffee houses with itinerant storytellers and musicians. I felt my shoulder muscles unclench under my sport coat. I'd lived in enough bizarre places in the Third World and had been through enough physically threatening circumstances in those countries to have developed an instinct for impending violence. With this boy I felt none of the usual menace. He was obviously a zealot; one look into his eyes told me that much. But he didn't seem to be personally violence-prone. Besides, I had been feeling a remnant of guilt since my encounter with the Persian chauvinist in the Montgomery Ward sport coat. I really did *not* know much about this country, about the religion and the common people. It was ridiculous of me to call myself a writer if I turned down the chance to meet and deal with an exotic "character" like this guy.

"Listen," I heard myself saying in an unnecessary, conspiratorial whisper. "I would like to talk to you . . . but I have to go back to my hotel and tell my wife where I'm going." He

noddled at me in the shadows. "She's waiting for me. Where shall I tell her we will be?"

Without speaking, he pointed off toward the misty glow of the floodlit Shrine. Then he smiled under his beard. "Go to your hotel. I will meet there, where they put the Mercedes cars of all the rich men from Teheran. I will wait."

He turned and strode into the shadows. A moment later the lumbering USIS van swung past the corner of the building, as if on cue.

* * *

The bearded boy's name was Mohammed, or so he said. He also said that he was a student in the *madrassahs*, and that he'd learned English from lessons on the BBC and Voice of America. He led me out of the Hyatt's vast parking lot, across two windy, dark boulevards and into a dripping park with unraked gravel walks. When we left the park, we crossed another wide boulevard—again devoid of traffic, as if abandoned—and entered a dark lane between shuttered shops. While we walked, I tried to keep up a line of light, sightseer conversation, but it was obvious after five minutes that Mohammed was preoccupied. Then it occurred to me that I was being led through a tail-shaking procedure, just like in all the spy books: my own included. But this was not fiction; this was a hollow-eyed young Muslim fanatic, barely 25 years old, who was playing a serious game of hide-and-seek with the SAVAK. Squelching down the wet path, I silently cursed myself for abandoning the comfort of a bath and whiskey, as well as the vicarious excitement of "Kojak," for the dry-mouthed reality that this boy represented.

When Mohammed was satisfied we weren't being followed or watched from in front, he ducked me into an even narrower side lane. I'd expected to find winding, medieval alleys like those in the Tangier madinah. Instead, the buildings on either side were of indeterminate modern design, anonymous cinderblock, uneven brick, and rough concrete with rusty stubs

of re-rod protruding like broken bones. Telephone and power lines were strung at odd heights and angles. The roofs were two or three stories above us in the darkness; the shops and house fronts stood shoulder to shoulder, unbroken, shoddy, cheaply built and featureless, except for an occasional fringe of broken glass burglar protection stuck in cement along the top of a courtyard wall. Mohammed took the lead now, striding along, mindless of the greasy puddles. I caught sporadic smells: clogged drains, black tobacco, some late-dinner dish redolent of onions and cinnamon, and, of course, the usual Iranian mixture of diesel smoke and horse manure.

"Here," Mohammed said somberly, holding up his long fingers. "Here is the house of Mehdi, my brother." He flourished a bunch of keys and opened a steel door, which creaked back to reveal a tiled courtyard about two paces wide and three stories high, some kind of afterthought, maybe an air shaft . . . or, perhaps, just another example of bungled Western design: the quintessence of Iran, a house, like an entire country, built too quickly, without blueprints.

We went up a cement staircase and again paused before a metal door, this time on a dark landing, half occupied by an incongruous stationary tub. Mohammed opened the door and we were inside a brightly lit, whitewashed room.

After the dimness of the stairs and landing, it took my eyes a moment to adjust to the fluorescent glare of the apartment. My first impression was of a recently tidied hippie crash pad of the '60s: the room's walls were flanked with low mattresses, each covered with a colorful cotton print and piled with cheap velvet bazaar pillows. On the walls were the expected color religious prints. A low, circular table held tea paraphernalia: a tarnished aluminum pot and some thimble glasses.

The young man called Mehdi was hunkered down on the mattress against the far wall, framed against the white back-drop in a cloak or robe of brown homespun wool. Like Mohammed, he wore a trim beard and had close-cropped, dark hair. It was cold in the room.

"*Salaam aleikum*," he said, inclining his head slightly.

"Welcome to my house in the name of God." His English sounded crisper, more fluent than Mohammed's.

"*Wa aleiku salaam*," I answered, then nodded back in what I hoped appeared a respectful manner.

For a restless moment I stood staring into Mehdi's face, then he gestured for me to sit on the mattress to his right. Mohammed did not sit, but instead stooped to retrieve the teapot and disappeared with it through a door to the right. Above us, on the ceiling, the glaring fluorescent tubes sputtered at the edge of perception.

"You come from United States," Mehdi proclaimed. "You are professor, and you come to lecture to us." He tucked the soft folds of his robe around his shins and feet.

"I'm a writer and I sometimes teach writing and literature," I answered. "Actually, I live most of the time in Greece, in an island village. I've been lecturing in the Far East . . . Malaysia, Singapore. . . . I spent two weeks in Pakistan." I caught myself adding this last bit of information as if in alibi, to placate this humorless young man.

He stared at the ceiling a moment, then gazed across the room at one of the religious prints, a riotous scene of turbaned figures swirling scimitars, with several limbs and bright swatches of blood: obviously the chronicle of some Shi'ite martyr. "Do American people know *Shi'a* people in Iran must eat dead bodies' meat?"

"I beg your pardon. I . . ."

He held up his left hand, palm toward me, not an especially polite gesture in the Islamic world. "Frozen meat comes from Germany on trucks from America in ships, from Australia. They say it is from beefs and lamb. We know this meat is frozen dead men and women from South United States . . . from Mexico. The Shah does this to Muslims in Iran."

I licked my dry lips, wishing I were back in the hotel with a glass of Johnnie Walker. "Why on earth would the Shah do that?"

"Mohammed Reza Shah is the enemy to Islam," he intoned, raising his index finger to wag it at me. "He is also friend of all

Jews and Israel. American government is under power from Jews and Israel and of Baha'is . . . so is Shah." He glared toward me. "You know who are Baha'is?"

"Not very well," I admitted. "But, tell me, why would the Shah let the Jews control him?"

Mehdi didn't hesitate. With his left hand he made rapid thumb-and-finger flicking gestures as if trumping tricks in a bridge game. "Money, only money. This is why Shah does everything."

"Everything? Is this why he builds hospitals and schools?" Now I gestured with my own hands. ". . . Why he spends so much money on his military forces? Surely the Shah is concerned with other things than just money."

Mehdi shook his head slowly. "Hospitals are for making prostitutes *Shi'a* women. Schools are for making boys ready to hate father and mother. Military airplanes are to give Israel. Shah is like . . . like. . . ." He closed his eyes, obviously searching for the English expression. "Shah is like devil, very bad, very strong, with strong friends."

Mohammed returned with the teapot and three dripping glasses. I glanced quickly toward the other room, wondering where they had been washed. Sipping my sour tea, I thought of how to form my next question without provoking anger. "My friend, Mehdi," I finally said in my most Levantine manner. "If the Shah is so very strong yet so evil like the devil, why did God put him here?"

Mehdi flashed me a canine grin, as if I'd had the audacity to threaten his knight with an exposed pawn. He spoke rapidly to Mohammed in Farsi, then leaned back on his cushions and let his eyes half close in a studied expression of pious wisdom. "Shah is here to test for courage of *Shi'a* people. We are. . . ." His voice trailed off, and he again carried out a quick Farsi exchange with Mohammed. After a moment, Mehdi spoke again, this time with his eyes wide open. "*Shi'a* people have Imam who . . . you say disappear . . .?"

I nodded.

". . . Who *disappear* one thousand years ago. He is Imam al-

Zaman. Soon this Imam returns to make world good for all true Muslims." He wagged his finger once again. "But before that *Shi'a* people must fight devil. They must fight Shah, fight Jews, fight America." He swept his hand in a flat arc, as if toppling evil governments.

With some difficulty, I kept my patience. "Do you really think you're strong enough to fight the Shah and his Army? What about SAVAK?"

He laughed with obvious scorn, as much at my questions as at the threat of SAVAK. "Shah tells SAVAK catch *Feday'i*, catch Islam *Mujahidin* . . . SAVAK kill ten men . . . twenty come again. SAVAK burn twenty boys with electric, *fifty* boys' brothers come to kill SAVAK . . . SAVAK shoot fifty brothers. . . ." He made a tommygun gesture with his clenched left hand. ". . . One hundred fathers come, one *thousand* sons from fathers' brother. SAVAK kill and kill and kill." He grinned now, a skeletal smirk. "This is *good* for Muslim Shi'a people . . . very good, very good."

"Look . . ." I blurted out. "You don't know what you're saying . . . the SAVAK, they're brutal, they're like the Nazi Gestapo. They're. . . ."

With ponderous, yet practiced movements, Mehdi inclined to one side and unfurled the tucked-up robe to present his naked right foot and his right hand. In the pulsing surgical light of the room, there was no way to avoid seeing them in horrible detail, no way to avoid the ripply beige and gray scar tissue of the burns, no way to deny the mangled tendons, the crushed and poorly set bones. I was sitting three feet from a young man who had not simply been tortured, but mutilated and maimed. When he spoke, his voice was dramatically soft. "SAVAK . . . in army prison Bandar Abbas . . . in Shah's prison Tadjrish. I *know* who are SAVAK, Mr. Professor."

For a sickening, quiet time of indeterminate length he kept his mutilated extremities in view, then delicately hid them once more beneath his robe, like a sleepy cat tucking in its paws.

I managed to swallow some bitter tea. Across the room,

Mohammed cracked his knuckles and yawned. Mehdi was still staring at my face, as if he expected me to speak, to admit my errors. "I am sorry," was all I eventually managed to say.

Mehdi nodded in his practiced and archaic manner, like a student actor over-playing the role of an Oriental sage. "SA-VAK are like little dogs . . . many, many dogs kill the lion. One dog alone is nothing. We. . . ."

I interrupted this pompous nonsense. "Look . . . the Shah's *army* are not like little dogs. They use big American M-60 tanks, with machine guns, with flame-throwers. They have helicopters, what we call gunships . . . with six-barreled machine guns that can kill a thousand people in two minutes." I leaned forward on the lumpy mattress, trying by willpower and words to convince this young fanatic. "The Shah has hundreds of these helicopters and tanks. That is not the same as a pack of little dogs."

Mehdi spoke in rapid Farsi, Mohammed laughed, as if at some mildly smutty joke. Now Mehdi rocked back on his haunches, his maimed hand exposed to gesticulate, his eyes half closed. "Bring the American tanks. Bring the American helicopters that kill *ten* thousand men. Make in Teheran streets rivers of blood. Make the wonderful tower arch of the Shah like an island in a lake full of blood." His voice was rising now, and his eyes were almost closed. "Kill me!" He chopped down with his claw hand. "Kill my brother! Kill my sisters, my mother . . . my father, too. Kill all *Shi'a* people. Make our blood so deep that Shah and SAVAK and American *experts* for helicopters must go in boats to drink their whiskey in the restaurants. Only that way will Shah have victory." His eyes snapped fully closed now, and he rocked slowly, his lips drawing tight. "But, Mr. American Professor, when all good Muslim people are dead . . . for who will Shah be king? Will dead *Shi'a* men dig in Khuzistan for oil? Will dead girls study for prostitute in his university? Shah is king of *Shi'a* Muslim people." His lips curled back to expose an uneven line of small white teeth. "Kill all the people, then Shah is not longer king."

The stark room seemed to reverberate with his heroic words. "You're right, of course," I said, trying to sound matter-of-fact. "The Shah can't kill all his subjects, so there will have to be a compromise between him and the opposition."

Mehdi frowned, not understanding the word, and Moham-med hissed the Farsi translation across the room. "Com-pro-mise," Mehdi repeated. "No, Mr. Professor, *Shi'a* people do not make compromise with devil . . . we kill him. We kill SAVAK . . . army. . . ." He began ticking the fingers of his left hand against the gristle of his right. "We kill Jew engineers . . . we kill Baha'i prostitute doctors . . . we kill Communists . . . we kill all who hate Islam." His face had become so contorted that I had to look away. "We *clean* Iran with blood, we clean Pakistan, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Kingdom. . . . We make world ready for when Imam al-Zaman returns."

His words had acquired a disturbing *deja vu* echo. Twice before on this trip I had encountered young zealots almost as fanatical as Mehdi. After a university lecture in Malaysia, I had been harangued by two angry Pan-Muslims who had spoken bitterly about American "favoritism" toward Chinese Malaysians, especially in the area of scholarships for graduate study. I tried my best to blunt their criticism, but I was finally interrupted by the taller of the two, who leaned so close to me that I could smell the clove essence in his hair oil.

"Doctor," he said, "perhaps we will return to pure Islam and all little China boys will go into the ocean for one long swimming, yes?"

This young man in his starched white shirt was seriously suggesting genocide, standing there in the cloying heat with his gold teeth flashing, telling me that he and his fellow fanatics wanted to exterminate several million of their fellow citizens.

A week later, I sat up late one night drinking pints of warm bitter with two left-wing "progressive" students in the mildewed garden of Karachi's Metropole Hotel. They were good-looking boys from upper-class families, suave with their Lacoste sport clothes and gold Dunhill cigarette lighters. Their

solution to the problem of the fundamentalist Muslim resurgence in Pakistan? Summary execution of all the "ring leaders," imprisonment without trial of the followers, and, if necessary, execution of those who would not "behave."

Now I was involved in another strange late-night encounter with yet one more murderous fanatic. Something brittle seemed to shift inside my chest. I knew I had to get away and glanced sideways at Mohammed to see if the path to the door were clear.

While Mehdi spoke, Mohammed had begun rocking on his knees, as if in the thrall of a powerful sermon. I edged off the mattress and made a show of consulting my watch. Only after I had gotten to my feet and was shifting my legs to shake out the stiffness, did Mehdi seem to notice I was leaving.

"You must go back to Hotel Hyatt that Shah has named for *Shi'a* poet Omar Khayyam." He fixed me with a kind of Charles Manson glare, which literally made the flesh on my neck crawl. "You must go drink whiskey with your wife in discotheque club. Maybe you get drunk and Baha'i Air Force engineer man take your wife in little dress like this. . . ." He slashed his crippled hand across his knees and chest to indicate a hemline and scoop neck. "Maybe you take Baha'i man's Jew wife. Maybe in morning good *Shi'a* girl brings you tea and you take her, too." He drew his limbs back under the homespun cloak. "You have important work for American professor who comes to Iran to teach all stupid *Shi'a* about literature." He turned away from me, just as I had turned my shoulder to Mohammed back at the lecture.

The rusty metal door of the apartment creaked open and I was past the cement tub and halfway down the stairs. *Oh, Jesus*, I thought, *what if they've got somebody down there in that courtyard, waiting for me?* The stupidity of my coming here at night, alone like this, had settled as a guilty knot of fear in my stomach.

When I was out of the lane and onto the wider street leading back to the boulevard, my gut relaxed a little. I strode along, unmindful of the stagnant puddles. The air was chill, heavy

with heater fumes and the mildewed closeness of buildings. But it felt wonderful to be outside, away from the glare of Mehdi's room, away from his shining eyes and his mangled hand.

I trotted across the boulevard and into the dripping shelter of the park trees. Behind me, the side street was half-lit, lifeless. I was not being followed. Shuffling along through the uneven gravel of the path, I lit a cigarette and sucked at the smoke with greed. The floodlights of the Hyatt Omar Khayyam cast a yellow glow through the trees. I'd made it; I'd been stupid to get involved with those suicidal—probably *homocidal*—Shi'ite fanatics. Now I felt spent and flabby with adrenaline, as if after some sudden, noisy encounter in a war zone. In ten minutes, I would be back at the hotel, my sodden shoes off, standing on a deep carpet in a tasteful, heated room, within the shelter of a familiar civilization. I could then relegate my meeting with Mehdi to the domain of good cocktail-party anecdotes. Puffing on my cigarette, I actually experienced a see-saw rush of pride that I'd had the guts to take up Mohammed's challenging invitation to see "really" the situation for Iran's Muslims.

What I had seen and heard from Mehdi made me feel certain that the retrograde thrust of Muslim fundamentalism—not just in Iran, but all across the Islamic world—was simply an anachronistic shunt of social evolution, doomed to failure and an obscure martyrdom far different from the glorious collective bloodbath envisioned by Mehdi. He and his fellow zealots, I speculated, would probably die at the hands of SAVAK, or perhaps the Army, if they ever actually did have the audacity to take their fanatical hatred into the streets. In an odd way, they reminded me of the Simba rebels I'd encountered in the Congo during the mid-'60s: exotic primitives, victims of their own atavistic dogma, on a collision course with the reality of the modern world, and doomed as surely as any dinosaur ponderously skirting the soft, sloping edges of the tar pit.

I stopped at a fork in the gravel path to decide which branch

would lead me most quickly back to the Hyatt. The floodlights of the hotel and those of the Shrine had taken on a diffuse peach-colored glow under the low cloud deck, as if they were paired monuments at either end of some vast ceremonial mall. In reality, of course, the Hyatt Omar Khayyam was the symbolic essence of modern Iran, an uneven combination of the vulgar and tasteful, which gave lip service to tradition while fawning after all the trendy mirages of Western chic. It was a perfect institution for this nation of arrogant *nouveaux riches*. The Shah, I knew, was using pleasure domes like the Hyatt as carrots and the SAVAK as a deadly stick to lure and prod his people into the 20th century. He represented the Juggernaut of historic inevitability against which all the retrograde, fundamental anger I'd seen in Iran would be crushed.

I squinted in the night and eventually decided to take the wider of the two paths, not the one that seemed to lead more directly to the hotel, but the path that had more electric lamps. As I turned back on the Shrine, I couldn't help but feel a wave of sadness for Mehdi and his brother, for all the young zealots in the hands of the SAVAK, for their fanatical co-religionists in Malaysia, and for the angry and confused peasant boys patrolling the university quarter of Teheran, searching for girls in swishing flannel skirts and Italian boots. The girls would survive the beatings and perhaps go on to rewarding lives; the muddled peasants faced only bitter alienation in the urban landscape of modern Iran. They had no skills beyond those of primitive agriculture; their religion was dominated by a deceitful hierarchy of mullahs and ayatollahs, men who were themselves so confused and alienated by the modern world that they could offer no emotional solace to their people.

Dinosaurs, I thought, stumbling down the rough path. Ahead of me, the tasteful arches of the Hyatt materialized out of the darkness. The naked trees hid the tiled domes of the Shrine. From the direction of the modern city, I heard the unmistakable mutter of a helicopter. A Huey flying low beneath clouds, I thought, listening to the familiar sound of engine rotors. For some reason, this dull, mechanical rhythm

seemed inordinately pleasant, even reassuring.

I crossed the final boulevard and trotted past the mist-beaded cars in the parking lot, eager now for the lights and warmth of the hotel, anxious to come in from the medieval darkness of Mashhad.

* * *

The next morning the sun was bright and warm. I lounged on the terrace of my hotel room, sipping my coffee as I gazed down at the new greenery in the hotel garden. The fruit trees were coming into bloom and there were sprouting leaves on the shrubbery. It was suddenly spring, and the dark Central Asian winter of the previous night seemed far removed. As I read the *Herald Tribune* in the sunshine, it occurred to me how truly preposterous it was for people like Mehdi and all the other Muslim fundamentalists actually to presume they could depose a leader like the Shah and then take over the day-to-day leadership of a modern state like Iran. In retrospect, I thought, my visit to Mehdi had been a waste of time. My qualifying those people as dinosaurs gave them a certain ponderous importance, an implied historical significance. In reality, I assured myself in the bouyant spring sunshine, they represented simply a minor footnote.

I put down the newspaper beside the breakfast tray. These people actually believed frozen lamb from New Zealand was the meat of human cadavers, diabolically shipped to Iran to corrupt the Shi'ite faithful. That was a valid indication of their thinking. I shook my head and poured myself more coffee. And they wanted to run the oil fields, the factories, schools and hospitals of Iran. *Absurd*, I thought in the benevolent, reassuring sunshine, *absolutely absurd*.

* * *

Almost exactly two years later, I sat in my apartment in Canton, New York, watching the CBS evening news while an

upstate spring blizzard clattered against the thermopanés. On the television screen a grainy videotape presented the expected panoramas of chanting mobs on the boulevards of Teheran. The Shah had been out of power three months, and the vengeance of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his Shi'ite followers was becoming swifter and more brutal. Earlier in this news spot, I'd seen Goyaesque still pictures of execution squads at work against Kurdish prisoners. Now the image shifted to the grounds of a stately, vaguely familiar building, where a throng of green-clad Revolutionary Guards were chanting as they brandished their automatic rifles: Mashhad; the armed comrades of Mehdi and Mohammed had taken control of the Hyatt Omar Khayyam.

There would be no more dancing in the discotheque, no more champagne brunches around the pool. The bearded young men who shouted and postured for the camera could have been the same boys whom I'd seen beat the student girl on the streets of Teheran. The young, dark-robed mullah who directed their demonstration like a veteran cheerleader could have been Mehdi's brother.

The colorful image faded, to be replaced by a commercial for dry cat food. I looked away from the set, at the passing headlights in the blizzard.

These extremist zealots no longer seemed so absurd. Obviously, their *raison de mourir* had not brought them the widespread martyrdom for which Mehdi had longed. They actually succeeded in bringing down the Shah. Now they were faced with the unpleasant task of either trying to manage their improbable Islamic Republic or of pushing boldly ahead toward the apocalypse.

I had little doubt in which direction their self-proclaimed Imam, the Ayatollah Khomeini, would order his Shi'ite faithful. For them, like so many people in the contemporary world, the dream of apocalypse was an attractive alternative to the confusion and pain of the present reality.

Mehdi and his brother were among the first such extremists with whom I had close dealings. But they were not the last.

Chapter Two

Greece

April 1977

THE OLYMPIC Airways 727 sliced through the shoulder of a thunderhead and banked into its final approach to the island airport. As I gazed down at the sunset water of Marmaris Channel, my breath fogged the window. Off to the east, there was lightning in the dark mountains of Turkey, but the island was still in daylight. I smiled at the graceful landscape. The hills and olive groves seemed so green, so unsullied after the Iranian desert and the smoggy streets of Teheran. Below the plane, shadows leapt away from the high-rise hotels and the tan walls of the Crusaders' citadel.

I yawned and my ears popped, a now-familiar sensation; I'd been on a lot of airplanes in the past two months. But my fatigue was not just a result of the hectic travel schedule during the lecture tour. The underlying social turmoil and the palpable, impending violence in Pakistan and Iran had exhausted me emotionally. After the encounters with the stu-

dent extremists in Karachi and after my chilling confrontation with Mehdi in Mashhad, I did not want to think about politics, social upheaval or revolution for a long time. I simply wanted a peaceful respite in the Aegean spring, working away on my new novel until the summer's heat and tourist invasion made our village temporarily untenable.

The plane descended into the lavender dusk, toward Europe. Beside my seat, Carol also yawned and then smiled. "We're almost home," she said, gathering up odds and ends to put in her flight bag.

I responded automatically, "It sure looks good."

But as I spoke, I caught a hollow tone in my voice. For the first time in 14 years living overseas, I sensed a nagging edge of vague but fundamental uncertainty; I felt somehow threatened. In every country we had visited, at almost every university at which I had lectured, I had encountered some young person who embodied a potentially violent extremism of the Right or the Left, an irrational rage and a yearning for simplistic, apocalyptic solutions. Students had been calmly discussing mass murder, genocide—for Christ's sake—and had expected me to agree with them. Granted, I had not well understood the Byzantine convolutions of their countries' politics, but I *had* sensed the goals of their various causes: crush any or all opposition; physically eliminate those who did not conform. It was a message I could listen to for only so long with feigned equanimity.

Below my seat the landing gear came thumping down, and I stubbed out my cigarette. In a couple of hours I would be back in the village, drinking a glass of retsina at Yanni's, eating a plateful of freshly caught *barbounia*. It was a pleasant prospect. I wanted to forget about the brooding chaos out there in the darkness beyond those Turkish mountains.

* * *

The next morning after breakfast, I was on my way down the cobbled path from the village to the fishermen's landing,

which we all called the "boat beach." I planned to check over and paint my mooring anchor and chain in anticipation of the summer sailing season. The sky and the sea were almost the same undiluted blue, and red poppies quivered on the grassy slope below the whitewashed village. I felt fine, rested and untroubled for the first time in weeks, eager to get on with the mindless but absorbing work. This was the best time of year in the Aegean, the first hot days co-existing with the greenery of the mild, rainy winter. It might not rain again until October, and the green hills would burn rock brown by the end of summer.

Striding down the rough path, I was happy to be in shorts and beat-up sandals again after too long in suits and city shoes. I felt that the angry tensions of Karachi and Iran were behind me, that I was back in civilized Europe.

A short, wiry man was striding athletically toward me up the path from the boat beach. Stopping, I recognized who it was: Karl Nordbrandt. With the flaky sandstone outcropping as a back rest, I paused to stare at Karl in surprise. Before I left on the Asian lecture tour, I'd telephoned him in Bremen, asking when we might expect to see him and his wife Elke in Greece this spring. Karl had told me definitely not until July.

I had known Karl four years, having first met him in Italy, when Carol and I spent the winter teaching English and learning Italian, living at a marina near Trieste. Karl flew down to Italy regularly that winter to work on the handsome motorsailer he shared with his partner in their Bremen investment brokerage firm. One of the first things I'd learned about Karl was that he never traveled spontaneously, that he always had his plane reservations weeks in advance, and that he always informed a number of people of his travel schedule so that he could be reached by phone or cable should he be needed by one of his clients. I never learned who these clients were, but I was told by Germans at the marina that Karl was very successful. Having known him socially for several years, I learned that he was methodical to a fault, as close to being a perfectionist as anyone I'd ever met. Some people

acted impulsively on the odd occasion; Karl never did.

He still kept his boat in Italy, but he'd been coming to Greece for the previous couple of years and sailing aboard the fiberglass sloop I shared with a French friend. Now I was completely taken aback that Karl had flown down to Greece without sending me a letter or cable announcing his arrival. As he strode up the roughly cobbled path toward me, I noted what extraordinary condition he was in for a man almost 50. He looked like an Italian soccer player, compact and smoothly muscled, with a head of thick, dark curly hair. Maybe, I mused, having a million dollars actually did buy you health and happiness. But that was being unfair: Karl had not always been wealthy. Indeed, like most Germans, he'd been destitute in 1945, the Year Zero, the Year One of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

Karl had turned 18 in May 1945, and celebrated his birthday in the overcrowded, understaffed medical shed of a British army POW camp, nursing two machine-gun wounds to his leg, which threatened to turn gangrenous. He considered himself very lucky, however. Of his consignment of 200 teen-age infantry replacements that had been sent to the Poznań Front that winter, he was one of perhaps 20 still alive at the time of the surrender. Almost as important as life itself, however, was the fact that his stalled hospital train of wounded Wehrmacht soldiers had been captured by the British on a bomb-shattered rail siding near Hanover, and not by the advancing Red Army 40 kilometers to the east. That bleak spring of defeat and liberation from Nazism, the British and German doctors worked to save his leg from the saw. Now, 32 years later, he ran a successful investment house in Bremen.

"Malcolm," he beamed, gripping my hand vigorously. "So good to see you. When did you get back?" Like most North Germans of his class and generation, his English was precise British Establishment. Mid-Atlantic Computereese was spoken further south, in Frankfurt and the Ruhr.

"When did *you* arrive?" I countered, noting that he'd been here long enough to have acquired a decent tan. "I had my last

batch of mail forwarded to Teheran, and there was no word you were coming. I would have planned to have the boat in the water. I”

Karl raised his hand. “No. . . .” He was slightly out of breath from the climb, and he, too, leaned against the sandstone wall. “I sent no telegram or letter, Malcolm.”

Squinting at him, I used the bottom of my T-shirt to wipe some vestigial Iranian dust off my sunglasses. “So,” I said, “you got some free time and came down on a charter flight.” There always had to be a logical explanation for the events of Karl’s life.

“No,” he said with flat finality. “I flew first to London, then to Athens.” He brushed back a strand of dark hair and stared at me with his moist brown eyes. “Malcolm . . . well, now is not a good time in Germany for . . . for a person such as me to tell everyone where and when he is going to travel. Yes? You understand?”

I did *not* understand. Sometimes the practiced tones of his Anglophilic accent hid the fact that he was speaking a foreign language with which he was not really comfortable. “What is the problem in Germany, Karl?” I asked, speaking slowly and clearly.

“Terrorists, yes?” He pronounced the word precisely, as if it were a Latin medical term. “You have heard of the kidnappings in Germany? Very bad they are just now.” He waved his hand vaguely, then thrust it down. “It is hard to explain unless you are there, Malcolm. Very fast, since Christmas, the atmosphere . . . you say atmosphere for *ambiance*?” I nodded and he looked down, scuffing his expensive Italian sandals on the crude pavement. “They are taking people, these criminals, these Baader-Meinhof terror commandos. They are holding them for . . . for. . . .”

“Ransom?” I offered. Now, I, too, was scuffing my sandal.

“Also,” he looked out to sea, toward a fishing caïque chugging north, a V-wake spreading from its prow. “Ransom,” he continued, obviously committing this useful English word to memory. “But they *kill* them, you understand? This is not a

joke protest anymore. Now they are very serious. You have read the newspaper?"

"I've been traveling, Karl. I've seen some things in the *Herald Tribune*. Didn't they connect one young guy to an electric cable and threaten to electrocute him?"

"Richard Oetker," Karl said without hesitation. "His father had to pay them twenty-million of D-Marks." Again, he stared out to sea with his unblinking dark eyes. "That is eight million dollars, yes?"

"Yes, it sure is."

Karl sighed and squinted up toward the white village. "The money is important, yes, but it is not only that." Again he sighed, almost theatrically, about as much obvious emotion as I ever saw him display. "At the airports and the rail stations the police have again machine guns. . . ." He made a cut-away gesture of a clutched gun. "It is hard to explain for you. Now . . . well, it is almost like we are back in the days of the War, do you understand?"

Again, I nodded somberly. At the airports in Teheran, in Karachi, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore, Mashhad and Athens, I had stood before nervous young troops gripping automatic weapons. I had walked out across the tarmac under the steel snouts of armored cars. I had felt the menace of a sudden grenade or suicidal outburst from some hidden Kalashnikov or rocket. For me, this seemingly endless trip through the besieged airports had brought back a flood of unpleasant memories of the 1960s, traveling through the various undeclared war zones of the Third World. For Karl, of course, this new reality evoked a more distant, but more cataclysmic war. "Yeah, Karl, I do understand."

He broke a few crumbs of sandstone off the weathered edge of the outcropping. Out beyond the peninsula and the two islands guarding the entrance to the bay, a local fisherman was pulling in the white Styrofoam floats of the nets he had placed at sunset the night before. For a moment, both Karl and I watched the fisherman. "So," Karl said, smiling now his ironic, self-deprecating grin, "now I come to Greece like a crimi-

nal, yes? Like one of the narcotic boys who buys a ticket for Madrid, then flies to Beirut so to fool Interpol. This is a nice thing now for Germany, eh?" Again, he produced his tight-lipped grin. "Never somebody would say the German Federal Republic again has guerrillas on the roads. . . ."

The melodious accuracy of his English was slipping. I had seen this happen once, when he allowed his deeply held feelings to surface. But I was surprised to note the intensity of his emotions now. Only last autumn, when he and Elke had flown down for a few days of late sailing, he had disparagingly dismissed the Baader-Meinhof people as radical chic poseurs, more interested in the color of the BMWs they stole and the sexual-dominance hierarchy of their clandestine cells than they were in violent revolution.

Now, obviously, his attitude had changed. The only other time I'd heard his English degenerate into a Katzenjammer Kids parody was when he had told me about the terrible days in the winter of 1945-46, about the conditions in the DP and POW camps in the bomb-flattened cities of the North: Hamburg, Kiel, Bremerhaven. The prisoners and refugees lived like *animals*, he had said; there was no sense of community, nothing was predictable, and violence was omnipresent. A man could have his throat cut for a few cigarettes, a kilo of coal, or a pair of warm boots. Gun battles were fought in the rubble-choked cellars over a few vials of penicillin or a forged ration card.

He moved away from the cliff face and looked toward the village. "Elke is waiting now for me at the pension. I was only walking on the beach before breakfast. It is nice to walk in the sunshine . . . like this, yes?"

I understood what he actually meant, what he had left unsaid . . . to walk in the sunshine without fear of a kidnapper's ambush. "I know what you mean, Karl."

He patted me on the shoulder. "You and Carol will come out with us for dinner tonight? Elke will want to hear everything from your trip, everything from the artists and painters in Malaysia and Singapore."

"Fine . . . thanks. We'd love to come. Well. . . ." I stared down at the sandy crescent of the boat beach. "I'm going to work on the mooring. Maybe tomorrow I can go up to Rhodes and see what's to be done in the boat yard."

Karl shook his head, slowly, with obvious reluctance. "No, I don't think now I will want to sail. We only will stay for . . . for a short while." He smiled coolly. "For a little vacation from Germany, you understand?" I nodded, watching his face. "In summer we will come back for a proper holiday. Now is just a . . . I don't know the word, when soldiers have permission to leave the battle . . . a . . ."

"Furlough, we say, Karl. Now they call it R and R, Rest and Rehabilitation."

"Yes," he said, ponderously nodding. "A rest from Germany." He shook his head. "Why, I wonder now, for what have we worked so hard like slaves for thirty years? So that we must have a soldier's rest from our own country?"

He did not seem to want an answer. Instead, he resumed his springy gait up the stone path. Below the trail, the red poppies swayed with the grass. The bathing beach was empty, clean brown sand. In the cove, the fishermen's landing was a patchwork of brightly painted wooden boats, piled saffron nets, and stacks of rusty, archaic tackle. The mountains of the Turkish mainland were already lost in the evaporation haze. It was going to be a hot day, and I knew I had better get to work. But the tranquility of the morning was shattered; I could no longer savor the comforting illusion that I had returned to the civilized stability of Europe from the land of the barbarians.

* * *

A little after noon, I finished the second coat of red-lead paint on the mooring chain. It was draped in sagging loops between three beached fishing boats, hanging out in the full midday sun to dry, so I had nothing to do for a couple of hours. I thought about going up to the house for lunch, but Carol was busy getting things put away after the trip, catching up on bills

and correspondence, and I felt too lazy to be of much use with the domestic chores. Besides, I was enjoying being alone after almost eight weeks of enforced socializing.

So, I chose to walk over to the restaurant on the main beach and drink a cold bottle of Heineken and eat a Greek salad, and maybe even have the opportunity to ogle any pre-season Scandinavian tourist girls brave enough to get their bikinis wet in the chilly water of the bay. These were innocently temperate ambitions, which matched my spring-fever languor.

* * *

At the southern end of the main beach, where the bluff drops precipitously down from the village, I almost stepped on Louise Mueller. She was lying on an orange towel in the shade, just below the last slab of rock at the base of the hill. This natural shelter was the only shade on the midday beach, but lying there put her right in the path of anyone ambling down the stone path. I had to jump sideways off the slab to avoid landing in the middle of her naked back. She sat up with a start. Her front was naked, too.

"Hey," she said, making no effort to cover herself. "You should be careful."

I brushed sand off my legs. This was typical of Louise. She would lie there half-hidden, half-naked, smack in the middle of the busiest path to the beach, then become indignant when somebody almost stepped on her. She would probably also start swearing at me if I suggested she put on a T-shirt over her narrow bikini bottom, in deference to the glaring, black-clad Greek women just above us on the hillside gathering caper buds from the shiny green bushes. For Louise, appearing topless on a Greek beach was some kind of a revolutionary statement about personal freedom, no doubt meant to tweak the noses of the "fascist" Greek police and reactionary clergy.

I had known Louise off and on for three years since she had first come to Greece from Munich and begun what used to be called a "stormy romance" with Danny Wooten, an expatriate

Dutch sculptor friend who had lived six years in the village. In many ways, it was an ideal relationship: Danny drank a lot, paid most of his attention to his beautifully rendered surrealist bronzes, and generally treated Louise badly. This confirmed Louise's strong feelings that all men were sexual chauvinists, and that even passionate and sensitive artists like Danny had been "co-opted" by the money addiction of capitalist imperialism. They broke up and got back together again about every three months, with Louise flying down from whatever revolutionary commune she was living in at the time. Danny had once made a drunken allusion to the modest disability payments she received from the Bavarian *Land*; apparently she had had emotional problems at some point in her young life and was considered chronically unemployable.

The last time I'd seen her in the village, however, Louise seemed to have acquired a new sense of purpose. Sitting around Yanni's café in the evening with Danny, she no longer tried to disrupt conversation with juvenile antics meant to draw attention to herself. I was pleased that she appeared to have achieved at least this degree of maturity because, basically, I felt sorry for her. Her emotional problems had no doubt arisen from a desperately unhappy childhood. I'd heard from friends that her parents had separated when Louise was quite young, and that her mother, a concentration camp survivor, was chronically ill. I also knew that she was absolutely estranged from her father, a successful lawyer, about whom she was deeply bitter because he had refused to visit her at the psychiatric hospital. Certainly Louise had experienced more than her share of trouble.

"Hello, Louise," I said, trying not to stare too obviously at her body. She was an attractive young woman—blond hair and green eyes, with very fair skin. Her eyes, however, had a bruised, unfocused look, the kind of expression I had seen on the faces of the Moonies the last time I had passed through Heathrow.

She squinted at me in the shadowless glare of the sun. "Malcolm?" I remembered now that she was far-sighted and

hated to wear her glasses. "Oh . . . I thought you were that crazy Greek boy, Georgos. . . . He came yesterday and wanted me to fuck with him."

I cleared my throat. Unlike Karl, Louise's English was very American, almost stereotypic hip '60s G.I. She'd supplemented her proper *gymnasium* English with endless hours of listening to Seventh Army disc jockeys on FM. Lousie still said "bread" for money, and used expressions like "far-fucking-out," especially among the staid British holiday-makers who had begun to dominate the social life of the village each summer. Unfortunately for her revolutionary purity, Louise also said things like "outstanding" and used "impact" as a verb, not realizing that these Alexander Haig expressions were not exactly revolutionary statements. I had always thought she was basically a good-hearted person, though, an unhappy kid who had read a lot of Frantz Fanon and Marcuse and really *did* care about the downtrodden, the poisoned environment, and all the rest of it that keeps us from sleeping well this century.

The only problem was that she cared about these issues in the abstract, not in the concrete particular. She did not, for example, view the poor Greek widow ladies picking caper buds for food as representatives of the world's downtrodden masses, individuals who had strong feelings about *xenie* women lying naked on a towel and tempting poor slow-witted Georgos. Frantz Fanon had probably never mentioned the sensibilities of Greek widow ladies in resort villages, but perhaps Marcuse had covered their case sufficiently.

"How are you, Louise?" I eventually asked. "When did you get back?"

"Last week, I think." She shrugged. "I don't know. When was the eighth? A comrade in Munich ripped off a bunch of Lufthansa tickets." She twirled her fingers. "I came first class, with free gin, truffles . . . shit like that."

With Louise, such a claim could have been either fantasy bravado, or a reckless admission of the truth; you could never be sure.

"Pretty nice," I said. "I've been flying a lot, too. But not first class, I'm afraid."

Her mouth set in a frown. "Oh, yeah, Danny told me . . . you were in China, talking about how wonderful America is, for the CIA." Now her eyes became moist and her lids tightened. It was her way of throwing out a challenge.

"The State Department, Louise. Not the CIA."

"Same fucking difference, right?"

I counted slowly to five before answering. "Wrong, Louise. If people thought I were with the CIA, I could get in real trouble. The Greeks hate the CIA . . . from the time of the Junta. Somebody who lost a brother or a sister in prison might just come and throw a grenade in my bedroom some night if he thought I went off and gave lectures for the CIA."

She looked away, out at the milky blue horizon of the windless Aegean. "So? Maybe you shouldn't go for such trips. Maybe the money is not worth the hassle, huh?"

"Yeah, and maybe you really *are* crazy like everyone says." I turned away and kicked off down the hot sand toward the restaurant. A cold beer was going to taste good.

"Malcolm . . . please. . . ." She had her orange towel around her shoulders, covering her breasts now as she jogged after me. "I'm sorry . . . hey, what did I say so bad? I was only kidding."

I spun back to face her. "Louise, you really shouldn't *kid* about stuff like that. I'm serious. You talk about things . . . revolution and punishing the capitalists and all that . . . but you never realize you're talking about people. I've got to live here. I don't want my Greek friends to think I'm some kind of flunky for the CIA."

"Flunky?" She seemed genuinely puzzled.

"Stooge . . . pawn. Hell, Louise, those are good *progressive* words. They mean helper . . . slave."

"Flunky," she repeated, like Karl, willing a new word into her memory. She was contrite now, as if I had found her remiss on some point of ideology. "So," she said, looking up again, "how was China? Did your wife buy a lot of nice cheap clothes?"

I stared at her pretty vulnerable face, unsure if she were serious or taunting me. "Louise, come on, for Christ's sake, you know the American government isn't going around China organizing lectures. We don't even have a real embassy there."

"Oh, I'm sorry." Her eyes took on that unfocused expression. "Danny said he got a postcard about how good the Chinese food was, and cheap beer, too."

"That was Singapore. There're nearly as many Chinese in Singapore as there are in Hong Kong." I smiled now, and she seemed to brighten in response. But then she frowned again.

"Where's Singapore? Isn't that China?"

So much for her Radical Third World Consciousness. "No, Louise, Singapore's about a thousand miles from Canton . . . south, on the bottom of the Malay Peninsula. It's an independent country now, with a prime minister called Lee Kuan Yew."

Her lips moved soundlessly, as if she were committing this, too, to memory. "Okay . . . Is he a Marxist or a *flunky* of the imperialists?"

Now I leaned closer to her, squinting under my sunglasses to see if she were actually serious. Apparently, she was. In her mind, there was no middle ground. "He's a Maoist-Billy Grahamite," I managed with a straight face. "You've probably seen his work in the revolutionary bookstores back in Germany."

Again, the dark uncertainty around the smudged eyes. "Yes . . . I think so, in Augsburg. Little books, right? Like Colonel Qadhafi's?"

I should have let it go at that and gone off to have my lunch. But I guess I really was still keyed up from the trip and disturbed by what Karl had told me. I was also *angry* at having to sit through one too many disjointed spiels of dogmatic, nihilistic bullshit. I broke into a snuffling giggle. "Okay. This is the revolutionary education the Rote Armee Fraktion is giving its sympathizers, huh? Jesus, Louise. Lee Kuan Yew is nobody's flunky . . . not Russia's, not Mao's, certainly not America's. . . ." Her pale cheeks were flooding a hot, muddy

color. "Maybe next time you won't be so damn sure of yourself," I scolded.

Louise shook her head and licked around her mouth, finally realizing I was mocking her. She jerked the orange terry cloth across her torso, hiding any naked flesh. "I get a good education from the comrades," she muttered, "so don't worry about me." Her lips moved again in a trembling flurry before more words came. "And maybe there won't be one more next time for you to laugh. I tried to be friends because of Danny. But you have to laugh. Maybe I'll tell my comrades about you. . . ." Her eyes jerked around now. "State Department . . . CIA . . . Okay, what's the difference? You call me *sympathisant* of RAF, okay. Maybe *next time* will be one surprise for you. . . ." She positively flashed hatred now, her shoulders rigid beneath the taut fabric of the towel, ". . . and maybe for your shitty friend, Karl Nordbrandt."

But I was angry, too, and recognized all the usual anthropoid posturing: my stiff right arm and shoulder, edge-on toward her, my jaw clenched, extended, my feet dug into the sand. "Look," I said, "I'm sorry I made fun of you," trying unsuccessfully to sound calm. "Let's not stand here on the beach, yelling at each other about terrorism, okay Louise? . . . I just want to be friends with you and Danny."

She wiped her damp face with the edge of the orange towel. "All right, no public scandal. . . ." She laughed quietly. "You people always want everything nice and quiet *in public* . . . so bourgeois. First you smash us with insults, then you order we must not demonstrate. You're just like the shit bulls in Germany."

As she marched away from me, I watched her tapered back and the graceful curve of her naked hips. Overhead a couple of tan gulls wheeled in the sunshine. Poppies and anemones were thick on the hillside. What the *hell* were we doing, screaming threats and insults at each other on such a day? "Louise . . . look, I'm sorry." She stopped, her back still to me. "I'm just all worn out from my trip. You know, nervous. Come on, I'll buy you some lunch."

Her eyes were clear again, her lips untrembling. "I don't want to eat lunch with you." She let the towel drop from her shoulders. "From now on, you're just like the rest of them. There's a war, and you're the enemy."

We glared at each other across a few yards of warm sand. A gull screeched above the beach and we both winced at the sudden noise. She was not about to turn away, not until I did. This had become some kind of juvenile confrontation, an absurd macho posturing. But my anger overrode my reason.

"If you think I'm the enemy, Louise, and you're going to stand there making threats, why shouldn't I go up and see the police chief, and tell him about the *ripped-off* Lufthansa ticket you flew down here on . . . you know, free gin and truffles, and shit like that?"

Just for a moment, her eyes seemed to fade again. "I am doing work for comrades, helping with letters," she blurted out. "If you send me back to a Greek prison, they will come for me. You think I'm afraid of that?"

My anger deflated. This poor little flake was *serious*. Did she have any real idea of what the Greek cops would do to a young woman like her in jail? I brushed more dry sand from my legs. "Louise . . . people get hurt in prisons, they *die* in jail breaks. Let's just forget all this crap."

Her face spun back, and in her eyes I saw the same expression I had flinched from in Karachi and Mashhad, the suicidal calm of the true believer. "Oh." Her voice was quiet, matter-of-fact. "I don't much care about *dying*. I care about the revolution." She turned and strolled away, dragging her towel as a cocky matador trails his *muleta*, then spun to face me again. "But maybe the CIA *flunky* Malcolm and his Nazi good friend Karl Nordbrandt have first their surprise like I said. What about that?"

I had no idea what she was raving about. "Louise," I began, "come on . . . we. . . ."

"I'll explain so even you understand," she said with Germanic scorn. "You know Herr Nordbrandt's sweet daughter Anna, the wonderful bourgeois *gymnasium* girl?"

Anna was Karl and Elke's teen-age daughter, a girl who had been more than usually buffeted by the stress of contemporary adolescence. Louise had met her the previous summer, during an unsuccessful stint as an *au pair* girl in the villa the Nordbrandts had rented. Instead of helping with the cooking and laundry, Louise had tried to indoctrinate Anna.

"Anna doesn't go to shit-bull school anymore," Louise spat. "Little Anna Nordbrandt has come over to the comrades like me. . . ." She nodded sharply. "No . . . much better than poor crazy Louise. Little Anna is not like me crazy. She told her rich *Papi* and Mama that they are enemies in the Klassenkampf, so now Herr Nordbrandt must come here to Greece secret like big class criminal to see his CIA friend Malcolm." She dug her toes into the sand. "Maybe if you go talk to police chief, maybe I go to the telephone office and call Anna." This time, she marched away without turning back.

I watched her retrieve her blouse and bag, then climb the bluff toward the village. What the hell should I do if she were actually serious? Louise Mueller had just threatened to have the Red Army Faction come down here and . . . what? *Get me*, I imagined. She implied that Karl's teen-age daughter, Anna, was . . . what again? Louise's innuendo was ridiculous. Anna Nordbrandt was a troubled kid, sure, but. . . . My reassuring, rational thoughts dwindled. I saw again the ghosts of war-zone fear in Karl's eyes as he spoke to me that morning.

Beneath my clenched toes, I felt the layers of sun-heated, then moist, cool sand. My body was still rigid with adrenaline nerves. What a *bizarre* way for my first day back in Greece to have begun. Up on the path, Louise was striding toward the village just as purposefully as Karl had done two hours earlier, her orange towel trailing behind her like an archaic battle flag. Red, I thought, she really ought to invest some of her comrades' stolen money in a bright red towel. My laughter, when it came, was more of a tight giggle. Again, I stared at her small figure, catching her just as she disappeared from sight behind the whitewashed chapel wall. What if she *were* serious? What if her sputtered threats were actually true?

I swallowed. This was preposterous: a crazy young drop-out threatening me, threatening a man like Karl with . . . with the deadly retribution of his own daughter. Surely, the Baader-Meinhof people relied on more stable recruits than Louise Mueller. But then I recalled reading a *New Yorker* article which proclaimed that many of the "second generation" German terrorists were "clinically schizophrenic" and that others had no ideology other than violent vengeance against their parents' generation. Could it possibly be that I had just encountered one of them, and that Karl and Elke's own daughter had "come over to the comrades"?

Shuffling along the sand, I stopped again. Given the shadowy nature of political terror, given the bitter trans-generational hatred so obviously manifest among the German terrorist groups, it became clear to me that almost anything—even this absurd situation—was possible. People like Louise hated men like Karl, in whom they uncompromisingly vested all the responsibility for the 12 years of Nazi atrocity, for the millions upon millions of stacked corpses in the death camps, and also for the don't-look-back materialism and prosperity of West Germany's Economic Miracle. In Louise's mind, it was her *duty* to detest Karl, a man who had fought and killed under the black swastika flag.

It was convenient for her, of course, not to ponder the reality of Karl's war, because there was no room for pity in her dogma. A 17-year-old private lying in a stinking train car with a bloated, gangrenous leg did not fit her picture of the Fascist elite. Equally, it was better if she did not speculate on the intelligence and energy people like Karl had used in rebuilding Germany. All that was too *complicated*. Young people like Louise—who had been born when West Germany was already a prosperous democracy—felt only repulsion for the plump complacency and autocratic confidence of their business and political leaders. Andreas Baader had told them that all of Germany was a "shit house," and they were more than willing to believe him.

It was emotionally satisfying to believe him, as well as the

more articulate and eloquent Ulrike Meinhof. If a young person hated the wealth and stability around him, if a person despised the men who fought the Nazi war, then that person need not feel the crippling grip of guilt at being a citizen of a nation that had once sent the long lines of box cars rolling to Auschwitz and Treblinka, a nation that was now unbelievably prosperous, a nation that, some radicals claimed, spent far more on canned dog food and lottery tickets than it did to send a few crumbs of its surplus milk-powder mountain to the starving babies of Africa and Asia.

I opened my eyes and stared out to sea again. All this I could understand. What I could not be sure of was whether Louise had gone beyond the emotional dislocation of her generational and national identity and actually joined the small cells of violent terrorism. Was her threat about Anna and her comrades merely bombast? I swallowed again. There was no easy way I could find out, not here in this village. As with a bomb threat against a crowded theatre or airliner, I had to take her angry outburst seriously. Perhaps her rhetoric was not all that bombastic; perhaps there really was a war raging across Europe. But this time Hitler's Tiger tanks did not duel with Stalin's lumbering T-34s, while Patton's Shermans cut through the blasted peach orchards of the southern flank. This time crazy young people lay on stained mattresses in squatter apartments in Berlin, Munich, and Milan dreaming of car bombs and kidnappings, of snipers' ambushes and executions of class criminals who looked very much like their fathers.

Kicking at the sand, I suddenly shifted my rambling speculation. It was just too simplistic to blame European terrorism on neurotic adolescents who suffered from unresolved conflicts with their parents. Surely there was more to the problem than that: social dislocations caused by rapid change, glaring injustices in the post-war social and economic conditions of Western Europe . . . *some* plausible cause other than the craziness of the individual terrorists.

As a slightly reconstructed Kennedy liberal, I had always assumed that violent radicals were simply people who had

gotten carried away to extremism out of frustrated impatience with an unyielding, political establishment that resisted peaceful reform. To me, such extremists followed a certain logical predictability. Urban guerrilla war was, for them, like other wars: politics by other means. I'd always considered such people as motivated by misguided *political* ideals, not psychopathology.

Now I was not so sure at all. When Louise Mueller had relegated Karl and me to the ranks of her enemies five minutes earlier on this beach, she had shown obvious hatred. From what I knew about human behavior, it was difficult to feel an emotion as intense as hatred for someone you barely knew. Such outraged outbursts were a sign of a disturbed personality. And, in Louise's case, you didn't have to be Sigmund Freud to figure out the origins of that disturbance.

Several times I'd heard her rail bitterly against her father, the man she'd said had "abandoned" her and her sick mother, and had then refused to visit her when she needed him most, the months she'd spent as a lonely, confused teen-ager in the Bavarian psychiatric clinic. Her father was a member of the Establishment, a lawyer who had made his fortune by working within a system of calm rationality and compromise. The group Louise had embraced did not believe in rational compromise; they practiced the opposite: irrational, extremist violence.

She had told me she'd become a revolutionary soldier, but the true guerrilla soldiers I'd occasionally encountered, working as a journalist overseas, had not been as reckless or emotional as she. They sure as hell would not have survived very long if they had been.

Then I remembered a story I'd heard about Ulrike Meinhof, the co-founder of the German Rote Armee Fraktion that Louise now claimed to serve. In the early 1970s, Meinhof had abandoned her husband and infant twin daughters in Hamburg, much in the same way she and her sister had been abandoned by the death of her parents during the war. She then fled to the radical enclave of West Berlin and joined

Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and the other radicals of the nascent "Baader-Meinhof Gang." On arriving at their flat and being praised by her new comrades for her heroic act of stepping over the line to the radical underground, she reportedly threw her arms around her friends and exclaimed: "Finally, I have a family!"

At the time I'd heard the anecdote, I'd dismissed it as apocryphal. Now, after my confrontation with Louise Mueller, I felt more sure of its validity. Louise had not rationally progressed from one political position to another, more-radical stance. She had cast about from one faddish, communal group to another until she had stumbled on what she sought: a cult-like collective family that gave her an identity to replace that of an abandoned child. The reason she felt such intense loyalty to this group was now clear to me. She shared a common hatred with all her comrades in the violent European ultra Left: the male leaders of the political and economic establishment, the fathers who had abandoned them through death, divorce or selfish careerism.

There were some flecks of color down the beach: a small group of tourists braving the chilly bay for a swim—normality, untroubled Western civilization taking its leisure in this halcyon island village. I looked up at the whitewashed houses above me. Somewhere up there in the lanes and alleyways, Karl Nordbrandt, the quarry, was furtively trying to relax, and Louise Mueller was dreaming her predatory fantasies of violent retribution. I licked my dry lips, no longer hungry.

As I trudged along the beach, I realized that Louise and her comrades had enlisted in a group far different from a guerrilla army. Their emotional instability had instead driven them into a small and desperate variant of the larger, more recognizable cults then mushrooming all across the Western world. Although terrorist bands and ostensibly spiritual cults did share certain traits in common, the young people who actually stepped over the line into the violent radical underground were clearly more disturbed than those who embraced cults.

But the terrorist bands and the religious cults did, apparent-

ly, share at least one more common trait: their leaders, men like Charles Manson, Andreas Baader and Jim Jones, were almost all cunning and manipulative psychopaths who knew how to transform a young follower's misguided altruism into fanatical, suicidal loyalty.

Part II

Chapter Three

Ukiah, California

Late Winter

I SAT in an armchair near the wide hardwood desk of Steven Katsaris, the director of the Trinity School for Children. The office was spacious and pleasantly furnished with leather sofas and two walls of bookcases holding an impressive collection of professional texts on child psychology. On the wall near the desk hung an abstract metal crucifix, a reminder to me that Steve Katsaris had been a Greek Orthodox priest for 20 years before leaving the priesthood in the late 1960s and becoming the director of this residential school for disturbed and emotionally handicapped children.

Carol and I had come to Ukiah, 100 miles north of San Francisco, to talk to Steve Katsaris about cults, about the psychology of cult leaders, the motives of young people who joined these groups, and also about the menace the more extreme groups posed for contemporary society. As both a trained theologian and a professional psychologist who spe-

cialized in the problems of confused young people, Steve Katsaris represented an obvious source of expertise on the subject.

But Mr. Katsaris had far more than just theoretical knowledge on the danger of cults and the involvement of young people in them. On the night of Saturday, November 18, 1978, Steve's oldest child, Maria, was one of the 912 human beings who died in that isolated section of Guyanese jungle now known all over the world as Jonestown. She was 25 years old when she died, and she had been a member of Reverend Jim Jones's Peoples Temple for almost five years.

As I moved through the usual small-talk preliminaries to setting up my tape recorder and beginning the formal interview, I became aware that my attempts to "get the subject to relax" were not very successful. Talking about his personal involvement in the Jonestown tragedy, I soon realized, was never a relaxing experience for Steve Katsaris. Later, I read in his testimony before a Congressional subcommittee investigating Jonestown 15 months after the massacre that, "There has not been a day when thoughts of that tragedy have not crept into my mind or been thrust upon me." This degree of intense emotional involvement seemed to manifest itself in Steve's posture and appearance. There was an austere, almost mournful angularity to his features; his raw-boned frame and profound dark eyes were immediately evocative of an El Greco apostle. Steve Katsaris had a disturbingly charismatic presence, and I knew after only a few minutes in his office that this was not going to be an easy day of information-gathering.

When he spoke about Maria and her involvement in the Peoples Temple, Steve leaned forward in his chair, bringing his face closer to mine and directly engaging my eyes with his. I found it almost impossible to take notes under such scrutiny and could simply hope that the tape recorder was picking up all the interview.

We began by clarifying some background information. Steve had been the pastor of a "middle-class, Republican"

Greek Orthodox parish in Belmont, a suburb of San Francisco. In the late 1960s, he petitioned the Church hierarchy to be allowed to leave the priesthood under an obscure canon law which permitted him to remain within the church as a layperson. During the same period—a time of fundamental personal searching for Steve—he and his wife, Sophia, ended their marriage. In 1970, he came up to Ukiah to become the director of the Trinity School, an institution partially funded by the Greek Orthodox Church in America. Maria graduated from high school in 1971 and moved north to live with her father. She wanted eventually to study nursing, but was content to delay her college education for a period and gain practical experience by working as an aide with disturbed kids at the Trinity School.

In 1973, Steve remarried. Maria's brother, Anthony, joined the new household in Redwood Valley, just north of Ukiah. This was isolated, agricultural country which had been sheltered from the social and political riptides that had swept through the Bay Area in the '60s and '70s.

Because of Steve's deeply held beliefs on social justice and racial equality, he became interested in the work of Jim Jones, a Disciples of Christ pastor whose church, the Peoples Temple, had been established just a short distance from his home in the rural community of Redwood Valley. "In the early days, Jim Jones was the only man talking against the Vietnam war, talking about racial equality," Steve said with soft precision. "He was the only person in this area who was saying that we need to go down to Watts and help people register to vote. He was the only one who was saying that we need to help the underprivileged elderly, that we need to get into the ghettos and work." Steve took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

"We lived within a mile or so of the Temple. I took my children to the Temple for the first time." All during the tumultuous years of the late '60s and early '70s, Steve continued, when he had made his decision to leave the priesthood and end his marriage, he had tried to engender in Maria, Anthony, and the youngest girl, Elaine, a sense of social

responsibility and humanistic concern with the plight of the oppressed and downtrodden. Now, not far from their home in Redwood Valley, there was a dedicated protestant clergyman whose church seemed to embody all the best of Christian compassion and liberal social activism.

After several frustrating attempts to observe the strangely secretive Temple services, he and the children decided to attend a public Temple faith-healing session at a local fair-ground. Temple officials called Steve outside the hall just before Jim Jones miraculously "cured" a spectator of cancer, by having the woman apparently cough up a putrid mass of malignant tissue. Steve then dismissed the Peoples Temple as a colorful anachronism, led by just another tent-show evangelist who had found some interesting new gimmicks to attract the faithful.

After her initial negative reaction to the hocus-pocus of the faith-healing session, however, Maria found herself invited back to ostensibly social gatherings at the Temple. Ukiah was a quiet agricultural town, and the isolation of the Katsaris family's ranch was not every teen-ager's idea of an interesting environment, so Maria began to visit the Temple and increasingly take part in its obviously worthwhile and diverse activities.

She began as a non-member volunteer, helping care for the elderly. One of Steve's staff at Trinity School was an active member of the Temple. She took Maria under her wing and encouraged her to participate in Temple activities. Later that year, Maria made a formal commitment and joined the church. For a while, she attended college in Santa Rosa as part of a Temple-sponsored group of students at the university. When the Temple left Redwood Valley for the more interesting social pastures of San Francisco's Fillmore district, Maria went with the group. Now she was a member of the Temple's inner circle, the Planning Commission. Although still in her early 20s, she was given considerable responsibility in handling the church's complicated financial "arrangements." She was also training for her commercial pilot's license under

Temple-sponsored flight training.

During this period, she maintained contact by telephone and letter with her father and family, but she rarely visited them. By 1976, however, her isolation from the family was almost complete, and Steve was beginning to have grave doubts about the nature of his daughter's entanglement with the Temple. In the summer of 1977, *New West* magazine published a damning, meticulously researched exposé of the Peoples Temple and its true nature. This article exposed the paranoia of Jim Jones, his sadism, which often led to brutal beatings of erring members, his bisexual satyriasis, his cynical and successful campaign to demand absolute obedience from members and to isolate them from their natural families. The faith healings and "resurrections" of the dead were shown to have been crude frauds, and Jones's blatant intriguing in Bay Area politics was brought under scrutiny.

Jim Jones responded to the *New West* exposé by cutting his losses and running, forcing many of his congregation to join him on an exodus to the Temple's so-called communal agricultural station at Jonestown in northern Guyana. Maria Katsaris was one of these pilgrims, but she assured her family that she was only going to be in Guyana "for a few weeks."

As Steve later learned, Jones had already seduced Maria sexually as well as emotionally.

Steve Katsaris was deeply alarmed and concerned for Maria's safety. Temple defectors had testified that Jones, in his manipulative hunger for total, unquestioning loyalty, had coerced all his followers into signing undated suicide notes as well as bizarre, incriminating confessions of atrocious and perverse acts.

Steve began to petition the local, state and federal governments, requesting that the Temple's activities in Guyana be further investigated. In the fall of 1977, he twice flew to Georgetown, Guyana's capital, in attempts to see Maria alone and talk sense to her. His first try was cleverly thwarted by the Temple's Georgetown staff, working under direct orders from Jim Jones to prevent Steve from seeing his daughter. During

this period, Temple spokesmen in San Francisco released statements supposedly made by Maria Katsaris that her father, Steven A. Katsaris, the director of the Trinity School for Children, was, in fact, a sexual pervert who had repeatedly molested her as a child.

But this blatant attempt at intimidation did not succeed. Steve finally managed to meet Maria face-to-face, but not alone. When he confronted her in the living room of a Georgetown house, Maria was "wooden," stiff and uncommunicative; she was also surrounded by three of Jim Jones's closest collaborators. Steve was shocked by her appearance. If he had seen such lack of affect and heard such stiff, emotionless speech in a patient at the school, he told me, he would have suspected severe drug abuse. But Maria was not drugged. Her mind was controlled by the rigid conditioning of the Peoples Temple cult. She refused to discuss the child-molestation charges; she refused to discuss returning to America; she showed no affection toward her father. Steve left Guyana that same day, accepting this temporary setback, but determined to redouble his efforts to free his daughter from this frightening, seemingly inexplicable, bondage.

For the next year Steve Katsaris worked tirelessly to liberate Maria and the more than 1000 other Temple members Jim Jones had taken to Guyana with him. Steve helped found the Concerned Relatives, a group that petitioned all levels of the American and Guyanese governments, seeking to be allowed to visit their loved ones in the concentration camp of Jonestown. The group contacted Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, warning him of Jones's public threats to unleash mass suicide if the "harassment" of the cult by the Concerned Relatives was not stopped. Mass, self-inflicted death was a real possibility, they warned. The State Department was not impressed. The Peoples Temple fought back hard, marshalling the aid of politicians whom Jones had cultivated and who owed him favors, such as California's lieutenant governor, Mervyn Dymally, and George Mascone, mayor of San Francisco. Steve Katsaris was denounced as a "fascist" with neo-Nazi connec-

tions, a racist, and, of course, a sexual pervert and child molester.

But, at long last, the efforts of the Concerned Relatives were beginning to succeed. Congressman Leo Ryan announced an investigation of the Temple and his plans to lead a Congressional delegation of inquiry to Jonestown in November 1978. Fourteen members of the Concerned Relatives, including Steve and Anthony Katsaris, joined Leo Ryan's groups, as did an NBC-TV film crew and several print-media reporters.

Because of limited room on the DeHavilland Twin Otter that flew into the Port Kaituma airstrip near Jonestown, Steve remained in Georgetown. Maria's brother Anthony was delegated to try to convince his sister to join the mass defection from Jonestown, which everyone hoped Leo Ryan and the media's presence would engender. If Maria was too intimidated to join a group of defectors, Anthony was prepared to spirit her away.

As almost every adult in the Western world knows, however, there was no general escape from Jonestown. In the holocaust at the airstrip on the afternoon of November 18, Anthony was severely wounded by the rifle fire of the Temple execution squad which slaughtered Leo Ryan, the defectors and the journalists.

In the orgy of murder and suicide at Jonestown, Maria Katsaris played a key role. Once the killing had begun outside the central pavillion, she went to the radio shed and relayed Jim Jones's instruction to his faithful staff in Georgetown: kill your children, kill the Concerned Relatives at the Pegasus Hotel—including her own father—then kill yourselves. Next she detailed three armed Temple guards to leave the commune by foot, carrying with them a suitcase containing \$500,000 in cash, to be delivered to the Soviet embassy in Georgetown. Then she joined others of the inner circle in Jim Jones's private bungalow, where she had lived as his mistress in relative seclusion for the previous year. When her body was discovered by the U.S. Army Graves Registration team, she had a possibly fatal gunshot wound; a later autopsy found

traces of cyanide in her system. It is not known if she died by her own hand or was murdered.

Steve swung away from me, turning his chair so that he could avert his face while he wiped away the tears. I cleared my throat and made a pretense of glancing around the office. There were framed prints of pioneer airplanes on the walls. Steve was a light-aircraft pilot with almost 40 years of experience. Maria's interest in aviation had come from her father, and so had her deeply felt social consciousness. As in many Greek families I had known, there had been an intense bond of empathetic identification between the father, Steve, and his first-born, Maria. The tears he now unashamedly shed were no affectation; his mourning for the loss of Maria, and for the manner of her estrangement from his and her eventual death, were a wound, which, I knew, would never heal.

I took a few desultory notes and adjusted the recorder's volume. Steve was ready to continue. I wanted his professional assessment of Jim Jones, of the psychodynamics, motives, and methods of the man who had taken Maria from him and led her to her death. Surely because Steve, a trained psychologist, had been locked in a mortal struggle with Jones for several years, he would have formed some unique insights on the nature of the cult leader. But I was only partially correct. Steve had indeed thought long and hard about the personality of Jim Jones, but because of the deep pain of the tragedy, Steve had not been able to attain any "perspective," any professional distance from his subject. He admitted this freely; he could never consider Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple as abstract entities. Steve could only recount his own experiences and hope that the reconstructions of these events would serve to illuminate the evil of Jones and the pathological nature of his cult.

What he was going to say, he warned me, would be anecdotal and might seem rambling on occasion, but he would be as open and honest with me as he could be. If I had the time, he added, he would try to recreate for me the pivotal episodes of Maria's entanglement with the Temple, her estrangement

from him, and her eventual commitment to die with the rest in Jonestown. I did have the time, I said.

His own motive in dragging up all these painful memories, he said, swinging back to face me again, was that he was afraid many people considered Maria and those who had died at Jonestown psychological inferiors. "My interest is that I think the greater obscenity than what happened in Guyana would be that people just gloss it over and consider the victims a bunch of kooks." He was especially sensitive about several books and articles that had already appeared and that tended to portray Maria as some kind of emotional cripple who had simply switched allegiances from one domineering, charismatic father (Steve), to an equally charismatic, but more domineering father figure (Jim Jones). This line of reasoning, he said, was simplistic. It also implied that *normal* young people would probably not become ensnared in cults, that those who did were the weaker of the species anyway. Thus, he said, dismissing the victims of Jonestown—including Maria Katsaris—to that status of "kooks" tended to dehumanize and erode the true nature of the tragedy.

Expanding slightly on this theme, Steve likened the Jonestown tragedy to a horrible car crash that a person witnesses on the highway. One is morbidly curious; one feels compelled to help the victims, but one doesn't want to get too closely involved with the messy cleanup. Above all, a person has a psychological need to believe that such a disaster *cannot* happen in his own life. Thus, the driver of the smashed-up car is assigned certain explanatory epithets: "careless," "drunk," "inexperienced." People like that, we all tend to reason, have fatal car accidents; such calamities will never happen to us. The same process, Steve said, was at work when writers tried to profile Maria as an aberration. If Maria Katsaris had little in common with *normal*, healthy kids, then we all have little to fear in the spread of destructive cults and so-called new religions in America.

If, however, he added, Maria was a healthy young woman who had been transformed by the mind-control practices of

the Temple—practices which were still being used by many of the estimated 3000 cults in America today—then people were fooling themselves about the relative security of their own situations.

I asked about Maria as a child; had she been overly sensitive, had she seemed overly prone to buffeting by the world's problems as she grew up?

She was a thoughtful, sensitive child, Steve said, but not abnormally so. Maria had always been interested in people more than ideas. At school, she was an average student who had to study hard to get a B, who occasionally slipped down to a C, and occasionally rose to an A. Her main concerns, however, were not with the abstractions of science or math, but with nurturing life. As a little girl, she mourned the death of pets and other animals. Even as a teen-ager, she would ask her father to stop the car when she saw a dead squirrel on the road so that she could pick up the body and give it a decent burial in the pet cemetery she maintained in their yard. Maria showed this same degree of compassion toward the elderly, especially her paternal grandparents, whom she loved with a deep, unblemished bond of affection. Later, Steve explained, Jim Jones exploited this compassionate concern for the elderly in his machinations to ensnare Maria in the Temple.

He related a clear example of Maria's compassionate sensitivity. When Steve and his wife, Sophia, announced their decision to seek a divorce, this was how Maria reacted: "We gathered the children in the family room one afternoon and talked to them. Maria had to be around sixteen. She leaned over and held both our hands. She could see the pain we were both going through . . ." Steve swallowed hard. ". . . and Maria said to us, 'That's all right. Things *will* be okay.'" Steve looked away. "But Maria also had a tough side to her. She was an aide here at the school, and she had no problem saying to some kids, 'Come off the bullshit. You know, you're not conning me. You don't have it as bad as you think you do.'" Such mature communication with a disturbed, obstreperous adolescent, Steve added, was "very hard" to maintain, and Maria's

ability to work with the patients at this level was a clear sign of her own inner resources, a balance of compassion and toughness.

Steve now addressed himself to the allegations of certain writers that Maria had been socially isolated, that the fact she had never dated in high school and that she was five feet, ten inches tall by the time she was 13 were somehow indicative of an underlying emotional affliction which made her especially vulnerable to the enticements of the Temple. This was patently not true, Steve said with feeling. Maria's social life as an adolescent had been very active; it simply had not included single-couple dating. At the church, she was a regular participant in group youth activities: certainly not the hallmark of an isolated and troubled girl.

I found myself agreeing with Steve. After having lived in Greece for seven years, and having visited Greek-American communities in the States, I knew how difficult it would have been for the oldest daughter of a parish priest in a first- and second-generation Greek-American community like Belmont to "date."

Steve pointed out that Maria had been anything but a retiring, lonely teenager. Like her father, she was especially concerned with the anti-war movement in the late '60s. On one occasion, Steve took Maria and Anthony to the first anti-war march in San Francisco, and Maria bought a stark, but effective, placard to carry to the park where the rally was held: a cardboard sign with the number 47,672 bordered in black, the number of Americans killed in Vietnam at that point. The next Sunday, she carried the placard to her pew for the children's service at church. "When it came time for the adult liturgy and the Sunday school kids to leave," Steve said softly, "Maria . . . this frail little girl, carried the sign out of the church, right in front of the adults, holding it carefully, not waving it, but with quiet resolution." That, Steve said, was another indication of Maria's inner strength and her dedication to the cause of social justice.

Again, he spoke with soft bitterness about the writers who

had portrayed Maria as an especially fragile child who felt abandoned by the father she idolized after he divorced her mother. "Seeing Maria as either a lonely child or a kid who didn't have anything to do is just too simplistic," Steve said. "She was quiet. She had the same characteristics that I have. I *like* isolation on my ranch. I have to drive up my own road for a mile to get there. Maria had her horse there. She had close friends, but she didn't blossom the way some fifteen-year-olds do who are falling in love every week. I think you can draw your own conclusions about Maria's childhood."

At the time, I was skeptical; I suspected that Steve, a bereaved father, might be allowing emotion to cloud his perception of Maria's adolescence. Surely, I thought, no *normal* teen-ager would let herself get sucked into a blatantly crazy outfit like the Peoples Temple. In my mind, I pictured Louise Mueller, an obvious emotional cripple, as well as several other visibly unstable former cult members I'd encountered.

But later, during the course of my research, I learned that most people who are recruited by destructive cults like the Peoples Temple are, indeed, normal adolescents and young adults from happy families.

According to Dr. Robert Schecter, the educational director for the American Family Foundation, a Massachusetts public education organization, "The fact that most of the kids who join are from normal, happy families bespeaks the power of the cult."

Dr. Margaret Singer, a University of California professor of clinical psychology and well-known expert on the phenomenon, is even more outspoken. "It's not just pathological people who join cults," she reported after interviewing hundreds of former cult members. "Rather, all of us at various times are more vulnerable than at other times. Almost anyone who is in a period of loneliness is in a vulnerable period in which he or she might get taken in by the flattery and deceptive lures that cults use to recruit new members."

When I spoke with Dr. Harold H. Goldstein, a practicing psychologist and acting director of the Staff College, National

Institute of Mental Health, about the issue of cult-convert personality, this was his view of the subject:

"Most people don't understand; they assume that the reason a child has gone off to a cult is that there's this terrible pathology in the family. But among people going into cults, the degree of pathology seems no greater than one would expect to find in the general population. There are some very disturbed people who've gone into cults, but the fact is that the groups don't want those people; they want people who are capable of working. There may actually be a lower percentage of people who are mentally disturbed in cult groups than exists in the general population."

A number of other cult experts—psychiatrists, sociologists, and youth counselors—have reiterated the view that a young person does not have to be emotionally disturbed or a product of a broken home to be susceptible to cults. The breakup of a family through death or divorce, however, as well as such normal upheavals as a collapsed love affair, the loss of a job, or an academic failure, can produce so-called "situational depressions," which, though often emotionally debilitating, are usually short-lived. But if the cult recruiters find a young person in the throes of such a temporary depression, they have a definite advantage.

What, I asked Steve, was the first indication that Maria was going to join the Peoples Temple, overcoming her initial reaction to the faith-healing session which she had called "gross"?

"Her initial involvement was social," Steve said. "She was a little kid living in a small country town like Redwood Valley, and the biggest thing going in the area is Jim Jones." He sighed. ". . . And her father takes her there for the first time and says it's a worthwhile organization." Of course, Steve added quickly, we now knew that Jim Jones was courting Maria from the first moment he saw her. "Grace Stoen told me that Jim Jones said, 'Wow, we've got to get this girl in here.' Jones just flipped over Maria when he first saw her, and even that early, when Maria wanted to break her ties with the Temple, others were assigned to convince her to stay in the church."

During the first few months of her membership in the Temple, Steve said, Maria maintained her interest in studying nursing, and actively sought her father's advice and support of her decisions. "But, the more she got involved with the Peoples Temple, the more distant she became from me." He shook his head. "I understand it *now*; the more they began controlling her life."

And once she moved to the Temple building on Geary Street in San Francisco? I asked. Did she break off all contact with her family in the pattern we now recognize as classic cult entrapment?

"No," Steve answered with conviction. "The sad part of all this is that I had constant contact with Maria. She would call me; I would call her. But very seldom would I get Maria on the line. She would always have to call me back. I now know that they didn't permit parents to talk to children alone, but kids could return calls that were being monitored." Until 1977, he added, he did occasionally see Maria alone. She was taking flight instruction at the Oakland airport, and Steve would fly his own light plane down to Oakland to see her. Away from Temple scrutiny, they would have dinner together or sometimes take in a movie. "But toward the end," he said quietly, "I could never see her alone." Even when her sister, Elaine, was leaving on an exchange study program in Japan, and Steve had arranged a small family farewell party in a Bay Area Japanese restaurant, Maria brought another Temple member with her and offered a "very weak excuse" for her strange action. Then, the next year, when Maria's beloved grandmother was visiting Steve, Maria made one excuse after another for not coming up to see her *Ya-ya*. Finally, Steve gave her an ultimatum; her grandmother was leaving in two days and Maria simply must come and visit her.

"No, Pop," Maria replied, "but I'll meet you at the Temple and go to the airport with you."

But when Steve went to the Temple to pick her up, she insisted on dragging along with her Tom Adams, a member of Jones's inner circle. Her excuse this time was that Tom had to

mail an important letter from the airport and needed a ride there.

For the first time, Steve realized that his daughter Maria, the little girl of such unshakable honesty and integrity, was standing before him and lying to his face. On the way out to the airport, he began to notice other changes in her manner. There was a hardness about her. When they had to wait a few minutes at the airport parking lot for Elaine to arrive from Stanford, Maria became irritably impatient. "Here comes Elaine's ass now," she proclaimed loudly when her sister's car arrived.

Steve was shocked; he had never heard his daughter speak this way. Such aggressive crudeness simply was not Maria's manner. He called her on this outburst, and she quickly apologized. But his suspicions about the nature of her life in the Temple had now become real fears. He openly challenged her to tell him the truth about her behavior, about her growing alienation from her family, and above all, to explain why she now had to be guarded by another Temple member whenever she ventured out of the church headquarters. Steve told Maria that he had carefully watched Tom Adams at the airport; the man had mailed no letter. "No, Pop," Maria told him, again boldly lying to her father, "Tom did mail a letter. You just didn't see him."

After this point, Steve was openly alarmed. Whatever techniques Jim Jones and his Temple hierarchy were using to control the members, the results were shocking. Steve consulted several of his psychologist colleagues at the Trinity School. Their consensus was that Maria was just passing through a predictable delayed-adolescent rebellion, and that she would eventually come to her senses, probably leave the Temple, and get on with her life as a normal young adult. Steve was only partially placated; in his gut, he could feel Maria being pulled away from him, away from the rational world, toward a confusing and frightening future with the Temple. At this time, of course—early 1977—the sickening revelations about the true nature of Jim Jones's *ministry* and the techniques he used to exact total obedience and loyalty

from his members, had not yet been made public. There were some muted rumors by Temple defectors, but the *normal* world paid little attention to the crazy tales of beatings and sexual depravities supposedly practiced on the orders of this well-known liberal minister, a clergyman who had given up a comfortable life in idyllic Redwood Valley to minister to the poor blacks of the San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles ghettos.

Still, Maria did try to maintain some contact with her father. Once, when she knew he would be working on the roof of the house in Potter Valley, she flew up from Oakland on a cross-country training flight and "flat-hatted" right over the roof where Steve was working, then executed a smooth, steep turn, and came back low across the rooftop, wagging her wingtips. Knowing Steve's deep love of aviation and his pride in his daughter's flying skills, this display of aerobatics was an especially poignant attempt at communication, as if Maria had been trying to say, "Look, Pop . . . maybe I can't be with you right now, but I am still *your* daughter."

But then came the summer of 1977, and the explosion of the *New West* exposé. Maria went into exile in Guyana with the hundreds of other faithful Temple members. And Steve Katsaris's lonely 16-month struggle to save his daughter began in earnest. After the confrontation with the "wooden" travesty of Maria in the Georgetown living room that November, Steve knew for certain that she had been exposed to unremitting and perhaps innovative "mind-control" techniques. He also realized that the very term was, of course, both frightening and hyperbolic. At that point, few in the general public understood the power and cumulative effect of the methods used by cult leaders to maintain their grip over their subjects.

Sleep deprivation over periods of months and years, a low-protein diet, repetitive chanting or group song, repeated public censure of "offenders," physical and psychological intimidation, paranoid fear-mongering about vicious outside enemies and conspiracies against the group, and the systematic breaking of sexual and other moral taboos were certainly

not methods invented by Jim Jones or the leaders of such cults as The Children of God, Synanon, or the Unification Church. But these blatant machinations did, indeed, work on normal people, transforming them into obedient zombies. This was the hard truth at the core of the Jonestown holocaust that Steve now wanted the world to learn; this was why he was disappointed that some writers had chosen the simplistic route of dismissing Maria as a father-fixated neurotic who had eagerly embraced Jim Jones's godless Apostolic Socialism when she felt rejected by her daddy.

Only during the last year of her involvement with the church, Steve stressed, was Maria coerced into breaking all direct contact with her family. But even during the early months of 1978, as the madness of her life at the Jonestown settlement was reaching a peak, she managed to maintain an indirect link with her father through messages she passed to him via Richard McCoy, the U.S. consul in Georgetown who had the tricky task of acting as liaison between the Temple and the Concerned Relatives. In April 1978, Dick McCoy wrote Steve with the following information about Maria: "On one occasion when she was alone in my office we discussed the meeting between you and her last year. She admitted it was painful, but claimed that her hostility was due to your opposition to the Peoples Temple. She did state that in spite of her attitude she still loved you."

Steve pushed his desk chair back and rubbed his moist eyes, savagely, as if forcing himself to continue this painful but necessary piece of emotional surgery. He said that he wanted me to understand just how radical Maria's transformation had become by the time she died, how the Temple's mind-control techniques had worked. That last terrible weekend in Guyana, Steve began, when it was clear that only Anthony would be able to meet Maria inside the confines of the Jonestown settlement, Steve entrusted to his son one important item to give Maria: the silver cross her grandfather gave Steve. "She used to love that cross," Steve said. "She once told me, 'You can leave anything you want to the other kids, but I want

Papous's cross.' I told her, 'I'm not going to give it to you until I die.' " So, Steve explained, he knew that receiving the cross, actually having it in her hand, would evoke a flood of family memories and love connections which just might help to jolt her out of her Temple conditioning.

* * *

The afternoon of Saturday, November 18, 1978, did not go well for Anthony Katsaris; he had been unable to spend much private time with his sister, and he had not been successful in convincing her to defect. The members of Leo Ryan's party and a small group of defectors who had braved the wrath of Jones and the Temple guards to leave with the Congressman were trudging along the muddy path to the yellow dump truck which would transport them back to the Port Kaituma airstrip and freedom. Maria walked silently at Anthony's side. Thirty feet from the truck—the tangible presence of escape—she stopped. This was as far as she could allow herself to venture. "Anthony turned around to her," Steve said, his voice breaking now. "He can't say goodbye, but he presses the cross quietly into her hand. Anthony said to me, 'I was crying, Pop, and I just walked away. I didn't even look back. Maria asked me what it was, and I told her, "Don't look at it now. Just keep it."'" Steve took a deep breath and continued. "He had barely gotten to the truck when he heard Maria shout to Tim Reiterman, the reporter from the *Examiner*, 'Tell Steve that we don't believe in God.' And she threw the cross at Tim."

Now Steve reached inside his shirt and removed the silver cross to show me. It was a squarish Orthodox crucifix fashioned of dark silver and burnished by two lifetimes of wear. On the face of the cross there was molded this cruciform devotional inscription:

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"Fos-Zoe," I intoned, translating the Greek: "Light and Life."

A few months after our interview, I viewed the NBC-TV videotapes of the final day at Jonestown. Maria and Anthony Katsaris appear together for a few tense moments; she is thin-lipped and rigid with controlled rage and inner turmoil. Anthony is tearful, distraught with the frustration of his failure to pierce Maria's cult persona. Maria talks bitterly about outsiders who have come to disturb the communal tranquility of the settlement; she explains that she is perfectly free to leave, but that she has simply chosen not to. Her brother, she says, should stay for a while and see for himself what a healthy life can be found here.

In the last moments of the tape clip, Maria Katsaris, a seemingly calm, coolly attractive young woman, stares clear-eyed into the camera lens. Although the cells of her body are identical to those of the girl who mourned dying soldiers and road-killed pets, the young woman gazing at the camera is as much a travesty of her former self as any person I encountered in the course of writing this book.

Steve Katsaris swung away in his chair to gaze out the window into the school courtyard. A church bell rang several times, and I realized that it was already lunchtime and the children were being summoned for their midday meal. Steve excused himself, explaining that he had a couple of quick phone calls to make before we went to eat lunch in the school cafeteria.

For a few moments, I found myself standing beside his desk, holding the warm silver cross in my hand. In my mind, I was transported to that stifling humid twilight on the muddy roadway at Jonestown. There was Maria Katsaris, now a wraith-like psychotic, flinging this silver cross into the muck and screaming for everyone to hear that her father must be told "we" did not believe in God. Less than four hours later she and over 900 other children and parents were lying dead, many on the same muddy ground to which she had cast her father's cross.

This crucifix, I now saw, had in fact represented Light and Life; Jim Jones, who slouched, brooding in his blue "Bishop's

throne" in the tin-roofed pavillion, had represented what he always had: Darkness and Death. Maria had made her final choice.

* * *

In the sunny courtyard of the Trinity School, I watched Steve Katsaris talking with a group of young residents. I was overcome with a sense of the incredible irony which ran through the story of his struggle to save Maria from Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. Steve stood in the center of a clutch of teen-age boys and girls, who looked up, smiling, into his face with obvious expressions of trust and love. A number of people I had spoken to about Steve Katsaris had described him as "saintly" and "charismatic," and now I could see that these often overused expressions were, in fact, accurate. Everything I had heard or read about Jim Jones—especially the "Bishop" Jim Jones of Jonestown—portrayed him as satanically evil. These two men, these apparently Manichaeian representatives of Light and Darkness had been engaged in the mortal contest for the life and soul of Maria.

I could understand the motives and methods of a humanistic Christian and divorced Greek parent like Steve, but I had trouble trying to fathom, to fully comprehend, the compulsions and cruelties of Jim Jones. I was still unable to grasp completely what hold he had maintained over people, how he was able to entrap hundreds of them within the confines of his Jonestown camp. Finally, I could not begin to imagine the power he held over them that last, muggy night, when the screech of the loudspeakers blaring "Alert! Alert! Alert!" drew the 900 from shed-like barracks to the central pavillion and, after some stage-managed debate, the obscene tub of purple Fla-Vor-Aid was set forth, and mothers actually *lined up* to squirt the poison down the throats of their squirming babies.

During the hysterical milling around the poison vat that night, Jim Jones had repeatedly appealed for order. At one point he had claimed that the gruesome cyanide convulsions

at the foot of his throne were not death throes at all. This isn't *death*, he told his remaining faithful, it's simply stepping over to another plane. "If you knew what was on the other side," he proclaimed, still able to muster a bogus evangelical fervor in the face of the piling corpses, "you'd be *glad* to be stepping over tonight."

I waited now in the shady portico of the Trinity School courtyard, watching the other partner in the war of Light and Darkness I was trying to understand. The school building had originally been a Dominican orphanage and was built in a graceful Spanish mission style. Now, at the end of the mild Mendicino County winter, there was an abundance of flowers rimming the courtyard. The grass was vivid green, and there were birds singing. Steve Katsaris stood at the center of the circle of young boys and girls of several races and also several combinations of race. These children were, Steve had told me earlier, the true outcasts of our fractured contemporary society. Some of these kids had been so traumatized by child abuse or molestation, so battered by alcoholic or drug-addict parents and guardians, that they had been rendered mute or unable to carry on even a simple direct conversation. Others had organic problems, brain damage or severe sensory learning disabilities, which had rendered them too disruptive for normal parental care or educational setting. These 70 or 80 kids represented the sifted end tailings of the human detritus that California's mobile society had produced. There was no quick fix for kids like this; they required years of expert counseling, carefully controlled and balanced diet, and stern, but unremitting, love.

I studied Steve in the center of this group of kids. He asked one boy about an art project, then turned to a slender, clearly frightened girl, and chatted with her about her math class that morning. After a few minutes, the kids who had dashed up to Steve with a frenetic intensity when he'd entered the courtyard, seemed to relax, to take on a calm patience as he asked first one, then another, about his or her schoolwork. Now he made a joke, and these emotionally splintered children, the so-called "basket cases" of child psychology, actually fell into

unaffected, happy laughter.

I spun away from the scene. In my mind, I saw a grotesque parody of this same pleasant picture. There was a famous photograph of Jim Jones which was taken outside the Redwood Valley Temple in the spring of 1972. Jim Jones, his face already bloated from barbiturate and amphetamine abuse, is standing at the center of a group of eleven black, white and Oriental children. The smaller kids crouch at his feet, and the older ones lean close to him to receive his blessing. The children beam up in the bright spring sunlight. Kim Uneii, a young Korean girl wearing her national dress, holds a healthy, dark-haired baby in her arms, extending the toddler forward to be closer to Jim's "metaphysical" strength. In the published picture—which was a mandatory bestseller among Temple faithful—a fine slice in the original negative produced a faint blur of light, which seemed to curve from the chest of Jones's scarlet clerical robe to the heart of Dorothy Buckley, the black teen-ager cuddled under Jim's left arm.

Jim proclaimed that this was a miraculous photograph, that the picture had somehow captured the "aura" of love he was projecting to Dorothy and the other children at the moment the shutter was tripped. Thousands of copies of the photograph were sold under the grandiose title "The Shekinah Glory of the Reverend Jim Jones."

Only four of the eleven children in the picture survived the events of November 1978. Six were poisoned at Jonestown. Little Martin Amos, shown kneeling at Jim's feet, had his throat slashed by his mother, Sharon, in the Temple's Georgetown headquarters on the night of November 18. It was Jim Jones who issued the order, but it was Maria Katsaris who delivered the coded murder-suicide command from the Jonestown radio shed.

* * *

After lunch in the school cafeteria, Steve offered to show us the site of the former Peoples Temple in Redwood Valley, and

also to take us to his Potter Valley ranch and let us dig through the large collection of documents on the Jonestown tragedy that he has accumulated there. As we drove north of Ukiah, following Steve's car, I was impressed by the beauty and tranquility of the countryside. The Russian River and its tributaries had bisected the foothills of the Coastal Range, producing a pattern of flat alluvial valleys between wooded hillsides. There were thousands of acres of budding vineyards on the bottom land, and flowering fruit orchards marching up the hillsides to the ridges of pine and cedar. Spring had come early to these valleys; everywhere I looked there was delicate new greenery and wildflowers. I couldn't help but imagine what this country must have looked like to the original group of Temple pilgrims whom Jones had brought with him from the Indianapolis ghetto in the mid-'60s.

Jones had claimed that he had received a divine revelation to lead his people away from an impending nuclear holocaust and to the promised land of northern California. In fact, he had become obsessed with an *Esquire* article listing several places in the world that would supposedly be safe from the fallout of a nuclear war. One was the area round Ukiah; another was Belo Horizonte in Brazil. Jones first spent a couple of ineffectual years trying to establish a populist ministry in Brazil, then returned to the United States and led his small congregation west. Surely, to people accustomed to the drab and dilapidated inner city of Indianapolis, these flowering hills and vineyards must have seemed like a divinely revealed promised land.

Steve signaled for a turn, and we followed his car left onto a potholed blacktop driveway. Before us stood the barn-like structure of the former Peoples Temple. The building was redwood slab, with a tent-like, gradually sloping roof, which rose to a central peak. The parking lot was huge, offering room for the hundreds of cars and buses that were jammed into it during the Temple's heyday in the early '70s. Behind this wide parking lot stood a pleasant yellow wood-frame house, surrounded by several side buildings and three tall pines.

This had been Jones's residence. There were more pines and budding hardwoods on the other sides of the former Temple property, giving the lot a secluded feeling.

Steve explained, as we strolled across the front lawn of the church building, that the entire property had been purchased by a fundamentalist Christian group, which was now hoping to turn the facility into an evangelistic youth center. I wondered if these people hoped to somehow exorcise the memory of Jonestown by putting this notorious facility to good Christian purpose. Some of the fundamentalists I'd spoken with during the course of my research had equated Jim Jones—a psychopathic, self-proclaimed Communist—with the emergence of the prophesied Antichrist.

We stood near the corner of the former church building, and Steve began a rapid-fire catalog of fraudulent activities that Jim Jones had originated here in Redwood Valley and later carried to extremes in San Francisco and Jonestown. Near Jones's house, there had been a large wire cage for the Temple mascot, the chimpanzee Mr. Muggs. "Jones . . ." Steve said, his voice edged with anger now, "Jones presented himself as the great humanitarian lover of all creation. He would encourage people in the local community to leave dogs and cats and other pets which they could no longer care for with the Peoples Temple. The Church would care for these animals, Jones said. Then he would just unload them on his followers in the area." Steve looked at me with his hard gaze. "When it came time for the Temple to move to San Francisco, they took all these animals up in the hills and threw them all into a common grave. They killed them all."

He spoke of Jones's ostensibly overweening concern for the elderly. It was this work, administering to the needs of elderly Temple members, which Maria first performed as a young volunteer. His precious "seniors," Jim Jones would often proclaim, could lay down their heavy burdens when they joined the Peoples Temple; they would be fed, housed and cared for with real affection for the rest of their lives. In reality, they were coerced into signing over their Social Secu-

rity and pension benefits, their life savings, and any other liquid property, then jammed into substandard housing, often four to a room, and fed a starchy, protein-poor diet.

Steve went on to discuss Jones's clever manipulation of the emotional issue of black-ghetto hunger. In an effort to win over the black community in San Francisco's Western Addition, Jones started a "school breakfast" program, modeled after the similar popular program begun by the Black Panthers in Oakland. "The breakfast program," Steve said with obvious disgust. "Jones would go out and tell the owners of grocery stores and bakeries that he was doing this wonderful thing for the poor, and they would give him their stale bread and day-old donuts. He would come back and feed this to the people who had given their payroll checks and Social Security payments to the Temple. That's what they got . . . a stale donut. You can ask Grace Stoen about this when you talk to her." Jones, Steve added, also got local merchants to contribute food for a "hot meal in the evening" for the poor elderly in the Fillmore district. He solicited funds for a highly touted legal-aid program for the poor. But *all* of this was a blatant hoax, Steve proclaimed: "None of that *ever* happened."

The starchy leftovers from the local stores made up the bulk of his members' diets. As for legal aid to the poor, Jones would often intercede with the criminal justice authorities to have a drug-related offender or a prostitute assigned probation under the benevolent supervision of the Temple, but he used such obvious leverage to closely control these people's lives for his own needs. This criminal-offender class of Temple member was especially useful to him to fill the ranks of his Apostolic Guards: the tough and ruthless men and women who eventually served as the armed enforcers of the suicide command that terrible Saturday night in Jonestown.

* * *

An hour later, we sat in the sunny living room of Steve's handsome ranch home in Potter Valley. The subject was still

Jim Jones's evil manipulation of his flock and the public. Because of Jim Jones's much-publicized social ministry to the poor and forgotten of society, he received humanitarian awards and was honored at testimonial dinners in the mid-'70s. He had also gained the active support of a variety of local, state, and national figures, office-holders and office-seekers who knew they could depend on Jones to deliver several thousand votes on election day and several hundred enthusiastic, multi-racial supporters during campaign rallies. Steve was particularly incensed about the support Jones received from Mervyn Dymally, then California's lieutenant governor, now a U.S. Congressman. On October 27, 1977—two months after the *New West* exposé—Lt. Gov. Dymally wrote a three-page letter to Forbes Burnham, prime minister of Guyana, expressing his strong support for the Reverend Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. Dymally implied that critics of the Temple were part of a well-financed, well-organized, right-wing conspiracy.

"Here," Steve said, handing me a Xerox copy of the letter from a pile of documents before him on the coffee table, "see for yourself." As I read the letter, I felt surprise, then shock. Dymally had described Jones as "one of the most committed activists and finest human beings I know. . . ." To Dymally, the Peoples Temple was "... one of the most significant forces today in the area of human rights, social change and concrete service work." He continued his praise by pointing out that, "A noteworthy feature of the Temple's program is its compassionate emphasis on the needs of the ever growing senior population." Dymally accused the Temple's enemies of harboring vicious right-wing motives. "Evidence currently being gathered points clearly to right wing forces of the first magnitude. One such force is known to have political affiliation with those remnants of the Nazis who continue to permeate the fabric of American society. . . ." Lt. Gov. Dymally concluded his laudatory letter by noting that, "Jim is a deeply loyal and sensitive person and he is a man who stands by his word and by those who look to him for guidance and leadership. It is

this kind of loyalty that makes him a man to be trusted.”

Steve shook his head and described the letter as “unbelievable.” I realized what an impact this letter must have had on the Guyanese government; here was the second-ranking executive of the largest, wealthiest state in America, fulsomely praising Jones and the Temple. The implication of the letter was clear: critics of the Temple were well-financed Nazis, bent on destroying the church’s good works. As Steve indicated, Jones had, indeed, cleverly courted and procured friends in high places.

It now became clear to me that there was a consistent thread of mirror-image-reversal propaganda running through the history of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple, a Big Lie campaign as brazen in conception as anything attempted by Hitler or Goebbels.

Jim Jones had claimed to be many strange things. He said that he was half Cherokee Indian so that minority people would empathize with him; he was not.

He claimed to have received a divine revelation to lead his people to California; in reality, he read about Ukiah in *Esquire* magazine.

He claimed “metaphysical” power to see into people’s lives, detect disease—especially cancer—then miraculously cure it; he did all this with the aid of fanatically loyal church members who paid “calls” on prospective members, then spied out the contents of their medicine cabinets and garbage cans and made lists of the revealing details of the hosts’ private lives so that Jones could produce a divine vision before calling the person to the altar for the cure. The “cancers” he extracted were in fact putrid chicken gizzards.

He claimed that both men and women followers ceaselessly demanded sexual favors from him, and that his compassionate love for them led him, reluctantly, to comply; in reality, he was a bisexual satyr who supplemented his appetites with orgies of sadistic punishment and voyeuristic humiliations.

He claimed that only he and his god-like powers could protect his people from the diabolical conspiracy of fascists,

racists, mercenaries and government agents bent on destroying them; in reality, he, himself, had a violent, barely subconscious hatred of black people.

He claimed that he was a prophet who often spoke with God. He later claimed to be a Marxist atheist who used the pages of the Bible, "this paper idol," as toilet paper. Then, in blasphemous pantomimes, he forced his congregation to mock the Christian "Sky God," portrayed by a Temple member costumed as a ludicrous, painted drag queen.

He claimed that he would lead his people to the dawn of a new utopia through Apostolic Socialism; in reality, he led them into psychotic darkness and mass death.

I had never before had connection, even indirect connection like this, with a person of such monumental evil. I was still at a loss in trying to understand his motivations. Steve Katsaris, a trained psychologist who had had long opportunity to think about Jones, now tried to share some of his insights. As Steve spoke, he gazed out the wide front windows of his hilltop ranch home at the green valley below. He was trying hard to sound dispassionate. "I would say that Jim Jones was a man who was never satisfied with anything. There was never enough to satisfy him because basically he was extremely empty. I see children at the school like this sometimes in whom the damage has been done so early in life that *no* amount of attention and love, re-parenting or limit-setting can fire them, can make them *feel*. . . ."

"Like Hitler," I blurted out. "They have no core."

Steve nodded somberly. "Nothing . . . *catches* in them." He made a vague gesture in the air. "You can't fill up this empty center. People like this have continually to compensate when they find themselves in positions of power like Jim Jones did. It was not enough to be the pastor of a parish, of a multi-racial congregation which was flying in the face of societal structure. . . . It was not enough to bring these people out here; he had to have absolute command over all of them, and command means power. Jones was not a sexually driven person. I think that his sexual abuse of people was just another

way of controlling them. People have seen this as sexual depravity, but it was just another means of control, of manipulation. Jones got his real pleasure, if that's the right term for it, out of manipulating people, out of deception. One of the characteristics of a person like Jim Jones is the ability to equate successful deception with actual accomplishment." Steve took a deep breath, then loudly expelled it. "If he could lie and get away with it, if he could deceive, then it was equal in his mind to having done the real thing. It didn't matter if he performed some *miracle* deceptively, as long as he did it successfully."

Steve was sitting on a handsome broadcloth sofa in this airy, tasteful California living room, describing a human monster of absolute amorality, a powerful leader with no moral core, a domestic Hitler or Stalin . . . perhaps a Caligula. The parallels were obvious; like these paranoid historical dictators, Jones had constructed elaborate command structures to control his subjects. He had extracted oaths of personal fealty to him alone; he had required his subjects to worship him as a god, and in the end, he had led them to destruction.

Maria Katsaris, that sensitive girl with such strong currents of Christian compassion and heightened social consciousness running through her young life, became literally entrapped by this American Caligula. But Jones had been more than a clever monster. He had also made use of the most sophisticated methods of contemporary mind control, methods used with equal effectiveness by the leaders and hierarchies of the thousands of cults still existing all across the Western world.

Steve reached over the coffee table and handed me another document. It was a copy of a long letter from Richard Delgado, a professor of law at UCLA, to James Schollasert of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. In the wake of the Jonestown disaster, Congress was investigating the problem of cult behavior-control methods used by the Peoples Temple. These techniques were once called "brainwashing"; now they are more generally known as "coercive persuasion." Professor Delgado first listed the key components of the cults' manipu-

lative system, then went on to discuss the relationship of these methods to the American legal system, especially to the First Amendment's absolute guarantees of religious freedom.

"Despite disagreement over the theoretical model that best explains induced changes in belief and behavior," Professor Delgado had written, "there is general agreement that the following elements are central: a) isolation of the victim and control over his or her environment; b) control over information and communication; c) physiological depletion by means of inadequate diet, and insufficient sleep, and overwork; d) assignment of meaningless tasks, such as repetitious copying of written material, or chanting; e) manipulation of guilt or anxiety; f) threats of annihilation, physical or spiritual, by all-powerful captors or leaders; g) degradation and assaults on the pre-existing self; h) peer pressure, sometimes applied through ritual "struggle sessions"; i) required acts of self-betrayal, betrayal of group norms, and confession; j) alternation of harshness and leniency, terror and forgiveness."

"Acting alone," Professor Delgado stated, "none of these forces is likely to prove irresistible to the average person. Their combined effect, however, can produce changes in thought and behavior in even the most strongly resistant person."

I put down the letter and stared out into the benevolent afternoon. Puffy clouds made attractive shadows on the vineyards below this hilltop retreat. Steve's ranch was easily one of the most beautiful settings I had seen in many years of travel. It was here that young Maria had tried to build a life for herself after her parents' divorce. From everything I had read about Maria or had learned about her from Steve, she had been an "average person" such as Professor Delgado described, perhaps, given her inner strengths, even a "strongly resistant person." But she had also been at a predictably vulnerable time in her life. And, as Dr. Margaret Singer had pointed out, everyone occasionally undergoes such periods.

For two years, Maria had tried to build a new life with her father after the divorce. But, like so many other young people

in the early 1970s, she was unsure of her educational goals and torn by strong, diffuse longings to effect worthwhile social change in the world, to look beyond her own selfish needs and help the downtrodden. And there were few heroes left, Steve pointed out; the Kennedys and Martin Luther King were dead.

When her father remarried in 1973, and Jim Jones started his elaborate and well-orchestrated campaign to win Maria over, she was probably at her most lonely, vulnerable point. As Grace Stoen later told me, Jim Jones had, indeed, "flipped" over Maria the first time he saw her. He wanted that slender, dark-eyed girl, and Jim Jones was used to getting what he wanted. He and his closest advisors stalked and courted Maria with an unprecedented intensity. When she showed signs of disgust at certain bizarre Temple practices, she was showered with flattery and given more responsibility, a technique the Moonies call "love bombing."

Slowly, the Temple came to be Maria's emotional home. Like the other Temple members, however—even those in the inner circle of advisors—Maria was subjected to all the techniques of coercive persuasion Richard Delgado had enumerated. For Maria, the "acts of self-betrayal" took the form of her eventual surrender to Jim Jones's persistent efforts at sexual seduction and her subsequent signing of the affidavits accusing her father of being a child molester. Then, of course, as a member of the Planning Commission, she had been forced to witness and give approval to repeated sadistic punishments and sexual humiliations of erring Temple members. She must have known that she, herself, would be a target for such treatment if she showed the least sign of resistance to Jones. By this point, however, she had no doubt made the death-camp prisoner's psychological transfer, and had come to identify completely with the ruling authority; she had become a *Kapo*, like the Jews at Auschwitz and Treblinka who had been beaten and coerced into herding their fellow prisoners into the gas chambers. The use of sadistic physical punishment by cult leaders is, in fact, quite widespread. After the Peoples

Temple was exposed to world scrutiny, stories began to emerge from former members of other cults that highlighted such cruelty and its use as a manipulative tool to control both the victims (through fear) and the inflictors (through collective guilt). Such a destruction of the "pre-existing self" would have produced in Maria a profound sense of guilt; this guilt would have fed a self-destructive depression, which would have culminated in suicide.

In fact, Steve admitted with deep regret, Maria had become completely crazy, "psychotic" by the final day of her life. Otherwise, he said, she could have never passed on Jones's order to the Georgetown Temple staff to murder the remaining Concerned Relatives, then kill themselves. The thin, cold-eyed young woman who survives in the NBC videotapes as a vengeful harpy had been synthesized out of the flesh, blood and soul of the little girl whose father had taught her to respect the sacred nature of all life, who had early shown a compassionate empathy for those less fortunate than herself. The girl who had wanted to become a nurse, had instead been transformed into an agent of mass execution.

By that last sweaty afternoon in the mud of Jonestown, Maria Katsaris had fully turned her back on the light and life of her father's liberal Christianity and embraced the darkness and death of the nihilistic, empty core that dwelt inside Jim Jones.

* * *

After several hours of conversation and poring over Steve's extensive collection of Jonestown documentation, I had come to understand on an *intellectual* level the coercive control Jones had maintained over Maria and the other members of the cult. But it was only after I interviewed Grace Stoen and spoke with other defectors and Jonestown survivors that I began to get any kind of emotional sense of what being in the Peoples Temple had been like.

Grace Stoen and her first husband, Tim, had been involved

with the Temple for six years. They had held prominent positions in the church hierarchy, and together they guarded the sensitive secrets of Jones's convoluted, crooked money dealings as well as his coercive use of pseudo-legal pressure to keep members in line. After Grace defected in 1976, Tim Stoen maintained his leadership position for several months because Jones had physical control of their young son, John Victor Stoen, in Jonestown. This was the toddler displayed in the bogus "Shekinah Glory" propaganda photo. He died with all the others in Jonestown while Grace, Tim Stoen and Steve Katsaris waited in the Pegasus Hotel in Georgetown for news from Congressman Leo Ryan's delegation to the jungle camp.

I asked Grace Stoen to relate what it had been like for her and the other members to be under the manipulative control of a man as pathologically clever as Jim Jones.

She shook her head slowly. "Jones knew what buttons to push in people. Once they were in the Temple, they were brainwashed. Number one," she said, raising a finger, "they were also tricked, and the majority of normal people can be tricked." She raised a second finger. "And then it was the psychological breaking down of what was normal in them. I think that this can happen to a lot of people . . . you can take a group of people, selected, unselected . . . whatever, a cross-section of the Temple members' backgrounds, and they would do the same thing."

Had Jones actively played on members' guilts and anxieties, as in the Delgado coercive persuasion model?

Grace nodded vigorously. "See, Jones was the kind of person who could spend about thirty minutes to an hour with you and pretty much find out what buttons make you tick. With Tim, he would use guilt, so Tim sold his Porsche right off the bat. And with me, he really played on the fact of my background being part Mexican, and he always used to say to me, 'Oh, the *Mexicans*! I need good examples, and you're the *only* one I have.'" She stared down at the table top. "He would always try to make me feel guilty."

Grace continued by talking about the debilitating effects of

sleep deprivation, ceaseless make-work, endless meetings and the terrible "catharsis sessions" during which Jones meted out physical punishments. "I'd work sixteen hours a day, and, on Thursday nights, I'd work all night, go home, take a shower and work that day; then we'd get on a bus for San Francisco and Los Angeles. I'd be so exhausted that they'd let everybody else off the bus, then the drivers would wake me up, and they'd say, 'Okay, your name is Grace Stoen and you're in San Francisco. Here's your briefcase, and there's the church.' . . . I would wake up and I would not know where I was or *who* I was. . . . People really did work like that a long time, and. . . our food; it was not the food you would normally eat."

"Low protein?"

"Yes . . . and high in carbohydrates. Plus, they eventually took the private food away from everybody and they fed us. . . . We had to go to a central kitchen. Those methods have strong psychological effect."

Would she talk about Maria's involvement in the Temple?

"Maria," Grace said, sighing. "I think that Maria just . . . I think that there really wasn't much to do up in Ukiah, and Maria just got into the church for that reason. But again, it was a situation where Jones would make you feel guilty for wanting to get out. I know that Maria wanted to leave. She certainly wasn't stupid. She saw what was going on, and I remember that at one point she even wanted to move back into her father's house; she could and would have gotten out. But I think that Maria felt guilty. . . . And I think Maria felt stuck in the Temple. She was such a wonderful person. She was very concerned about people's feelings . . . about hurting people's feelings . . . very sensitive . . . and she was *young*." Grace looked up and smiled sadly. "You know, we weren't really worldly or wise. If I had known what I know today, based on the experiences that I've been through in my life, I would have told Jones, 'Hey . . .'" She shook her head, unable to articulate her anger.

For the next ten minutes Grace confirmed my direct ques-

tions about the brutal beatings and sexual humiliations Jones used as punishments for members whom he found wanting in their performance or loyalty toward him. I listened, but made few notes. I had read enough testimony and enough exposés of those sadistic spectacles to have numbed my sensibilities. It was like reading the memoirs of concentration-camp survivors: I soon became numb, unfeeling in the face of such overpowering brutality.

After a while, Grace spoke of the seductiveness of the power that she and certain members of the inner circle had been able to wield. Maria had been one such member. "You know," Grace said, shaking her head again, "at times I had twenty-five thousand dollars in cash, in a paper bag in my hand. That's a lot of power. Some of the young people, they couldn't handle it; they had a problem with it."

Illegal cash, I jotted in my notepad, *breaking of the crime taboo*.

Beyond the powerful deterrent of physical punishment, I asked, what other holds did Jones have over members like Maria Katsaris? I could understand the threat of sadistic beatings as a direct coercive tool, but I still didn't feel I knew what it was that had made Maria accuse her father of having been a child molester, an embezzler.

There would be carefully arranged testimonials by one-time defectors, Grace said, by people who'd tried to make a go of their lives outside the church. Jones, she said, "... got them to tell us how horrible it really was out in society." Jones also had a network of spies within the Temple, and it was commonplace for people to denounce even supposedly close friends for discussing such "treasonous" topics as leaving the church.

"See," she explained, "I would have left if I could have *talked* to someone. That was why a lot of people stayed."

Also, she added, and perhaps most importantly, Jones, like other successful cult leaders, had been able to make his members feel that their only emotional home was within the group. "He divided and conquered. . . ." she said, speaking slowly now, "I knew that the minute I left the church, I would

receive instant hatred, that I'd become an instant *nobody* . . . and that I would go from being a counselor and having power to zilch, zero. . . ."

People thinking of leaving, she continued, knew that their friends and family members would remain within the Temple, that leaving was equated to complete and final emotional isolation. "In fact," she said, once more smiling weakly, "I believed this for a long time: that I would never be able to meet people like those in the Temple, that I would never be able to relate to people on the outside. . . ." The Temple formed an all-encompassing, all-protecting community. "You didn't have to make any decisions," she said flatly.

And all these pressures, these strange compulsions had also worked on Maria Katsaris? I asked.

More than just those pressures, Grace said, her voice becoming clipped and angry. Jim Jones had also seduced Maria sexually. On Maria's first trip to Guyana in December 1976, he had finally broken down her resistance and forced her into his bed in the Port Kaituma guest house. The next day, he paraded Maria before the other members of his traveling party. Jones had bitten and scratched Maria's graceful neck as "his mark to the world" that he had finally conquered Maria Katsaris. After that, Grace said, Maria had been "broken"; she was "totally humiliated," unable to look other Temple members in the eye for several days. Jim Jones was the first and last man Maria had ever been involved with, and she never recovered from her shame.

As I listened in disgusted silence to Grace Stoen, I realized that Jim Jones was no longer such a paradigm of inexplicable evil. Jones was readily explicable: a manipulative psychopath with unhealthy ambitions, a man with an empty emotional core who had become even more detached from the normal, healthy world through chronic abuse of amphetamines and barbiturates.

In this respect, the Peoples Temple was not much different from the 3000 other cults flourishing in the Western world today. Indeed, the standard description of a destructive cult

that Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke provided in their seminal study, "All God's Children," could have been written with the Peoples Temple and Jim Jones expressly in mind.

It is ironic that this insightful book was published in 1977, over a year before the Jonestown tragedy, yet few people listened to the warnings it contained. According to the authors, these are the most striking characteristics of a destructive cult:

1. "A cult has a living leader. Cult doctrine is based on his, or her revelations which either supplant or supplement traditional religious doctrine and scripture.

2. "The cult leader is the sole judge of the quality of a member's faith and he enjoys absolute authority over the members. He often lives in kingly splendor while his subjects live in poverty.

3. "A cult promises a system in which a convert may work to save the world and humanity, but actually sponsors no community-improvement programs.

4. "The daily work of nearly all cult members is demeaning and utilizes little of their potential, in terms of intelligence, training or education.

5. "Religious cults are exclusive social systems, claiming that their members will achieve salvation (or happiness). Members are taught to believe that they are 'superior' to those outside of the group.

6. "To be a member of a cult a person must remove himself from society, cut himself off from job, education, friends, and family.

7. "Methods of ego-destruction and thought control are part of a religious cult's recruiting and indoctrination practices.

8. "Cults discourage critical analysis by dictating the suppression of negative thoughts, therefore fostering a dependency on cult's authority that arrests the maturation process.

9. "The cult rituals and practices are psychologically unwholesome, and in some cases physically dangerous when they involve the use of drugs or perverse sexual rites."

In each of the nine identifying characteristics of the typical

destructive cult, the Peoples Temple offers a quintessential example. But to a greater or lesser degree, so do the Unification Church of Reverend Sun Myung Moon, David Berg's Children of God, The Way International, Divine Light Mission, the Hare Krishna movement and Scientology, to name just a few of the larger cults operating today. Unfortunately, there are also literally thousands of smaller, less well-known groups at work. Ironically, their members often staunchly refuse to recognize they are in a cult until some shocking exposé of abuses shatters their illusions.

In addition to the clearly delineated characteristics offered by Stoner and Parke, many cults are also blatantly anti-Semitic, a bitterly ironic insult-to-injury for the parents of the hundreds of thousands of young Jewish members the cults have managed to recruit in the past 15 years.

As Margaret Singer and other psychologists specializing in the problem of cults have repeatedly pointed out, certain young people are especially vulnerable to these groups' recruitment practices. Today's urban living patterns, social mobility, family instability, casual intimacy and the decline of traditional religious values are among the many stressful factors in modern life that often combine to produce a sense of lonely spiritual emptiness, a loss of meaningful, nurturing human contact among young people in their late teens and early 20s—the age at which most cult members are recruited.

The palpable threat of nuclear holocaust is another obvious factor contributing to spiritual emptiness so many young people seem to suffer. In a quite *unscientific*, purely subjective manner, I polled approximately 50 of my white, middle-class students at three universities about the impact possible nuclear war has had on them. The results of my shirt-tail survey were readily predictable, but revealing nevertheless: those younger, less mature students (late teens and early 20s) who were the most preoccupied with nuclear destruction were also the most depressed and pessimistic about their present lives and their futures. When I questioned them about their preoccupations, many inadvertently revealed that they were undergo-

ing the kind of "situational depression" that the psychologists have associated with potential cult conversion.

On the other hand, my older, more mature graduate students, people in the mid-20s and older, who had achieved some academic or professional success as well as a degree of social adroitness, were almost universally less affected by the perceived threat of nuclear holocaust. These students talked optimistically about their futures. Perhaps they had made it over the maturity hump with their sense-of-self intact. The older, better-adjusted graduate students with whom I spoke generally and sincerely deplored the nuclear arms race, but they were neither obsessed with it, nor did they use it as the rationale to explain a sense of spiritual emptiness.

Many of my younger students, however, did feel a sense of apocalyptic pessimism, and also an impotency in the face of their perceived future annihilation. This apocalypse took many forms: nuclear holocaust, ultimate ecological collapse, exhaustion of the world's resources, the population explosion or an impending "fascist" political take-over. In this respect, my informal survey accurately reflected the research of the established social scientists. Temporary, "situational" depressions—caused by a broken romance, family problems, or academic difficulties—often color a young person's world view, and sometimes trigger apocalyptic pessimism. Given the diversity of their specific fears, yet the similarity of universal cataclysm they collectively envisioned, I reached the none-too-original conclusion that coming of age today exposed young people to unusual stress and unique pitfalls.

Entrapment by destructive cults was simply one of these pitfalls.

But then I realized that the lure of cults was hardly unique; cults have flourished throughout recorded history during times of social upheaval. The cult-like Ku Klux Klan, for example, acquired several million members during the social turmoil of the 1920s; scores of utopian religious cults sprang up during the 19th century as the Industrial Revolution convulsed Europe and America. In the United States, the centri-

fuge of industrialization combined with the Civil War spawned a wide variety of new religions, cults and cult-like utopian communities, many of which have survived to the present day.

And looking further back in history, to the 14th century, we can find many parallels with contemporary anomie. Historian Barbara Tuchman has shown us that the Hundred Years War and the devastating onset of the Plague caused such widespread social chaos and emotional dislocation in Europe that a swarm of apocalyptic cults sprang up, including the Flagellants. The "Masters" of these roving bands ordered sado-masochistic and sexual excesses equal to anything dreamt of by Jim Jones. The ranks of the Flagellants swelled to thousands during the height of the Plague in the mid-1300s. As Barbara Tuchman tells us in *A Distant Mirror*, cult members were required to "... swear obedience to the Master. They were forbidden to bathe, shave, change their clothes, sleep in beds, talk or have intercourse with women without the Master's permission. Evidently, this was not withheld, since the Flagellants were later charged with orgies in which whipping combined with sex."

The contemporary threats of unpredictable nuclear vaporization or ecological collapse are only two of many confusing complexities plaguing modern young people. Predictable permanence is hard to find. In California, the divorce rate has risen to roughly equal the rate of first marriages. Nation-wide, cancer among young people seems to be in epidemic ascendancy. And there are chronic, roller-coaster economic predictions of either cannibalistic inflation or crushing depression, or, worse, the new phenomenon of "stagflation." For many young people at vulnerable states in their lives, these and the other sometimes sensationalized dangers of the present world may well have worked with normal post-adolescent depressions to trigger their conversion by cults. The "wars and rumors of war" of this troubled century had not quite reached the duration of 100 years, but since the Maxim guns first chattered on the high veldt of South Africa during the Boer

War in 1900, the machine guns had not been silent very long.

When I asked Steve Katsaris his final, considered opinion about the root causes and motivations of young people in joining cults today, this was his reply:

"I think that they are confused by the complexities in the world, and that they are victims of people like Jim Jones who offer easy answers. . . . We're all still searching; some people offer us ready answers. Jim Jones was one of them."

* * *

The afternoon sun washed across the small country cemetery. Carol and I joined Steve, gazing down at the neat redwood slab which marked Maria's grave. The cemetery was on a low hill, above the gorge of a fast-moving river. The orchards on the surrounding hillsides were in bloom. Here eucalyptus and native California madrona trees shaded the graves. This was an old burial ground, by American standards. Some of the graves dated to the Anglo pioneers of the region. Maria's grave was beneath a lovely spreading madrona tree, and the russet curlicues of the tree's bark had fallen to blend with the redwood chips covering the length of the grave. All around us were fecund softness, curving hills, billowing white clouds, greening orchards and the liquid movement of the river.

Steve stood hard and angular against the soft afternoon sky. He spoke in brittle fragments about the "hassles" he had undergone trying to retrieve Maria's body from government custody after the 912 corpses had been airlifted out of Guyana. Finally, Steve's dry, clicking voice gave out. There was not much more to say; there were people who would never be brought to account, but who were just as guilty as the Apostolic Guards who herded their brethren at gunpoint toward the poison vat. There were politicians still in office who had used the Peoples Temple for their own ends, who had defended Jones beyond all reason, and others who now claimed that the massacre at Jonestown had somehow been a CIA plot. No

amount of righteous indignation against these people would bring Maria back to life.

I stared down at the curved redwood slab which Steve had carved to mark his daughter's final bed.

Maria Katsaris
Beloved Daughter
6/9/53 — 11/18/78

ΝΟΙΩΘΩ , ΠΑΙΔΙ ΜΟΥ

"*Neotho, pethi mou,*" I read in Greek. "I understand, my child."

Chapter Four

Tulsa, Spring

ALTHOUGH today's mass conversion to cults is not historically unique, the current global explosion of drug abuse does appear to be without close parallels in history.

The abuse of such drugs as alcohol, marijuana, and opium, however, has deep roots in many civilizations. In fact, most cultures have traditionally had problems with one or two chronic chemical dependencies. American frontier settlers, for example, regularly drank themselves to death at an early age; Inca peasants addictively chewed coca leaves; in parts of Bantu Africa, the palm-wine binge was a socially destructive institution; and some Indian people of the Southwest elevated peyote to sacramental status. During the social upheaval and the resulting anomie of the Industrial Revolution, widespread alcoholism and opiate addiction became serious problems in Great Britain.

But there are no historical precedents for the sheer magni-

tude and diversity of the pharmacopoeia that contemporary middle-class youth regularly use for "recreation." All over the Western world, young people from stable, prosperous families are deeply involved with a bewildering variety of illegal drugs. These are not Andean peasants or benighted Shanghai coolies seeking temporary escape from their unacceptably harsh existence, but rather white, mainstream adolescents and pre-adolescents from the world's most advanced countries.

The drugs they use are also without precedent in human history. Today, there is a plethora of psychoactive chemicals readily available to them, which ranges across the spectrum from hybrid, high-resin marijuana, to LSD and the other powerful hallucinogens, to hypnotics like Quaaludes and a hodgepodge of dependency-forming tranquilizers, to the physically debilitating amphetamines. Some of these drugs, like the animal tranquilizer PCP, "angel dust," were never intended for human consumption. But literally millions of doses of such drugs are being produced daily in clandestine laboratories. And these strange chemicals find their way into the hands of children as young as seven or eight years old in such unlikely places as Grand Rapids, Muskogee, and Omaha.

Only 20 years ago, American drug abuse—other than alcoholism—was restricted to a relatively few ghetto poor and a handful of avant-garde students—at campuses such as Berkeley—who experimented with "hip" marijuana or Benzedrine. For a few years, many parts of America appeared to be inherently immune to drug abuse. Farming towns on the Great Plains, the Old South, and most of the Midwest seemed to be protected by their isolation from the shocking excesses of the drug culture in Haight-Ashbury or the East Village.

But, as we all learned, the ostensible immunity of geographic isolation was pure illusion. Today there is probably not a city or town in Western Europe or North America that does not have some type of drug-abuse problem among its youth. To call this situation a drug "epidemic" is understatement; the proper term is pandemic. And all indications are that the problem is still growing. Recent estimates suggest that marijuana is now

the *fourth largest* cash crop in America. In many parts of the Third World, marijuana, coca leaves, or opium poppies have become the *only* cash crop. Worldwide, the annual sale of illicit now reaches hundreds of billions of dollars.

Dr. Robert Dupont, a recognized expert on the drug explosion, recently commented on the dangers in the current situation: "I think we're going to lose ten percent of the creative potential of this generation."

After a visit to a drug-treatment center, First Lady Nancy Reagan was even more outspoken. "We're in danger of losing our whole next generation," she said. When a reporter asked her to expand on this statement, she replied, "It's the most democratic problem that I know; it crosses all the lines. There are no social, economic, political, or color lines. It crosses everything."

Only ten years ago such a dramatic statement by a national figure would have been dismissed as wild hyperbole. Today most thoughtful adults would take her warning seriously.

Before the late 1960s, relatively few middle-class parents worried about drug abuse among their kids, and drug-awareness programs at schools were a rarity. Today, for many parents, the problem has become a constant, destructive presence in their lives.

To gain some first-hand insight into the lives of adolescent drug abusers, I went to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to interview my young cousin Bruce and his wife Jackie, two young people who had fallen into the pit of drug dependence and had pulled themselves back out with their lives still intact.

* * *

I drove away from Tulsa along the south bank of the swollen Arkansas River. The city had stopped abruptly, with no suburbs, just a clutch of oil rig companies and a sprawling tank farm. Through the open car window, I could smell the stink of the nearby refineries mixed with the wet-loam of the Oklahoma spring.

It had been spring when I'd last seen Bruce five years before in Illinois. Then, he had been a cool, uncommunicative teen-ager. During that visit, I'd gone bicycling with him one evening, out through the flat suburbs of the industrial town the family had lived in since Bruce had been a child.

I had found him a little sullen, and also strangely intense about pedaling his bike. Head down, hunched over the handlebars, he pumped blindly along the service road of a wide boulevard. I had a hard time staying with him, but I had to keep following because he was leading me to a shopping-mall mailbox that had a late pickup. When we passed first one mall, then another, and he had sped through several intersections without stopping, I yelled for him to hold up. But it took me a while to get his attention.

By the time he stopped, I was dripping with chill sweat and panting from exertion. We were on a country road, at least a mile past the shopping center. It was getting dark, and Bruce leaned over his handlebars, gazing at the pastures and trees around him as if seeing a dairy farm for the first time in his life. He did not seem aware of how far past the mall we'd ridden. For a few moments, he didn't even seem to recognize me. I stood there, feeling foolish, shivering in the prairie dusk, wondering what kind of prank my young cousin was trying to pull on me. Then Bruce leaned toward me, and I got a good look at the milky pink, disconnected expression in his eyes. There was something not quite right about this lanky kid, something about the way he had pedaled blindly through the intersection. But I did not then associate his strange mood with drugs.

Later that night, I mentioned Bruce's behavior to my Uncle David, and he shook his head. The boy's just going through one of these teen-age phases, he assured me. Deep down, he's a good, sweet kid, but sometimes he seems to be off in a world of his own.

A few years later, I learned that Bruce had been seriously involved with drugs all through high school. After graduation, he remained at home for a few months, but then his drug use

became so disruptive that David ordered him out of the house. Bruce had drifted down to Tulsa, looking for a job, and that was the last I heard of him for over a year.

His mother, Joyce, had then written to announce that, in amazingly rapid succession, Bruce had given up drugs, joined a Pentecostal church, married Jackie, his girlfriend from Illinois, and that they were expecting a baby, David and Joyce's first grandchild. From the tone of her letter, I gathered she was ambivalent about the religious conversion, but happy about the coming grandchild.

What had struck me the most in Joyce's account was the fact that Bruce had been so heavily involved with drugs without his parents learning of the problem until several years after it had become serious. I was also curious about the root causes of Bruce's drug abuse. From what I knew of David and Joyce's home life, the family was emotionally stable and reasonably prosperous. David and his wife were devoted parents who spent a great deal of time with their five children. The family had always attended church together, and there had never been a hint of any deeply rooted dissatisfaction among either the parents or the children. In my mind, they had always represented normal suburban America in the 1970s.

But then, so had Karen Ryan's family.

* * *

I turned up a wet gravel driveway into the makeshift courtyard of three wooden houses and a mobile home set on a cement foundation. The houses were far from new, but there was evidence of recent paint and carpentry, kind of a threadbare country feeling to the property, exacerbated by a couple of old cars on blocks and the surrounding tangle of leafless brush. I've seen housing like this all the way from Atlanta to Bakersfield, the homes of working people not willing to give up their country roots and move into the apartment cell blocks of the city.

Bruce and Jackie lived on the second floor of the largest

house. The railing of the outside stairs was a bit rickety, and I found myself wondering how they negotiated this with an active toddler.

The smiling young man who greeted me with a firm, dry handshake was nothing like Karen Ryan. Bruce was now taller than his father, and muscular, with a naturally confident, erect posture one rarely sees in boys his age. That, in fact, was my overwhelming impression, that Bruce had somehow been transformed from the gangly, spaced-out teen-ager of only five years before into a mature, self-assured young man in his late 20s.

"Good to see you," he said with obvious sincerity. "Please come in."

The interior of the flat was much more comfortable than I would have guessed looking up from the weedy lawn. Spotlessly clean, the small living room and kitchen were filled with morning sun. Although the furniture was sparse, they had done a nice job of decorating with handsome broadloom drapes and cushions. The hardwood floors and interior trims were expertly varnished. I had subconsciously been expecting to find a post-hippie crash pad, piled knee-deep with religious tracts; what I instead discovered was the tasteful home of two mature, self-possessed young people.

We sat in the living room, drinking coffee and chatting about neutral family gossip while I set up and tested my tape recorder before the interview. There were two other small children playing on the gleaming floor with Billie, neighbor kids for whom Jackie babysat each day. The presence of the babbling children helped ease the tension of the impending discussion. And by the time we got down to business we were all relaxed.

Jackie held her little boy on her lap and remained calmly silent, serene, as Bruce first began talking about his teen-age-years drug problems. Sitting next to Bruce, she also had an unaffected upright posture and an inner confidence that shone on her face and made her appear much older than 21. She wore her dark print shirtwaist dress well below the knees, and she displayed no makeup or jewelry. Watching her, I couldn't

help remembering the missionary women I'd met when I served in the Congo.

Both Bruce and Jackie had gone to suburban high schools on opposite sides of the Midwestern industrial town in which they were raised. Their schools were progressive concrete-and-glass institutions, hastily built and staffed to absorb and educationally process the young army of the baby boom. Bruce began high school in 1974 and Jackie started the next year. Like Bruce, she came from a stable, solidly middle-class family, which had never been shaken by the trauma of divorce, economic hardship or major illness. In theory, these kids should have experienced a reasonably trouble-free adolescence. But traditional theory did not take into consideration the explosion of illegal drugs in America today.

As Bruce talked about the drug situation on his Midwest high-school campus during the late 1970s, I was able to shift from my role as a cousin to that of an impartial investigator. I'd been aware of the serious drug situation among American teen-agers, but Bruce's story was still shocking.

He explained that he first began using marijuana and "trying a few pills" on an experimental basis when he was only in eighth grade. During his freshman year in high school, fully one-third of his 1,500 fellow students used some kind of dope, "not all full time, but just like experimenting." However, he admitted, there had still been a fair number of "full-time users" in eighth and ninth grades. Some were readily identifiable by their long hair and hippie dress, but many appeared straight.

Each consecutive year in high school, he said, shaking his head at the memory, the numbers of full-time drug users had increased among the student body. The occasional joint, passed between friends outside a pinball arcade, became a nightly ritual after studying, something to enliven the 110th rerun of a "Gilligan's Island" episode on late-night TV. By Bruce's senior year in high school, 1978, he estimated that easily *two-thirds* of his fellow students were using drugs on a regular basis.

In his own case, he had progressed to the point where he normally smoked a full joint *before* entering the school building each morning, another in the student smoking area after his first class, where "everybody smoked dope, not cigarettes," a couple during lunch hour, and several more after school. Weekends, of course, were reserved for "heavy partying," binges of downers and alcohol, and uppers, occasionally LSD, and whatever else was readily available.

Knowing that reformed drunks and drug addicts often liked to exaggerate their former condition, I interrupted Bruce's narration at this point to pin him down on some facts. Exactly how many joints was he smoking a week at this time? Forty, he said flatly, at least that many.

Forty, I thought, making a note on my pad; that was almost six a day. *The kid was never straight; he was always stoned.*

"I was buying a quarter pound at a time by then," he said, again shaking his head at the memory as if at the antics of some distant relative. "Then it cost almost a hundred dollars, and if the ounces were selling for thirty, I would make up four ounces in baggies and get people to take what they wanted, and keep the last one. I'd get it for ten dollars where most people were buying for thirty." He compressed his lips in thought. "It was never hard to sell the other three ounces."

My mind drifted back to Bay View High School in Milwaukee during the 1950s. Dope, of course, was totally unknown to us, but we did sometimes illegally buy and drink beer. A boy with a fake I.D. card would buy a six-pack of Schlitz for a dollar and sell the six cans for twenty cents each. Was what Bruce described so much different?

But he admitted to smoking *forty* joints a week, and we rarely drank a surreptitious back-seat beer more than once a month, and certainly two-thirds of our fellow students were not doing the same thing. Drinking during the day was obviously something only the dead-end "hoods" did then. It was grounds for expulsion, and we were serious about our futures.

Incredibly, this much doping had not dramatically affected Bruce's school performance. His grades, he said, fell from A's

to B's to a steady C average, which he was able to maintain, "wrecked" most of the time as he was, in order to satisfy his dad. It wasn't so much that he couldn't do the undemanding homework stoned, he said, but he was simply missing too many classes to keep up with the other students. School really wasn't very hard; he knew kids who "partied" every night with dope and drank each day, and still got A's for just showing up in class and taking part in discussions.

"Exactly what other drugs were you using besides marijuana?"

Bruce shifted on the couch, absentmindedly stroking Billie's bare arm. "Not as much acid as a lot of the other kids were because I knew it messed you up and stayed with you. But I tried probably everything else except heroin." He smiled warmly now. "I look back now and I think that God put the thought in my head, you want to have children one day, and you'd never forgive yourself if you child was half normal from LSD . . . born without arms or something."

Jackie sighed deeply and nodded without speaking. In her lap, Billie beamed out from beneath his tight yellow curls.

Bruce said that he had taken LSD "only" about eight times, that he had been into downers more heavily, Quaaludes, reds, barbiturates of other shapes and colors. Once he and some friends took off from school to drive around the country roads in a beat-up old Vega and to try shooting some barbiturates with a needle. They mixed the crushed pills with plain tap water and did not use alcohol to clean their skin. Just as his friend was leaning back from the front seat to jab Bruce's extended forearm, they saw a sheriff's car coming at them. In a panic the boy jammed the hypodermic needle deeply into Bruce's flesh and pushed the plunger. The drug hit Bruce almost at once, and he was "so messed up that I just went home. I can't even remember what I did."

"What did your parents say about all of this?"

Bruce shrugged. "Sort of, 'We care about you and wish that you wouldn't do this.' Toward the end, I tested them as hard as I could. If they said, be home at eleven, I made a point of *not* being home. My dad kept trying to talk to me, but I

wouldn't listen."

A sudden fragmented picture of Karen Ryan slouched at the dinner table and of her father's flushed and lowered face, two chairs away, jumped through my mind. Raising kids today, I realized, was surely not simple. Regaining my presence of mind, I explained that recent studies have shown that regular marijuana use makes the user rebellious and anti-authoritarian.

Bruce nodded somberly. "I can remember that it made me feel alienated from my family, wanting to be there, wanting not to be there when I was stoned. But I wanted to be stoned more than I wanted to be with my family."

We all sipped our cool coffee, letting his last word reverberate off the sunny woodwork.

Now I turned to Jackie and asked her to talk about her troubles with drugs. She drew herself even more upright and self-consciously flared the dark dress about her legs. Then she breathed in deeply, handed the docile baby to Bruce and began speaking in a firm voice, her calm brown eyes unblinking.

Jackie had embarked on her chemical odyssey as do most kids these days, with a few tokes on a joint in junior high school. In this respect she was no different from Bruce. But in Jackie's case there was an obvious underlying anguish that made her especially vulnerable to drug abuse. She was the youngest child in a large, warm family. In grade school, her classmates had come to replace this mutually supportive group. Active in sports and in the junior high pep club, Jackie fantasized that this untroubled gang of buddies would somehow journey through life intact.

But given the vagaries of suburban demography and school board whims, the group was broken up when they completed eighth grade, and Jackie found herself alienated and lonely in early adolescence—a situational depression of the kind that initially drives many teen-agers to abuse drugs and alcohol. A girlfriend, Sharon, the only member of the original gang to go on to the same high school as Jackie, had tried pot and easily convinced Jackie to also do so. The pot helped at first, she

said. "I got real depressed 'cause we'd all broken up, and I got real mad at everybody. But I still had my friend."

Within a year, her initial experiments had given way to full-time use. "After a while," she said, shaking her head, "I started wanting more and more . . . and *more*. Then it would start having a whole different effect on me, and I got really rebellious."

"Did you reach the point of forty joints a week?" I asked, my pencil poised.

"All the time," Jackie said softly, ". . . every spare moment of the day I was doing it."

She then related how she and Sharon fell in with a group of hard-core dopers at school, a gang similar to the "dead beat" kids Bruce had befriended. Incredibly, Jackie was able to hide her heavy drug use from her parents because she still dressed straight and displayed an interest in straight activities: she worked in an infant-wear store in a nearby mall; she attended voice classes; and, like Bruce, she was able to maintain a mediocre grade average simply by physically appearing in class.

Jackie now described her last year in high school. "My actions . . . my behavior really started to change. Towards graduation, it got pretty wild." She lowered her eyes. "I began going with Harley riders and dressing the part of a biker girl. I started really using heavy drugs . . . all the time."

"Acid?" I asked, not meeting her eyes.

She straightened up and took a deep breath. "We did a *lot* of acid. Around graduation, we were doing acid every *day*. And that's why I had to do speed every day, too, so I could wake up in the morning. I was smoking dope, too . . . just to be sociable, you know . . . but it actually got to the point where I was hardly smoking marijuana. It wasn't affecting me because of all the other drugs." Now she took Billie back on her lap, and the baby cooed, breaking some of the tension in the small room. Jackie sighed again. "I had to keep doing drugs . . . I had to keep doing acid even to put a smile on my face."

She could see, in this final month of this final high-school

semester, that a terrible pattern—the breakup of her close-knit group of friends—was about to be repeated. Rather than face this reality, she sought escape through LSD and amphetamines. The acid, Jackie explained, came from an illicit student laboratory on a nearby college campus. It was blotter acid, on perforated sheets with the imprint of Walt Disney cartoon characters—Goofy, Donald Duck—or of Mr. Natural,” from a popular dopers’ comic book.

“We’d take as many as we’d dare take, you know,” she admitted. “I got real moody . . . crazy. My parents *finally* noticed the change in my attitude. I came home from a concert blasted and Dad found the stuff in my purse. . . .”

But, as with Bruce, the crisis passed. She was able to make excuses and rationalize, lie about the extent of her condition. Her parents were an older couple of a far different generation; they had no readily available way of coping with this problem of their youngest child.

Later, when I talked with David and Joyce about Bruce’s drug abuse during his last year in high school, I discovered an interesting corollary to the difficulty Jackie’s parents had faced, a problem that has no doubt plagued literally millions of American parents in the past 15 years. Like the vast majority of these parents, David and Joyce had no concept of the effect of drugs like marijuana, LSD, mescaline, or speed. Again, like most members of their generation, they had never experimented with drugs themselves. Their image of serious intoxication was associated with drunkenness; serious drunkenness produced unmistakable symptoms: staggering, slurred speech, vomiting, and, ultimately, blackouts. As long as their kids didn’t pass out before their eyes, they had no reliable yardstick with which to judge the disastrous effect of this chronic drug intoxication.

Further, Joyce and David, like Jackie’s parents, knew that adolescents inevitably experimented with the perceived accoutrements of adulthood, including sex and alcohol. For the members of these parents’ generation, experimenting with drugs—at least in the case of marijuana—was thus dismissed

as an unfortunate but normal phase in the contemporary maturation process. They had absolutely no way to gauge the mental state of a kid who had taken LSD, hashish, speed and Quaaludes during the course of a weekend drug binge. If the boy seemed distant and unfocused, they associated this with the *normal* fuzziness of relatively harmless illicit beer tippling when they were kids. Nothing in their experience as parents had prepared them to recognize the effect of chemicals like LSD or angel dust. Nor were they at all familiar with drug paraphernalia such as plastic bongos, water pipes, and roach clips, which kids all across America began to flaunt in the mid-1970s.

Only after Bruce had been abusing drugs for four years did his parents begin to suspect the true dimensions of the problem. His younger sister, Pauline, however, who was just 11 years old at the time Bruce was a high-school senior, was well aware of the dangerous situation; she later told me that she understood not only the purpose of the drug paraphernalia that Bruce "hid" in his room, but she could also recognize the various telltale symptoms of the different drugs he was using.

Here was a real irony, of course, and a clear sign of the generational chasm separating the members of David and Joyce's generation from that of their children: a child of 11 could easily spot the effects of Quaalude "wallbangers" or "white-cross" speed on her brother; his parents, like so many other American adults of the period, had no frame of reference from which to assess the effect of such drugs.

Five years after the worst of Bruce's drug abuse, I talked with his father about the situation. "I knew he was smoking some marijuana," David admitted, "and I didn't like the kids Bruce was hanging around with; they were deadbeats. But I didn't know anything about that other stuff . . . like the LSD. Nodody in our neighborhood did. The sheriff had an active drug-awareness program, but there really wasn't much about drugs in the local schools. Slowly, it got better, with educational programs. But when Bruce was going through it, we were all just kind of in the dark."

In this respect, David and Joyce—and Joe and Helen Ryan—were typical of parents all across the American heartland. In many ways, the school administrators, family doctors, and psychological counselors in these “isolated” parts of the country were just as much “in the dark.” The drug problem had exploded on them too quickly; it had struck hard and low, even reaching into the fourth and fifth grade levels before educational and law enforcement professionals became fully cognizant of the dangerous situation.

Bruce now took up the story. It was during Jackie’s last year at school that she and Bruce met, on a skiing weekend that ended in a binge of cocaine, grass and assorted downers. They began going together. Bruce was six months out of high school and working as a maintenance man at a nearby motel. The money was good, and he lived rent-free at home, so he always had plenty of cash for drugs. Like so many other enterprising youngsters, he was also dealing grass and pills to supplement his own income as well as to keep in touch with a good source of high-quality dope.

But then his close friends began to physically and emotionally disintegrate from drug abuse. Once, he found himself alone with a suicidal buddy, Tony. All one wild winter night, Bruce, tripping on acid himself, struggled with Tony, who was in the midst of a savage “bummer” acid trip and could moan and sob about nothing but death.

As Bruce described Tony’s suicidal drug psychosis, I remembered the first time I had encountered drug-induced mental disturbance in a young person. In 1969, I was a consul at the American Consulate General in Tangier. Morocco was then, as now, a magnet for young drug users, and the cheap hotels of the Tangier medina were known as good places to score anything from potent local *kif*, like Ketama Gold, to Orange Sunshine acid, supposedly made from the original Sandoz formula.

One rainy Saturday night when I was consulate duty officer, I received a call from Inspector Ben Slimane of the Tangier police. He explained that there was a young American up on

the roof of the Hotel Victoria, a hippie dive near the Socco Chico. The young man, he said, was acting "*très fou*." Could I come at once? I pulled on my raincoat and sped down to the madinah.

There, up on the slippery tile roof of the mildewed old hotel, was perched a stark naked boy of about 20. His Buffalo-Bill hair dangled in wet strings to his shoulders in the steady winter drizzle. He sat, slumped on the edge of the roof with his bare legs hanging down into the darkness of the narrow lane. After considerable confusion, the police allowed me to climb the rusty ladder to the roof trap door.

Standing half-in, half-out of the hatchway, I tried to coax the boy back off the roof edge. But he was not easy to reason with. For periods of up to five minutes, he would sob, his legs drawn up to his chest and his arms wrapped tightly about his knees. Then he would shake his head violently and mumble about poison gas coming out of the sink drain in his room and contaminating his clothing and backpack. The rain continued to fall on the flat tile roofs. Down in the harbor, a ferryboat sounded its fog horn. I waited, my head soaked now and my hair dripping like the boy's.

"They're all *dying*," he moaned. "The gas is *killing* them . . . all of them. They're all dying. . . ."

Over an hour later, he finally got cold enough to be lured back to the ladder.

When I visited the boy the next afternoon at the Spanish Hospital, he was groggy from Thorazine and had no memory of the previous night beyond the first "rush" as the LSD began to take hold. I asked if he had any recollection of the poison gas flowing out of his sink.

"Oh, shit," he said, through the tranquilizer haze, "did I freak out on *that* again? What a bummer. I thought I was all over with *that* one."

He explained that he had taken some ostensibly "pure Sandoz cap acid," a drug that was supposed to be "bummer-free." The paranoid delusion of being gassed in his hotel room was something he associated with cheap street acid, not the

mythical "good shit."

The boy was so forlorn and groggy in that run-down Tangier charity ward that I didn't have the heart to lecture him about the dangers of LSD. He probably wouldn't have listened to me, even if we had discussed the problem under better circumstances. He was a street-wise 20-year-old in 1969; he didn't want to get hassled by some straight "asshole" from the consulate. Nor would he have believed me if I'd taken the time to explain that LSD had, indeed, been first synthesized by Sandoz in the 1940s, but that its powerful psychoactive properties immediately placed it in the category of extremely dangerous drugs. It was not long after its synthesis that experimenters recognized LSD as a potential research tool in helping to replicate, under controlled conditions, of course, psychotic delusions. Here, in fact, was a chemical compound that produced in the normal subject's brain biochemical conditions similar to schizophrenia. The drug certainly did offer potential as an interesting research aid for qualified professionals in the late 1950s.

But ten years later, on a rainy winter night in 1969, a naked young American perched on the roof of a Tangier hotel, moaning about the people he *saw* being gassed in the narrow, muddy alley below him.

Recently, when I discussed LSD with Dr. David Winter, the chief of medical research at Sandoz, he expressed deep regret that the compound had ever illegally made its way out of the controlled conditions of the research laboratory and onto the street.

"Of course, it just got out of hand," he said. "But the dangers of the drug didn't really take hold until enough kids started getting themselves in really bad trouble and doing really bizarre things . . . killing themselves in some cases. Then, when the flashback phenomenon came about, I think that people began to wake up, to realize that this was not as innocuous a thing as having a weird experience for one night, and the next day you're fine again. It was the real potential for long-lasting, irreversible effects that lead to a realization that •

LSD probably wasn't worth it."

The explosive "popularization" of LSD was an unprecedented and dangerous situation. "One of the real tragedies," the doctor concluded, "is that this stuff, unfortunately, is available on the street."

Bruce's friend Tony, like the boy in Tangier, recovered within a few days. But he was so badly shaken by the nightmare night that he soon left the Midwest, coming south to Tulsa to work with his brother as a carpenter's helper, a job with the promise of an eventual union apprenticeship. A few weeks later, Bruce found himself in almost the same state of suicidal depression. In the garage of the family's suburban home, he physically assaulted his father and verbally attacked his mother, to whom he had always been close. Crushed by remorse after this terrible episode, Bruce opted for that archetypical American solution to one's problems: go west, go toward the sun. Bruce came down to Tulsa to work with Tony and his brother.

A few weeks later, Jackie graduated from high school, and her problems also took on a nightmarish dimension. She was still using LSD and amphetamines at an admittedly suicidal rate, and she was also simultaneously involved with several "Harley riders." She described this situation as a "real mess . . . everything was coming apart. My dad finally kicked me out of the house. He couldn't take it anymore. I'd be gone all the time, for weeks without telling them where or who with. I just *had* to get out of there. I put everything I had in two suitcases and ran . . ." her voice dropped, ". . . to get *away*."

So she came south to join Bruce, and they set up a young doper's business-as-usual household in a modern townhouse complex on Lewis Avenue near Oral Roberts University in South Tulsa.

I tried to picture these two teen-agers in that glittery, ersatz sophisticated apartment: two haunted refugees from the unprecedented chemical ambush that had struck them and so many of their peers in the placid suburban mid-section of America. Now they were on the lam from their shattered lives

in those seemingly tranquil suburbs. But they had brought with them all their plastic pill bottles, roach clips and baggies, rolling machines and pharmacist's scales, unaware that the dope was at the core of their turmoil. Listening to them, I had to force myself to remember that these were white, middle-class youngsters from the flat blandness of the Midwest, not poor blacks or Hispanics in some South Bronx tenement.

At this point in Bruce's recollection, I had a belated insight: as street-wise and savvy as Bruce and Jackie had become about the quality and price of the various drugs they used, they actually had no more *understanding* of the effect of these powerful chemicals than did their parents.

They had moved away from the hassles of their lives in the Midwest and had seriously hoped to build a new, hassle-free life here in the prosperous Sunbelt. But neither of them could recognize that their intellects and emotions had been battered to the point of craziness by the daily use of potently psychoactive drugs like hashish, amphetamines and barbiturates.

Indeed, among young drug abusers, the figure of the "wasted head," the kid whose brain is so blown-out he can hardly tie his shoes, has only recently become an alarm signal. For years, such pathetic travesties were objects of popular amusement, like the scramble-headed Jim on television's "Taxi." The burnt-out acid head had replaced the laughable drunk for the kids who came of age in the 1970s. But as in the case of the real-life alcoholic, there was no valid mirth to be found in kids who had fried their brains on uppers, downers, grass and acid.

After a few weeks in Tulsa, during which they drank heavily and husbanded their dwindling supply of exotic northern drugs, Bruce continued, they began arguing on a regular basis. The Sunbelt was not the utopia they had envisioned. Because they did not have a trustworthy source for the high-quality drugs, they began to depend increasingly on alcohol and over-the-counter uppers and downers. Naturally, these new chemicals did not help. The intensity and duration of their domestic violence increased.

In desperation, Jackie suggested that they might try going to

church. Although neither had received an intense religious formation as a child, they both felt that church might be a good idea under their circumstances. As they related this, it became obvious that they had reached the extreme limits of their emotional tethers, and that *something* had to change in their lives.

Later, when I discussed their case with Dr. Harold Goldstein of the National Institute of Mental Health, he suggested that there may be a relationship between the questing for powerful drug experiences and questing for religious absolutism. The anomie produced by contemporary social upheaval, he said, is indeed a factor in both these quests. Young people like Bruce and Jackie often feel a nagging, diffuse uncertainty about their futures, a kind of low-grade depression, which causes them to hunger for absolutes.

I certainly had to agree with Dr. Goldstein. In my research I had discovered numerous examples of depressed young people who had flip-flopped—in some cases, literally overnight—from heavy drug abuse to sudden religious conversion that was triggered by an unexpected epiphany.

I had also read accounts of young drug abusers suddenly embracing political absolutism. The case of Nancy Ling Perry, one of the founders of the tragicomic Symbionese Liberation Army, was an obvious example of this phenomenon. An addicted Berkeley “street person,” she one day swore off all drugs and almost simultaneously espoused violent radical revolution as the solution to her—and the world’s—myriad problems.

The only Tulsa congregation with which Bruce and Jackie were familiar was the small Pentecostal church which Tony’s sister-in-law attended. Knowing nothing about fundamentalism, and having only a sketchy awareness of the wave of religious revival sweeping the country, they attended their first Sunday night prayer service at this church. They almost did not go, however, because, as Jackie explained, “We’d been drinking that afternoon and were mad at each other again and all that. . . .” But they did decide in the end to attend. And

that decision altered them remarkably.

During that first service, Jackie explained, they were both embarrassed by the singing, the shouts of "Glory!" and "Praise the Lord!", the swaying and the mass raising of hands toward heaven. Neither had before seen a charismatic religious rite. All this at first seemed to Jackie to be so much mumbo jumbo. But they were also both fascinated by the warmth and fellowship they felt surrounding them, by the kind smiles and concern of those in the congregation.

After a strong sermon on repentance by the minister, Brother Jackson, Bruce felt that he had seen and heard enough for one night, and he nodded to Jackie that he was ready to leave. At this point, the congregation was in deep, emotional prayer, each member in direct communication with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Bruce did feel a "strong desire to change my life," but not just right then. He and Jackie rose quietly and turned to leave the praying congregation.

Bruce stared at me levelly across the bright living room. "I got about *five* steps and I just . . . I just hit an invisible *wall* or something." Now he smiled at me broadly. "I went down there and then I repented . . . I really prayed that night."

"So," I asked, "you went to the altar call that first night?"

"Yes, I sure did. I prayed that night, and I really . . ." Bruce wiped his damp eyes with the back of his muscular hand. "The Lord really touched me and I felt so *good* then."

"What exactly was so good," I asked, forcing myself to probe. "Was it a high like drugs?"

Bruce smiled indulgently. "I felt that load of sin . . ." He swallowed. "Just to repent it, just to get that guilt off my conscience. But that was not the night I received the Holy Spirit. That happened on the night I was baptized."

The next week, Bruce and Jackie returned to the church for another evening service. In the middle of the preacher's sermon, Bruce felt himself rising before the congregation. Then he announced that he wanted to be baptized. According to Jackie, this request brought on an emotional scene. "People were standing there, raising their hands and praying out loud,

and some people were dancing and shouting and running around and screaming.”

While Bruce was being congratulated, Jackie retreated to the rear of the church, embarrassed and dismayed by this turn of events. She disliked the raw emotional outpourings of the congregation. And also she felt a tingling of fear that, once again, she was going to abruptly lose the love and comradeship of someone close to her. In the rear of the church, a sudden depression came over her, and she began to cry. But then one of the lay preachers, Brother Jones, came back to comfort her. After a while, he asked if she wanted to pray. She nodded, still sobbing uncontrollably.

An indeterminate time passed, during which she prayed. Her depression began to lift, and when she looked up, she was surrounded by the women of the congregation, each person deep in prayer for Jackie. This outpouring of love was both troubling and touching, and Jackie fled to the parking lot, her feelings in a churning muddle.

Although Jackie had no way of knowing it at the time, she had just been exposed to a benign version of “love bombing,” the intense focusing of warm, empathic interest by the congregation on the potential convert. The destructive cults, such as the Peoples Temple, the Children of God, and the Unification Church, employ this technique in a controlled and cynical manner to trick and deceive the convert into believing the cult represents a perfect family of love-bonded brothers and sisters.

But the more traditional charismatic religious groups, such as the Pentecostals, also encourage warm emotional outpourings toward their new members. In this and other respects, destructive cults have consciously modeled themselves on legitimate charismatic religious groups—the so-called *constructive* cults. This blurring of the lines between the relatively new charismatic movements, the “new” Eastern-oriented religions, and the destructive cults that are led by a living megalomaniac, often presents problems for established clergymen and family counselors.

Four days later, Bruce was baptized in the church’s baptis-

mal tank. With the preacher shouting a fervent plea for the boy's repentance to be accepted as sincere, Bruce rose from the water, "speaking in tongues." Jackie was thunderstruck; she knew Bruce had no knowledge of any foreign language, other than a smattering of high-school Spanish. To hear him chanting rapidly away, his long hair streaming with water and his eyes glowing with new life, was a profoundly moving experience for her. She did not then realize that glossolalia, the speaking in unknown or supposedly ancient languages, is a relatively common phenomenon associated with intensely emotional experience.

For Bruce, the event was virtually the rebirth to a new life. The Holy Spirit entered him, and, "... it was so *real* that it just changed my life. I was delivered. . . . The Spirit just took away all desires. I felt ten feet tall. I felt totally. . . ." His voice went dull. Words were not sufficient to describe his feelings.

I remained in my chair, silent and vaguely embarrassed. After a pause, Bruce took up the story. When they returned to the apartment that night after his baptism, he explained to Jackie that they could no longer sleep together; he took the couch. Jackie was torn by this decision. On the one hand, she felt rejection; on the other, she understood his new righteousness. And she also, "felt something that I never felt before. That day . . . just like Bruce, I just quit smoking and drinking or taking drugs or anything."

I made a careful note of this point. From the moment of Bruce's baptism, almost three years before, neither he nor Jackie had touched tobacco, alcohol or drugs. Not once in almost three years. The amazing thing to me was that they also both attested vehemently that they neither felt the least desire, physical or emotional, to take up their old ways again.

The next day, Bruce continued, he got his hair cut, and set out to find alternative living arrangements. Jackie moved in with a woman church member, and Bruce and Jackie saw each other platonically. Jackie attended the numerous weekly church services, but she still had not opted for baptism. This choice was hard for her, and she only made it after several

weeks of introspection. When she did choose, however, she had been off drugs for almost a month, and her mind was clear.

The night of her baptism, Jackie said, she sank into the cool water of the tank and felt the Holy Spirit enter her body and soul. For weeks she had been dreading the baptism because she *knew* her flesh and spirit were tarnished and fouled by the years of drugs and "wild times" with the bikers. Secretly, she was afraid that she was too far gone for God to save. But immersed in that tank, she felt the Holy Spirit literally working within the molecular confines of her cells, lifting out the LSD poisons, cleaning her body. "I felt the cleansing," she whispered. "People used to ask me if I was afraid of acid flashbacks. I always say no because the Lord has taken all that away. When I was baptized, I finally felt clean."

I wanted to probe Jackie's memory, to force her to dissect and analyze the experience. Probably, I also wanted her and Bruce to admit that they had simply exchanged one form of addiction for another. But my own feelings on the meaning of their conversions were anything but firm.

I later had occasion to discuss the biochemistry of religious conversion among drug abusers with Dr. David G. Hubbard, a well-known Dallas psychiatrist and former senior advisor to the federal drug rehabilitation hospital at Fort Worth. Dr. Hubbard readily confirmed that there was a clear body of evidence linking religious conversion with the breaking of drug addiction. When he had worked with drug abusers, he said, he had seen "time and time again" cases in which the patient underwent an emotional conversion experience such as Bruce's and then kicked addictive drugs cold turkey with few, mild withdrawal symptoms.

Further, he was familiar with extensive studies done among Pentecostal converts with long histories of drug and alcohol abuse. The powerful epiphany of the Pentecostal conversion, he said, was often enough to break even stubbornly persistent addictions.

"In the conversion experience," he said, "it is clear that the intensity of the moment obviously must bring forth endor-

phins in the brain."

These are the naturally occurring brain hormones, associated with pleasurable sensation and the control of pain, that certain drugs sometimes stimulate in the human brain.

I cleared my throat, reluctant to continue. What could I tell these two kids? What did I have to offer them to replace what they had found here? My generation of liberal leaders had certainly not given their generation the best of all worlds in which to come of age. "Turn on, Tune in, and Drop out." Or however it went. We had also given them "wars and rumors of war." We had offered them the raw suburbs, devoid of organic neighborhoods, the windswept parking lots of malls, and the sterile uniformity of the burger franchise plastic booths. We had provided them with an under-funded, poorly staffed educational system which blandly processed them through a 12-year tube of mediocrity.

I flipped shut my notebook and hit the stop button on the recorder. Bruce and Jackie would probably never sip Campari at cocktail parties, wittily discussing the antics of Sebastian in *Brideshead Revisited*; they would never read Saul Bellow or Sartre, or Mark Twain or Thomas Mann. They would not ponder the composition of the intergalactic matrix in *Scientific American*, nor, fortunately, were they likely to read what contemporary medical experts like Dr. Hubbard had to say about addictive personality types and charismatic religions.

* * *

In this regard, they were similar to thousands of other young Christian fundamentalists in America; they had rejected the complex and confusing pluralism of the contemporary world for a closed system of thought based on absolute faith. For young people like Bruce and Jackie, this faith clearly filled a void that existed in their lives at the time of conversion. The emotional support and fellowship of their small congregation also provided them with a badly needed sense of community connection, with a group identity that transcended the purpose-

less, painful anomie that gripped them before conversion.

It would be simplistic, however, to say that they had been burnt-out dopers who had merely replaced one form of addiction, drugs, for another opiate, fundamentalist religion. I had come to realize that the underlying cause of their anomie was connected to a pervasive but unperceived depression—a kind of emotional anemia—that had affected not only them as individuals, but so many members of their class and generation. For these kids, the roller-coaster swoops of drug experiences, high and low, had probably been their first experiences of intense pleasure, pain or fear.

They had come of age as emotional paupers, who had trouble experiencing spontaneous feelings. Prior to their conversion, they considered joy, wonder, and excitement as commodities, not as internal processes connected to their fully integrated selves. Young drug users like Bruce and Jackie who had been involved with powerful psychoactive chemicals from the threshold of adolescence often believed that there was a chemical tailor-made to produce any mood they might desire. Moreover, they did not consider daily drug use as a means to relax from the tensions of the day, as do many of us who look forward to a glass of wine before dinner. For their generation there was little moderation. Popping a cap of acid or shooting a needleful of speed was an all-or-nothing action. One minute, you were straight; the next, you were “wrecked,” fully intoxicated but no longer bored. Those apologists for illegal drugs who claim they are no worse than cocktails before dinner would do well to remember the “on-off” potency of street drugs today.

Because many young people were intoxicated throughout so much of their adolescence, they never had a chance to work through the normal emotional upheavals of that period. Jackie’s reaction to the breakup of her junior high school is a good example of this inability. What should have been an adolescent depression was called a “bummer,” to be cured by getting a “good rush” with some drug. But if you got too high, you brought yourself “down”; if you slipped too low, you took a

little speed to “crank” yourself back up. They had solved the age-old mind-body dichotomy by simply ignoring the mind; unconsciously, they saw their brains as biochemical machines that could be altered by additions of the right drug.

Jackie had admitted that her drug abuse had reached the point where, “I had to keep doing acid even to put a smile on my face.” To me, this was a clear admission that she had become incapable of spontaneous emotion.

And Jackie was certainly not alone in her condition. I have had students her age from all over the country tell me that they cannot enjoy seeing a movie, going to a concert, or even making love unless they have taken some drug to “enhance” their mood. What they are really saying, of course, is that without the drug there would not *be* any mood, any spontaneous feeling.

Given this situation, it was certainly not surprising that Jackie and Bruce were virtually bowled over by the emotional intensity of their conversions. Dr. Hubbard is probably correct when he talks about endorphin release in the brain of the convert. But this explanation, fascinating as it is, is only half the story. Before their conversion, they had been unable to experience emotional intensity; they had been disconnected from their feelings. After conversion, they gave vent to great rushes of emotion—channeled into their charismatic worship—on an almost daily basis.

The day before I visited them, I had witnessed a striking example of emotional Pentecostal worship at the campus of Oral Roberts University. On the mall between the sweeping curves of the futuristic classroom buildings and the Prayer Tower’s bronze-mirrored shaft, I had practically stumbled over a student couple in their early 20s. They were kneeling on the sidewalk, hands locked, heads bowed, deep in vocal, heartfelt prayer. It was exam week and they prayed for God’s help. Students glanced at the kneeling couple and offered them a few hearty words of fellowship. Everyone smiled. No one seemed embarrassed. Only me.

When I mentioned this emotional outpouring to the univer-

sity spokeswoman, Jan Dargatz, she smiled and said such occurrences were fairly common on campus. She knew a great deal about ORU's students, and she was more than willing to share her knowledge with me. Actually, Jan did a very good job of disabusing me of my northern liberal's prejudices. She was an articulate and insightful person, not at all what I had expected to find in a fundamentalist. Her doctorate was *real*, from USC, not a piece of wallpaper from some mail order divinity school. I was impressed, and I listened to her.

What I was interested in discovering, of course, was whether the 4,000 students who had sought out this fundamentalist university were, like Bruce and Jackie, refugees from an emotional disaster zone. Surely, they couldn't all be dopers on the run from their destructive drug dependencies, but what other factors had driven them here when they might have chosen Berkeley, a Big Ten school, or maybe even Harvard? Dr. Carl Hamilton, the university provost, had told me on the telephone that, "Lots of our young people have gotten into trouble, but the Lord has gotten them back out."

Could most of these kids I saw around me on the campus have been driven here by chronic depression and the need to embrace a simplistic, overweening dogma in order to regain personal stability?

That might have been partially true a few years ago, Jan candidly admitted. In the late-1970s, Oral Roberts University had an unusually high percentage of kids from broken homes, with the divorce rate among students' parents running as high as 40 percent. This percentage had fallen, she said. But today's students *had* been affected by the pandemic divorce rate and general social upheaval. They now tended to reject the new morality of the 1960s, if-it-feels-good-do-it school of thought. They were also deeply "frustrated" by the fast pace and directionless chaos of life in mainstream America. Many of them saw the university as a sanctuary from this widespread anomie. Equally, many of them had seen older brothers and sisters' lives ruined by drugs and alcohol and self-destructive behavior, and these students had chosen a narrower, more

predictable path of fundamentalist morality and Pentecostal fellowship.

Jan was quick to add, however, that the ORU student body was not dominated by anxious misfits from the real world. The Scholastic Aptitude Test averages were well above the national norm, she insisted, and the vast majority of ORU's 4,000 students were in the upper ten percent of their high-school classes.

I wondered out loud about the degree of Final Days, apocalyptic fanaticism among ORU students. When I had taught at a large Midwestern university in the late 1970s, one of my young undergrads, a girl I'll call Debbie, had been badly buffeted by late-adolescent emotional stress. She suddenly joined a fanatical Pentecostal splinter group that was predicting the onset of the prophesied Final Days in May 1981. Her small, cult-like congregation believed we were about to enter the seven years of Tribulation preceding the Second Coming of Christ. They also believed all born-again Christians would be bodily lifted up to heaven on May 21, 1981, an event called the Rapture.

Debbie had become obsessed with the Antichrist and the horrible events of the Days of Tribulation, which she had been taught were about to be unleashed. Once she came to my office and harangued me with a load of half-baked misinterpretations of the Book of Revelation. That morning she was full of references to "the seven-headed beast with ten horns," (the European Common Market) and bizarre warnings about the introduction of optical scanning in supermarkets. Apparently her group believed that those little bar code lines, put on packages, that look like fish skeletons were actually the "mark of the beast," a sure sign that we were in the Final Days. Debbie was also obsessed with the number "666," and had been encouraged by her preacher to cut her Social Security card into three pieces to "break the power" of the three digits of "6 that appeared in her Social Security number.

When I tried to reason with her, she rebuffed me; when I attempted to read to her in the original *koine* Greek from the

Book of Revelation, in order to show her the source of her misinterpretation, she flew into a panic and ran out of my office. I never saw her again, but heard from her friends that she had subsequently joined a Pentecostal "foundation," which has since become recognized as a destructive cult.

I have often wondered what she thought when the Rapture and the Tribulation did not occur as scheduled in May 1981.

Now, I asked Jan Dargatz if there was any of this Rapture fanaticism and apocalyptic longing for the Final Days among the students.

She admitted that a *few* proclaimed such beliefs, but she also pointed out that most students studied hard and prepared for graduate school, marriage, and future careers: an indication that they weren't about to completely reject the world. Today's students, she added a bit wistfully, were far more *conventional* than in the past. Unlike those of the late '60s and '70s, these students did not question fundamental articles of faith, society, or politics. There was far more self-concern and far less altruism than there had been. The great cultural shock wave of the '60s had struck ORU, too, but now it had passed.

* * *

Bruce and Jackie had now entered the ranks of those unquestioning faithful. Slipping my chunky tape recorder into my briefcase, I rose to leave their small living room. I noticed a few attractive children's animal books, but there was no evidence of adult reading material. The Bible, I imagined, sufficed for them. They had, indeed, surrendered their patrimony of intellectual curiosity for a closed, fundamentalist belief system. But in so doing, I had to admit, they had freed themselves from a destructive affliction of fatal potentiality. Who was I to say that they had not chosen the better life?

Now Bruce was no longer a criminal parasite, selling dope to other young people to finance his own use. He worked hard as a machinist, not missing a day at the shop in over two years. His future with the company was promising. They had money

in the bank and were saving each month to make a down payment on a house. Before their conversion, such optimism, hard work, and stability would have been impossible.

But they had, to a great degree, opted out of the contemporary mainstream. Jackie stayed home, taking care of Billie and the neighbor kids. She wore no makeup or jewelry, did not cut her hair, and her somber dresses fell well below the knee. In all matters of importance, she deferred to her husband's decisions. Their social life was concentrated on the weekly prayer services, their Bible study and periodic revivals.

I stared at her. If she were not here now, in this room, with this man and child, would she still be alive? Or would she rather be just another digit in the ongoing tally of drug victims? I could not help but compare her to Karen Ryan.

As I rose to go, I dutifully asked Bruce his feelings on the End Times. But in so doing, I was afraid of unleashing a crazy diatribe like the one I'd received from Debbie.

Bruce sat down on the couch and spoke with quiet intensity. No, he said, he was not one of those Pentecostals who believed the Rapture was going to happen "every five seconds." But he did believe that the Holy Spirit was manifesting Himself so strongly these days to prepare people for the Final Days. "I feel that God wants us to live here as an example to people. The Bible explicitly says, 'Be ready for my coming,' but I plan to buy a house. I'm planning on staying here a while. I don't want the world to be my home, but I want to occupy it until He comes again."

There was in his statement no doubt a nominal desire for an end to confusion through apocalypse. It would have been interesting to sit down again and discuss the historical precedents of such apocalyptic longing, going all the way back through medieval times to the first-century Jewish tradition. But Bruce and Jackie did not need, nor would they readily accept, humanistic interpretation of their lives. They needed emotional support, and they had found it.

They descended the creaky steps with me to my car, Bruce holding the baby in his strong arms. The sky was clouding up,

and he commented that March down here could be like August one day and December the next. We shook hands and I kissed Jackie's warm cheek. Inside, I was feeling a rising calm. Whether I approved of their new lives or not, these kids were here to stay. As I backed down the gravel driveway, I saw them silhouetted there against the now curdled prairie sky, the chill breeze ruffling Jackie's clean length of hair and the baby's curls, Bruce tall and stalwart beside her. I couldn't help but see them as a new generation of pioneers, like the Land Rush Sooners of a century past, refugees from a tangled, ultimately unlivable civilization, which they had abandoned to stake out their risky claim in this unexplored territory.

* * *

I turned on the radio. The national news mentioned the controversy surrounding the Los Angeles coroner's report on the drug-overdose death of John Belushi. There was also a local report about a police raid on an LSD distribution ring in nearby Muskogee. A city spokesman was interviewed who expressed his deep concern about the dealing of powerful "blotter acid" to grade-school children. The LSD was apparently sold on perforated sheets, imprinted with Disney cartoon characters. When you licked the paper, you ingested the chemical. A number of very young school children had been made seriously ill by this drug, the official proclaimed. The reporter then commented that Oklahoma could no longer consider itself protected from such hazards by its relative isolation.

As part of the redneck backlash to the '60s counterculture, I recalled, Merle Haggard had written a song entitled "Okie from Muskogee." There was a line in the lyrics that went:

"We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee,
We don't take our trips on LSD."

At the bottom of the driveway, I stopped before turning onto the highway. Bruce and Jackie still stood at the foot of the stairs, gazing out onto the swollen river. Three years before,

they could have easily been the people selling blotter acid in the school yards of Muskogee. Now, their lives had been radically and positively transformed.

I had come down here half expecting to find doomsday fanatics like Mehdi or burnt-out dopers like Karen Ryan. Instead, I had met two well-adjusted young people who apparently had their lives in order.

They had survived the unexpected onslaught of drugs in our society. Those drugs had come precariously close to destroying them through suicidal depression or accidental overdose. But they *had* survived. I might not agree with the dogmatic rigidity of their new religion, but I had to recognize the role it had played in changing them. They had, in fact, been through an amazing sequence of sudden transformations in less than ten years. Bruce and Jackie had gone in rapid succession from being untroubled, suburban pre-adolescents, to compulsive, near-suicidal dopers, to born-again Christians living now as productive and stable young adults.

If nothing else, their short, intense odyssey was a clear example of rapid currents of social change churning across the world today.

Chapter Five

Los Angeles, Winter

WHEN Bruce and Jackie fled the turmoil in their lives and headed south for the supposedly tranquil Sunbelt, they were lucky enough to have had friends in Tulsa on whom they could depend for shelter and companionship. And, of course, they had each other to turn to for emotional support and affection. They were also fortunate that they were old enough to work legally and that their drug habits, though serious, were not fully debilitating.

In this respect, they were in a much stronger position than the estimated 1,500,000 American teen-agers who run away from home each year. Many of these kids are alone for the first time in their lives; they have no friends on the road or in the cities to which they gravitate. Nor do they have work experience to qualify them for a legitimate job. A large percentage have suffered emotional or physical abuse in the homes they are fleeing. And many are so desperately lonely that they

often make easy pickings for the various sexual predators who haunt the bus stations and amusement arcades that the run-aways frequent all across America.

With growing frequency, young runaways are recruited into the expanding commercial sex industry.

Every year, thousands simply disappear, some to become victims of sexual psychopaths like the Hillside Strangler or the Freeway Killer—to name just two of the numerous mass murderers who have recently stalked homeless young people.

Others surface as John or Jane Doe death reports in cities such as Miami, Houston, Denver, New York and Los Angeles, where they are often listed as the victims of drug overdoses, either accidental or intentional.

The Youth Development Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services has charted an apparently steady increase in the number of teen-age runaways since the mid-1970s. Statistics, however, are difficult to substantiate because most young runaways do not come in contact with government agencies. Donald Swicord, a spokesman for the Bureau, told me, however, that, "There appears to be a continual increase in young runaways each year." A 1974 projection, for example, estimated that there were approximately 740,000 minors on the run from their homes in America; in 1983, the projection went as high as 1,500,000. These are not estimates of kids who merely decided to skip school one afternoon and whose names were mindlessly added to an alarmist statistical snowball, but rather figures that attempt to chart the paths of young Americans who have either voluntarily walked away or have been ejected from their rightful homes. Although most return home after a few days on the run, many others are unwilling to go home. Some come under the control of an adult sexual "sponsor" who restricts their freedom of movement. These kids are not simply latter-day Huck Finns and Tom Sawyers out for a look at the wide world, but rather refugees from unprecedented domestic conflict. If these figures are anywhere near accurate, the number has doubled in the past nine years and is still growing.

I came to realize that the runaway situation was a major new social phenomenon which was well worth investigating. What pressures compelled so many kids to flee their homes? What kinds of homes did they come from? Was there such a person as a *typical* teen-age runaway? These were all valid questions, and I knew that one place I might find some of the answers was southern California.

Los Angeles in general and Hollywood in particular have become Meccas for teen-agers on the run. A person only has to watch the television programs and movies popular with the kids to see why. I imagine that the collective unconscious of teen-age America is filled with images of tanned, laid-back kids with straight teeth and nice hair who pass countless sunny afternoons cruising their Trans Ams along palm-lined boulevards that are always miraculously free of smog, police, and unsympathetic adults.

In order to talk directly to teen-age runaways, and to the social welfare and law enforcement professional who must deal with this growing problem, I went to Los Angeles. There I was directed to the Sunset Strip, that part of Hollywood which one writer has eloquently and accurately described as a "DMZ of the mind." Detectives Ralph Bennett and Bill Dworin of the Los Angeles Police Department Juvenile Division advised me on making contact with typical runaways. I could find them on the Strip, they said, trying to make a buck by selling the only thing of value they possessed: their bodies. The boy hustlers, they assured me, would be on Santa Monica Boulevard, the girls on Sunset, all the way from Highland into West Hollywood.

"Go alone," Bill Dworin suggested. "They'll talk to you; they're very open. Tell them you're writing a book."

Ralph Bennett looked out the office window at the rain. "But you'd better pick a day when it's not raining."

He was right about the rain, but I decided to do a reconnaissance of the Sunset Strip in the hope that I might make some kind of contact. Now it was four o'clock on Saint Patrick's Day afternoon, and I drove aimlessly around the deserted streets,

the windshield wipers smacking at high speed, just barely keeping up with the downpour. I peered out at the empty sidewalks. It was surprising how shoddy this part of Hollywood appeared under the scudding overcast. There were no palm trees to be seen.

So far, I had not been able to spot any hustlers, either. Bill Dworin had told me to try the evening rush hour if I wanted to find the young kids. "In the early evening, they're out there trying to pick up a trick in all the traffic going home."

But the storefronts and rain-swept corners were empty. I drove slowly east, peering into the doorways of sex shops and bars like the Kit Kat Club, which advertised "Live, Nude Girls!" in vibrant Day-Glo letters. There were a few discount record stores and a couple of garishly lit taco joints, but most of the street was hardware stores, laundromats and auto parts. The pavement was potholed, and the ugly overhead rigging of telephone and utility wires gave the neighborhood a run-down, industrial atmosphere.

I wondered how disappointing this down-home plainness must be to a young runaway from Nebraska who had hitchhiked here in search of Hollywood the Golden. Indeed, driving up the 605 Freeway that afternoon, splashing past the industrial cities on the southern flank of megalopolis Los Angeles, I could not help but imagine how depressing a teenage runaway from the Midwest would find places like Torrance, Bellflower and Compton. *This is really L.A.?*

A brighter swatch of clouds sailed by. We had a respite, a pause between two dense cloud banks blowing in from the sea. As I passed Santa Monica and La Brea, the first of the boys appeared on the sidewalks. They sprang out of nowhere, like gaudy orchids in an Asian forest, blooming suddenly between sharp blasts of tropical rain.

Some had long hair and wore shiny pastel jackets and tight jeans. A few wobbled along the wet sidewalks on high platform shoes, which accentuated their legs and buttocks.

Most of them looked in their late teens, but a couple appeared older behind their wispy mustaches. When they saw

the Texas license plates on my muddy Chevette, several twirled striped umbrellas at me from doorways and hooted peals of ritualized seduction.

I sped through the next intersection, almost running a red light, headed east toward Highland. There was something both pathetic and terribly repulsive about those boy street hustlers which drove me to seek escape.

I approached the intersection of Santa Monica and Highland and swung right toward the Strip. The girls were there, just as Bill Dworin had said they would be. They were grouped in twos and threes near the intersection of Sunset and Highland, an area of big, tawdry motels, which all seemed to be painted in bilious yellow or clashing scarlet. The girls were equally colorful. They wore pink or chartreuse hotpants, bright knit leg warmers, and gaudy tube tops that left their bellies and hips bare. A couple had on the platform sandals affected by the boy hustlers on Santa Monica, and others tottered along the sidewalk on spike heels. I slowed for the red light at Sunset and found myself being solicited by three girls, who beckoned to me from the curb to the right of the car. One was a chunky black woman with a frosted wig. She looked about 35 years old. The other two were white, obviously well past their teens.

I decided to park in a lot I'd seen on Highland and continue my reconnaissance on foot. The rain appeared to have relented for a while, and I hoped to get a closer look at the hookers by walking along the Sunset.

Forty minutes later, I felt stymied. There were prostitutes out now all along the gaudy motel area on either side of Sunset and Highland, but they were all much older than any hypothetical teen-age runaway from Omaha. In desperation, I sidled up to a thin black woman who had just stepped back to the curb after an unsuccessful negotiation with two men in a gleaming station wagon. I handed her a folded ten-dollar bill and said I was looking for a young girl, a runaway cousin from the Midwest. She stared at me over the rims of her pink granny glasses a moment, pursed her lips in theatrical concen-

tration, then nodded, as if to signify that she had judged me acceptable, that I was not some kind of cop or juvenile welfare official.

"Try that little bunch of stores up there round the corner, Daddy," she said, pointing toward a side street. "That's where you find your jailbait, short-eyes and your deely-boppers."

I turned to stare in the direction she was pointing. The early darkness had fallen and the wet streets were all headlight glare. "Okay," I said uncertainly, "thanks."

As I walked stiffly along toward the small shopping center, my mood fluctuated from acute embarrassment to curiosity. It was dark now, and I could see several silhouettes against the brightly lit windows of the stores. Even though four of the five stores were already closed for the evening, the three girls in the darkness avoided the shopping center sidewalk and kept to the street side of the parking lot. When I stopped 20 yards away to study the girls, the same station wagon I'd just seen cruising Sunset bounced up into the lot. After a quick negotiation, two of the three girls climbed into the car and the driver wheeled away.

Still torn by ambivalence, I forced back my embarrassment and strode up to the remaining girl. Just as I neared her, the rain began pelting down again in stinging drops. In the light from the stores, I got my first clear look at her. She was short and slightly plump, but the thick cork soles of her wedgies made her look taller and gracefully proportioned. Her green poplin jacket featured a number of stylish epaulettes, tabs and zippers; her hotpants were glistening blue satin, like shrunken boxer's trunks; and her brown hair had been frosted to accept the inevitable Farrah Fawcett cut. Despite this adult camouflage, I doubted if she was even 17.

"Hi!" she called out cheerfully. "Bummer weather, huh?" She dug into her braided shoulder bag and produced a small folding umbrella.

"Sunny California," I commented, hunching my shoulders against the swelling rain.

The girl cowered under the disc of the umbrella, trying to

protect her hair. She gazed down at the gasoline rainbows on the asphalt for a long moment, then threw her head back to face me with a shining smile. "Hey . . . ah, why don't you loan me eighty bucks to get my brakes fixed." She shrugged in the direction of the parked cars. "Then we can sort of go to my motel and have a drink. How about it? Can't go wrong, Babes. You lend me the money for my car, then we go and cool out."

"No," I blurted out. "I'm a writer. I want to talk to you. I'm doing a book."

She scowled. "Shit, man. I don't have time for *that* kind of number. Forget it." She turned and pranced away several steps. The rain was smacking down now. Up on Sunset and down on Santa Monica, the cars all had on their headlights. The thousands of tires on the wet pavement produced a sizzling backdrop of sound.

"I'll pay you for your time," I called out to her. "Come on. My car's just over on Highland. We can talk there."

In the car I gave her thirty dollars "down payment," and she insisted on seeing as many pieces of identification as I was willing to show her. The rain tumbled down, and car windows steamed up. Her name, she said, was Pam. For another twenty-five dollars, Pam added, trying to cuddle up to me from the other bucket seat, she would show me a real good time, right here in the car. I could smell her hairspray. She smoked Vantages, and after the second cigarette, I suggested we drive someplace nearby to get a cup of coffee.

"I make eighty bucks a half hour," she shrugged, "with the motel. Call it sixty without. Let's go."

The fast-food shop was all molded plastic booths and wall mirrors. There were some older people eating at the counters, but the booths were taken by kids, some of whom, I imagined, were hookers of both sexes, seeking shelter from the downpour. We were lucky enough to find a narrow end booth, which offered a modicum of privacy. Unfortunately, it was near the jukebox.

Like an improbable geisha, Pam tottered up to the counter and returned bearing a tray of refreshment: a vanilla coke

served in an antique soda-fountain glass for herself and a plastic mug of coffee for me. While she spoke, she toyed with the tiny ice-machine bricks in her glass, poking at them with her pink straw.

With starts and halts, and a variety of inane, giggling comments apropos of nothing, this was Pam's story:

She came, she said, from an industrial city in the Midwest. The youngest of four kids, she had begun her junior year of high school the previous September.

"What year were you born!" I interrupted.

"Nineteen sixty-eight," she said, nodding to the beat of the record on the machine.

"That makes you only fourteen." I was now exasperated with her apparent spaciness.

She snapped her head back from her private groove. "I mean . . . nineteen sixty-four. I'm almost nineteen, right? In May, like May twenty-first."

I made a note on my small pad. "And you started your junior year at age eighteen? Come on, Pam. I'm *paying* for this interview."

She lowered her face and licked her lips. "Right . . . *right*." Then glaring at me across the narrow booth, "You're LAPD, huh?" I shook my head. "You're from Social Services, right?"

Again, I shook my head. "I'm what I said I was in the car, a professor and a writer who's doing a book about kids in trouble."

"Okay," she said, as if she'd just sat down for a business conference. "What do you want to hear about?"

"Why'd you run away from home?"

I did *not* run away," she snapped. Her manner suddenly changed. "That's like number one okay? I'm not some pissy little *runaway*. I left with my old man, my boyfriend, Phil. I didn't take a pissy Trailways or something. He's got an eighty-one Datsun with factory air and five on the floor. The front seat goes down so you can sleep . . . cruise control, the whole package. That's not what I'd call running away."

"Fine," I said. "So why'd you decide to leave home in the

middle of your junior year in high school?"

"High school," she said, "is suck-city." Anyway, she continued, her mom and dad were having "a real hard time" this winter, and it had just gotten better for her to move on down the road with Phil.

"What kind of hard time . . . financial, emotional, what do you mean?"

Mimicking me, she ticked her right index finger against her left palm. It was then I first noticed her gnawed fingernails. "Financial . . . emotional . . . shit, physical, whatever. My dad freaked out at Christmastime. It was a *heavy* episode, Pancho . . . and I do mean heavy." She giggled again, and I finally realized that she was high on something, maybe coke, more likely a downer . . . a red or a Quaalude.

I asked her to be more specific.

"Okay . . . here's the *in-side sto-ry*." She snickered, cupping her hands like a megaphone and mock-bellowing her words. "Summer, last year, Labor Day, right? My dad's got this good job at the plant across the river . . . in custodial and maintenance? Our house is paid for. My sister's got her divorce finally, and legal custody. Everything's cool. So, he goes and has a few beers with his good buddy, Mr. Johnson. They decide to . . . I don't know all the details, but it's a *foolproof* fuckin' deal, okay? She grinned incongruously and shook her head. "The deal is this: They get these mobile homes from the collection agency, right? Then they take 'em across the river to the plant and use the shop at night and on Saturday and Sunday to fix them all up. Then they sell them for lotsa money." Again she smiled. "Only they had to like mortgage the house and take a big loan from the bank to *get* the mobile homes." She stopped speaking and stared out at the headlights on the rain-smeared windows of the restaurant.

"So, what happened then?"

"He like lost *everything* . . . in three months, the whole enchilada, Pancho. He had a ninety-day loan. Then the plant flashes on the fact that he's using their shop at night, right? So, he gets fired. My dad gets fired after like thirty years. And he

gets fucked outta half his pension, okay?" she said, rubbing her eyes. "And my mom's in the hospital for blood pressure. Once at Halloween, Once after Thanksgiving. So my dad doesn't tell nobody in the family about the heavy shit that's coming down . . . nobody, not Mom, not me, not my sister. He figures we can't handle the news, okay?"

Pam stabbed at the ice cubes in her glass and stared around the crowded booths, then began speaking again. I could sense now that she was becoming, indeed, "open," that she had not had the chance to tell her story to anyone who seemed to care, who appeared willing to listen.

"Christmas week, okay? I'm working for two-ninety an hour in a stockroom at this one department store, in the basement of this mall, with water on the floor, rats, whatever. I'm trying to save some money to get nice presents for my mom because she's just back from the hospital. Only, I know I'll never save enough before Christmas, so I borrow my mom's charge cards and I get her a food processor, which she always wanted, and a sweater-and-slacks set to fit her since she lost so much weight. And I get my sister's kids a Space Invaders, and hunting boots for my dad."

She took a deep breath. "Two days later, my dad comes stomping into the kitchen, and like knocks me out of my chair, no shit, with the back of his hand. 'You little bitch,' he says. 'You knew damn well I'm doing Chapter Thirteen' . . . or Eleven, or whatever the fuck it is. 'I'm filing for bankruptcy and you're buying video games on your mother's credit cards.' " Pam threw down the plastic straw and slurped some Coke from the glass. "That was like the *first* either me or Mom or my sister had even *heard* about bankruptcy. But he's crazy, freak city, running around the kitchen, screaming 'bitch' and 'cunt' at me, trying to beat the shit out of me, but my mom's in between, crying. So he says I'm grounded until the end of the school year . . . the end of the *next* semester, right? Like June, six months from now. I ask him what about going with Phil and his brother to the basketball game we already got tickets for and staying overnight with his sister like he already agreed

to?" Pam rocked back in the booth and closed her eyes. "He says no more Phil, that's out, 'That guy Phil is no good for you.' I say we want to get engaged when I finish school, and he laughs and says that's just a line to make a slut out of me, words to that effect, you know what I mean?"

She fell into a long silence, her eyes half closed. On the jukebox, a plaintive Latino woman was singing some popular lament. After the long record ended, Pam continued her story as if there had been no pause. "Some Merry Chistmas, right? So Phil comes over to try to talk to Dad about going to the basketball game, and Dad like throws him down the front porch steps. Phil's standing there cussing Dad out and Dad says he's going to get the twelve-gauge. Merry Christmas. . . ."

"Does your dad drink much?" I asked, breaking another of her silences.

"Does the bear shit in the woods?" she answered bitterly. "You better believe he drinks, even fired from the plant, even with Chapter Thirteen, and the bank freaking out for their loan, he's got money for a half-barrel of Michelob in the basement and these big double bottles of Canadian Club. That's part of his problem, you know?"

"Yeah, Pam, I know."

"So, anyway," she continued, "it comes time for the basketball game that Phil's paid thirty bucks for tickets for, and he calls me and says, 'I can get fifty for the tickets and fifty bills buys a lot of gas going to California.' I say, 'Wait a minute, Pancho.' And he says, 'They're paying seven bucks an hour for new guys on the offshore oil rigs down there, so let's go. We can get married.'" Pam smirked now at the memory. She pulled off her shining jacket and revealed a Kelly-green tube top. "So, we just split, on Wednesday morning when Mom was at the doctor's. By that night, we're in Kansas. By the next day, Arizona, and Saturday afternoon, right on the San Diego Freeway, heading for the beach."

"Okay. What happened then?"

For the first time, Pam laughed out loud, a nasty sound, echoing the chemicals in her bloodstream. "There ain't any

offshore oil rigs down at Long Beach. Phil got it all wrong, boss. The oil rigs are like in *Louisiana*, not California."

"And then?" I asked, pushing my half-hour to its limit.

But Pam had forgotten about time. She seemed still willing to dwell on the details. They had ended up in one of the beach cities in a "shitty, cheap motel." "We're like there two weeks, looking at the road maps and trying to find a job. He goes out one morning in the car. And he just don't come back that night. The rent's due the next day, right?"

Pam made her megaphone again. "Next morning, the *Raid*. . . . All kinds of cops. Seems the Coke and cigarette machine by the pool got busted open, and Phil's gone with a week's rent to pay. They grab me. Pretty quick they flash that I'm a *helpless juvenile*, okay? But they want to know where Phil's at, and I tell them Louisiana. Then they take me down and book me on a six-oh-one."

"Juvenile runaway?"

"You got it. So, I call my mom, and say, 'Hi, Mom, I'm in California, and you got to send me a hundred and sixty-seven bucks to fly me back home. Phil ditched me.'"

"What did she say?"

" 'You'll have to talk to your dad tonight. He's working days again . . . at this other company.' " That day, she continued, the police and welfare authorities shuffled her from one "smelly" office to another, and around six in the evening, they drove her and another girl to a "SODA bed home somewhere out in the boonies" of south L.A.

I'd learned that the acronym "SODA" stood for Status Offender Detention Alternative. SODA home facilities were county-funded and supervised way stations for juveniles whose status as minors without parental supervision required the intervention of the welfare authorities. Before the late 1970s, I had also learned, such status offenders—runaways for juveniles removed from abusive homes—were initially detained in secure juvenile detention centers, pending the disposition of their cases by the courts. As part of the great wave of liberalization of the criminal justice laws, however, the

California legislature decided that a juvenile runaway's status alone did not require infringement of his constitutional rights through secure detention. Hence the growth of the SODA home system. The LAPD Central Division detectives with whom I spoke about the juvenile runaway problem called the SODA bed homes simply places "to flop." Because these facilities were not secure, they were often described as "walk-away" homes by the officers working on juvenile cases. When I'd heard the acronym for the first time, I'd had a strange fantasy of a Candy Land kind of place, a *home* where naughty children were not spanked, but instead put into a comfortable bed and given a bottle of grape soda.

Pam had, indeed, walked away from the SODA bed home to which she was sent that weekend. As she described the events of that Friday night, her language became laced with some of the foulest, most obscene idioms I had ever heard a young person use. I had to remind myself that the girl sitting across from me was not some callous hooker who'd been on the street for years, but rather a 14 or maybe 16-year-old kid, and I had to keep in mind that her compulsive use of this gutter language was an obvious symptom of the deep anguish she was experiencing as she spoke.

She had "hung out" in the TV room of the SODA home that night, "rapping" with the other kids, stalling, to delay the inevitable telephone confrontation with her father. Finally, just before the Johnny Carson show, she placed a collect call home. Unfortunately for Pam, she had forgotten the two-hour difference between Pacific and Central Standard Time. It was after midnight when her call reached her home in the Midwest, midnight on a Friday night.

Her father was "pissed out of his skull," incoherently, brutally drunk. He called her "every name in the dictionary." When she tried to explain what the social worker had told her, that her parents had no choice but to take her back, that they were required by law to provide her plane fare home, her father exploded. He told her to go "peddle your ass" for the ticket money, that she was only good for one thing anyway, so

she may as well be useful for *something* for the first time in her life. Again, she tried to reason with him, to explain that the social-services people would be contacting the local police at home, first thing Monday morning to "lay a legal hassle" on him. He responded by saying such a legal confrontation would be sure to kill her mother, that if Pam wanted to see her mother in a grave, she should just go ahead and suck up to the California authorities. With this warning, he hung up.

I stared at her, remembering the words of Detective Horace Wendt, the juvenile coordinator of the LAPD Central Division: "We have many, many cases where the parents refuse to come pick their kids up. The parents are *tired* of trying to control them."

Pam slouched across from me in the ochre plastic booth. "Can I have some frozen yogurt?" she asked in the voice of a young child. "Blueberry if they still got any."

I fetched a shallow dish of purple yogurt, and as I slid into the booth, I saw that her mascara had run with tears. Like a good little girl who had earned her treat, she spooned down the frozen yogurt, explaining that, "They don't even have this yet at home."

"When did you leave the SODA bed home?" I had to keep pressing ahead, even though the rain was still falling in sheets outside. When it did finally stop, I knew she would leave.

"That next afternoon," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "This one other girl is from here . . . Ventura or someplace. She's been around a lot, you know what I mean? She tells me I'll get locked up with spics and black dykes, first thing Monday morning at Juvenile Hall, once the DPSS finds out my dad's not paying my way back. Anyway, the case worker's supposed to come by that night to see me. They got the weekend lady at the SODA home, right? So, I tell her I'm going to visit this girl's aunt in Ventura. Me and this other girl hitch over to the freeway and end up here. She has some buddies with the whole top floor of a house. Beats the hell out of Juvenile Hall, right?"

"I suppose so," I answered wearily. "How did you get into . . . I mean. . . ."

She grinned at me, wiping her lips with the back of her hand. "How'd I get into The Life . . . start tricking?"

I nodded, unreasonably embarrassed.

She laughed at my discomfort. "No dope-'em-out-and-rape-'em number, if that's what you think. Okay . . . it was this. I crash with these kids for three days, and a guy comes over. He's one of the best, solidest dudes around, right? His scam is record cassettes and video cassettes, copies of them, like cheap copies. . . ."

I supplied the word she was looking for, "Counterfeit."

She extended her finger at me and nodded in sarcastic deference. "*Right!* Anyway, he looks like Erik Estrada, okay? and he comes on to me, and this-and-that, and yackety-yack . . . so I tell him about Phil ditching me, and he says he can get some lowriders to go find Phil and rearrange his face for him, if that's what I want. Wild shit, huh?"

I nodded, but did not speak.

"So, I say don't bother and we go in his van to see about getting some reefer. I like to do a joint most afternoons. We eat in this nice restaurant in Newport Beach. Then we come back to Hollywood, and he says I can crash with him. No problem. He's got his gig goin' during the day, and at night we party. He asks around about me, but there's no warrant or anything like that from the cigarette machine at the motel."

I felt an urge to ask Pam outright when the guy had conned her into whoring for him, but she told me without my intrusion.

"A couple weeks later he says, 'Hey, you want to turn some tricks during this one convention?' Him and the other guys need a little extra money to get this whole load of cassettes. They like *bid* on them, okay? And now they have to pay. So, I go, why not? It's really not that bad, not like I do it."

I made several quick notes on my pad. "Do you give your friend all your money?"

Pam laughed harshly. "Poor pissy little runaway gets ripped

off by pimp, right? No. We share our money. I bring in some cash, and I get my share of things. Hey, I got a bank account, okay?"

"How often do you hustle?"

She smirked at my attempt at hip language, but answered anyway. "Like holidays. Today's a holiday, right?" It was not, but I did not challenge her logic. "... Friday, Saturday, Sunday night. That's Amateur Hour with kids in from all over the Valley, so Hollywood Vice can't handle everybody, okay? They put moves on the older girls with rap sheets on them already 'cause they can make them cop a plea, get convictions on them. They. . . ."

I must have looked skeptical because Pam glared at me.

"Listen, Mr. Writer. The cops will fuck you over every chance they get. *Reader's Digest* should know about that."

"Okay, How many hours do you work? What happens on a typical. . . ."

"Three, four tricks," Pam answered coolly, staring out at the slow headlights in the rain. "Sometimes only two if I get a good tip from some old businessman or something. Jap salesmen are big spenders if they had a good day down at Century City or whatever."

"What about VD?" I asked, looking away from her eyes.

"My friends have this one doctor's book, with all these yucky-colored, gross-out pictures." She lowered her gaze. "I know what to look for."

"What about herpes?"

"What?"

"Genital herpes simplex . . . that's a virus. You never get rid of it."

She shrugged. "We got this book," she repeated defiantly. "I know what to look for. It's like a job, right? Like going to work as a nurse, like a physical *therapist* or something, okay? What's so terrible about that?"

I wondered silently which smooth, counterfeit Erik Estrada had taught her that line.

She was licking the last of the frozen yogurt from her spoon.

"People are killing themselves with the food they eat, you know about that? Bacon and eggs and white sugar and Wonder Bread. You can live on yogurt and natural honey and wheat bran, a perfect diet, right? I eat yogurt every day. I even got yogurt shampoo. California is really neat for stuff like that. At home they never even heard of *any* of this stuff."

I stared at her suddenly earnest and vulnerable young face. Here was a teen-ager who, by her own admission, smoked marijuana every day, who obviously abused other drugs, who had sexual intercourse with up to 16 strangers a week, who seemed to have only a vague notion about the existence of genital herpes, and who had, in her desperate need to be loved, completely swallowed the lies of her young pimp. And this girl was laying on me the shop-worn, Age-of-Aquarius California rap about yogurt: you are what you eat. I wondered if she'd ever heard the corollary: *you are what you do?*

Pam frowned at my expression, as if sensing my change of mood from curiosity to anger and pity. "Hey, I'm doing my own . . . I'm leading my own life, okay? A week ago I'm down here, working, and it's slow, and I'm bummed-out, right? So, I decide I want a Walkman to listen to some music. Okay, I tool up the street and just go into the first store and lay down ninety-two ninety-five for this beautiful Walkman stereo with dual headphones and auto-select FM and a leather carrying case. I see it, I want it, I got it." She stubbed out her cigarette in a puddle of blue yogurt. "Don't say in your story I'm a runaway, 'cause I'm not. I call my mom all the time, and my sister. They know exactly where I'm at."

I interrupted to ask if she meant to imply that her family knew she was a prostitute.

She laughed. "Hey, I'm not a space cadet. My mom thinks I work for this cassette dealer. She thinks I make a lot of money. Next summer, I'm going to buy an RX-7 and take a vacation, take my sister and her kids up to Great America. I'm doing what I want to do, okay? So don't write like I'm a pissy little runaway at the Trailways station."

I promised her that I would faithfully reproduce her very words. Then I paid her for the rest of the interview and she said that she'd "catch" me later.

I watched her through the steamy restaurant windows. The rain was thinning again. Pam looked both ways down the sidewalk, then, twirling her umbrella over her shoulder, she strode off to the left, toward the Sunset Strip.

* * *

As I drove along the Santa Monica Freeway that evening, I listened to the broken, distorted noise on the tape I had surreptitiously begun recording when Pam had fetched the Coke and coffee. Her voice blossomed harsh, then fragile, inside the darkened car, only to be drowned out by the blare of the jukebox. I was going home to my brother-in-law's house in the southern suburbs for a comfortable family dinner. At this moment, Pam might be lying naked under some grunting, drunken stranger in one of the "dirt-bag" motels along the Strip. Despite the false I.D. card she had boasted of, which proclaimed her age as 19, and despite her stoned-out confusion about the year of her birth, she was probably 16 years old at most.

But she was leading her own life, as she chose to put it. A life which inevitably would bring her to drug addiction, a criminal record, venereal disease, and possibly brutal violence against her body by either a client or a pimp. This frightened, rejected child who had been so taken by the wholesome benefits of yogurt and bran would quickly become one of the "older girls" with a rap sheet, an arrest record that would trail her from state to state as she lived on the criminal margins of society. Eventually, perhaps, she would wake up one morning and decide to shoot a speedball or to swallow a couple of red barbiturate capsules and drink a few glasses of gin to ease the psychic pain of the night before. A few hours later, the paramedics would wheel away the spongy husk of her body, one more suspected suicide.

There were, of course, grimmer scenarios. The Hillside Strangler, who had haunted Los Angeles for several years, had sought out young "semi-pro" streetwalkers like Pam. And the boy hustlers often fared no better. William Bonin, the Freeway Killer, had been especially partial to these kids. He could torture, rape and kill these anonymous "throwaways" without much fear of parental clamor for an investigation of their sons' disappearance.

Earlier that week, I had discussed the troubling phenomenon of adolescent runaways with Captain Robert Taylor, the commanding officer of the LAPD Juvenile Division. Captain Taylor was a thoughtful and articulate professional, with twenty years experience at many levels of police work and an advanced degree in public administration. Our conversation quickly passed beyond platitudes and the stark statistics of the teen-age runaway problem. It became obvious that Captain Taylor was interested in addressing the more fundamental issue of the nature of the society that produced such runaways, and also how our society had chosen to face the problem.

In Los Angeles, he explained, the runaway situation was problematic and complex because of the huge area of the county, the fact that children on the run gravitated here from all over the United States, and also because current laws and shrinking budgets had made it especially difficult for the police and juvenile welfare authorities to maintain control over kids who basically did not want to be controlled. Los Angeles County had just lost almost 250 Children's Services staff due to budget cuts, he said, handing me a copy of the press release announcing the cutbacks. County juvenile welfare facilities would henceforth be limited to extreme cases of child neglect and abuse. Simple runaway or truancy cases would be given low priority. "Frankly," he said, rocking back in his swivel chair and staring out the window, "those things trouble me because I sense what the police will have to deal with in the future will be the results of that decision not to treat these kids today."

Teen-age runaways would still be intercepted by the Los Angeles Police Department, he continued, but if no evidence of criminal activity or exploitation of the child warranted further investigation, the child would be turned over to County Social Services authorities. The county could hold an out-of-state runaway for up to three days in a SODA home. "According to law," he said, "status offenders cannot be placed in a secure detention facility."

"How recent a change is that?" I asked.

"The law was enacted in the late seventies." The security in SODA homes, he added, was "a joke."

Detective Ralph Bennett of the Division's Sexually Exploited Child Unit had now joined the conversation. Thirty percent of the kids sent to SODA bed homes, Detective Bennett said, simply "walk away."

"The people who created this law," Captain Taylor said, "are not people of ill will. They thought that it was not fair to take normal kids and truants and mix them with hard-core delinquents." But the obvious weakness of this system was just one symptom of a weakening and blunting of the juvenile justice system. According to Captain Taylor, the groundswell of liberalization that had swept over the adult criminal justice system since the early 1960s had also flooded juvenile justice. A minor offender now had every right and prerogative of an adult, with the exception of the right to a jury.

This meant, he continued, that a young criminal could be treated no differently than his adult counterpart. There was now much less use of custodial detention as a deterrent to juvenile crime. "A child that commits burglary or robbery or manslaughter cannot be placed in a detention facility any longer than an adult offender would serve for the same crime." Previously, the state would have had custody over a serious juvenile offender until he was an adult. Now, for example, because the average adult detention period for second degree murder was about four years, a juvenile second-degree murderer cannot be kept in detention any longer. "We cannot institutionalize that kid for more than four years. Then

we let him go. . . . You're prohibited by law from locking him up for any appreciable length of time, the same law that's supposed to protect his potential victims."

Captain Taylor rocked in his chair, then linked his hands behind his neck and concentrated on choosing his words with care. What kind of signals, he asked, was our society giving its young citizens about the standards of civilized conduct toward their fellow citizens. "There should be some severe consequences for violating the rules of the society, to maintain order and discipline within it. When the law is so compromised that there aren't any consequences to violating the rules, then these rules don't mean anything." It used to be, he continued, that the prevailing attitude of the state toward juveniles was that of an "alter-parent," which would when necessary "control and nurture" a child. Now, he said, in California at least, the relationship of the state to the young person who had gotten into trouble had become an "adversary process"; children seemed to have lost their traditionally protected status before the law. "There's something fundamentally wrong with a system that no longer cares about its children."

He suddenly leaned forward, elbows on his desk. "What are we teaching them? What kind of system have we given them?" A clever juvenile dope dealer, for example, he continued, could peddle marijuana on a school ground with relative impunity. As long as the dealer maintained less than one ounce on his person at all times, his offense would be treated as an infraction, "like a traffic ticket." Captain Taylor spoke more slowly now. "I certainly think that the . . . crime experience we're seeing now . . . that we've seen since the late seventies and into the eighties, is partially a result of our failure to provide proper constraints, proper guidance, and to set up proper structures in the nineteen-sixties."

I asked him what he thought could be done now to correct the problem.

The situation would remain bad, he felt, until people decided to get involved: with their public schools, with their local

law enforcement agencies, with their own kids. The Me Generation had stressed personal fulfillment, doing your own thing, not family and community responsibility. "Because of the choice to not get involved, to not correct the problem," he said, rocking once more in his chair, "the situation continues to deteriorate to the point where you have all the people who can afford private schools sending their children to them." The public school system, he added, then becomes the institution of the have-nots, and the wedge is driven further between the two prevailing classes of society.

The police, he continued, were literally public servants; they followed the priorities the people set up through their decisions about the laws they wanted passed and the taxes they wanted to pay.

I raised the hypothetical case of a 14-year-old runaway hooker from Omaha, for example, who was assigned a low quotient of concern by the public, and seen as a naughty but titillating object of sexual exploitation. "We're not willing to hold that fourteen year-old girl accountable," Captain Taylor said bitterly. "We're not willing to do anything for her if she doesn't abide by the rules. We just put her in a SODA facility and treat her with benign neglect. And what's going to happen to her? Is this treatment going to improve her life situation? What are the consequences going to be? Will she become a drug addict? Is she going to get some disease and spread it? Should we be concerned if she does? Is she going to be murdered? Should we be concerned about that? Or should we not be concerned about her at all, because, *after* all, she's not *our* child. That isn't *our* daughter out there." This attitude, he added, led only one way, toward a fractured society in which everyone maintained his narrow self-interests and self-protection, and a medieval-type fragmentation developed in which people chose to live isolated, behind "walls and moats."

Without question, he continued, contemporary economic pressures have also hastened the process of family fragmentation. Both mothers and fathers were forced to work to make

ends meet, and their kids often got lost in the shuffle, with no one at home "to be there to love and nurture them." But the kids did not have the capacity to understand the economic pressures their parents were encountering. The kids simply felt neglected, and they "strike out."

Many, like Pam, simply run away.

* * *

I drove through the rain, south on the San Diego Freeway. Ahead of me, the semi-trucks were kicking up huge plumes of spray. On either side of the eight-lane roadway, the lights of vast Los Angeles stretched to the horizon. Just as I passed a slow tanker truck, I caught a glimpse of a young boy on the shoulder; he was huddled in a green poncho, with his thumb out, a limp cardboard destination sign clutched to his chest. He was lucky, I thought. On a night like this, the Highway Patrol would grab him quick. It was far too dangerous to hitch on the freeways in this blinding deluge, and I felt confident that the "proper authorities" would soon have him in their custody. He would also be protected from any successor of the Freeway Killer who might be prowling in a torture van that night. And then what? A SODA bed home?

Pam had been picked up and turned over to the authorities, and she had run away again. Unwittingly, when Captain Taylor and I had developed our hypothetical picture of a runaway girl from Omaha, we had come quite close to describing a living human being. I was especially impressed by the ironic parallels with Pam's real-life situation and the theoretical model we'd discussed in the captain's office.

Although both her parents had not been forced to work, as in our model, her father's ill-advised gamble at entrepreneurship had definitely been an attempt to better his family's economic status. And when he had sunk into the shame of bankruptcy, his drinking had increased. In his growing depression, he didn't have the time or energy needed to understand the problems of a teen-age daughter. As Captain Taylor

had predicted, the child had struck out in rebellion.

From the tape recorder beside me, Captain Taylor's final words echoed around the empty car. "Most children don't need a lot of time. They just need a little more time. They need some time to be told that they're loved, that they're wanted, and they're needed."

* * *

Options House, a shelter and counseling center for teen-age runaways, was a large, comfortable frame home with white cedar-shake siding on Beachwood Drive in Hollywood. This part of Hollywood was a quiet residential neighborhood, with Spanish stucco homes, redwood-modern duplexes, and a number of neatly painted frame buildings like Options House. There were plenty of palm trees and flowering hedges. It was mid-morning, and the sun was bright. At the far end of the street, I could read the famous Hollywood sign, white against the green scrub brush of the hills.

I stood for a moment in the benign winter sunshine, marveling at the transformation brought by the cloudless weather after four days of rain. Southern California was *supposed* to look like this: trimmed shrubbery, egg-shell sky, and smogless vistas, all the way south across the flatlands of L.A. County. A runaway kid arriving in Hollywood today might well feel that he *had* found the promised land.

But only five blocks from this attractive neighborhood, the Strip began: "discount" sex shops, the garish motels, the girls and boys on the corners, waiting for trade. A high percentage of the estimated 1,500,000 American runaways gravitated to the commercial sex industries of our large cities: Los Angeles, New York, Houston, San Diego, Seattle, Denver, and Atlanta. Street corner prostitution by both boys and girls was the usual route they took, but the pornographic film and video-cassette business was a growing recruiter.

Incredibly, there was even a commercial sex market that explicitly exploited the *specific* misfortunes of the runaway.

This advertisement had appeared in the February 1982 edition of *Club International*:

GIRLS IN TROUBLE

NEED MONEY IN A HURRY. UNUSUAL
PHOTOS OF UNWED PREGNANT GIRLS.
RUNAWAYS, GIRLS OF ALL AGES,
...8-16... AND WILD ORGY PHOTOS
TAKEN OF GIRLS FROM BROKEN HOMES.
\$2 FOR EACH GROUP. ALL 3 GROUPS
FOR ONLY \$5.

MRS. P.L. Apt. C13
3531 VANOWEN STA., VAN NUYS, CA 91407

The kids were also preyed upon by a variety of "chicken hawks" and pedophiles, according to Ralph Bennett and Bill Dworin, the two experienced detectives in the Sexually Exploited Child Unit of the LAPD Juvenile Division. These two dedicated, street-wise officers had seen a bellyful of the exploitation practiced on children, including adolescent runaways. The criminal sexual use of teen-age runaways had increased in Los Angeles, they explained, in direct proportion to the increasing influx of young runaways to the area. Detective Bennett explained that a "very high percentage" of the younger kids who remained on the street fell prey to one kind of sexual recruiter or another. "It stands to reason," he said. "What does a fourteen-year-old have to offer as far as a professional skill? They have nothing to offer but their bodies, and that is what's being exploited."

The younger the child, Bill Dworin explained, the more prized they are by the organized pedophiles. In the late '70s, he added, there was a child-prostitution ring in Los Angeles that attracted clients from as far away as New York and London. The commercialized sexual abuse of homeless young people had become a profitable, international industry. Each year there was a huge volume of child pornography confiscated by the U.S. Customs Service, but the material seized was only about five percent of the estimated total. The majority of child pornography was produced in Europe, but the U.S. was catching up fast.

Both Ralph Bennett and Bill Dworin stressed the often hidden emotional damage done to juveniles lured into prosti-

tution and pornography. When the favored prepubescent victims reached sexual maturity, they were dumped by the pimps or surrogate "fathers." This left the children with a deep sense of inadequacy and guilt. A large proportion of teen-age runaways, they told me, had been sexually abused or molested before they left home, and this sexual molestation was an especially important factor among girl prostitutes.

Ralph Bennett got out one of the unit's evidence folders to show me some samples of child pornography. I thought that I had a strong stomach and that I'd seen my fair share of the gruesome and sordid in my life. But these color "fantasy" photographs displaying young children in bloody sadomasochistic orgies, was enough to make me gag.

"I can't recall picking up a runaway kid in Hollywood," Ralph Bennett said, snapping shut the portfolio, "who has not been sexually exploited."

* * *

Dr. Luba Elman, then director of Options House, had told me on the phone that morning that I would be able to interview one of her clients, a girl Pam's age. I was not sure, however, if I had the emotional stamina to listen to another story as disturbing as Pam's.

But the atmosphere inside Options House, as well as Dr. Elman's forthright manner and insights on the runaway problem, soon had me curious to interview her young client.

Options House had been founded 18 months before to fill the obvious need for a runaway shelter in Hollywood, the magnet that drew the largest percentage of rootless kids drifting to Los Angeles County. The institution was funded from a variety of private and public sources, state and federal. There was not much fat in the budget, however, and much of the staff were unpaid volunteers.

The salaried professional staff, however, were all trained counselors. By state licensing regulations, they were limited to six beds for resident clients, but they also provided walk-in

counseling and follow-up work for ex-residents. Since they opened their doors in October 1981, the shelter has not had any empty beds. Young clients stayed for a maximum of two weeks, during which they were intensely counseled by the Options House psychological staff, which also made every effort possible to achieve a reconciliation between the runaway and his or her family.

"We place a priority on counseling," Dr. Elman said. "Kids see their primary counselor every day, and we stress family counseling whenever possible. There's a program here; it's *not* a crash pad. Kids don't just come in here to crash; they come here to work on their problems so that they can get on with their lives, at least in terms of survival and a stable living situation. Our commitment to them once they come into the program is to take them from an unstable living situation, and, in two weeks, get them into a stable, or at least *potentially* stable situation. . . . Then we can go on to aftercare for up to a year."

There were plenty of rules connected with this intensive residential counseling program, she added. "The three biggies are: no sex, no drugs, and no violence." She smiled. "They can see it on TV, but they can't do it here."

She handed me the Options House Rules, a form that each client must read and sign before being admitted to the program. Beyond the prohibition of sexual activity, drug use, and violence, there was a daily 6 p.m. curfew and mandatory participation in household chores for an hour each day. The residents were required to dress decently and show courtesy toward the other residents, the staff, visitors and neighbors. Cigarette smoking was permitted only in certain parts of the house, watching television only at certain times. The rules reminded me of the regulations in a freshman women's college dorm in the 1950s. I could see, however, that such a clearly delineated statement of rights and obligations would provide a reassuring and predictable underpinning, the beginning of a "stable life situation," that most of these kids were missing. Certainly, I thought, if Pam had been brought

here and had received such compassionate but firm counseling, the girl would not have ended up strutting in her wedgy sandals and satin hotpants in the Hollywood rain.

I told Luba Elman about Pam's journey from the Midwest and about her flight from the SODA bed home after her boyfriend had dumped her.

"The system is wrong," Dr. Elman said flatly. "Pick up a kid and take her to a SODA home, but then what? Nobody works with her. . . . For the transient from out of state, they'll contact the parents, and they'll make arrangements to ship the kid back. But, while the kid is *in* the SODA home, nothing happens, no counseling, no help, no nothing. Nobody talks to her."

"What kinds of kids have you been getting here?" I asked.

"Runaways," Luba answered, "are not a homogeneous group. There are a lot of kids who are very streetwise and sophisticated, into the whole hustling scene. Then there are kids who are experiencing a lot of communication difficulty at home, or are from very restrictive homes. . . ."

"Divorced or single-parent families?" I asked.

"Lots of single-parent or newly merged parent situations . . . one natural parent, step-parents. . . ." She spread her hands, "or what have you. . . ," as if to signify that any improbable combination of splintered and spliced family was possible in America today.

"The situation that comes up very often," Luba added, "is the very restrictive family, sometimes immigrants, sometimes not. These are families in which a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old kid is not allowed to date, not allowed to go to parties or to dance. No communication. A kid who has to come right home after school, every day." She paused. "And then there are a whole slew of kids who come from homes where there is sexual or physical abuse, and that's a whole different situation." Again, she paused, considering her words. "There are also kids who are just unreasonable, and parents who are equally unreasonable. We sometimes have to move in and try to defuse that situation, which is often deeply entrenched."

She smiled up at a young girl passing the open office door, then spoke quietly. "Now we often get a whole bunch of kids who are just *pushed out*, abandoned kids. That is close to twenty percent of our population."

"You call them push-outs?"

"Push-outs," she answered softly, "or throwaways." She bit her lip. "These kids who have been in families looking for work, moving in a car across the country, and the kid is sent into a store to buy a quart of milk, and when he comes out, the parents' car has just disappeared."

I jotted my notes, wondering what it must feel like to be a father or mother, sitting in some rattling old station wagon in front of a 7-Eleven, watching your unsuspecting child enter the swinging glass door for a quart of milk, knowing you were about to *throw* that child away.

Luba was talking about family counseling now, a process Options House held to be of great importance. "Our goal is to have the child reconciled with his or her family. To achieve this, we have to first clarify what the difficulties are, maybe make a list of the problems between the child and parents, to try to decide what each contributes to those problems. Then we have to decide what they'd like to see changed and how long that might take."

As she continued describing the ideal formula for humane, enlightened family therapy, I remembered Pam's white face across from me in the plastic restaurant booth. The reasonable but emotionally difficult compromises Luba Elman was describing would probably be impossibly alien to Pam's father, certainly if he had remained as violently depressed as she had described him to me. I only hoped that Luba's young client would have a more upbeat story to tell than Pam.

* * *

The girl sat primly in the small counseling office. I was on one side of a varnished desk, she on the other. Outside the window, beige sparrows were jumping about in the sunshine.

I studied her face; she appeared older than 15, but kids did try to look older these days, especially girls. Her clothes were ironic. She was barefoot and wore tight jeans, a black, rock-band T-shirt, and a red-print bandana rolled, Willie Nelson style, as a headband; hippie headbands, I'd read in some airline magazine, were back in adolescent vogue, part of a nostalgia trip for the flower-power innocence which the kids today imagined the '60s to have represented. The girl sitting across from me just might have seen herself as a romanticized incarnation of a 1968 Haight-Ashbury runaway, a refugee from an earlier battle in the culture war. But she was a little too carefully scrubbed, too well coiffed and groomed to pull it off. Her jeans showed the neat creases of a skillfully applied steam iron, and her bare feet were clean.

I asked her what pseudonym she would like to be known by in my book.

"How about 'Rosemary'?" she whispered tentatively. "I like the name. I always wanted that name."

"Now you've got it," I said, smiling to reassure her.

Her voice was so earnest and vulnerable, so unaffected, that I banished any suspicion that she was consciously playing a role. As part of the normal warm-up, we chatted about the other chapters in the book. I mentioned drug use and marijuana, and Rosemary leaned forward in her chair, like an attentive student showing the teacher she was listening. I suggested that she might want to read the *Reader's Digest* series entitled "Marijuana Alert," that there were some interesting new discoveries contained in the articles.

Rosemary said that she'd seen the articles here at Options House. "I'm probably going to read it today," she said, gazing at me like an overly obedient student, ". . . now."

Christ, I thought, she's desperate to please adults.

Flopping open my notebook, I began to jot down some background information on Rosemary. She was about to turn 15, her birthday being the next Monday. I waited for the inevitable "I'm a Pisces," but apparently she was not into astrology. Rosemary had run away from home about two

weeks before, and had been in Options House for five days. The home from which she had run was a comfortable middle-class apartment in one of the industrial towns out on the monotonous Disneyland plains of southern L.A. County. She had lived there with her mother, who was 36, a younger brother, 11, and her stepfather, Gary, who was in his early 40s. "He's been married two times before," she said, still staring at me earnestly, "and now he and my mom are separating."

"Don't they get along?" I asked inanely, trying to keep the conversation moving.

"Well," she answered, her voice becoming stronger, more mature, "he screwed around a lot. My mom and him got in a fight about him staying out all night for like the tenth time, and Mom said, 'I can't handle it anymore, just get out of the house.'"

Gary, she explained, was a computer engineer for a large, successful firm. He was trying to enter a higher executive level by completing an advanced degree at a local university. Her mother worked full-time as a secretary at a nearby insurance company, but, like Gary, she had tried to better herself by taking a real-estate-broker course on a part-time basis. Once again, Captain Taylor's hypothetical model of the over-achieving American family began to rise in my mind.

Rosemary stressed that she really didn't dislike Gary, but that he was too cold. "He talks just like a computer, too logical. There's no feeling in it. I never liked that."

And her mother, I asked, did she show love and affection for Rosemary?

"A lot of time she loved us," Rosemary answered in a strangely oblique manner, then contradicted herself: "But I feel that she was not concerned about me." Her mother, she continued, had "missed out" on college because of her first marriage, to Rosemary's father. When her mother had tried to work full-time and also study evenings to become a real-estate broker, "She just didn't have a lot of time" for the two kids. She also had social obligations, centered around the activities of the women's auxiliary of the service organization to which Gary belonged. Many of these activities were of a mother-

daughter nature, but Rosemary said she always felt her mother was too critical of her performance in the rituals and ceremonies. After a period of conflicting demands on her time, Rosemary's mother dropped the evening study.

I wondered how much the mother's "critical" scrutiny of her daughter's performance had to do with her own resentment at having to abandon the satisfying path of self-improvement. Probably the close involvement with the women's auxiliary had been an attempt to draw Gary closer to her, to weld a stable, seemingly traditional family unit of successful husband, dutiful wife, and respectful, publicly upright children. But at a certain point, she had found it necessary to send Gary packing, and she was left with another broken marriage and the empty rituals of the auxiliary. Perhaps Rosemary had inadvertently become the target, the scapegoat of her mother's frustrations, just as Pam had become the dumping ground for her father's rage at his business failure.

Rosemary was talking about school now, but again her reasoning was strangely bifurcated and contradictory. "I love school," she said cheerfully. "It's just that I don't like to be there all the time. But I like to learn, I like the challenge. . . . I have college-bound English. It's easy." But, she added, her voice falling once more, her grades suffered during her freshman year at high school because "I wasn't there a lot." She complained of a variety of debilitating illnesses that kept her out of school: stomach flu, "really bad" bronchitis, and also less specific complaints, which were clearly the psychosomatic symptoms of a serious depression. "Sometimes I just did not *feel* good at all," she said, whining now. "And my mom said to stay home, so I stayed home."

Dr. Alberto Serrano, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, has recently speculated that serious depression might affect just as many children as adults, especially children of "fractured families." These children often blame themselves for the family breakup. Such a child, Dr. Serrano stated, "might act aggressive, hostile, self-destructive in an 'accident-prone' way, or even be

labeled lazy by his parents or others.”

A picture was forming in my mind. Here was the mother, bitter and frustrated at her separation from Gary, undergoing guilt at the obvious symptoms this latest family upheaval was producing in her daughter. And here was Rosemary, emotionally blackjacked by the second catastrophe in her short life, this one falling on her at a critical point in adolescence. It was natural for her to turn away from the world, to retreat into the comforting, infantile pattern of the sick child who would be cared for by the loving mother. But this was also California in the 1980s; the loving mother had to drive away each morning at 6:30 to put in her eight hours at the console of a word processor, a galley slave whose oar was a clicking keyboard and a screen of flashing, lime-green letters. Rosemary had been unable to curl up in a flannel nightie while her mother spooned her hot, buttered tomato soup and read her stories. She had been left alone in the blond-carpeted apartment, isolated from the apparently normal world outside, forced to dwell on her own depressive guilt.

But Rosemary didn't stay home “sick” very long. That was not an adequate means of punishing herself. Instead she fell into a pattern of truancy during which she unconsciously sought out other troubled kids, and they spent their days driving around in cars or hanging out at each other's houses and apartments.

I interrupted at this point, asking her about drug abuse. She was 15 years old, and I guessed that she might have experimented with marijuana, as had so many other kids her age across the country.

Rosemary looked at me with an even gaze, but did not immediately answer. When she did speak, her tone was precise. “I've taken speed, smoked grass, taken uppers, downers, ludes. I've taken lots of things, tried lots of things.” She added that she would never “do anything too extreme,” however. But the first time she took LSD, she took *two* Mickey Mouse blotter-acid hits. This was when she was only 13, on a children's outing to the Knott's Berry Farm amusement park orga-

nized by her mother's auxiliary group. "It scared me," she admitted. "Because you got so high you couldn't control yourself. I had a bum experience with it." She looked around the narrow room, as if searching for the right words. "It was good acid, but it wasn't my thing. . . ."

I asked if she had friends who took acid or used other drugs on a regular basis, so that the drugs interfered in their lives.

She nodded. "There's quite a few of those. Most of them were kicked out of high school, but I know so many people from my school who are still really heavily into drugs."

"Acid?" I asked. "Angel dust?"

Rosemary said she and her friends smoked some grass that had been "dusted" with PCP. "I swear to God I'll never touch it again. I've had ten friends that have had bad trips on it, and flashbacks and all. I'll never do it again."

Clearly, this was evidence of "self-destructive" depressive behavior to which Dr. Serrano had alluded.

She leaned back against the wall and continued her story. During this time of rootless emotional limbo, stalling the inevitable expulsion from school, Rosemary became pregnant for the first time. She had just turned 14. She and her mother were not communicating very well at that point, she admitted; her mother found out about the pregnancy "through the grapevine." The news caused an emotionally violent confrontation; her mother, Rosemary said, had always wanted her to be "perfect," and had driven her too hard toward positions of honor in the women's auxiliary. Now the *perfect* 14-year-old daughter was pregnant.

I guessed that the "accidental" pregnancy was a more effective means of punishing herself and her mother than the LSD and PCP overdoses had been.

When Rosemary underwent her first abortion, she was given a prescription for oral contraceptive pills, but her mother refused to allow her to have it filled. "I asked her what I was supposed to use," Rosemary said. "And she said, 'You're not supposed to use nothing, because you're not going to do it.'"

After this traumatic event, Rosemary continued her pattern

of psychosomatic illnesses and truancy. Her mother's criticism of her increased. Rosemary had to be home every school day by 3:30. Her mother loaded her down with household chores, she claimed: cooking dinner, doing the laundry, washing walls and windows, constant vacuuming of the pale carpeting. "But she'd come home from work, and she'd say, 'This isn't done well' . . . or, 'There's a little speck of dust. Didn't you dust today?'" Rosemary's face reddened with emotion for the first time in the interview. "And that made me feel real bad. I thought that I'd done a good job, and her criticism built up inside of me."

I asked about her social life during this period. Was she dating? She shook her head emphatically. Her mother, it seemed, had decided to prevent a future pregnancy by eliminating the opportunity for sexual contact. Also, she had issued Rosemary a frightening ultimatum on their return from the first abortion. "My mom said, 'If you're ever pregnant again, don't even *think* about coming home. Don't even *think* about living here.'"

But, like so many other latch-key adolescents living in a youth subculture of vans and open high-school campuses, Rosemary did, indeed, have ample opportunity for sexual contact, despite her mother's Draconian attempts at isolation. The young man's name was Jim; he was a 19-year-old high-school dropout who worked the graveyard shift at a warehouse company in Torrance. Every day, Jim was free to "party" with lonely, depressed Rosemary. "I was going out with him for nine months," she said wistfully, as if this period represented a major life investment. "I sort of thought that maybe he'd be a different kind of person. But I found out after four or five months that he's screwing around." She lowered her head. I made a quick note to remind me that she'd used the same phrase to describe the adulterous behavior of her stepfather, Gary. "I didn't know what to think; I was devoted. I was in love with him, and I was hurt."

When I described this situation to Dr. Serrano, he explained that, "Depression is associated with a loss; either the child

has lost something tangible like a parent's love . . ." or something less tangible, ". . . perhaps the idea of a good family." The depressed child, he added, is frequently searching for other people to love. Here, he could have been describing Rosemary's life in detail.

Then, Rosemary said, speaking in her child's voice, she discovered she was pregnant again. She had no one to confide in. Her mother's ultimatum, she knew, was absolute: "If you're ever pregnant again, don't even *think* about coming home. Don't even *think* about living here." And Jim told her, "I don't think I can handle the responsibility of a child." She could not confide in her natural father because he was in emotional turmoil himself, "going through a divorce" with his current wife. In predictable Me Generation fashion, those adults responsible for Rosemary had made it clear to her that they were unwilling or unable to help. She was only 14 years old, but the adults she loved and trusted simply did not have emotional "space" to accommodate her.

All this overpowering rejection and isolation had come to an explosive point on a Friday evening three weeks before our interview. Her mother had arrived home, exhausted from having worked overtime that day. Rosemary lied, asking permission to go for a ride with some girlfriends, promising to return by nine. Instead, she said, "we ended up partying." She and Jim stayed out all night, and when Rosemary came home the next day, her mother was mad enough to "kill" her. Rosemary offered a lame story about having fallen asleep at a friend's house, but her mother put her on an absolute restriction: no more "driving around," no more friends over, no more missing school for any reason. Given this icy truce at home, Rosemary felt it was utterly out of the question to confess her pregnancy. Instead, she spent the week trying to borrow the 250 dollars needed for another abortion. She was not successful, but she hoped Jim could produce the money by the next Friday night, because she had already made an appointment for an abortion for the tenth of that month.

That Thursday night, she again managed to slip away from

home on a pretext, and met with Jim and his friend Joey. They drove around aimlessly in Jim's van for a few hours, then stopped at a friend's house in the residential community of Lakewood. Jim took the van and drove off, ostensibly to round up the remaining abortion money. He didn't return until after midnight. "I wasn't planning on running away; I had no shoes with me," Rosemary insisted. Then she added in her self-contradictory manner, "I was *thinking* of running away, but I didn't know when to do it, what time, when to get my clothes, stuff like that. I just said to myself, 'Okay, the second time you stay out all night, Mom's going to *kill* you.'"

So she went with Jim and Joey to work and slept in the van. The next morning she telephoned her mother and said that she'd stayed with the two boys at a friend's house, that she needed time to think through her problems. "Then, Friday night we found out from Joey's sister, Tammy, that there was a warrant out for their arrest: statutory rape and kidnapping. So I went to another friend's house down the street."

For the next week, Rosemary shifted from house to house in the working-class neighborhoods of southern Los Angeles County. On a Thursday morning, she kept her appointment for her second abortion in 11 months.

Several times during the week, she telephoned her mother to reassure her that she was unharmed, that she still needed time to think. By the next week, she found herself in a small prefab home with a group of young people, some friends, some vague acquaintances. "There were three runaways in that house," she said, her tone almost prideful. "One was gay. The girl I stayed with was gay, and they were girlfriends. The other one was a good friend I knew who had been abused in Oregon, and was sent down here and lived with this aunt and uncle. Her aunt said something like, 'You're not a blood relative, so why don't you just get out of the house?' That made her feel real bad. But that wasn't a good reason for running away. We kept telling her to go home, to work things out." Rosemary shook her head. "Being on the run is not the best thing in the world."

I nodded, thinking of Pam.

Within a few days, the local police came to this suburban crash pad and arrested Rosemary and the two other girls. She found herself "walking in the rain, no shoes, handcuffed," to the police car.

That night, she was taken to a SODA bed home in East Los Angeles, a ghetto neighborhood, which scared her. Her case worker managed to get her placed into Options House the next day. When Rosemary's mother came to Options House, she first met with Rosemary's primary counselor, Joe. Rosemary thought that Joe must have cautioned her mother not to lash out in anger because during their first meeting, her mother said that, "She was very frightened, and she wanted to know if it was her fault or my fault. I told her it was both of our faults. She said that the whole family, my grandmother . . . everybody, was very concerned about me. They were convinced I was staying with Jim and Joey, living with these two guys, that I was hurt or something."

"What did you tell her?" I asked softly.

"I told her I was confused." She blinked away tears. "I told her I need someone to talk to . . . because I was really messed up and confused. . . ."

What problems did she hope to work on here at Options House, I asked.

Rosemary said she planned to talk to her mother and their family counselor about the question of trust and compromise within the family. "Any mother who puts her child under such strong restriction . . ." she said, shaking her head. "Most kids will rebel, and they're going to go out and get hurt, anyway." She closed her eyes a moment, then opened them. "That's what I did."

I asked how the reconciliation attempt between Gary and her mother was progressing. She shook her head again. Not very well, she said; Gary continually lied to her mother. She couldn't trust him. "She's getting hurt over and over each time."

"That's a tough set of stresses she's got," I said, trying to select my words with care. "It sounds like your mom could

have gotten up and walked away from you and your brother lots of times."

Rosemary nodded agreement. "Many times she said that she wanted to get away from it all, that she doesn't want to be a mother right now, that she's got too many responsibilities. . . ."

"What do you think would have happened to you if Options House wasn't here? Had you and your mother had any psychological counseling before?"

Rosemary shook her head. "No. I had asked for it. I said, 'Mom, I think that I need a counselor. . . .' Like she's making my head explode, like I'm crazy. I meant confused, but I said crazy. So I called Casa Hermosa and another place like this, Stepping Stones, but both of those were full. Through school I asked for a counselor, and they said they'd get back to me, but they *never* got back to me. . . . I'm just glad I got in here. It's hard to get into these places. They only help six kids at a time, and there's not enough of them."

I asked her plans for the future, after she and her mother had been reconciled and she was back in school. Did she plan on college?

"I want to be a lawyer so that I can help people out. . . ." She spoke intently now. "But not a divorce lawyer because I've been hurt by that, and I don't want to see anyone else hurt. I want to do something like contract lawyer, something exciting. . . ."

Where every rule and statute is predictably stable, I thought, closing my notebook, a career in which the obligations between Rosemary and her fellow human beings would be precisely delineated and there would be no sudden shifts of alliance, where people would be contract-bound not to abandon each other.

As we left the small counseling room, Rosemary touched my arm. "I'm glad I'm here," she whispered. "I'm glad there are places like this."

When I summarized the salient details of the two girls' stories for Dr. Alberto Serrano, he commented, "Both cases clearly fit the model of adolescent depression. Frequently running away is a manifestation of such depression. This

behavior can mean a sense of giving up on the family, of searching for some alternative. The child may not be obviously depressed in the adult sense. And such children may not see themselves as being depressed, but rather as being angry, fed up with the family. This type of adolescent depression is often clearly associated with a family fracture—a separation, divorce or other disruption. This child is unable to fight the situation; he may get angry and just run away.”

Again, Dr. Serrano was coming incredibly close to describing the two girls without ever having met or treated them.

* * *

That night Carol and I drove along the Sunset Strip, looking for Pam. It was a warm Friday night, and we had just come from a pleasant dinner party. The Strip was busy with slowly cruising cars. On the regular corners, girls in hotpants and halters appeared in bright, jittery flocks. We went down Sunset, back up Santa Monica, then returned to the small shopping center where I'd first met Pam. I wanted to talk to her again, to convince her to try Options House or Stepping Stones or one of the other shelters that offered psychological counseling.

In the dim parking lot, I saw two girls leaning against the back of an elaborately candy-striped van. The taller, blond girl had been with Pam the previous evening. Now the blonde slumped against the van, puffing nonchalantly on a lady's cigarillo, watching us through tinted Barbara Walters glasses.

“Let's talk to her together,” I said to Carol. “. . . It's easier.”

As we approached, the blonde made a display of pulling her peach tube top across her chest to accentuate her breasts. Carol looked away.

“Oh,” the girl said, squinting myopically, “the *writer*. Hey, you want to write my life story for a mini-series . . . ‘Kim the Kid Conquers . . .’” She and the other girl collapsed into spooky, metallic, Quaalude giggles.

“We're looking for Pam,” I said, fighting back anger at the girl's sarcasm.

"We'd just like to talk to her for a few minutes," Carol added.

The blonde dug her toe into a chunk of sodden palm frond, which the storm winds of the day before had knocked down. I glanced around the parking lot; there were lots of these downed palm fronds on the asphalt. They had been run over by so many car tires that they'd taken on furry weight and looked alarmingly like so many street-killed cats and rabbits. "Pam's working," she muttered, then looked up. "If you're sort of into a *ménage* situation. . . ." She stared at Carol. "I can relate to that . . . it's natural."

I realized now from whom Pam had learned all her post-hip Hollywood jargon. I supposed it had also been Kim the Kid who had turned her onto frozen yogurt, wheat bran and Quaaludes.

I reached slowly into my jacket pocket and removed my personal card and a sheet of note paper, on which I had typed the address and phone number of Options House. "Please give this to Pam when you see her." The girl shrugged and took the two pieces of paper, holding them between thumb and forefinger at a slight distance from her body. "Tell Pam she can call me collect anytime she wants. Tell her she can. . . ."

I was interrupted by the flooding headlights and rumble of a white Firebird, which wheeled smoothly into the parking lot. In the front seat of the low-slung car two short-haired young men grinned out at the girls. I could see a blue-and-orange, Navy-base decal on the car's bumper. The blonde and her partner bounced off the back of the van and were swinging their naked limbs in the direction of the sports car. Looking back over her shoulder, the blonde called out, "Yeah, right . . . we'll tell Pam. Hey, don't worry about her. She's all right. She's got friends."

* * *

After midnight, Carol and I parked the car in front of her brother's house and stood on the quiet sidewalk of his darkened suburban street. The glare and rumble of Sunset Strip

were almost 40 miles away to the north, across the wide plain of the city. Here there was starlight, blooming jacaranda and oleander. Pam would probably still be working. But Rosemary was now sleeping between clean sheets in Options House. Tomorrow was Saturday, and there would be a family-counseling conference scheduled between Rosemary and her mother, with the girl's primary counselor, Joe, as moderator. In the small counseling room, there would undoubtedly be surges of anger and tears, bursts of love, guilt, and even occasional splinters of insight cutting through the hot emotions. Whatever the outcome of these initial counseling sessions, however, an important first step would have been made by the girl and her mother. I did not think the progress would be easy; there was too much distrust and disappointment already existing between them for a quick breakthrough to be possible.

But at least Rosemary had a chance. She was one of the lucky ones, a runaway whose desperate action had been a cry for help that had actually been answered. In all this huge county there were perhaps 20 kids like Rosemary, sleeping in clean beds, guided by dedicated counselors like those at Options House. For every lucky kid like Rosemary, I guessed that there were 10, maybe even 20, like Pam.

Nationwide, there were probably 200,000 runaway kids living "permanently" on their wits and the fees they could charge for the use of their bodies. This 200,000 was the hard core of the 1,500,000 children who ran away or were driven out of their homes each year.

A million was a numbing abstraction, however, like *megaton*. I could not feel very much for such a figure. But I had felt considerable pain and concern for the two girls I had interviewed. One of them, I was sure, had a good chance at making a success of her life. But Pam currently faced only sorrow and disaster.

Walking up the sidewalk to the house, Carol took my hand. "Maybe she'll get the note and call Options House," she said quietly.

"Yeah," I answered. "Maybe."

Chapter Six

Texas, Spring

THE ARMY of adolescent runaways exploding onto the new interstate highway system during the last 20 years was only one of the many unprecedented and disturbing social phenomena which conjoined in that part of America we now call the Sun Belt. From the Carolinas to California, unusual demographic and economic conditions in the past two decades produced social strains of unparalleled dimensions. As the statisticians have so frequently indicated, the country is growing more prosperous, and the center of population density is moving out of the Frost Belt, south and west into the Sun Belt. These same demographers have also emphasized that the baby boom of the 1940s and '50s produced a huge bulge of young people—the largest generation of Americans in history—that has been likened to a “pig moving through a python.”

In parts of the Sun Belt, such as Texas, rapid population growth intensified the predictable strains that the baby boom

placed on overburdened social institutions. But Texas experienced sudden and widespread economic prosperity as well as growth, and the social mobility inherent to this prosperity added its own problems to the already troubled mix.

Texas underwent an overall 30 percent population increase in the 1970s. Dallas has doubled in size since 1950; Houston and El Paso have seen their populations triple in the past 30 years, with most of this growth during the past 15 years. A large percentage of the recent immigrants to these booming cities has been well below the national median age of 30.0 years. In fact, there were proportionately more young adults, adolescents, and children moving to the Sun Belt states like Texas during the past 15 years than to other regions of America. Given this migration, the predictable social strains of the baby boom's "pig" passing through the Sun Belt's chronically overextended social-support institutions were greater compared to those in the better-established communities of the Frost Belt.

Sociologists have come to associate a number of problems with both this rapid economic expansion and the more generalized baby boom. These problems include increased incidence of family breakup and divorce, growing violent crime, increased alcohol and drug abuse, declining academic achievement, and a widely perceived sense of strain on the social fabric.

The obvious dislocations of the recent rapid and prosperous expansion in Texas have already been well charted by the social scientists, commented on *ad nauseam* by the media, and dramatically documented by such insightful writers as Tommy Thompson and perceptive novelists as Larry McMurtry. Television has made Texas the stuff of glittery fantasies like "Dallas," and there had even been a soap opera called "Texas," which played heavily upon the social and psychological upheaval inherent in the Sun Belt's sudden wealth.

Many Texans whom I came to know are keenly aware that their state represents a kind of central petri dish in the ongo-

ing American social experiment. They realize that in many ways, contemporary Texas is analogous to California in the 1950s and '60s. And like their earlier counterparts in California, these Texans often equate both the positive and negative events in their own lives and communities with the tumultuous social currents swirling around them.

Californians I knew in the mid-1960s would often wax eloquent about the "non-linear life style" they had come to appreciate and embrace in their hot tubs and on the sun decks of their ocean-view "leisure homes." "A person simply cannot *live* this way back East," they'd tell me. Their satisfaction with their new lives and with the excitement of their expanding and professional horizons became firmly identified in their minds with a *place*: California. Equally, when the melowed-out fantasy of open sexuality and expanded consciousness fractured into the reality of divorce and drug abuse, they also blamed California. After the violent disintegration of Haight-Ashbury and the Manson Family murders, my California friends sometimes bemoaned the "rootless, mindless hedonism" of the young people who gravitated to California. "Only out here," they told me, "can you find so many screwed-up kids who all think they've found The Answer."

In a similar manner, the people I came to know in West Texas in the early 1980s paralleled my California friends of 15 years before. People in El Paso were often chauvinistically preoccupied with being Texans. They continually wanted to know what I, a transplanted Midwesterner, thought of their prosperous and colorful life styles.

But when there was violent crime in the city, or examples of widespread public drug and alcohol abuse too flagrant to ignore, these same Texans would rail against the "trashy" people whom the economic boom had attracted to El Paso. "This used to be a real quiet, comfortable little place," they'd say. "But it's gotten so *now* a person don't hardly know anybody anymore. That's why we're having so much crime."

My first year in West Texas, however, I managed to avoid any speculation on the darker side of the Sun Belt's gleaming

success. My professional life was pleasantly spent teaching and writing, and my social life revolved around exciting outdoor activities in one of the most pristine and uncrowded desert and mountain areas in North America.

But during my second year in El Paso, I became acquainted with the unhappy story of Ronnie Love and his family. And, as I delved deeper into this tragedy, it became increasingly clear to me that the sunny, seemingly untroubled veneer of prosperous growth covered a reservoir of anomie as deep as any I'd encountered in California ten years earlier. In fact, Ronnie Love came to exemplify for me both the serious, widespread problems associated with rapid social change and the often exaggerated "anxious awareness" of those problems which lies so near the consciousness of our contemporary society.

* * *

The stark sequence of events surrounding the tragedy is now well established. According to police reports and the sworn testimony of the survivors and witness, this is what happened to the Tom Love family on Wednesday, April 18, 1979.

That morning El Paso lay beneath a cloudless and benevolent High Desert sky. The choking heat of summer was still two months off. In the exclusive Upper Valley the morning was cool, the sunshine filtered by cottonwoods and cypress trees surrounding the "old" brick ranch houses and Spanish colonials dating to the boom building years of the 1960s. Tom Love sat in the sunny kitchen of his unpretentious but handsome brick home, eating breakfast and chatting with his wife Theresa, before driving in to his office. He could afford the simple luxury of relaxing over a cup of coffee so as to avoid the morning traffic congesting Interstate 10 into downtown El Paso, eight miles east. He could afford to spend a moment watching the first of the season's hummingbirds flitting among yellow oleander along the shady street.

Tom Love was a prominent contractor and home builder, an

archetypical Sun Belt success story. After 30 years of hard work, risk taking, and marathon hours on building sites, he could ease up a bit. The boom years of the '60s and '70s, which had made El Paso the third-fastest-growing city in America, had brought Tom Love the satisfaction of business success: the rewards of a long, difficult struggle that had entailed dedication and self-sacrifice.

But this moderate material success was not the only reason for contentment that bright spring morning. Tom and Theresa Love were the Irish-Catholic parents of a large family, six kids, ranging from Tommy, the oldest, to Louise. Raising such a large family through all the social and political turbulence of the past 20 years had not been at all easy or without complicated trauma. But now, finally, it looked as if the kids' lives were settling down.

Tommy, the oldest, had survived a long tour in the combat zones of Vietnam; Donny was back from service in Korea. Both older boys had undergone the usual problems adjusting to civilian life, but now they were working and building for a stable future. The older girls were married, and there were already four grandchildren. Louise, the youngest daughter, was a senior at the University of Texas at El Paso. In less than a month, she would receive her B.A. in English.

But then, of course, there was Ronnie. Their youngest son had been a frightening, unpredictable problem since he was a teen-ager. He was born in the late 1950s, at the very height of the baby boom, and it seemed as if all the troubles of his large generation had been made manifest in Ronnie's life: rebellion at school, drinking, extreme drug abuse, petty crime, senseless vandalism, and a seemingly endless series of runaway odysseys to Mexico and California. Ronnie had been raised in a warm and caring home, guided by devoted parents and loving brothers and sisters. Throughout his early childhood, he took part in church activities and sports. But his parents now had to admit that Ronnie was also mentally unbalanced, seriously ill. The doctors had diagnosed him as a chronic paranoid schizophrenic. For two years, he had been a patient

at Timberlawn, an expensive private psychiatric hospital in Dallas, 600 miles away. Even in Ronnie's case, however, there was some slight hope for the future.

Six months before, Timberlawn had released Ron as an outpatient, allowing him to live in the local community, sharing an apartment with another outpatient, and working to support himself, as would any other young man of 23. Because of his previous history of irrational violence, however, his release program was designed to be administered in conjunction with psychotherapy and a careful regime of anti-psychotic drugs.

Tom and Theresa Love had often told the doctors at Timberlawn about their deep fear of Ronnie's latent violence. Their son suffered sudden episodes of ranting irrationality, which had twice been followed by threats and assaults with scissors and a knife. For years, Tom later testified, he and Theresa had lived through "endless nights of fear," taking shifts sleeping, a loaded revolver under the bed to use as protection against Ronnie in the event he once again stopped taking his medication and was thrown by his inner demons into one of his thrashing rages.

Now Ronnie was out on the street. But he *was* ostensibly still under the doctor's care. And he was also all those hundreds of miles of Trans-Pecos desert away. Earlier that spring, he had called to chat with his mother, as he often did. And he had also made one of his periodic requests to come home. But Tom and Theresa were forced to refuse this seemingly simple request. With Ronnie, nothing was simple. Too often in the past—while chaotically traipsing around the country as a teenager—he had returned home and become violently irrational.

There was a shadow across the kitchen window, followed by the glare of sunlight reflected by a vehicle's windshield. Tom Love looked up. Maybe Louise had forgotten some school books and had doubled back on her way down to the UTEP campus, or one of the older girls was dropping by as they often did. But the figure who emerged from the cab of the dusty red pickup truck in the curved driveway was not Louise

or one of the older girls. It was Ronnie.

He appeared haggard and clearly disturbed, as if he hadn't slept for days. His jean cutoffs were ragged; the dark T-shirt was torn and sweaty; and his hair looked as if he hadn't combed it for a while. From the back of the pickup, a small puppy yipped plaintively.

"What are you doing here?" Tom Love asked when Ronnie came into the cool kitchen.

"I'm coming home," Ronnie answered, his head swaying on his shoulders.

The Love family had enough experience with Ronnie to recognize when they could and when they could not reason with him. This was obviously no time for discussion.

"I didn't get angry with him," Tom Love later testified. But he was heartsick at the sight of Ronnie, so visibly disturbed again, obviously not in a coherent frame of mind. Only a few months earlier, Ronnie had visited El Paso to spend Christmas with the family, and his father said he'd been in "real, real good shape" then. Now Tom Love was deeply saddened. ". . . After all this time," Tom Love said, summarizing his disappointment, "and all this effort, and all our energy, all our money and everything, we were right back where we started from."

After assuring himself that Ronnie was tractable enough to be managed for a while by his mother, Tom left to clear up some pressing business at his firm, then to proceed on to the County Attorney's office to start the complicated legal process of having Ronnie hospitalized under an involuntary temporary commitment.

The morning passed, and Theresa Love was able to reason with her son, to get him to lie down in the shady family room, to drink some ice water. At one point, Tom called their son-in-law, Cliff O'Gurian, and told him to go to the house to keep an eye on Ronnie while Tom arranged for the temporary commitment. Cliff had a way with Ronnie: he could often talk to him when others couldn't.

Louise returned from her classes, but Cliff kept her away

from Ronnie. Cliff was trying to calm him down. But this was not easy. Ronnie sat in the den, grinning as he rocked back and forth. No one could quite gather when he had left Dallas, if he had actually driven straight through alone, without sleep, or what his "plans" were. His face was a mottle of pallor and flush. His eyes sagged, then flared up when he mumbled irrationally.

After a while, it was decided that Louise and her mother would leave, that Cliff would stay at the house, guarding Ronnie, trying to keep him calm until he could be taken to the secure psychiatric wing of a local hospital. Mrs. Love and Louise went to the nearby handicraft store that Theresa owned, and there met the two other Love daughters. They discussed this latest unsettling episode with Ronnie, and it was agreed that a temporary commitment was the only logical solution.

When Theresa and Louise returned in mid-afternoon, Ronnie's red pickup truck was gone from the sunny driveway, but Cliff's gleaming white Coupe de Ville was still there, a reassuring presence. Cliff explained that Ron had suddenly taken off in the truck, before he could stop him. This was worrisome, but perhaps better in a way, because once the commitment order was issued, the armed and experienced sheriff's deputies could deal with him without further danger to any family member.

The only problem now was that Cliff had to leave for a few minutes, to deliver a soccer ball to a team he coached at a nearby playing field. When he drove off, Louise set out to locate, feed and water the puppy that Ronnie had dragged with him all the way down from Dallas.

Theresa Love was sitting in her kitchen, reading a Gold Bond advertisement flyer that had come in the morning mail.

Louise was in the backyard, seeing to the whimpering puppy, when she heard an odd sequence of three sounds.

A vehicle door crunched shut, the house door slammed, and then, almost immediately after the slam, there was a loud pop. She was puzzled by this last sound, assuming the car and

house doors banging had been Cliff returning from his errand. But an echoing fear swelled inside her. Moving to the side of the house, she was met by Ronnie Love. Slowly, without seeming emotion, he raised the shotgun and sighted down the barrel at her head.

Tears flooded her vision, and she raised her left hand in an instinctive, futile gesture of self-protection. "Come on, Ron," she begged. "Put the gun down . . . *please*."

Ronnie Love did not answer. She tried to spin away. That was when Ronnie fired the .20-gauge shotgun through her hand, into the side of her face. Two of her fingers were severed by the blast, but enough pellets had been deflected to save her life.

Out in front of the house once more, Ronnie hid the shotgun behind his back as Cliff O'Gurian drove into the driveway. The windows of the white Cadillac were closed snugly on the air-conditioned interior. Ron did not wait for Cliff to leave the big car.

Stepping briskly up to the driver's side window, Ron fired through the safety glass. As with Louise, Cliff's instinctively upraised hand probably saved his life. Trailing blood from his shattered hand, he somehow managed to flee the car, dash into the backyard, and vault the tall fence to seek help.

Ronnie stood there a few moments, trying to tempt a shocked neighbor closer. Then he climbed back into his pickup truck and drove off toward the nearest border crossing to Mexico, the Cordoba Bridge, ten miles away. Twenty minutes later the police had him in handcuffs.

On the floor of her kitchen, Theresa Love lay dead, shot once through the head at point-blank range.

* * *

I sat back in the front seat of Scott's car and gazed down across the ranch houses of Coronado Terrace and Chaparral Park toward the green band of the Upper Valley. It was a bright spring morning three years after the shooting. During

that time, many people in El Paso had developed a number of strongly held, but often conflicting, opinions about the cause of the tragedy that afternoon on Bird Avenue. Scott, a young reporter for the local newspaper, was one of these people.

He pulled the car over to the curb and leaned across the steering wheel to gesture down at the sprawling pattern of suburban streets and arterial roads below us. We were parked on Thunderbird Drive, halfway up the slope of Shadow Mountain. Below us El Paso's West Side and the Upper Valley were displayed as if in some elaborate architect's model.

"There's Doniphan Avenue," he said, indicating a distant highway bordering the green carpet of the lush valley. "Past the river is New Mexico, and over the other way, where the river bends, that's the U.S.-Mexican border."

The Rio Grande was wide with brown meltwater from the Colorado Rockies to the north. The trees and shrubbery of the Upper Valley seemed very green compared with the arid slabs of the Franklin Mountains just above us. On their undeveloped rock slopes, only spikey yucca, salt bush, and creosote offered relief from the sun glare on the granite. Between the naked stone of the Franklin ridges and the green flood plain of the Rio Grande, El Paso's West Side spread down the slope, the neighborhoods of treeless streets following the contours of the lower ridges and arroyos.

When I had come to El Paso to teach the year before, I had been shocked by the barrenness of these streets. I'd grown up with trees and lawns, and the desert landscaping of gravel, spidery ocotillo cactus and straggling junipers seemed downright shoddy to me at first, especially as these neighborhoods were often separated by moonscapes of washed-out gullies and boulder-strewn fields, looking like so much rubble from a distance. It was these new West Side and the Upper Valley neighborhoods that Scott wanted to discuss.

He had been raised on the West Side not far from the Loves' home. As a kid he had played softball with Ronnie and his brothers and had taken part with them in youth activities at Saint Matthew Catholic Church, the large parish that had

been established to answer the spiritual needs of the middle-class Catholic families settling in growing neighborhoods on the far West Side and Upper Valley in the 1960s.

Scott felt he had some special insights into what had sent Ronnie off the deep end into the abyss of violence. In this he was not alone. A number of people came forward to "explain" the causes of Ronnie's violent illness, even though they had never met the young man or his family. According to Scott's thesis these prosperous neighborhoods had in fact been tailor-made to produce emotionally isolated sociopaths like Ronnie. Growing up in El Paso's suburbs in the 1960s and '70s, Scott stated, was a troubling, disruptive experience. There was absolutely nothing for kids to *do*: a typical enough complaint of all suburban children. But according to Scott, this youthful boredom was more deep-rooted and destructive than it would have been elsewhere.

"Kids on the West Side were tempted by dope and vandalism real early," he said. "Nothing too violent, but definitely angry . . . defiant."

Here on the West Side, distances were measured in miles of four-lane highway, often lacking sidewalks, not in blocks as in more conventional neighborhoods. Youngsters could not walk anywhere to amuse themselves: they had to be driven by harassed mothers. The schools were so distant from the kids' homes that there was seldom any after-school contact among classmates. They simply filed out of the building, across the empty playground and into their mothers' waiting station wagons. This isolation, Scott added, was exacerbated by the upward social mobility of most of the parents out here.

Families who had achieved rapid financial success in the swelling Sun Belt economy of the '60s, Scott speculated, often found themselves transferred into or out of El Paso in the middle of a school year. Many of these parents sought private schools for their children, and had them bused miles away each weekday morning. Mothers took jobs to help meet high mortgage payments. Divorce, Scott said, cut an especially devastating gouge through the social stability of the neighbor-

hoods. "The divorce wave hit really hard out here."

By the time children reached high school, they had formed emotionally nurturing cliques, often structured along the lines of membership in this or that country club. These cliques protected the children from isolation, from feeling lost, from the anomie of the prosperity carved out of the crippled desert mountains.

At Coronado High School, Scott insisted, you had to be a member of an established clique to be *anybody*.

Ronnie Love had transferred into Coronado late, after four unsuccessful semesters at Jesuit High, 20 miles east in the Lower Valley. According to Scott, Ronnie Love had slipped through a crack. His original isolation had been heightened by the fact that his parents, like so many others on the West Side, had been too busy with their professional and social obligations to spend much time with the boy. Once at Coronado, Ron had unconsciously sought out a group of similar misfits who embarked on intense, self-destructive adventures, taking advantage of the plethora of strong drugs then readily available in the corridors and parking lots of the high school.

As far as I could follow it, this was the essence of Scott's thesis on Ronnie Love: the unfortunate young man had been a product of his unique place and time; growing up in the rootless, fractured society of the Sun Belt in the turbulent 1970s had done Ronnie in, had *somehow* kindled in him a homicidal schizophrenic rage.

I gazed down at the quiet brick and stucco homes along the curving streets. From this height the neighborhoods appeared so *stable*, so solid, almost an organic part of the mountain slopes.

Scott pointed down at the traffic on North Mesa, at all the flat roofs, each with its squat turret of a desert cooler. "None of this existed twenty years ago," he said, shaking his head. "It's all so new."

There was a certain beguiling simplicity and neatness to Scott's argument. Prosperity and growth cause confusion; which leads to drug abuse; this produces academic failure;

which, in turn, evokes a drop-out, run-away syndrome; and eventually, a kid like Ronnie Love goes insane, is hospitalized, and finally returns to wreak violent retribution against his family.

Unfortunately, this thesis did not find any strong supporters among the psychiatric experts I later interviewed about the Love family tragedy.

After talking with Scott, I slowly began to realize the full extent of the problem I faced in attempting to get to the root of the Ronnie Love story. Apparently, the shooting—as is often the case with such horrible crimes—was so shocking, so emotionally awesome, that many people in El Paso felt compelled to embrace some relatively simple, but all-encompassing and, above all, *comprehensible*, explanation. In their compulsive need to find facile, seamless explanations, they reminded me of my California friends after the Manson-Family murders in 1969. None of these friends had been able to simply accept the incarnate evil of Charles Manson; among them, theories and theses abounded as to what sparked Manson's violent madness and motivated his followers.

People often have difficulty in accepting the possibility that such an event is simply a random occurrence. They want to root out the causes, in the same way a medical researcher tracks down the mysterious microbes responsible for an unprecedented epidemic like Legionnaire's disease. Most of us cannot accept the possibility that a child from a caring, healthy home can simply go mad and join a group like the Manson Family or perhaps one day come stomping through the kitchen door with a shotgun to shoot us.

Scott was one of approximately two dozen people I spoke to in El Paso about Ronnie Love. Almost all of them had strongly held opinions on the matter. Predictably, these opinions were as varied as they were contradictory. They included the following:

* Ronnie was simply, inexplicably crazy; he had been that way since he was a small child. Such bad seeds occurred occasionally in any family. It was not the fault of society, of

the parents or his brothers and sisters. It wasn't Ronnie's fault either.

* Drugs had caused *all* of Ronnie's problems. He had taken far too much marijuana and LSD, too many downers, amphetamines, in too short a period, often washing down this dangerous mixture with large quantities of alcohol. In so doing, he had "burnt out" his brain, virtually short-circuited the wiring, and had subsequently become homicidal, just like a member of the Charlie Manson Family.

* Ronnie had suffered the benign neglect of an upwardly mobile, status-conscious family. In their selfish quest for material wealth, they had neglected the early warning signals of an unhappy boy; his violence was simply unconscious revenge.

* Ronnie was an indirect victim of baby-boom overcrowding in the school system. The lax, unfocused and undisciplined public education process had left him confused and unable to deal with the real world; his rage grew out of terminal confusion.

* Ronnie had fallen in with a group of shiftless, trashy "bums," kids from splintered, displaced families, boys who had never learned moral values. They had somehow infected Ronnie with a violent nihilism, which eventually spilled over into homicidal rage.

* Ronnie had been possessed by Satan as part of the general resurgence of diabolical powers foreshadowing the Final Days.

When I came to summarizing my notes, I gave names to these sometimes colorful, mutually contradictory theories.

Scott's explanation, I called the "Rootless Sun Belt Thesis." It was interesting, but had no bearing on the Love family. Even though the divorce rate in Texas *had* outstripped the national average, Tom and Theresa Love had been happily married; according to friends and neighbors, they had never discussed separation or divorce. Furthermore, they were practicing, believing Catholics. In addition to this unchallengeable reality, I also had to consider the obvious fact that the

Love family (Ronnie included) had *not* been shunted from pillar to post by the vagaries of Sun Belt boom and bust. Ronnie Love had been raised in one, relatively stable, neighborhood. So much for broken homes and rootlessness.

The organic craziness explanation I called "The Bad Seed Thesis." Several psychiatrists I spoke with favored this one. Schizophrenia, they emphasized, was a *brain*-chemistry disorder. Environmental factors such as parental influence or drug abuse cannot cause the disease. But other doctors disagreed with them.

I named the drug-abuse explanation the "Acid Head Thesis"; its obvious persuasive attractions were seriously dampened by statistical evidence. Over the past 15 years, many millions of young Americans have taken multiple doses of LSD. But there is no apparent way to link this drug abuse directly with any statistical increase in violent schizophrenia.

"The Country Club Neglect Thesis" was what I called the theory that Ronnie's upwardly mobile parents had ignored him. This theory seemed to be popular with people who did *not* belong to country clubs. And, like the other theses, it was not borne out by the facts. People close to the Love family assured me that Tom and Theresa Love had been deeply concerned with Ronnie's well-being and school performance throughout his childhood. During the time he lived at home, he had reportedly received loving parental attention, guidance and fair discipline on a regular basis.

Blaming the public school system for Ronnie's illness became the "Crowded School Thesis." The glaring problem with this theory was that Ronnie had attended the *small*, academically rigorous and strictly disciplined Jesuit High School for the ninth and tenth grades.

There was a certain attraction in the "Bad Company" or "Bums Thesis." Ronnie had hung out with a group of drug-abusing, drop-out misfits after he left Jesuit High, but his own drug abuse and disruptive behavior predated this involvement with "bad company."

Personally, I discounted the "Satanic Possession Thesis,"

but several born-again Christians felt strongly that the world's evil, including the crazy violence of Ronnie Love, could be explained in this manner.

When I queried the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports statistical office several months later, I began to understand why so many people—not just in Texas, but all across America—had become preoccupied with finding comprehensible explanations for the explosive growth of crime in this country. Any way the statistics were slanted and weighted to compensate for population growth and other demographic factors, there was still no denying the hard fact that crime in America, especially violent crime, had increased dramatically since 1960.

In 1964, for example, the per-100,000-inhabitant rate for murder was 4.9 per annum; it had *doubled* to 9.8 by 1981.

The per-100,000 rate for robbery involving force—armed robbery or mugging—had shot up from the 1964 figure of 68.2 to a shocking 250.6 rate in 1981.

And when I asked for the trends in juvenile crimes, I got an even clearer indication of why people were so worried about the criminal tendencies of today's youth. In the under-18 age group during the 15 years between 1960 and 1975, these were the statistics for arrests of juveniles:

murder: 211% increase

robbery with force: 375% increase

drug abuse: 4,417% increase.

Clearly, the young people of Ronnie Love's baby-boom generation had become more violently lawless and tended to abuse drugs at a much higher rate than recent generations. For many older citizens of El Paso, I think, Ronnie's crime represented an unusually blatant example of this frightening eruption of criminal violence among the young.

It was also interesting to discover that El Paso itself, and Texas as a state, were less violently criminal than a number of seemingly less socially disrupted Frost Belt cities and states. In 1981, for example, Texas had a per-100,000 violent crime rate of 532.4; Massachusetts had a rate of 628.6, and Maryland

a rate of 887.1. El Paso's violent crime rate for that year was 741.3, while Cleveland had a rate of 839.3, and Boston 768.1. Certainly those people who saw in Ronnie Love's violence a clear example of explosive crime in El Paso were reacting to subjective perceptions, not neutral evidence.

It was also interesting and indicative of the times, however, for me to discover that some of the people with the most strongly held opinions had never met Ronnie or his family.

For a while, I tried to concentrate my investigation among those people who'd actually known him. But even among this group, the theories were so mutually contradictory that they tended to erode validity. So after several weeks of talking to Ronnie's former friends, neighbors and former teachers—many of whom were very forthcoming, many reticent on the subject—I knew that I would have to try to personally interview Ronnie Love. He was in a legal limbo, an untried, mentally incompetent patient in the maximum security unit of the Rusk State Hospital, almost 800 miles away in East Texas. Getting permission to see him would not be easy. And, even if I did speak with him, I realized he might not be rational enough to shed any light on the roots and causes of his violence.

But I also realized that Ronnie, himself, might be one of the few people with any insights on the matter who might be free of prejudice or biased theory on the factors that contributed to the onset of his illness.

* * *

The dripping hills and gullies of East Texas were choked with brush and creepers; they reminded me of the scrub jungle of the Congo. Driving through the rain, a mile or two from the hospital, I was stricken by an urge to turn around and head back to the desert sunshine of El Paso. I did not want to face Ronnie Love, and I knew that this deep reluctance was making the surrounding landscape seem alien and sinister. But I also knew there was no backing down now, that I would

simply have to swallow my qualms.

On the curving blacktop road to the Sky View maximum security unit, I wondered for perhaps the 50th time that day if Ronnie Love would be coherent or if he would be so incomprehensible that my 1500-mile round trip would prove to be a futile effort. The Sky View unit sat on a treeless ridge, dominating the wooded valley below and the main hospital building like a firebase. But there were no bunkers inside the high, wire-mesh fence, just parallel rows of low, drab concrete dormitories. From the parking lot, the facility looked like a rundown grade school, hastily slapped together to accommodate the baby boom, now falling into disuse and disrepair. The lawns were weedy and flooded from the recent rain, and the sidewalks were cracked. Once I was through the main security gate, it clanked automatically shut behind me and I was alone inside the complex, my isolation intensifying the sensation that the buildings were abandoned.

But Ronnie Love was waiting for me, sitting patiently on a splayed Naugahyde sofa. I hadn't expected him to be right there, inside the door of his building, and before I had a chance to compose myself, I was shaking his hand and muttering a blatantly incongruous, "Nice to meet you."

A moment later we were seated in the privacy of a consulting room, me at the desk, Ronnie poised on the edge of a straight chair. He hardly appeared to be the "big, strong" fellow described in earlier interviews. To me, he seemed average in both height and build. He wore a neatly trimmed auburn beard, and his light brown hair was thinning above a high hairline. Rather than any kind of institutional uniform, he was dressed in a rumpled sport shirt and faded jeans with a large western belt. Surely, I thought, he could not be dangerous now or they wouldn't let him keep a belt with such a huge buckle that might be used as a weapon.

As we chatted uneasily through the initial small talk about the weather and my flight from El Paso, I found myself staring at his large, dark-brown eyes. They were moist and mobile, and alternated between a hooded wariness and a decidedly

spooky wisdom, as if he were privy to matters normal people were not. Next, I noticed his slender hands; they were neatly manicured, obviously he had filled hollow hours working on his nails. When I reiterated the purpose of my interview—the need to find the root causes for the tragic events of his life—he half closed his eyes and rocked back in his chair, his head inclined to one side as if he were listening to a faint sonata.

When he spoke, his voice was sometimes halting, sometimes clear. He smacked his lips and shook his head. Then I realized that the heavy dosage of the anti-psychotic drug Prolixin was making him cotton-mouthed. A doctor brought a Styrofoam cup of water, and Ronnie nodded that he was ready to begin. For the first ten minutes, I verified some biographic details on his early schooling and childhood in the Upper Valley.

In an earlier interview with a young woman who had known him well as a child, I'd been told that Ronnie had been an optimistic, happy student in grade school. "He liked school," she had told me. "And he read a lot." Ron had also loved sports, she said, and probably would have never gotten into trouble if he hadn't received a football injury at Jesuit that invalidated him out of sports forever.

Almost immediately, however, Ronnie refuted the suggestion that he had ever liked school or had studied hard. He had indeed liked sports, he said, but not formal study in organized classes. "I really didn't think much of school at all," he admitted. Then he added unequivocally that he had been "thrown out," expelled from Jesuit High because of his poor academic performance. He agreed with the young woman, however, about the pivotal nature of his football injury. The priests at Jesuit, he said, might have kept him on if he could have played football for them.

He shifted suddenly in his chair, and began snapping a rubber band against the side of the metal desk. Jesuit High, he said bitterly, "didn't answer any problems for me." Even in junior high school he felt alienated within his family, twisted by strange sexual longings. For a while, he thought the spiri-

tual guidance and discipline of the Jesuits would help him out of his emotional muddle. "I needed any kind of help I could get. See, my family and me wasn't working. It was all screwed up. . . ." He looked at me with his pleading dark eyes open wide. "I was just trying to get a family life together, you know."

This was the first indication I'd had that Ron had felt emotionally isolated at such an early age.

Was it about then that he had turned to drugs as a possible solution to his problems? I asked.

By the age of 13, he said, he was experimenting with marijuana. He recalled that he had just smoked a joint and was watching television after school when the news flash announced the murder of Martin Luther King in Memphis. After this, he began smoking "a lot" of grass. His older brothers were away in the Army; he felt isolated and alone. For several months, the drugs seemed to have little effect on him. But one night at a dance, he and a friend scored a joint of potent Acapulco Gold and smoked it in the school parking lot, then went back inside the building. His reaction was powerful. "I don't know how I got out of that place. Next thing I know, I was running out, just *totally deployed*."

After that experience, he thought he could alleviate the daily pressures of his life—at least temporarily—by taking drugs. Several months later, in October of his sophomore year at Jesuit, he took LSD for the first time. As with the strong Mexican marijuana, he reacted with disproportionate intensity to this new, more powerful drug. He and a friend went out onto the Coronado Country Club golf course to watch the sunset along the river. "We popped this Strawberry Fields, which was probably the best acid you can get. . . . From then on that night, it was just blackout spells, and I didn't know where I was going. I didn't know how to get places. I must have been walking but I don't remember."

Ronnie lowered his head and pursed his lips, trying to resurrect the splintered memories of his first encounter with the mind-altering drug.

"Did you take more acid after that?" I asked, already knowing the answer.

"I started to like it. . . ." Again, he shook his head. "It made me *feel* better. But then it changed. It started to get poison in it."

"What kind of poison are you talking about, Ron?"

"Strychnine. A girl at school died of LSD poisoning. And I found out that she had just taken it ten minutes before."

I asked him if this event turned him off of LSD.

He shook his head and gulped down the last bit of water in his foam cup. "I dropped a lot of acid . . . I mean *a lot* of acid. I get into my junior year in high school and people start dying from it. . . . Boom, I just backed off." But then, a few months later, he found a friend undergoing a bad acid trip and tried to help the boy through it. Later that afternoon—another school day not spent in school—two friends who had witnessed the unpleasant scene were able to convince Ronnie that *he* should take some of the same acid that had produced the boy's bumner. "I said, shit, wow! I dropped it. I don't know why. I should have known better." His absence that day was the last straw for the Coronado administrators; he was expelled, and rather than face his family, he headed west. "That day I was out of school, and by the end of the day, I was truckin' to California with an ounce of opium, three hits of LSD, and a couple of joints."

Next I questioned Ron about the most LSD he had ever taken at once.

Laughing softly, he denied ever having taken eleven hits of acid, an apocryphal legend about Ron I'd heard repeated by several people in El Paso. That wasn't LSD, he said; it was "only" Mellaril, a strong psychiatric medication, and anyway, he *only* took eight.

I pressed the point. Was he sure he had never dropped a large amount of LSD?

Ronnie considered this question, again wrestling through his Prolixin haze to grab a valid memory. "Six at one point," he admitted. "They were just paper blotter. I didn't do them

all at one time. I did them over a short period of time, like two days. That was probably the most."

The young woman who had been Ron's childhood friend had also known him well at Coronado High School. She confirmed that he had taken a lot of dope during that period. "We just got high all the time with this or that," she said. "One day I asked him for some coke and mescaline, and his friend pulled out a pocket *full* of dope . . . powder, pills, *bags* of it. This same friend would give the stuff to Ronnie." She added that dope was prevalent at Coronado High School in the early 1970s. "That was the period of long-hair freaks and stompers . . . cowboys, too. Very dope oriented. In fact, you would stand in the halls and kids right and left were just dealing." But even in this wide-open dope scene, Ronnie appeared exceptional. "Another friend," she said, "told me that he'd never seen anybody but Ronnie do that amount of dope . . . or it have such an effect on anybody."

After speaking with this young woman, I questioned Charles Murphree, the principal of Coronado High School, who had also known Ronnie at Zack White Junior High and the Love family for several years. Had the drug problem been openly serious when he had taken over as principal in 1972, the last year Ronnie attended before sinking away into his drop-out syndrome?

"When I left Zack White in seventy-two," he said, "we had not had one single episode of any type of drugs at the junior high school level." He cleared his throat and faced me squarely, like an old-time wagon master telling some bad news to his settlers. "I moved from there to here, and there was a kind of epidemic of what they call reds and yellows, uppers, downers, some speed . . . amphetamines, barbiturates . . . well, maybe not an epidemic, but it was quite prevalent."

I wondered if this had created major discipline and academic problems among the two thousand Coronado students.

At that time, he emphasized, alcohol was a bigger problem than drugs. But there were, he admitted, a hard core of "fifty or sixty" kids whose lives were in shambles because of "pill-

popping" and marijuana. But he stressed that this was a small minority of the two thousand students, and that any claims of "wide-open" drug use and dealing on the Coronado campus were exaggerations. Since the school board passed "an extremely tough" drug policy in 1976, he added, the problem had all but disappeared. He admitted that serious, self-destructive drug abuse still went on as a "minor problem," but the scale was much, much smaller than it had been ten years before.

I began to zero in on the personality of Ronnie Love, as Mr. Murphree had perceived him as a youngster coming up through grade school, and the principal became adamant. In his opinion, Ronnie was definitely not the product of confusing social upheaval or drug abuse. He said a perceptive teacher could spot a troubled child—"a borderline case"—in first or second grade, long before the kid ever heard of drugs. Such children were "hell on wheels," destined to behave in anti-social patterns in later life. "Very few, I would say, have blown their minds with drugs. They had a personality that would go that way before they ever got involved with drugs." Ronnie Love, he stated, had definitely been a prime example of this type of "borderline" child. One of Ronnie's grade-school teachers had once told Mr. Murphree, years before, "That kid is going to be in prison one day."

These strongly held, contradictory opinions about Ronnie Love were just two of the many similar views I had to sift and weigh. The young woman who had known Ronnie well as a youngster felt deeply that drugs had ruined him. But the experienced teacher and principal who had watched the boy from early on was just as convinced that neither drugs nor confusing social conditions had influenced his development. Given these conflicting theories, I was now glad that I had come to Rusk State Hospital to question the person who was central to all this controversy.

Talking about the state of Ron's mind when he was a patient at Timberlawn Hospital in Dallas, his answers became increasingly muddled. I knew from reading the transcripts of his

competency hearings in El Paso District Court that he had testified to having suffered elaborate psychotic delusions and paranoid hallucinations. These overtly psychotic episodes had begun in the mid-1970s, after several years of serious drug abuse and during the period he was “truckin’” all over the country as a runaway.

Now I wanted him to describe how these mental aberrations had eventually caused him to fire his shotgun that April afternoon three years before. Paging through one especially bizarre hearing transcript, I reminded Ronnie he had testified that he was not really Ronald Patrick Love at all, but rather a brilliant experimental scientist named Michael Edward Cullum. His true self, Doctor Cullum, Ron had sworn, had worked with Albert Einstein during and after World War II, perfecting a machine for time travel. During this research, he sometimes found himself transported “one frame ahead” into the future, so that he could see events—both good and bad—that were about to occur in Cullum’s life and the lives of Ronnie Love’s family. The time machine, Ron said, was about the same size and shape as R2-D2, the Hollywood robot. The machine could radiate time “motions.” A person standing near the machine could feel it humming, warping time. “It is like that,” Ron Love-Michael Cullum had testified in October 1979. “And the center of it—there’s a center, and it’s a vial of LSD, you know, and place the vial in the center of the machine. You can actually just step into time by just walking into it.”

I handed Ronnie the transcript across the desk top, and he chuckled oddly as he read the passage for himself. “Yeah,” he muttered, “I was pretty wired up back then.” He began talking about LSD being “a rare plant,” then slipped into unintelligible gibberish.

When Ronnie eventually began relating the events, physical and psychological, that culminated in his firing the shotgun in El Paso, his voice became very soft, and his syntax broke into chaotic, mumbled fragments. On several occasions, he tried to sidetrack the chronology by claiming he was actual-

ly a secret FBI agent, who had been recruited as a teen-ager for secret duties—about the same time, incidentally, that he began dropping acid. He was eager to be part of this supposedly complex undercover operation because he wanted the terrible events of his life to have meaning, not be “just some lunatic story.”

By probing hard, however, I was able to draw out his explanation of the shootings. As a Timberlawn outpatient, he shared an apartment with a young man named Bill. Ron was working menial jobs at this point, but able to maintain a seemingly normal life. He said he wasn't “doing” any serious dope at this time, “only” Nytol sleeping pills and diet pills: over-the-counter uppers and downers, and, of course, alcohol. Then, in the spring of 1979, after approximately six months as an outpatient, his psychotic delusions began to get the better of him. He heard voices, commanding him to strange duties. He often saw, then merged with, Michael Cullum and his wife Carolyn. His roommate, Bill, began to look increasingly like Satan. On April 16, 1979, Ronnie attacked Bill for kicking the stereo speaker. Ronnie “beat him up pretty bad.” Later Ron packed his possessions into his red pickup truck and headed west out of Dallas, bound, he had decided abruptly, for Wyoming, to spend the summer there. He had about five hundred dollars, a few clothes, and a small puppy. He also had the .20-gauge shotgun and a box of shells, which he had bought for “protection.” When Ron had bought the gun at a Dallas sports store, he had answered “yes” to the question on the government form asking if he had ever been committed to a mental institution. He was sold the weapon despite this answer.

Driving out Dallas' Central Expressway, he was overcome by weird, seemingly poisonous air pollution that smelled like “acid.” He saw a strange girl, one of the people whose voices had been haunting him.

“Who did you feel you were, driving home?” I asked, “Ron Love, or did you feel you were Michael Cullum?”

“I . . . feel like Ron Love,” he stammered. “. . . I was . . . they possess you, these spirits. It possesses you, the spirit. They

possess you, you know. Nothing you can really do to fight it."

His next memory was of being on the levee near his home in El Paso, then in a motel room in Las Cruces, New Mexico, 40 miles to the north on Interstate 10. "I started hearing voices, kind of commanding me what to do. They didn't want me to go home and kill nobody, but they *pushed* me around all day."

"Which voices were those, Ron?"

"Mary and Abraham Lincoln," he answered without a hint of sarcasm. In the motel room, "I was trying to figure out where I should go next. I was sure I didn't want to go home, 'cause everybody rejected me there." He lowered his head and muttered on the edge of audible perception. "... In the motel room, I started to hear voices, I heard a girl scream 'Rape! Rape!' so I thought it was my duty to help. So I get in my car, and I say God told me to go home, you know ... maybe. I don't remember if He did or didn't, but I said, 'Well, I'll go back and help my father with his business.'" Thus began what Ron called, "the nuttiest goddamn day of my life."

In the Love home that morning, after his brother-in-law, Cliff, was summoned, Ron agreed to lie down in the family room. There were a series of telephone calls between his family in El Paso and his therapist at Timberlawn Hospital in Dallas. The psychotherapist, Robert Hagebak, suggested Theresa Love leave the house, feeling there was a risk in her staying. She left for a short time to confer with other family members, but then returned to try to calm Ronnie while her husband initiated the complicated involuntary commitment procedures.

Next Ron began to hallucinate actively, he told me. The light was "changing"; he began to see strange, translucent silhouettes, "just visible, just barely." At a certain point, he spoke on the phone to his therapist in Dallas, who urged Ron to "come back to the hospital, shit like that." He felt he had to stall the therapist because he knew there were strange and important events about to happen. "Something was going to go down."

While Ron sat in the cool family room, he began to experience a terrible, familiar taste in his mouth, a kind of exotic

"acid poison," the same taste he had known on the expressway in Dallas, the same poison that he felt had killed his schoolmate at Coronado High.

Among Ron's confused memories of that morning, there is a sharp recollection of meeting his father at the door of his pickup truck. Tom Love had waited until Ronnie had gone to the bathroom, then he searched Ron's pickup for the shotgun that he had been warned Ron was carrying. Just as Tom Love was about to remove the gun from behind the seat, Ron came out of the house. Tom Love undoubtedly realized that confronting Ronnie over the gun at this point might well precipitate a violent scene. Very quietly, he asked his son to turn over the shotgun. Ron refused. Tom Love did not press his request to the point of angry insistence. Ron locked the doors of the truck.

"I needed that gun," he told me three years after that April morning, "because I *knew* something bad was going to go down."

About that time, "a series of hallucinations" began sweeping through his mind. He saw his sister Louise seized by Elizabethan British pikemen, who proceeded to cut off her head and place it in a wicker basket. He saw his mother with a long white beard. "Right about that point, I started having visions of a kind of guy . . . showing me all this stuff and he says, 'Don't worry about it. It won't hurt you.' And I started to get *real* mad . . . visions of girls out in the pool . . . lots of girls out by the pool, lollygagging around and stuff."

After his father reluctantly left to start the commitment process, and Theresa Love and Louise went to consult the other daughters, the paranoid hallucinations intensified, and with them, his rage mounted. Translucent "angels" were following him around the house, nagging at him. The voices of his family echoed through his head. Cliff tried to calm him down by taking him out in the front yard to pull weeds, but the phantom voice of his sister Joan taunted him. Then Cliff began to take on the horrible appearance of a monstrous science-fiction spider. Ron had a flash of his mother in the kitchen, a giant extraterrestrial spider on either side of her. He

mumbled to Cliff that he was going to the store, "to get a Coke," and slipped off in his pickup truck.

Ron drove to his sister Joan's house, but there was nobody home. On the way back toward his parents' home, he saw bomb shelters suddenly opening under manholes in the street. Then, near Zack White Junior High, a voice proclaimed that the schoolchildren would be killed slowly by being forced to eat dead human flesh. A strange "English guy" materialized beside him in the cab and savagely spun the steering wheel, almost causing a serious accident. That, Ronnie proclaimed from his chair across from me, "was the last straw." He roared back to the brick house on Bird Avenue to settle his mounting score with his phantom tormentors.

In the driveway, he noticed his mother's Lincoln. Cliff's car was gone. Getting out of the cab, Ron witnessed a ballistic missile impact near Coronado High School, several miles away up on the mesa. Through the trees, he watched another missile strike near the school. There was dark smoke. The missiles were "ray bombs" fired by the spider creatures. At last he *knew* what his duty was. When he marched toward the house, he clutched the loaded shotgun in his hands. He threw open the kitchen door. "My mother was in between these two spiders. They were gonna put an electric cone over her, the way they wrap their food before they eat it. They were going to do that, man, so I said, 'Hell, I want what's in here.' And sure enough, there was my mom. I pulled the trigger."

"The spiders were on each side of her?" I asked quietly.

Ron lowered his sweating face. "There weren't any spiders after that."

"Why did you pull the trigger?"

"To save her."

The rubber band snapped hard against the desk metal. Ronnie's eyes were rolling in his head, and I had to ask a series of abrupt, simple questions to make him respond coherently. He had shot his mother to save her from the spiders, "one frame ahead." Then he went back to the truck, took a pocketful of shells, and began stalking other family members

who might need saving from their horrible deaths, "one frame ahead." The family dog snapped at him. He killed the animal in a single blast. He saved Louise in the backyard, firing from seven or eight yards away. He felt like he was "in a war."

With Louise sprawled on the bloody grass, Ron ran around to the front of the house. There he tried to tempt a young retarded neighbor into shotgun range to punish him. Ron was "sure enough mad enough to kill anyone that moved, 'cause you can't let these people that cheated you out of life get away with it."

At that point, Cliff's Cadillac arrived. Ron could clearly see, "one frame ahead," that Cliff was possessed by Lucifer. He was mumbling, and I asked him to repeat. One of the "special bombs" filled with "rotten food and drugs" apparently hit. He was sent "back a frame." Cliff had become Lucifer. Ron shot him.

Ronnie slumped mutely in his chair now, his lips slick with saliva. He sucked down more water, and I managed to get him to talk about less emotive subjects than the shootings. Finally I questioned him once more about drugs.

"You know, when we were talking earlier, you said that one of the worst things you ever did was get into dope. Do you think dope caused a lot of your problems?"

Ron sighed loudly and nodded. "Yeah, but I don't want to blame all those people for getting me onto dope."

" . . . So, you think you would have heard voices, and Lucifer would have gotten involved with you, if you hadn't started doing dope?"

Ron mumbled an answer, then spoke more clearly. "No, but I could have had a wing on them?"

"Think the dope slowed you down combatting them?"

"I think it confused the both of us."

"Lucifer and you?"

"We're both confused."

* * *

When I left the stuffy consultation room, my shirt was heavy with rancid sweat. I blamed the poor ventilation. Ronnie and I

shook hands, and a smiling good ole boy of a custodian led him away to his room.

After I had recovered from the emotional wringing of the interview, I met with Dr. Sethurama Srinivasan, the Indian-born medical director of the Maximum Security Unit. Although I knew that Dr. Srinivasan was ethically proscribed from directly discussing Ron's case with me, I was anxious to elicit the doctor's opinion about the causal relationship between psychosis and drug abuse. Several people I'd spoke to in El Paso had espoused a seemingly simplistic "Drug-Crazed Hippie Killer" explanation for Ronnie's case. One psychiatrist, Dr. Joseph Hornisher, had testified during a competency hearing that psychologically speaking, Ronnie Love may have never returned from one of his frequent LSD trips. I had spent several evenings at the University Medical Library, plowing through the dense psychiatric jargon of a number of professional articles that equated LSD "ingestion" with eventual psychotic episodes. After deciphering such exotic nomenclature as "dopamine autoreceptor subsensitivity" and "poly-drug-induced schizophrenia," I understood that there was clear clinical evidence that strong drugs such as LSD, amphetamines, and PCP could trigger a "psychotic break" in a troubled person. Now I sought the opinion of a physician who worked with violent psychotics every day.

If I wanted clear, unequivocal answers, Dr. Srinivasan was certainly the man to provide them.

"A good number of our patients here became psychotic on drugs," he said, nodding abruptly for emphasis. "Hallucinogens such as LSD can definitely cause psychotic symptoms. Drugs which cause the flashback syndrome are responsible for certain psychoses." He opened and closed his strong brown hands, pausing while he carefully chose his words. "When we are dealing with hallucinogens, almost any kind of symptom is possible."

"Would you say, Doctor, that these kinds of drugs can trigger a psychosis in an otherwise normal person?"

Again, Dr. Srinivasan was direct and unequivocal. "Psycho-

sis in otherwise normal persons has definitely increased with the widespread use of hallucinogens, especially LSD and PCP."

Certain metabolic residues of drugs like PCP and THC of marijuana, he explained, were stored in the fatty cells of body tissue and spontaneously released at any time, producing bizarre and frightening hallucinations. For a person who had a genetic disposition toward psychosis, this could be enough to send him over the edge and into the terrifying swamp of active schizophrenia. Widespread drug abuse, in other words, weakened the borderline patient's ability to resist the inborn tendency toward crippling mental affliction.

Rapidly scratching notes on my pad, it seemed to me that Dr. Srinivasan was accurately describing the case of Ronald Patrick Love.

* * *

Several months after seeing Ronnie Love at Rusk State Hospital, I had a chance to talk about drugs and schizophrenia with Dr. Park E. Dietz, an internationally known forensic psychiatrist from the University of Virginia Schools of Law and Medicine. Dr. Dietz had testified at the trial of John Hinckley, as well as at the trial of the malpractice suit the Love family initiated against the Timberlawn Psychiatric Hospital. In his specialty of forensic psychiatry, Dr. Dietz was obliged to be familiar with the latest research findings and diagnostic criteria of American psychiatry.

Like other doctors I queried, Dr. Dietz would not comment on the specific case of Ronnie Love, but he would talk in general about drug use and schizophrenia. Answering the same question I put to Dr. Srinivasan, Dr. Dietz said that it was "largely believed" that the use of drugs "does not in any way *cause* schizophrenia." But, the doctor added, there were other than direct causal relationships between drug use and the onset of schizophrenia.

He said that psychiatrists see patients with incipient schizo-

phrenia who begin—as Ronnie Love had begun—to abuse drugs in a desperate effort at “self-medication.” “Why they turn to drugs is quite complex,” he said. “But one of the things that is often said is that some of them may be trying to medicate themselves by turning to various kinds of drugs. The illness of schizophrenia may in some way, indirectly, cause drug abuse.”

He added, however, that these mentally ill people derive a certain, strange emotional comfort by the paranoid delusions and hallucinations the drugs produce. “This gives them a way of saying, ‘I’m *not* crazy. I use drugs and these symptoms are brought on by me; I can control them.’ Of course, that’s not true.”

Speaking of his first LSD use, Ron Love had told me, “I started to like it. It made me *feel* better.”

Another relationship between drugs and schizophrenia, Dr. Dietz continued, was quite interesting. “Some drugs,” he said, “that is, LSD, amphetamines, and PCP . . . not heroin or barbiturates . . . maybe marijuana, can provoke the initial symptoms in a person who has underlying schizophrenia that hasn’t been symptomatic before. That’s an area where there is some research going on.” He paused to consider his words. “The belief that I hold,” he summarized, “is that, until I see some more evidence otherwise, there are some people with an unmanifested schizophrenic propensity who would not develop symptoms but for the drugs . . . the drugs bring it out, and they stay sick.”

In this cautious, well-reasoned language, Dr. Dietz seemed to be clearly offering a second, affirmative opinion to support Dr. Srinivasan’s outspoken views on the relationship between strong drugs and the onset of schizophrenia.

Dr. Dietz added that chronic runaway behavior, such as that Ronnie engaged in during the mid-1970s, is one of the features of Antisocial Personality Disorder, according to the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Dietz also noted that runaway behavior is commonly observed among emotionally troubled and mentally ill adolescents and young adults, in-

cluding those who later develop symptoms of schizophrenia. It may well have been, I realized, that in constantly running away, Ronnie Love was not reacting to the prevailing drop-out mood of the early 1970s, but rather to the powerful internal pressures of his onrushing illness.

Dr. Sam Keith of the Schizophrenia Center of the National Institute of Mental Health gave me some additional important insights on the relationship between Ronnie Love's disease and the way such illness is perceived by the general public. Although there has been no measurable increase of schizophrenia in the past 15 or 20 years, Dr. Keith said, schizophrenia has become more evident because of a trend toward decreased residential hospital treatment and increased community treatment facilities. Overall, the doctor assured me, about one percent of the population runs a "lifetime risk" of falling ill with the disease.

He did, however, add an interesting afterthought. "What we're finding," he said, "is that, at a younger and younger age, schizophrenics are becoming rather chronic looking. We have a whole phenomenon of the young, chronic schizophrenic. It had always been assumed that this took *years* to develop. But we are finding this really not to be so."

When I asked Dr. Keith about the relationship between drug abuse and schizophrenia, I received an answer similar to those of the other psychiatrists I'd queried.

"In general," Dr. Keith said, "what we know is that drugs are not helpful. Do they cause schizophrenia? Probably not, but they certainly make it more manifest."

After talking to Dr. Dietz and Dr. Keith, I realized that in many ways, I had been just as guilty of simplistic thinking as the people I'd spoken to in El Paso. Like them, I had felt a compulsive need to place the case of Ronnie Love within the comprehensible, hermetically sealed pigeonhole of some sociological or political theory: the demographic pressures of the baby boom; the decline of family integrity and moral values; the glittery hollowness of Sun Belt prosperity; and, of course, the frightening mental alchemy of hallucinogenic

drugs. But, unfortunately, none of these factors was a prime cause of Ronnie's schizophrenia. The experts had spoken, and I had to agree with them.

The terrible disease that had driven Ronnie Love to attack his family, thinking he was *saving* them, "one frame ahead" in time, had without doubt arisen out of some unfathomable biochemical accident within the molecular confines of his nervous system. As one psychiatrist put it, "People *do* fall ill with schizophrenia and become violent. When Lizzie Borden took her ax, we didn't have LSD or the drop-out syndrome to blame."

I smiled at the doctor. "No," I admitted, "we had the devil." Now, it seemed, we had other devils to blame.

Perhaps my greatest frustration in investigating the Ronnie Love tragedy was that there were clearly tantalizing *indirect* links between the social upheaval of Ronnie's adolescence and the nature of his eventual illness. But these links were too tenuous to clearly document. Obviously, however, it would be spurious to claim that the tumultuous events of the 1960s and 1970s had *not* influenced the texture and dimension of his madness.

When Tim Leary and Ken Kesey broadcast their clarion call for young people to find their inner selves through the chemical magic of LSD, boys like Ronnie Love had listened. In Ron's case, however, the person living inside the protective shell of normal consciousness was incipiently schizophrenic. Perhaps Professor Leary never thought about that grim possibility when he summoned the world's youth to "expand" their minds.

When Bob Dylan and the Grateful Dead and Peter Fonda glorified the life of the rootless drifter, sick boys like Ronnie Love had also listened.

Tim Leary and G. Gordon Liddy now have a lucrative campus-lecture act, a kind of tragicomic Bob and Ray routine; Bob Dylan is a millionaire born-again Christian; Peter Fonda enjoys sailing large yawls and ketches in the blue Pacific. They all survived the cultural and social warfare

of the past decade very nicely.

But there were also casualties in this long struggle. Theresa Love is dead in her grave. Ronnie Love sits sedated in the hilltop fortress of the Sky View Unit, filing his fingernails, wondering if his life is truly more than just another "lunatic story."

I think that it is. Without question, he had an inborn propensity toward schizophrenia; the psychiatrists tell us that an unknown small percentage of any population may have a similar condition. But there can be no doubt that his intense and self-destructive drug use helped trigger his eventual psychotic break; the hallucinations of space spiders and ray bombs were similar to the LSD bummers he had experienced as a teen-ager. The time-travel machine that Professor Cullum had developed with Albert Einstein had at its center "a vial of LSD." And this drug abuse was accepted behavior by a large number of his peers when Ronnie reached adolescence, as was a fundamental anti-authority attitude, which encouraged rebellious drop-out patterns among millions of young Americans. It would, of course, be simplistic nonsense to blame *all* of Ronnie's troubles on drugs, transforming LSD into a contemporary object of hysteria akin to the "killer weed" scare of the 1930s. But the fact remains that serious abuse of LSD has had a drastic effect on potential psychotics.

A troubled boy, Ronnie told me that he had sought the spiritual discipline of the Jesuits, but he had been unable to meet the academic requirements of the school and also maintain his active drug experimentation. By the time he reached Coronado High School, he was emotionally isolated from his family and socially channeled into the large, visible minority of dopers who were then making life difficult for Mr. Murphree and his colleagues; his only friends became "those bums," the dopers of Coronado against whom his parents had often railed.

The language and imagery of the Vietnam War and nuclear holocaust had also melded into his drug experiences and his eventual delusions. He became "wasted" on LSD and "totally

deployed" on grass. The "ray bombs" of the phantom extra-terrestrials from which he *saved* his mother and Louise were delivered by ballistic missiles. He seemed unable to control his drug use, willing to choke down almost any combination of polychrome pills his "friends" offered him. During this time, his bummers and flashbacks smeared together almost indistinguishably into the full-blown delusions of a paranoid schizophrenic.

As Charles Murphree implied, Ronnie Love had undoubtedly always harbored an inner rage, an anger bred by the isolation of his borderline personality. But on that terrible Wednesday afternoon in April, he became "mad enough to kill anyone that moved, 'cause you can't let those people that cheated you out of life get away with it." Ronnie Love had indeed been cheated out of any semblance of a normal life, just as he had cheated his mother, sister, and brother-in-law out of their normal lives. But no serious observer of America would describe the ten years between the night Ronnie became "totally deployed" on the joint of Acapulco Gold and the afternoon he gunned down his family, as a *normal* decade of American history.

Part III

Chapter Seven

Italy, Summer

IT was hot on the small *piazza* near the Anzio train station. Carol and I waited in the humid sunlight while the crowds of working-class Romans pushed past us and streamed down the sloping avenue toward the seafront a kilometer away. Most of them were dressed for the beach in cotton wrappers and bright shorts. Many of the older children wheeled the younger kids in strollers, which did double duty as carry-alls for picnic hampers and rolled beach mats. This was a Saturday noon at the end of July, and Italy had been clutched by a heat wave for over a week. Now, it seemed as if every family that could afford the second-class fare had jammed aboard the train with us in Rome. They had come down to spend the afternoon and evening in the relative coolness of the Anzio and Nettuno *lidi*.

We had not traveled to Anzio to swim, however. We had come here to meet a young man who called himself Claudio, who was said to be a member of the Prima Linea terrorist group.

Across the palm-lined square, Franco, our guide for this strange expedition, was bent down at the window of a battered taxi, negotiating with the driver. After a few minutes, Franco came strolling back across the *piazza*, grinning with embarrassment, his hands held open near his chest, a sign of resignation that he had not been able to arrange a decent price for the taxi ride to the waterfront.

"*No importa,*" I managed in my rusty Italian. "*Potiamo andare a piedi.*"

"*Va bene,*" Franco answered with a deferential smile, and gestured for us to follow him across the square and down the palm-shaded sidewalk bordering the gardens of the old stucco villas. He was a pleasant, mannerly young man, and I had found him surprisingly easy to deal with during our discussions of the previous two days. Despite his extremist political views and dedication to revolutionary causes, he had retained a traditional deference toward his elders which he had no doubt learned while being raised in a family of prosperous Roman bourgeoisie.

But Franco no longer considered himself middle class. Like so many thousands of other Italians of his generation—Franco told us he was 25—he felt himself to be a "pure" communist, a committed revolutionary who had abandoned the compromising sycophancy of the mainstream PCI, the Italian Communist Party, and had instead become a supporter of one of the various neo-Maoist splinter groups, which were collectively known as the *autonomia*.

Franco's unsuccessful bargaining with the taxi driver was a good example of his dedication to revolutionary principles. There was a *fair* price for the ride from the station to the *lido*, and there was also profiteering. When Franco had been unable to convince the taxi driver to charge the reasonable, *honest* fare, he had decided that it was better for the three of us to walk through the humid heat than to give in to price gouging. Besides, all the proletarian families were walking, and solidarity with the working classes was a zealously held article of faith among the *autonomi*, as the members of the

autonomous radical groups were called.

I was in no position to argue, to offer to pay the 4000 or 5000 *lire* cab fare. I had to respect his decision. My relationship to Franco, and to the other young Italians who had led me to him through a series of delicate negotiations during the past week, was fragile, if not downright precarious. On strongly held principle, the *autonomi* did not grant interviews to writers, either foreign or domestic. Young radicals of Franco's coloration certainly did not make a practice of arranging interviews with their comrades who were actual members of illegal terrorist groups like Prima Linea, comrades who were wanted on criminal warrants and faced long prison terms if they were arrested.

But I had been very lucky and also the beneficiary of some invaluable assistance in my efforts to meet an Italian terrorist. Before coming to Italy, I had hoped to interview one of the imprisoned founding members of the Red Brigades or Front Line terrorist groups, who had rejected violent revolution and joined the ranks of the so-called "*Pentiti*," former terrorists who now cooperated with the authorities. Specifically, I had wanted to speak with either Patrizio Peci or Carlo Fioroni, *ex-capi di gruppi* who had made sweeping confessions as to the extent, financing, goals, and international alliances of the left-wing terrorist groups in Italy.

On arrival in Italy, however, I had quickly learned that such interviews would be out of the question. Carlo Fioroni had been released from prison and was now living in hiding—having undergone plastic surgery to hide his identity, some said—in constant fear of violent reprisals from his former comrades. Patrizio Peci was no longer talking either; his brother had been brutally murdered by the Red Brigades in reprisal for Patrizio's well-publicized act of *pentimento*. Also, during my first week in Italy, another imprisoned Red Brigades *pentito*, Ennio Di Rocco—a young man who had helped the *carabiniere* break the General James Dozier kidnapping case the previous winter—had been stabbed and strangled to death in the exercise yard of the maximum security prison in

Trani. Obviously, making public statements about terrorist organizations was a hazardous activity.

When Carol and I had lived in northern Italy in the mid-1970s, I had become quite interested in the growth of the *autonomia* and the violent terrorist groups like the Red Brigades and the Front Line. I was especially curious about the personal histories and psychological motivations of the young people who joined these groups. Italy did not impress me then as being an innately violent society, and yet, almost each evening as I read the *Corriere della Sera* or *La Stampa*, I saw accounts of kidnappings, violent assaults or armed robberies carried out by one "ultra" revolutionary group or another. Many Italian editorial writers ascribed this violence to spoiled and neurotic middle-class youngsters, bored with the inactivity imposed on them by the sudden, deep slump that had hit the Italian economy following the OPEC price jumps. Other journalists saw the heavy hand of the Soviet KGB at work among the *autonomia*, stirring the already cloudy broth of Italian politics. Some writers simply dismissed the terrorists as an inexplicable handful of criminal psychopaths, who had to be hunted down and destroyed like rabid dogs.

In the nine months we had spent near Trieste, studying Italian and teaching English, we had made numerous contacts among university students from the Italian middle classes; many of these students were avowed political radicals. At the time, they seemed to be sane, sober, and motivated by strong altruistic drives as well as by a universal disgust at the widespread social injustice and corruption they claimed to see all around them. Several years later, we heard that a few of these young people had "stepped over" the line between legal protest and violent terrorism. Yet these students, with whom we had cheerfully exchanged English and Italian lessons all during a rainy Friulian winter, did not seem to be bored and spoiled rich kids playing at revolution; nor had they appeared to be kill-crazy sociopaths on a suicidal collision course with any and all authority. They had, in fact, seemed like reasonably normal young people, perhaps more serious and pessi-

mistic than their counterparts in American graduate schools, but certainly not the diabolical monsters they were portrayed as by the Italian press.

Now, almost seven years later, we were back in Italy, and I wanted very much to talk to one of the young people who had turned his back on legal society and embraced the life of the violent revolutionary underground. I was fortunate in having a good variety of Italian friends, people whose families we had known for years. Their children knew me as a teacher and writer who was sincerely interested in hearing their side of the story, rather than as a salaried reporter, writing for the "Imperialist" American news media.

In the end, after one tentative contact either fizzled out or led to another, it was my academic background that brought me to Franco and led me here to Anzio to meet his friend Claudio. The night before in Rome, at the sidewalk table of a *trattoria* in Trastevere, Franco had agreed to put me in touch with Claudio if, in return, I would advise Claudio and assist him in his efforts to emigrate to Canada, where he hoped to complete his engineering studies and start a new life away from the violence and political chaos of Italy. I had explained to Franco that I had certain connections with Canadian universities, and that one of my friends was the dean of science at a large university in Ontario. In exchange for an interview, I promised to help Claudio in any legal way I could.

We were nearing the commercial center of Anzio. The old summer villas of the Roman upper classes had given way to six-story apartment blocks with brightly shuttered balconies facing the blue bay. Souvenir shops, cafés, and ice cream stands occupied the ground floors of these buildings. The streets were crowded with tiny Fiats, overloaded with families down from Rome, and the sidewalks streamed with sun-burnt people in floppy hats and swimming suits. Glancing around, the only evidence of police I saw was an elderly municipal traffic cop who rested in the shade of a small park, passively surveying a logjam of illegally parked cars, which clogged the avenue of palms leading to the fishing port.

I realized what an excellent spot Franco and Claudio had selected for our meeting. The anonymous weekend crowds offered perfect cover; practically everyone was a stranger here. All around the park and seaside esplanade, people rested on shady benches chatting quietly. No police inspector in his right mind would attempt to set up roadblocks here or check the identity papers of the crowds on a day like today.

The young man who called himself Claudio was waiting for us on the cobbled pier jutting out into the greasy water of the fishing port. He was dressed in swimming trunks and a blue T-shirt, sitting on a mooring bollard near the whitewashed wall of the CaNav boat yard, a couple of cane fishing poles rigged out at his feet. All up and down the pier there were wooden boats and shellfish dorries bobbing on stern anchors in the slight chop of the harbor. As we came down the rough pavement of the pier toward him, Claudio glanced up, smiled, and waved languidly to us as if we were old friends. Even as Franco made the introductions in rather formal Italian, Claudio remained seated on the steel toadstool of the bollard, smiling. But behind his lightly tinted sunglasses, I could see his dark eyes shifting rapidly from our faces to the esplanade, automatically searching out any unusual observers.

Satisfied that we had not aroused undue notice, Claudio pulled up a salt-bleached crate and gestured for me to sit down. "*Si nous parlions francais ensemble?*" he suggested, in accented but fluent French. He nodded 20 meters down the pier where several old men also sat on crates, fishing in the midday sun. Whatever he had to say, he obviously did not want to be overheard. We chatted a few moments about the heat wave and the number of Roman tourists. Then Claudio asked if Carol would mind waiting for us in the Miramare Caffè up on the esplanade. Franco volunteered to show her the way as he returned to the station.

I sat down on the splintery crate and stretched my legs before me, and Claudio fussed with one of his fishing poles. Out in the harbor, a couple of pot-bellied Romans were having

a hard time starting a huge Evinrude outboard on a gleaming waterski boat.

"*Ce sont des idiots*," Claudio said with a friendly smile. "They're idiots. That motor burns over twenty liters of gasoline an hour. Italy must import every barrel of gasoline it uses. . . ." He nodded sharply. "Every . . . drop." Briefly, he reverted to Italian. "*E questi idioti* . . . and these *idiots* happily ruin our economy for their own pleasure. This is an example of the current situation."

As he spoke, I studied his face. He was deeply suntanned, as if he'd been working outside all summer. His angular cheekbones and chin gave him a certain graceful strength, but his eyes were soft and fluid, suggesting an over-sensitive nature. I studied his hands next. The nails were well-clipped and clean. I could see no callouses on his fingers as he gestured. Whatever it was Claudio had been doing in the sun all summer, it was not working on a construction gang or road crew.

When he stopped berating the Roman landlubbers in the waterski boat, I asked him where he had learned such fluent French.

"Not in Italian schools!" he said with a quietly bitter snort. "I worked in France for two years. My oldest brother's a cook in a restaurant. He's been up there for a long time, since I was a little kid. He even married a French woman. I lived with them and worked in the restaurant, in the kitchen with the Arabs." He made a washboard pantomime of scrubbing pots and pans. "Then I had a chance for the university, so I came back to Italy. That was a big mistake, Professor."

"Now you want to go to Canada?" I asked, "to finish your university study?"

"*C'est ça*," he said with his easy smile. "I have already done two years toward my *dottore* in electrical engineering. . ."

"Why didn't you complete your study?"

"The university system is a fraud, a complete . . . *macello* . . . a shambles." He made a face to show his frustration. "You would have to know my whole story to understand."

"I've got time," I said. "What do you . . . what are you free to tell me?"

"*Eh bien*," he said. "What do you want to hear about?"

"How did you happen to get involved with the Prima Linea?"

He fiddled with his cane poles a moment, then glanced around the sunny harbor. "It started in nineteen seventy-five, when I was in the terminal year at the *istituto tecnico*. . . ."

I sat back on my crate and listened to Claudio's story. He had been raised in one of the grim working-class apartment projects, which had sprung up around Rome during the economic boom years of the 1960s. His father had been a semi-skilled worker for the Post, Telephone and Telegraph Ministry, a kind of lineman's helper, according to Claudio. The last of three children, Claudio had been raised almost as an only child because of the 20-years age difference between him and his older brother and sister. The brother had been apprenticed to a chef while still a young boy, and had eventually settled in northern France, where he was now a cook in a popular Italian restaurant. The sister had married early.

Claudio's mother, he said, speaking in quieter tones now, was a "very good woman," but also "very Catholic." All during his childhood, she did piecework sewing on a machine in the small parlor of the family apartment. His father was "rather old," a conscript veteran of Mussolini's North African adventures who had been "cheated" out of any chance of education or industrial training by the War. He was a long-time member of the large Communist labor union, the CGIL, an organization in which he held a minor position similar to a shop steward's assistant.

Seven years before, Claudio added, speaking in clipped tones now, his father had suffered a serious accident at work, falling over ten meters from the side of a building where he was helping to install telephone lines. His injuries were serious enough to keep him out of work for a year, and when he did return, he was unable to perform the heavy lifting and climbing required in his job. After being "stupidly" advised by CGIL officials to take an early medical-compensation re-

tirement instead of petitioning for a light-duty work assignment, his father found himself trying to live on roughly half his former income, just when inflation began to rise toward 20 percent in the mid-1970s.

The worst aspect of this situation for Claudio was the fact that his father was no longer employed by the PTT, and could therefore not make an effective *raccomandazione* to secure his son a job with the ministry after the boy's completion of technical secondary school. In 1975, therefore, Claudio was in the position of hundreds of thousands of similar young Italians: half-educated, unskilled, and unemployed, without the immediate prospect of work. The generous years of the post-war economic miracle had ended abruptly with the first OPEC oil price explosion, and by the late 1970s, Italy was being battered by the frightening new phenomenon of stagflation.

As Claudio described the economic turmoil in Italy after the OPEC price increases, I was struck by the emotional emphasis he placed on the plight of unemployed youth, the so-called *non-garantiti*, dispossessed young people like himself who lacked family connections to guarantee them a job, who also lacked official status as students or workers to guarantee them a stipend or unemployment benefits. These young people had fallen through a crack in the Italian economic miracle. Part of their plight, I'd learned, was due to a late-developing Italian baby boom. Although the Italian birth rate actually fell for a few years in the 1940s, the number of young people eventually increased dramatically. Between 1970 and 1980, for example, there was a net increase of 8 percent, or 640,000, young Italians between 15 and 24 years old: the age of politically active students and young people looking for their first job. To my surprise, many Italians were not aware of this demographic phenomenon.

But when I had discussed the *non-garantiti* with Deputy Marco Boato, a Radical Party member of parliament and well-known former student activist from the 1960s who knew the Italian youth movements intimately, he had told me that this group was, "Very strong, very large, and very isolated from the

rest of Italian society, above all from the parliamentary political system."

The *non-garantiti* represented hundreds of thousands of young Italians, I discovered. Yet only a handful continued to take up arms and join terrorist bands. I asked Marco Boato about this, and he commented that the recent recruits to the armed groups were made up of "psychologically fragile" young people for whom the strains and frustrations of their condition had proven too much to bear.

One factor many of these frustrated young *non-garantiti* had in common was the relative stability and affluence of the country in which they'd been born. Unlike earlier revolutionaries who had been driven to radical extremism out of widespread poverty or in reaction to a blatantly repressive government, Claudio's generation had been born in a country which was undergoing a period of unparalleled economic growth and a spectacular renaissance of democracy after a long generation of fascist totalitarian misrule.

Ironically, however, many Europeans, especially Germans and Italians of Claudio's generation, stubbornly refused to adopt any historical perspective on the social and political matrix into which they were born. The young recruits to Italian terrorism were anxious to see their country in the worst possible light. They did not want to consider Italy in terms of the progress that had been made since World War II, but rather through a utopian lens that measured how much social and economic improvement remained to be accomplished.

Almost without exception, the young Italians with whom I spoke were uncomfortable and impatient with discussions of the post-war Italian economic miracle. But, for me, this unprecedented economic explosion and the social upheaval it produced were pivotal to any understanding of Italian terrorism. Only that afternoon, on the train ride down from Rome, I had been again impressed by the incredible economic progress Italy had achieved since I had first visited the country in the 1950s.

Carol and I had sat on the shady side of the train, gazing out

the open window at the prosperous farms of the Roman Campagna. The hillsides were green with sweeping contour rows of corn, the vineyards and orchards were coming into fruit, and the hay had already been harvested and stacked in huge blanket rolls by modern machinery. In the yards of the tile-roofed farm houses we saw new Fiat tractors and pickup trucks. This bucolic abundance seemed almost like a propaganda display for the Common Market agricultural policies of subsidized private agriculture. Noting this prosperity, I couldn't help but think of the plump families we'd seen the night before crowding the Trastevere restaurant terraces in Rome. Most of them were clearly working class, and seemed quite able and happy to spend their money on expensive veal, *spaghetti con vongole* or *frutti di mare*.

And here, in these fertile hills, the farmers may have had problems with interest rates and price supports—like farmers all over the Western world—but they also had marketing cooperatives and agricultural credit banks to ease the burden. Diesel tractors, many of them with air-conditioned cabs, had replaced the mule-and-harness plow. If the classical poet Virgil were alive today, I mused, and were commissioned to write an ode on the benefits of good government in Rome, he would probably describe the machinists' families in Trastevere with their plates full of pasta and veal, and the shiny yellow tractors in the yards of these passing farms.

In fact, nothing I had seen since returning to Italy this summer had in any way suggested a country governed by a voraciously greedy fascist clique who maintained themselves in power through a state-sponsored terror while they bled the country white through corruption. Yet that was the Italy which Claudio and his comrades must have seen when they took up arms. And many people in the Establishment saw in Claudio simply a homicidal maniac wearing the thinly disguised livery of the KGB. Surely, I thought, such extreme political polarization must be engendered by some fundamental social dislocation.

Again, I stared out at the sloping vineyards and cornfields. Thirty-eight years before, these hills had not looked so pros-

perous. This had been the perimeter of the Anzio beachhead, where one of the most devastating and bitter battles of the bloody Italian campaign had been waged. From these hill-sides, the German 88s and self-propelled howitzers had pulverized the Allied positions in the ruined seaside towns. Day after day, the medium bombers of the American Air Force had smashed the roads and train lines on which the Germans depended for supplies. The Allies advanced and were beaten back; the Germans retreated, then counterattacked. The stalemate lasted almost six months and was emblematic of the wider stalemate fought for two full years on the Italian peninsula. The war in Italy was vastly devastating, with the poor agricultural regions of the South suffering the worst of the savage ground fighting, and the industrial North taking the brunt of the heavy aerial bombardment.

By the end of the war in 1945, Italy was a smoking ruin. There had been famine and widespread malnutrition in the immediate post-war period. Italian politics were also in ruins, the legacy of 25 years of Fascist dictatorship. The two strongest political forces were the Stalinist PCI and the conservative-Catholic Christian Democrats, the DC: magnets at either end of the spectrum that activated the pattern of contemporary political polarization. But American Marshall Plan aid began arriving in 1947. And in only 25 years, Italy had transformed itself from a broken shell of a Fascist dictatorship into a leading industrial democracy. Its Gross National Product had increased an incredible 3100 percent between 1951 and 1980. Italy was now one of the ten most prosperous and influential countries on the planet.

Naturally, this transformation—the Economic Miracle—was not accomplished without considerable social dislocation and chaos. The most disruptive of these dislocations was undoubtedly the shift of population from the almost-medieval agrarian regions of the South to the booming industrial towns of the North—a move that the insightful observer Alberto Ronchey has described as a “Biblical migration.” During the boom years of the ’50s and ’60s, with cheap energy fueling a mush-

rooming economy, literally millions of poor and poorly educated southerners fled the misery of their tenant plots and villages for the promise of jobs in the industrial triangle bounded by Milan, Turin and Genoa.

West Germany was the only other European country to experience such a fundamental demographic shift in the post-war period. The strains this migration put on the social fabric of Italy were widespread and intense. Predictably, the social-service institutions, including state health care, subsidized housing, and public education, were strained the most and were least able to respond efficiently to the migration. But as long as the economy continued to expand at record growth rates, there was little public discontent.

Then came the OPEC oil price debacle in 1973, and the Italian economy went into what so many commentators have called a "tailspin." During the 1970-80 decade the number of young people in the schools and job marketplace also increased dramatically.

Claudio's generation, however, did not like to hear about the destruction of the War, even though the very pier on which we now sat marked the site where the lead LSTs of the U.S. Navy had unloaded their rumbling Sherman tanks onto the blasted esplanade in 1944. He would no doubt also be impatient with sociological interpretations of contemporary Italian history. In fact, I found him to be rather handicapped in the area of historical and sociological perspective. For Claudio, and his *autonomia* comrades, every aspect of public life in Italy had a clear *political* explanation, usually one involving right-wing conspiracies against the working classes. But I guessed it was difficult for anyone to see his country in historical terms, especially when the passions of radical politics have been aroused.

As Claudio continued his story, I guessed that his relationship with his father began, understandably, to suffer serious strains during this difficult decade. His father was a traditional, doctrinaire Communist, a member of the PCI, who believed in the Party with an almost religious fervor. But the

Party had become bourgeois. In technical school, Claudio had begun listening to self-styled Maoist students and teachers who spoke of such exotic concepts as “workers’ autonomy”: direct intervention in the affairs of government and in the capitalist corporations by a powerful alliance of workers, students, and intellectuals. This direct action—modeled after China’s Cultural Revolution—would take the form of factory seizures, of “appropriations” of property which, they claimed, rightfully belonged to the working classes. But what Claudio found most attractive in all of this, he said, was the *autonomous* nature of this proposed struggle: no more begging from the entrenched bureaucrats of the CGIL, no more knuckling under to the compromising cowards in the Italian Communist Party. By the mid-1970s, it had become quite clear to developing young “ultras” like Claudio that the PCI was no longer even a quasi-revolutionary party, that the “historic compromise” whereby Party leader Enrico Berlinguer agreed to share power with the ruling Christian Democrats was, in fact, a betrayal of the working classes, like his family, who had unquestionably supported the PCI for so many years.

Naturally, Claudio’s nascent conversion to the political beliefs of the *autonomi* put him in conflict with his father. But, listening to the young man’s story, I saw that there had also been powerful psychological reasons for the eventual schism. As taxes on practically everything went up, and inflation spiralled in the late 1970s, Claudio’s father had to accept money from his oldest son and his daughter to meet his monthly expenses. Large among these expenses was his unemployed son, Claudio, the 20-year-old whom he had always assumed would follow him into a secure, union-guaranteed job in the PTT. But Claudio’s father could no longer provide a *raccomandazione* for his son, and this must have hurt the old man deeply. And now this son was openly scorning his father’s political beliefs, and, in so doing, effectively proclaiming his own father a failure.

For a while in 1976, Claudio said, relations between him and his father were “very difficult.” But then Claudio accept-

ed his responsibilities toward the family and journeyed north to France where he worked as a kitchen helper in his brother's restaurant and took advantage of a French language course offered free to foreign workers. During the time he spent in France, Claudio said he was too busy to get involved in politics, but he did hear disturbing reports of continuing right-wing violence against members of the *autonomia*. By the summer of 1977, Claudio had managed to save a respectable sum of money, even though he had regularly sent a portion of his wages home to his mother and father.

It was at this time, he said, that he was forced to make some serious decisions about his future. And, he added, he felt that he had acquired the "political" maturity to make such important decisions. His brother had convinced the restaurant owner to keep him on as an apprentice cook in an informal program of training that would last perhaps five years and culminate in his acquiring a profession he could practice anywhere. But he had learned from school friends that reforms in the Italian educational system had made university study available to lower technical school graduates like him. Before the 1970s, only students with traditional academic secondary education could aspire to university study. That these students came almost entirely from the middle and upper classes, and that the children of the working classes were almost all excluded from the universities, had long been a bitter complaint of the Italian Left.

Now he had a chance to help break these old patterns of social rigidity. He declined the offered apprenticeship and, against his father's strongly stated wishes, returned to Italy, where he enrolled as a first-year engineering student at the University of Rome.

"That was in 1978?" I asked.

"September, 1977," he said. He gave one of his cane poles a tentative wiggle. The bobber lay still on the oil water. "I came back and found a *war* happening on the streets of Rome."

The *autonomia*, he said, had formed politically effective collectives of students and workers all across Italy and were

leading the campaign of demonstrations for "real" reform on a wide spectrum of social and economic issues: jobs for the 500,000 unemployed young people; a government-subsidized building program to end the worst housing shortage in Europe; better health care; reform of the abortion and divorce laws; tax reform; and, of course, a large increase in the government stipends paid to university students. The proof that these often violent demonstrations were effective, he said, was the degree to which the demonstrators were physically attacked by the neo-Fascists of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, the MSI.

A few days earlier, I had talked about Claudio's generation with Professor Alessandro Silj, one of Italy's leading sociologists and a recognized expert on the motivations of Italian terrorists.

In the 1970s, Professor Silj said, there was a "general belief" among left-wing political circles that a right-wing *coup d'état* on the model of the Greek Junta and sparked by the MSI was imminent, and that the Left had to prepare for an armed confrontation. This belief, he added, was espoused and propagated by people like Renato Curcio, the founder of the Red Brigades, and by the founders of the other leftist terrorist groups, including the Prima Linea. A similar fear was missing today, he emphasized. Since the late '60s, the government had efficiently thwarted machinations of right-wing and neo-Fascist coup plotters in high places—ranging from General De Lorenzo of the Italian Counterespionage Service, to Prince Valerio Borghese, a former commander of the Fascist navy. A rightist *coup* no longer seemed possible in 1982.

Another major difference, he continued, was the general social climate then and now. Beginning in the autumn of 1969, and continuing through the 1970s, militant workers took to the streets and sought violent confrontation with the police. There existed then, he said, a "general climate of violence." After several years of this seemingly endless round of labor protest, wildcat strikes, and mass rallies—often punctuated by violent excesses by both demonstrators and police—the over-

all mood of organized labor became less volatile. But all this violent confrontation "had an impact on the minds of young people growing up then."

Having lived in northern Italy in the mid-1970s, I could attest to the volatile nature of the workers' street demonstrations. On two occasions, I had seen demonstrators hurl Molotov cocktails, iron bars, and paving stones at the riot police when mass rallies for higher wages degenerated into angry confrontations. In their own regard, the *carabinieri* often responded excessively, teargassing passersby and cruelly bludgeoning any demonstrator they could catch.

A young man seeing all this in the early '70s, Professor Silj said, could easily "build theories about the collapse of bourgeois society." He could then feel that the next logical step for a committed Marxist-Leninist was to join an armed underground group, which would be in the vanguard of the new society that followed the inevitable collapse of democratic capitalism.

"And now," I asked, "do they still feel such a revolution is possible?"

"I don't know," Professor Silj said. "I'm trying to put myself in the position of someone who has been underground for ten years. It's been a long time that nothing has happened, that society has *not* collapsed. Can I really go on believing that one day it will? Psychologically, one would expect these people to be morally disappointed, to want to do something, to achieve some success at all costs, just to prove that they were not wrong." He leaned forward and stroked the wood of his desk, then shook his head. "I doubt that they still believe the revolution is possible."

We next spoke of the mentality of young people today, the badly educated and unemployed *non-garantiti* who thronged the streets of all the cities, the kids a few years younger than Claudio. Were many of them still eager to fill the ranks of the Front Line and the Red Brigades?

"I would imagine," he said, "that recruiting people is more difficult now than then. A twenty-two-year-old today is bound

to ask himself, 'What have the Red Brigades really accomplished?' While, in the beginning, the Red Brigades included people who were really politicized, as time went by, people were forced to draw a balance sheet. They discovered that not much has been accomplished by the armed groups."

"The proportion of politically committed people who join these groups today is shrinking," Professor Silj continued, "while the number of desperados who join is increasing. If you are unhappy and unemployed, if you have a grudge against society, then . . . why not? If that is your motivation, you don't need to believe in revolution. . . . You just want to throw bombs."

* * *

Claudio stood up and stretched in the heat, then sat down lazily and shook his head. The MSI was murdering student demonstrators all across Italy during the autumn of 1977, he claimed, and the Italian police would do absolutely nothing to stop the violence. Indeed, he added, by that winter, it had become "obvious" to him and his new friends at the university that the *carabinieri*, the Ministry of the Interior, and the various shadowy organizations that made up the Italian intelligence community, were actively supporting the MSI gunmen and bombers in their attempts to intimidate and destroy the protesting students before their demands caught hold among the rank and file of the Italian working class.

"What happened that winter?" I asked.

Claudio frowned. "The Fascists shot four or five students . . . on the street . . . just like this. . . ." He made a child's finger pistol and pointed out into the harbor. "These were simply students going about their business. They were. . . ."

"Weren't they demonstrating?" I interrupted.

For the first time, I caught a smolder of anger in Claudio's face. But he paused a moment before he answered. "*Si, ma* . . . Listen, there was no law against carrying out a peaceful manifestation on the street. The students who were killed were

unarmed. But who did the *carabiniere* arrest, the Fascists? No, they rounded up the students and threw them in jail. This was the situation I found when I came back to Italy."

"Were you able to study with all of this going on?"

He squinted and shook his head, as if recalling a particularly painful memory. "First year engineering requires advanced algebra . . . *calcolo, come se dici?*"

"Integrated calculus."

"*C'est ça,*" he said, smiling thinly now. "The boys from the good schools all had taken calculus and trigonometry. Almost none of us from the *istituti* had been given mathematics past simple algebra and geometry. We never had a chance. . . ." He began rapping his fist lightly against his bare knee. "Three, four hundred students in an amphitheatre, the professor writing all these symbols on the blackboard and talking into his microphone about Maxwell's Principles or Faraday's Continuum. . . ." Claudio slapped his leg now, hard. "At the *istituto* we had a little theory, but mostly it was simple things . . . how to calculate ohms and watts, that type of problem. None of us from the technical institutes was prepared for a course like electromagnetic physics."

"Did you drop out of school?" I asked.

"No," he said calmly. "I went to my classes and I studied. I read physics and mathematics until four in the morning. They were trying to cheat people like *me*, but I would not give them the pleasure of seeing me abandon my courses."

Many other young Italian extremists have spoken about social inequity in just such personal terms. When Claudio used the phrase, "They were trying to cheat people like *me* . . ." he was unconsciously echoing a refrain that had first been heard several years earlier from Renato Curcio and the other founders of the Red Brigades.

When I had discussed Curcio's emotional makeup with Deputy Marco Boato, I learned some revealing information.

Renato Curcio, Marco Boato told me, took the social injustice he saw around him in a clearly *personal* manner, as if the inequities inherent in the social upheaval of Italy in the

booming 1960s paralleled inequities he had experienced in his own life.

"Psychologically," Beato said, "I eventually found Curcio to be *too* serious—that's to say, a very *anguished* person."

Such anguish, or diffuse depression, I learned, was a hallmark of many modern revolutionaries. In fact, during the course of my research and interviews, I had discovered an extremely interesting bit of information: Many of the leaders of terrorist bands, cult-like guerrilla groups, and actual cults whom I had studied, were oldest or only children who manifested a suicidal, depressive personality, which seemed to stem from an early fracture or emotional schism in what the psychiatrists call the "family constellation."

Andreas Baader of the German Rote Armee Fraktion, was an only child whose father had died on the Eastern Front. Ulrike Meinhof, his co-founder of the RAF, was an oldest child who lost both her parents as a young girl during the War. Renato Curcio was an illegitimate, only child whose father disappeared as an Italian Fascist volunteer on the Eastern Front and did not reappear until years later. Donald DeFreeze, the Field Marshal General Cinque of the American Symbionese Liberation Army, was an oldest child whose father beat him so brutally that he fled from his home almost as soon as he was physically able to do so. And, of course, there was the Reverend Jim Jones; an only child, he was beaten by a racially bigoted father as a young boy, then lost that father in early adolescence through divorce.

Probably of equal psychological importance, I learned later when I discussed this phenomenon with Dr. David Halperin, a New York psychiatrist who studies cult members' backgrounds, was the fact that all these leaders had been raised by strong-willed, seemingly self-effacing, independent women, mothers or surrogate mothers who convinced the emotionally isolated and lonely child that he or she was someone "special," destined for great things in life. In psychological terms, such a young person develops a personality marked by "paranoid grandiosity."

A prime example of this phenomenon was Pol Pot, the leader of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge. Emotionally isolated from boyhood, he apparently never manifested either pleasure or pain, sexual excitement or personal attachment. Like so many other leaders of revolutionary extremist groups, and like so many cult leaders, Pol Pot exhibited the "dead core," the empty emotional center about which Steve Katsaris spoke so eloquently.

Certainly, such emotional dislocation played a big role in the founding of Italian terrorism. When the "anguished" Curcio left the University of Trento with his new wife, Mara, and moved to Milan, he took with him his revolutionary fervor as well as a few colleagues from his radical journal, *Lavoro Politico*. They formed a radical splinter group called the Collettivo Politico Metropolitano, a Maoist splinter group that they somehow hoped would bring together students, workers, professional people and members of the non-unionized proletariat. They desperately wanted the masses, the oppressed workers of the factories, to reject the sycophancy of the CGIL and rally to the true revolution. But this did not happen. "From the ideological point of view," Marco Boato told me, "Curcio theorized a great deal about the role of the masses. But in reality, the *masses* he wanted to lead instead became increasingly small splinter groups which were increasingly isolated from the very masses about which he theorized."

Around this time, Deputy Boato continued, the neo-Fascist terror campaign of bombings and assassinations was in full swing. This "Strategy of Tension," as the campaign became known, was exactly what Curcio and his followers needed to convince themselves a Fascist *coup d'état* was in the offing. By arming themselves and going underground to fight against the Fascist threat, they had entered yet another sidetrack, but at least their troubling failure at converting the masses could be ignored in the face of this new danger.

As Signor Boato spoke, I considered this explanatory scenario of the development of terrorism: increasing isolation from the mainstream of politically active, but emotionally

unstable, young Italians, growing pessimism at their failure to become a mass movement, and, finally, retreat into a paranoid-but-plausible defensive posture against Fascist aggression. In effect, this explanation provided for me a believable sense of human bumbling and compounded error, factors of historical interpretation that I've always felt have been underestimated. Those Western journalists who *exclusively* saw in the Red Brigades and the Front Line pawns of the Soviet KGB, actual *creations* of the Kremlin, I think were missing an obvious point. The Russians did not create these groups or their "anguished" leaders; they simply exploited them.

In this exploitation, however, the Soviet Union was extremely clever as well as cynical. Knowing that the confused ultra-Maoists of the Red Brigades and Front Line would not easily accept *direct* Soviet control, the KGB appears to have manipulated the terrorist groups by indirectly controlling their finances and weapons supply through the Palestinians and the Bulgarian intelligence agencies: enthusiastic and loyal surrogates of the KGB.

As to the overall climate in Italy during the 1970s, Marco Boato agreed with Professor Silj's assertion that Italy had been an extremely politicized country, and that revolutionary theory had been a compelling interest—almost an obsession—for the early leaders of the armed groups.

During the time Boato and Renato Curcio were students together at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Trento, almost all the students there took an active interest in reformist politics. In fact, when the university was created in the mid-1960s, it was the first Italian institution to offer a degree in sociology, and therefore attracted a concentration of high-minded, theory-oriented young people who saw in sociology a possible means of redressing the inequities and dislocations in Italian society. This was certainly true in the case of Red Brigades founder Renato Curcio; he had already completed a degree in chemistry, but had rejected an academic career for what he called his "political work."

Marco Boato traced for me the ground swell of leftist stu-

dent sentiment from which the terrorist groups eventually emerged. The late 1960s in Italy, he said, were a time of widespread revolutionary fervor. Nineteen sixty-seven was called the "Year of Vietnam"; there had been almost constant student demonstrations that year against the war and in support of a variety of "anti-Imperialist" causes. Developing revolutionary leaders like Curcio saw the war in Vietnam, the urban guerrilla movement in Latin America, the anti-colonial wars in southern Africa, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the student protest movements in Europe and America as being cut from the same cloth. There was, Boato stated, "a strong revolutionary expectation" current among Italian students in the late '60s and early '70s.

As Professor Silj had stressed, Marco Boato confirmed that many students of Curcio's generation saw the PCI as no longer being a true Marxist-Leninist party, but simply an Establishment institution that had abandoned revolutionary ambitions. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—to which the PCI acquiesced—further strengthened this conviction. But above all, Curcio and the others were fascinated by China's Cultural Revolution, a chaotic revolutionary meat grinder that had turned China virtually upside down. "They had the belief," Deputy Boato said, "that, with a few exceptions, they could do in Italy what Mao had done in China."

This utopian fantasy, however, was not shared by the mainstream Italian student, Boato continued. "Curcio's position was very marginal in comparison to the mainstream student at the University of Trento." But Renato Curcio and his small group of followers did not seem to mind their isolation. Rather than take stock of the realities around them, they retreated further up a theoretical sidetrack. As Signore Boato described this steady flight from political reality, an image formed in my mind: the bearded, scholarly and rather monastic Renato Curcio, the trained chemist who wished to apply the cold logic of the laboratory to the living flesh of Italian society. He and his colleagues in the small Maoist propaganda organ they called *Lavoro Politico*, created metaphysical equations to represent

Italy; according to their logic, Latin, democratic, industrial Italy somehow came to equal agrarian, Maoist China. This process was akin to a schoolboy writing: $2 + 2 = 5$. The "base equation" determined the rest of his calculation, but the isolated, theoretical revolutionary plodded ahead unaware of his root misconceptions.

* * *

The surface of the harbor now was smooth gray under the vertical sun. Near the steel trawlers across from us, the Roman waterskiers had given up trying to start their motor and were attempting to paddle their boat back to the dock.

"What finally . . . led you away from the university and toward. . . ." I didn't know what word to use for terrorism.

Claudio helped me. "Toward the armed struggle?" He drew in a breath. "There were a number of important factors. As I said, we all knew that the government was behind the MSI and that there was a real chance of a *coup d'état* sponsored . . . I'm sorry," he looked at me apologetically, ". . . sponsored by the American CIA."

"What made you think that?"

Again, he thumped his fist on his knee. "Vietnam was liberated. Franco was dead in Spain, and a revolutionary government was in power in Portugal. The colonels had been overthrown in Greece. Where was the only place in the Mediterranean that America had secure military bases?" He slapped his thigh, then answered his rhetorical question. "Italy. The U.S.A. was in danger of losing its bases in Portugal, Greece and Spain. They would do *anything* to keep anti-Imperialist groups out of power in Italy." He looked at the skeptical expression on my face. "All this has been documented, you know."

"All right," I conceded. "What were some of your other reasons?" I continued. He had obviously learned the litany of this strategic argument well, as at an earlier time in his life, he had memorized categories of sin and means of obtaining grace

during catechism class. He had become a Maoist true believer and there was no sense arguing with him.

He sighed. "The entire affair of Aldo Moro," he answered, lowering his voice as he spoke the name of the murdered former prime minister, and his language regained the artificial tones of radical cant. "This showed us that the Christian Democrats were so obsessed with holding onto their positions of corrupt privilege that they would willingly sacrifice one of their most important leaders rather than compromise. One could never expect any real social progress from such a government. Also," he said, holding up his right index finger, "the Moro affair clearly demonstrated just how weak the government security forces were."

I wondered if he still believed this self-serving rationalizing or if it had become another comforting crutch, an article of faith. But I kept my speculation to myself. "So, let's see . . . by May 1978, then, you were involved with a . . . group?"

He shook his head. "No, not until later that summer, during the *feragosto*. A friend came to see me. He needed a place to stay. My father and mother were away, with my sister and her family, so I had room for him. Two days later, another friend came." Claudio was carefully selecting his words to tell his story, yet remain ambiguous. He cleared his throat and continued. "They belonged to an armed group . . . in the North. I knew that, and that they needed me to help them. There had been trouble . . . at a bank, and they had come down to Rome. That summer, after Aldo Moro, the police and *carabinieri* were on all the trains, wherever young people went, checking your papers, rounding people up as suspects. My friends asked me to help, to contact other members of their group. They needed money and identity papers."

Claudio rose now and strode back and forth next to my crate. Twice he stooped to lift his lines, as if he were actually interested in fishing at that moment. "I had to make a decision," he continued. "After Aldo Moro, a lot of people I knew were joining armed groups. A lot of my friends were in prison." He strode down the pier several paces, then swung back.

"I had this choice to make . . . like a soldier in a war: do you join your comrades, or are you a coward? I talked to my friends. They needed people in Rome." He rocked his shoulders and sighed. "I agreed to help. I joined them."

"Was this the Prima Linea?"

He pursed his lips and nodded. When he spoke again, his words came quickly, and his French became increasingly laced with Italian street jargon with which I was not familiar. "I stayed at the *facoltà*. But I didn't spend much time on my classes anymore, just enough to get along. No more demonstrations, though, no more protests or confrontations with the Fascists." He sat down on his bollard and laughed uncomfortably. "I cut my hair; I shaved my beard. Six months, then a year. I was in the armed struggle, in the underground." Here, he used the romantic French word *le maquis*. "But I didn't really fight. I never shot anybody or raided a bank . . . nothing like that. In the groups, it takes many, many people like me to support a few active combatants."

Now I cleared my own throat, a nervous reflex to Claudio's obvious anxiety in discussing the details of his underground life. "May I ask what kind of work you did for the Prima Linea?"

He drummed his fingers on his taut thigh muscles. "All right . . . I can tell you some things. I bought cars, using false papers. That was easy. I rented flats, using different papers."

"What else did you do?" I could see he was about to become reticent, and I wanted more information.

"I drove baggage in cars sometimes . . . suitcases, boxes." He nodded vaguely inland. "Sometimes from the . . . certain ports . . . to the North."

"What was in the suitcases?"

He smiled uncomfortably. "I never looked inside . . . honestly. That was not my job."

"Why did you leave the university? Franco said that there is a warrant for your arrest; was that the reason?" I felt very uncomfortable asking this because I sensed we were nearing a sensitive area. Surely, Claudio had to realize that it would be

impossible for me to recommend him to a Canadian colleague if he were wanted for serious crimes of terrorism here in Italy?

Claudio lifted one of his cane poles and dismantled it, carefully, so as to keep the dripping hook and sinker well clear of my crate. When he reached the gray chunk of unshelled shrimp he was using for bait, he delicately tossed it into the water. "In August 1980, after the Fascists bombed the railway station in Bologna, the group I was with became very active. People were arrested. Some of them cooperated with the police. Do you know about the *pentiti* laws?"

I nodded.

"Well, one of the people gave over my name. The police came to my parents' apartment about three o'clock on a Sunday morning. They smashed the door and pushed my father around. They threatened him. Lucky for me, I was not at home. That was in October 1980. I was supposed to start my third year of engineering. . . ."

"You couldn't continue?" I asked, recognizing the ridiculous stupidity of the question as soon as I spoke.

Claudio smiled politely. "The Minister of Education and the Minister of the Interior *do* talk to each other every few months, even in Italy."

"Have you stayed in Italy these past eighteen months?" Again, I realized that I was asking an inappropriate question.

Claudio was taking apart his second fishing pole now. He sighed. "My group became inactive after all the arrests. I spent some time working in a hotel kitchen. Now I'm living somewhere else. I've got a lot of friends like Franco who help me. . . ." His words slowed, then stopped.

"And now?"

"I want to go to Canada to finish my engineering. I want to get a job and marry some nice woman and live a comfortable life." He unsnapped sections of the fishing pole.

"What is the charge against you?"

"Membership in a terrorist organization," he recited. "And participation in armed insurrection against the State."

"Do you have a valid passport?" I was stalling, trying to

delay the inevitable end of the interview. There was a lot more that I wanted to learn about Claudio, about his motives in joining the Prima Linea.

"I have a passport, but it's not in my real name. That's a problem, isn't it?"

I nodded somberly. "Can you get a tourist visa to Canada?"

He shrugged. "*Forse* . . . maybe. This is the nearest I've been to Rome in a year. I could maybe get a visa in Paris."

"What about your academic records?"

"They are all in my own name, of course." He shook his head. "No good?"

"I don't know," I said as convincingly as I could. "If you got into Canada on a tourist visa, then explained your situation to the university authorities, they *might* be able to do something."

In my small notebook, I carefully printed the names and addresses of my two Canadian colleagues.

Claudio studied the names on the sheet of notepaper intently, then folded it and slipped it into a cheap billfold in the plastic box he used for his tackle.

"What about the armed struggle?" I asked, hearing a hollowness in my voice. "Is it all over? Are you through with it?"

He was snapping thick orange rubber bands around the sections of the cane poles, but stopped what he was doing and rocked back his head to consider my question. "For me . . . *si, certo*. That is why I want to emigrate. For other young people . . . I don't know. With so many in prison already, and every new person arrested making a *pentimento* . . . I don't know. I'm a bad person to ask. I just want to get away from this country."

"Have conditions improved at all?"

He frowned. "Not really. Everything's still a bloody mess . . . *un macello*, but now people are afraid to act . . . after the business with General Dozier. After Savasta and the others up in Bergamo who named so many of their comrades, it's probably finished."

"Did you accomplish anything? Did you have any successes?"

He finished binding up his fishing gear. "Yes," he said with

conviction. "Very many bourgeois people in this country were forced to realize that we exist when they found their own children joining us . . . when boys like Franco would risk prison to hide me and when he'd give me money. . . ." He shook his head. "The newspapers talk about the *miniscule* size of the Brigade Rosse and the Front Line and the *nappisti*, but they never really consider all the thousands of young bourgeois people who supported and protected us. *That* is a success. Italy will never be the same again."

Bending at the waist, he pulled on a pair of dusty plastic sandals. It was obvious that he wished to end the interview, now that he realized my Canadian contacts would not be much use to him.

"And what about the people who died," I blurted out. "What about the widows of the policemen and judges and journalists who were murdered?"

Claudio sat back up and stared at me. "We did not start the violence, *signore* . . . really. We did not set the bomb in the Piazza Fontana in 1969; the Fascists did. All that has been proven. Nobody from the Left put the bomb in the *stazione* in Bologna two years ago, either. Eighty-five people were blown up . . . *working* people just starting their August holidays. From the very beginning, the Right, the Fascists, have tried to crush us, to keep us down with violence. But we finally fought back."

I stared back at those sensitive, fluid eyes. Without question, he had a point; the campaign of neo-Fascist violence in Italy during the past 15 years has been widespread and barbaric, and much of it did seem to have been targeted on the working classes. But the violence of the Left—the kidnappings, "revolutionary executions," and kneecappings of journalists—had certainly not been limited to reprisals against armed neo-Fascist bands. Obviously, however, it was more psychologically comforting for a person like Claudio, whose life was indeed a *macello*, a bloody shambles, to believe that he had been engaged in a noble struggle to defend his own people, rather than in quixotic and ill-advised revolutionary adventurism.

"Do you ever see your father or mother these days?" I asked, trying to break the tension between us.

He picked up his tackle box and rose. "I talk to my mother on the telephone sometimes. But my father doesn't want to hear about me."

"I'm sorry," I said, shaking his hand.

"Thank you for the names of your friends in Canada." He turned to leave. "I'll go up alone, *s'il vous plait*." Moving down the pier, he adopted the slow, practiced stride of a person who desperately wants to appear untroubled.

At the foot of the pier, the two Romans had the cover off their Evinrude motor and were carrying on an animated discussion about its workings. Claudio strolled by them, grinned down at their stout, red backs, then climbed the stairs to the esplanade.

All the way back from Anzio on the three o'clock train to Rome, I sat on the gritty plastic seat, pondering Claudio's wasted life. Maybe he would actually escape to Canada and be able to start over with a "nice woman"; more likely, he would be caught, tried, and imprisoned here in Italy. If that happened, I realized with a hot cramp of shame, and it were discovered that he had granted an interview to an American writer, his chances of surviving prison would not be very great. I stared out at the humid afternoon and wondered what had gone wrong with Claudio's life and with Italy to have created such a grim possibility.

The train was entering the working-class *borgate* south of Rome now, a region of ugly high-rise apartment blocks, which stood like yellow fortifications, blocking the entry to the city. As we grew nearer, I could see the crumbling brickwork of the balconies and the broken roll shutters, half shut against the hot afternoon sun. On the flat roofs of these monoliths, thousands of television antennae poked up against the smoggy sky. It was in a vertical slum like this that Claudio had been raised.

Along the retaining walls of the train tracks and the ground-floor shopping arcades of the apartment blocks, spray-can graffiti blossomed in grotesque patches as high as a tall man

could reach. All of this graffiti was political, and much of it represented the bitterly polarized struggle between the extreme Left and the far Right:

MSI = Bastardi

PCI = Fame

DC = Servi del Sistema

As the train entered Rome proper and moved through older working-class neighborhoods, the graffiti became almost exclusively left-wing, much of it the work of "ultras":

Carabiniere = Assassini

NATO = Nazi

Autonomia Operaia = Libertà

B*R = Patrioti

This last graffiti was one of the few I saw in Rome that championed the Red Brigades. Most of the current graffiti proclaimed the virtues of small, quasi-legal *autonomia* groups or splinter political parties on the far left of the parliamentary spectrum. What I had come to find especially interesting about the ubiquitous Italian political graffiti was the accusatory simplicity of the messages, most of which involved the equal sign, as in:

DC = Bastardi Fascisti

Some Christian Democrats might well have been virtual and literal bastards, but it was very doubtful if they were "Fascists"; if they were, they had a perfectly legal, neo-Fascist party—the MSI—with which to affiliate. There was a kind of 1984 New Think at work here: spray a message on a wall, and the words became true; the polemical wish became reality. If you didn't like the government, and the government supported NATO, then you could transform the North Atlantic Treaty Organization into a collection of "Nazis"—in your mind as well as on the walls of buildings—simply by spraying a bright red = between *NATO* and *Nazi*. If a person saw enough of these slogans, especially a young person like Claudio for whom life in modern Italy had become a hopeless and frustrating *macello*, he might actually start to believe the message.

As an American university student in the 1950s, I had

scrawled my fair share of graffiti slogans, such as "Work is the Curse of the Drinking Class," on the toilet walls of campus bars. But neither I nor my buddies ever *believed* any of these messages. Our social causes, the "Eisenhower" recession of '57, for example, were far milder than the stagflation and social upheaval which have gripped Italy for the past decade. Certainly, few of my generation ever felt the deep-seated anger that seems to permeate the life of so many young Italians today. Also, the American students of the 1950s were not searching for all-encompassing, simplistic political explanations as to why the system had failed; we did not for a moment believe that democratic capitalism *had* failed. The same cannot be said for young people in contemporary Italy. It certainly seemed to me, passing between the graffiti-smeared walls of the train embankment, that these spray-can slogans typified the angry search for answers to the confusing riddle of widely perceived societal failure.

Graffiti, of course, is an Italian word, and the use of political painted slogans villifying your enemies has a venerable tradition in Italy. But today's zealous use of hateful over-simplification, which I had seen in the graffiti of both the Right and the Left, certainly added to the already dangerous situation. If, for example, a person believed the graffiti equation: *NATO* = *NAZI*, then an Italian conscript on guard duty at an arms depot could easily be mentally transformed into an actual Nazi soldier. If that young conscript were shot and killed in the course of an arms-hijacking raid on the depot, then no valid moral outrage had been committed; a recognized enemy of the people had simply been eliminated. Equally, if one believed the right-wing graffiti that all leftists protestors were "Moscow Whores," then a bomb planted in a student cafeteria or working-class bar was simply a blow struck for Western democracy.

As we passed through the squalid blocks of southern Rome, I couldn't help pondering the irony that Italy had been the birthplace of Renaissance humanism, a cultural movement that eventually elevated the uniquely individual person to a

position of unprecedented dignity. Now, it seemed, contemporary Italians were hell-bent on stripping the individual of his unique identity and shunting him into one easily recognized mass-formation or another in the centrifuge of the current political and social struggle.

The train was slowing for the Termini station, and the russet brick walls of the Emperor Hadrian replaced the yellow slabs of the high-rise housing projects. On the side streets facing the rail yard, young men lounged at dingy café tables or slouched around motorbikes at the curbside. By their postures and manner, I saw the tense, frustrated boredom I had come to recognize in the throngs of young people who wandered the streets of Rome each day. Some of the boys were shirtless in the afternoon sun, languidly kicking a soccer ball back and forth in the street. Just as our train squeaked onto a track for the central terminal area, I realized how it was that Claudio had acquired such an enviable suntan.

* * *

Later that day, I was strolling along the Via del Tritone toward my hotel. It was a warm evening and the sidewalks were crowded with well-dressed Romans leaving their shops and offices for the day. On the café terraces, prosperous citizens thronged the tables, chatting happily over Campari and dry vermouth, while the white-jacketed waiters scurried about with trays bearing spectacular ice-cream creations.

Nearing the Trevi Fountain, I turned right and entered the small, elegant piazza. On an impulse, I took a free café table and ordered a Cinzano from an aloof waiter. As I sipped my drink and watched the water cascade over Alberti's lovely marble seahorses, I saw a young man who looked like my *autonomia* guide, Franco, walking arm-in-arm with a beautiful young woman in a yellow summer dress. Staring more closely, I recognized that it was not Franco.

But then I realized that it could well have been, that he might take an occasional evening off from his revolutionary

commitments to the *autonomia*, and revert to the pleasures of his middle-class upbringing: a date with a charming, fair-haired girl, a stroll through the stylish *centro storico* of Rome, followed by dinner at one of the many elegant outdoor restaurants.

Franco could still permit himself the luxury of such indulgences; his family supported him during his long wait for the eventual *raccomandazione*. For him, the revolution was still an attractive ideal, but the picking up of a loaded pistol was better left for more desperate young men like his comrade Claudio.

Once more, I pictured the young men hunched over empty *espresso* cups in the shoddy cafes near the Termini. They were filling their empty days with long waits between occasional coffees. Almost everyone with whom I had spoken about the problem of unemployment among technical school and university graduates had mentioned the phenomenon of "waiting." Italian society, my sources stressed, was not at all as youth-oriented or mobile as other Western societies.

Certainly among the middle classes, a young person was not expected to find employment immediately after completing his education; he was expected to live at home and *wait*, sometimes for as long as ten years, for his family's *raccomandazione* to secure him a job. Then he could marry and begin his adult life.

This system might have worked well in the past, I realized, but it did not provide any solace for young people like Claudio who had been lifted up by educational reform from the relative stability of the unionized working classes, then politicized at the overcrowded universities and dumped on the labor market with or without a sham degree, but certainly without the possibility of an effective family *raccomandazione*. Obviously, young men like Claudio were not as patient as middle-class boys like Franco, who had led me to him.

But there was also a fair amount of impatience among middle-class youth. During talks with the overlapping chain of acquaintances who had eventually led me to Franco and Claudio, I'd heard several stories of depression and despair over-

taking kids from "good families," young middle-class people who had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into semi-legal radical activity. One girl told me of two friends who had worked for the revolutionary journal *Lotta Continua*, then become depressed at the lack of social progress in Italy, and eventually committed suicide within a few weeks of each other. These suicides were only two among several about which I was told.

Serious drug abuse was another disturbing trend among young would-be revolutionaries of the middle classes. A friend who regularly jogs in the Villa Ada park in central Rome told me that she saw spent syringes on the gravel paths each morning, and occasional "nodding" young addicts on the park benches. Reading the major Italian newspapers during my stay in Italy, I noted several stories on heroin-overdose deaths in the industrial North. Indeed, the English word "overdose" had come into contemporary Italian usage, in much the same way that "Mafia" became a common word in America. Alessandro Silj told me that *American* institutions like heroin use and revolutionary student-protest movements seemed to reach Italy six to eight years after they had run their course in the States. Italian youth was looking outside Italy for answers to its "anguish."

Two weeks before, on the tumultuous Sunday night that Italy won the World Cup soccer championship, Carol and I had been literally swept along by the ecstatic crowds to this same small *piazza*, where an estimated 100,000 young people chanted praise for their country's team and repeatedly roared the Italian national anthem. Many of these kids were probably *non-garantiti* or stalled middle-class boys like Franco, waiting out their inactivity by dabbling in revolution. But, for a few hours at least, they had been transformed by the victory in Madrid and reunited through patriotic zeal with their fellow countrymen. Class warfare had been temporarily cancelled. It was easy for me to picture Franco losing himself in the joyous hysteria and climbing to the top of the fountain to literally drape himself in the Italian flag, as had

so many other young men that night.

But, somehow, I could not envision Claudio giving in to such excesses of emotion. He had been two years in the underground; he was tired and depressed. For him, all of Italy was, purely and simply, *un macello*. Nor, I was sure, had Renato Curcio joined his fellow convicts around the flickering television screen in singing the national anthem when the horn ended the match and Italy had defeated the fearsome German team by a score of three to one.

To young revolutionaries like Claudio, and not-so-young terrorist leaders like Renato Curcio, patriotism was a despicable aberration, a device used by the Establishment to lead the masses away from their true revolutionary destiny. The fact that the Italian working "masses" truly loved soccer and worshiped their national team would not have been considered relevant, not if NATO = Nazi, or

$$2 + 2 = 5.$$

True believers like Curcio, whom Marco Boato had called "extremely rigid," clung tenaciously to their revolutionary faith. In this respect, they were as fanatical as any of Ayatollah Khomeini's Shi'ite Revolutionary Guards, who were, as I sat at my café table in Rome, hurling themselves in suicidal human-wave attacks against the Iraqi minefields outside Basra. Both Deputy Boato and Professor Silj had emphasized that Curcio and the members of his terrorist "generation" would never cop out and beg for leniency under the *pentiti* laws, even though those who had exercised this option and received lighter prison sentences had carried out far more violent acts than had they themselves.

A true believer, whether he be Italian Maoist or Iranian Shi'ite, Apostolic Guard in Jonestown, or Moonie selling flowers on the street corner, emotionally *defines* himself by his identity to the group. Through this identity, he receives personal confirmation of his existence, of his value. Without it, the dead void inside him swells to intolerable size.

Alessandro Silj seemed to have captured the essence of this situation when he offered me his insights on the motives of

the most recent "generation" of Italian terrorists. "As to their motivations," he said, "they have, at the most, twenty percent political concerns and eighty percent personal problems."

The professor's contention seems to be borne out in the estimated sizes of armed terrorist bands, their active supporters, and the *autonomi* sympathizers. During the heyday of urban terrorist activity in the late 1970s, Italian authorities estimated that there were perhaps 1000 full-time, underground terrorists divided among 22 "permanent" groups, the largest of which were the Red Brigades and the Front Line. These full-time guerrillas were assisted by possibly 3000 to 8000 active, clandestine supporters who acted as couriers and provided transportation and safe havens for the armed terrorists. To these active members in the "armed struggle," there were an additional 20,000 to 30,000 dedicated sympathizers: "ultra" members of neo-Maoist *autonomia* organizations who leaned emotionally toward terrorism.

A worst-case estimate, therefore, would render a total of perhaps 30,000 young Italians who were intellectually and emotionally disposed toward anti-government violence. Only a small percentage of these young people, however, actually took part in armed terrorist actions, and only a handful of these active "combatants" actually attacked people. Thirty thousand is only a tiny percentage of Italy's total population of 55 million. On a more relevant level, the generous estimate of 30,000 terrorists, supporters, and sympathizers represents only a third of one percent of the eight million young Italians in secondary school, university or the labor market during the troubled decade of the 1970s.

Placing the phenomenon of Italian terrorism under such statistical scrutiny deflates much of the sensational impact the movement gained in the world press. There is no denying, however, that this small core of unstable radicals was active and violent: in the first six months of 1978 alone, there were over 1400 acts of political violence, including 925 bombings and shootings. That level of action is much worse than any similar wave of radical activity in the United States during the

height of the anti-war, anti-Establishment violence of the late '60s and early '70s.

But the fact remains that only a tiny percentage of Italian youth actively supported this violently nihilistic rebellion. The vast majority of young people made the best of troubled times and got on with their lives. Significantly, even though the Red Brigades grandiosely "declared war" on NATO, the incidence of conscientious objection to military conscription in Italy did not rise very much in the 1970s. Further, the Italian government dramatically increased its contributions and responsibilities within the NATO alliance. If one of the goals of Italian Terrorism had been to "demilitarize" Italy and drag it away from its NATO partners, the failure of the terror campaign to meet this objective was obvious.

More important than statistics on military conscription, or the budget increases to NATO army units, however, is the demonstrated durability of Italian social institutions during the long, corrosive terror campaign that gripped the country for over ten years. During this bloody decade, the Italian criminal justice system and the parliament did not resort to widespread extra-legal, unconstitutional means of combatting the terrorists. Much to the dismay of the Red Brigades intellectuals and their supporters in the *autonomia*, "Fascist" measures did not become commonplace among Italian police or judges. *Habeas corpus* was never suspended, nor was violent interrogation of captured suspects employed to any degree. The one case of documented police brutality—involving the anti-terrorist squad that rescued American General James Dozier from the Red Brigades in Padua—was significant in that the handful of overzealous police involved were publicly brought before justice.

When I discussed the durability of Italian institutions with Professor Silj, he noted how easy it would have been for Italy to "go the way" of Argentina and unleash a murderous wave of state terror to combat the violence of the urban guerrillas. But, in the end, Italy had not chosen to battle left-wing terror with right-wing overkill. There are, in fact, no political prisoners in

Italy today. Every young person in prison is there because he or she was convicted by a jury of his or her peers for having taken part in specific, proven criminal acts.

Amazingly, Italy achieved this degree of political and social maturity only 30 years after the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini. Equally significant is Italy's record in combatting far-right, neo-Fascist violence and illegal political intrigue while simultaneously combatting the far-left terror. No other contemporary society has been so assaulted by anti-democratic extremism and been able to maintain its moderate, democratic institutional framework.

Italian intellectuals are slowly recognizing this remarkable achievement. As Alessandro Silj told me when we met in Rome, "The behavior of Italian institutions has been extremely responsible on the whole. These democratic institutions, after all, have proven to still have flexibility."

Chapter Eight

San Francisco, Spring

IT WAS FOGGY along Market Street. Carol and I were snuggled into the end booth of the bar, sipping our beers as we waited for Sue to arrive with her friend, Duane. Outside the plate-glass window, the headlights formed gauzy halos in the fog. From where I sat, I could see further up Market toward the Filmore district where those disembodied headlights looked like spacecraft, silently cruising among the bright stars of the anti-crime lights.

Carol fidgeted with the tape recorder; I opened, then popped shut my notebook. Leaning close to the cold window glass, I peered once more down the sidewalk. There weren't many people on the street tonight, and the bar was almost deserted, which made our long wait even more irksome. Sue was over an hour late, and I was beginning to suspect that she had simply gotten last-minute nerves and decided to cancel the scheduled meeting without calling our motel to tell us.

I sighed, and my breath formed a misty oval on the glass to match the mist outside. We had spent another exhausting day, interviewing old friends and acquaintances, friends of friends, and several openly hostile strangers—all members of the amorphous Bay Area community that forms an embattled remnant of the once-powerful radical Left.

The week before, when we arrived in San Francisco, we'd been optimistic about making contact with former members or active supporters of armed radical groups like the flamboyantly violent Symbionese Liberation Army, the Black Guerrilla Family, or the shadowy Weather Underground. Our initial contacts by long-distance telephone earlier that year had been promising, but when we actually began knocking on doors, people were much less forthcoming. Several attributed their wave of suspicion and reluctance even to discuss past events in the most general terms to renewed paranoia over FBI interest in the resurgent Weather Underground. Whatever the cause, few people were willing to talk about their activities during the politically volatile years of the '60s and '70s. One by one, our potential sources dried up, much as they had during our initial weeks in Rome, seeking out Italian extremists.

But then Sue had called me back in the afternoon. Explaining that she had finally been able to reach a man named Duane, whom she had once been "very close to," she asked if, in exchange for an interview, I would be willing to include something in my book about Duane's deep concern about the American "military escalation" in Central America. Duane, it seemed, was a bona fide American extremist, a young man with an impressive radical pedigree: a Vietnam veteran and a protest bomber during the chaotic mid-1970s. Initially, Sue's description sounded too good to be true; I felt I might be letting myself be set up as part of either a nasty practical joke—a tweak of the Establishment's collective nose—or perhaps a gutsy attempt to use my book as a propaganda conduit.

By ten o'clock, however, with Sue an hour overdue, I had decided that her inherent optimism had led her to promise something she couldn't deliver. But as I slipped the notebook

into my briefcase, I couldn't muster any real anger at Sue; she was a talented weaver and potter, a woman with a warm and generous nature whom we had known since we'd lived in the same Greek island village during the "Aquarian" days of the '60s. Our lives had gone in different directions, but I knew Sue would not deliberately deceive us.

I reached for my wallet to pay the check, but Sue came breezing in the door, followed by a tall, stoop-shouldered guy with the collar of his plaid jacket turned up against the damp night. Standing in the entrance of the bar, searching for us among the dim tables and booths, they looked like a couple costumed for a '60s nostalgia party. Sue wore an eclectic mix of embroidered Bedouin dress and raw-wool Andean poncho; the bearded man had on a worn mackinaw, patched jeans and work boots. As they turned to approach us, I saw that his auburn beard was trimmed and his hair tied back in a thin pony tail. Standing up to shake his hand, I got a close look at his ravaged face and tired, cautious eyes. His hands were scarred and muscular; the callouses were quite authentic. I sat down next to Carol and stared across at Duane. Whoever he was, I decided he was not some latter-day campus leftist playing the role of a mad bomber.

In her habitually breathless manner, Sue apologized for being so late, explaining that Duane's "lady" had dropped him at her house in Berkeley on time, but that Sue's faithful old VW camper had refused to start until Duane had practically taken apart and put back together the "whole motor." Glancing at the residual engine grease on Duane's fingers, I noted that he did look like the type of guy who had fixed his share of ailing VW motors. A svelte young waiter fluttered by, ignoring our booth, but Duane managed to stop the boy's flight with a throaty "Hey, brother."

We ordered beers. While Sue and Carol made a self-conscious attempt to chat about the weave of Sue's poncho, Duane and I eyed each other with equal self-consciousness. After downing half a glass of Miller Lite in nervous sips, Sue slid out of the booth, explaining that she had an early-morning

crafts class in Oakland to teach. She pressed our hands and kissed Duane's face, then was gone. Duane and I cleared our throats at the same embarrassing moment, then went silent. A moment later, we both started to speak at the same time. For several difficult minutes we each made queries about possible mutual friends. Duane smoked a Camel, sucking short puffs right down to the butt, like an infantry grunt or a convict. Finally, Carol intervened to explain slowly and calmly our relationship to Sue, throwing out the names of several recognizable radical figures with whom we had already made contact. As she spoke, Duane began to relax.

The waiter brought three more beers and Duane smiled for the first time. He asked if Sue had discussed his willingness to grant us an interview in exchange for my agreement to include his opinions about the current trends in American foreign policy in my book. I told him that I was willing to listen to anything he wanted to say. Sliding his long frame over to fill the wooden bench seat opposite us, he began a low, seemingly well-reasoned summary of his political position, pausing twice, like a seasoned commentator, while Carol adjusted the tape recorder and I jotted notes.

The major thrust of what he had to say concerned the personality and "institutional identity" of Secretary of State Alexander Haig. General Haig, Duane said gravely, was a "charter member" of the Military Industrial Complex, the "only man in the history of the goddamn world who goes from colonel to four-star general in less than five years."

Although I found Duane's description of Haig hyperbolic and riddled with the usual distortions, I remained silent, sensing that he was testing me. If I spoke up now, I knew, I could easily blow the interview. So, I dutifully wrote notes, and Carol made a show of manning the tape recorder; after all, a deal was a deal, and we had promised Sue that we'd listen to and record what her friend had to say.

For the next 15 minutes, Duane spoke with impassioned intensity on the conspiratorial nature of the present administration, and about the secret, inner core of corporate and

military "oligarchs" who had long controlled our supposedly democratic nation, America. I had heard most of this before, in the '60s and '70s. The cast of villains—real and imagined—was slightly different then, but the import of the message was much the same: America was a "fascist" country, ruled by a hidden clique of greedy generals and weapons merchants. As a political moderate, I'd often found myself damned by both the Right and the Left during discussions like this, and I'd learned to bite my tongue with a convincing expression of interest on my face.

The only novelty in Duane's blanket condemnation of America was his obsession with Alexander Haig. Whereas many liberals found Haig a singular object of potential parody, Duane—a radical true believer—saw in Haig's Strangelovian mumbo jumbo and hi-tech syntax mangling a truly sinister quality. To Duane, Alexander Haig was the quintessential representative of the hidden America power elite.

American involvement in El Salvador, Duane said, choosing his words for maximum impact, was a "clear proof" of this power elite's dangerous and ruthless greed. El Salvador was about to become a second Vietnam, Duane proclaimed, his lips clenched in quiet rage, his eyes searching my face. Did I understand what that meant?

I said that I did, then asked him to explain why the American "military industrial complex" would want to involve the country in another disastrous, protracted guerrilla war that had all the potential of becoming as big a social and economic boomerang as Vietnam.

Duane had a ready answer. The power elite needed a smoke screen to take the people's minds off the impending economic collapse. Did I realize, he asked, that the rate of unemployment and business failures was at its highest since 1940?

I admitted that I was aware of this, but pointed out that Great Britain and other European countries were undergoing similar economic dislocations.

Duane brushed aside my attempt to link America to any global economic trends; he wanted to make me aware of the

unique evil that America represented. "Look!" he said, visibly struggling to speak patiently, "you've got the worst god-damn depression since the thirties, okay? You've got the supply-side fascists in the process of ripping down every institution of social justice this country's managed to build since the New Deal. Hell, Reagan himself is gonna tear apart the Social Security system and use the money to pay off his Palm Springs buddies from TRW and Rockwell International. Do you know what kind of *defense* contracts ITT has . . .?"

I held up my hand in protest. "Okay," I muttered. "I understand your point, but I still don't see how getting the U.S. involved in a guerrilla war in El Salvador fits into Reagan's economic policies."

"Diversion, man," Duane said flatly. "With the people watching all the bang-bang on the tube, they won't feel like getting out in the streets to protest when the day-care centers and the CETA programs get shut down for good. But there's a more important reason. He's afraid of his own military, the *troops*, not the generals. Ninety-five percent of the enlisted men in the American military are Third World or dispossessed working-class whites. Now, when you look at . . ."

Duane went on to offer the convoluted theory that the administration needed a shooting war to maintain discipline in the restive ranks of "Third World" American soldiers, sailors and airmen, who, he claimed, were on the verge of mutiny. For the next interminable 40 minutes, he lectured us on the racist fears and racially repressive policies of the "corporate power bosses" who had selected Alexander Haig to be their point man. Carol and I made a reasonably convincing show of listening to this diatribe and taking notes, but what I remember most clearly from Duane's harangue is his deep-seated but amorphous anger. Duane wasn't simply discussing political theory; he was venting bitter hatred. Sitting in this dumpy Market Street bar, I found myself in the presence of another young person like Louise Mueller, Mehdi, or Claudio whose means of political discourse was vituperative rage.

Finally, Duane completed his remarks, and, according to

the terms of our bargain, he was ready to discuss his own involvement in the Bay Area leftist underground during the turbulent and violent 1970s.

I took a few moments to remind him of the structure and purpose of the book. This series of profiles, I explained, would be an attempt to discover the true motivations of people who had embraced or had felt themselves driven to embrace extremist, often violent, patterns of behavior, both personal and political. I said that the motives of most American radicals had often been portrayed by writers in distorted, simplistic terms. I wanted him to understand as fully as possible what my goals were in this project.

"Listen," Duane interrupted with a smile. "If Sue said I should go for it, I should talk to you, that's good enough for me, okay?" He went on to say that the news-media portrayal of the disgruntled Vietnam vet had always been distorted, and that the renewed interest in the vets' problems was encouraging but that it was "coming down about ten fucking years too late for a lot of vets."

I wondered if he included himself in the category, but didn't pose that question yet. Instead, I asked Duane to talk about his family background and to tell us about his experiences in college and in the service.

Duane said he was born in the Pacific Northwest, the first son in a family of two girls and two boys. His father was a heavy-equipment mechanic for a lumber company, and the family moved around a lot when Duane was a small child in the early 1950s, finally settling in an industrial town, where Duane attended high school. When speaking of his childhood, Duane became more relaxed; he laughed several times recounting amusing incidents on family camping trips to dig clams and surf fish. His father and mother, he said, were a "well-adjusted, working-stiff couple." I had not heard *that* shop-worn, Old Left phrase since my student days at Madison in the late '50s, but I refrained from commenting. The only *real* problem Duane had experienced with his father, he said quietly, was the fact that his dad actually believed he owed

some kind of “loyalty debt to the rip-off company” that had employed him “man and goddamn boy” since he had returned from Merchant Marine service in World War II. That “shucky Uncle Tom mind-set” was a controlling factor in Duane’s father’s life, and, according to Duane, the major cause of the eventual alienation that developed between the father and his son.

At this point, I sensed that Duane might become reticent, giving in to silent anger associated with his father, so I quickly asked him to move ahead, to talk about his college days.

Duane looked up from the wet bottle rings on the table. “Okay,” he muttered. “College. I transferred down here in sixty-eight. Entered UC Berkeley as a sophomore with some advanced course standing.”

He had found the large, bizarre student scene at Berkeley overpowering at first, he admitted, so he had sought out friends from home—a guy named Jason and “two guys who were into engineering”—to share a two-bedroom duplex off campus. But, despite the familiar comfort of friends as roommates, the contrast between his journalism and general humanities courses and the flamboyant freak scene in the Berkeley community soon began to bother Duane. “Look,” he explained, “humanities really sucked, okay? David Copperfield or some such nonsense. Out on Telegraph Avenue you got people levitating and doing astral projections . . . people tripping, right? So, I can’t handle it. School was like this cartoon movie or something. Go to Spanish conversation lab, Señor Johnson, the friendly American banker bullshits Señor Lopez, the friendly Columbian business executive, then you come home and watch villages getting blown away with napalm on the Walter Cronkite Show. Unreal. The *real* world was happening off campus. On the street, in people’s houses, and at the meetings, man. What can I tell you? It was a shitty experience. Berkeley, nineteen sixty-eight. I wasn’t ready for it, okay?”

He lowered his head and took a furtive glance at his watch. I felt I might be losing him.

"Can I ask about the kind of dope you were doing at that time?" I blurted out.

Duane looked up and smiled. "You can ask anything you want, man. This is the U.S. of A., a free country."

We both laughed and the tension fell.

He began speaking softly about drugs during his first year at Berkeley. Basically, he said, dope was an almost *patriotic* thing to do, a public statement that your loyalties were in the right place. 'Strong peer pressure,' I jotted in my notebook.

"I wasn't a real head, though," Duane said. "I did some speed to study behind, right? Crystal meth, white crosses, until after Christmas break. Just to study behind because I *needed* my grade point."

"And grass?"

"Grass to cool out. Everywhere you went in those days it was 'Don't Bogart that joint, my friend.' Flower Power, what can I tell you? It wasn't Reefer Madness . . . more a social thing, like beer when you went to school."

I nodded, but in my notes I wrote: 'Daily marijuana use, combined with amphetamine binging.' Although not inclined to provoke an argument, I still wanted to learn more about his drug intake during the single, turbulent year he had spent at Berkeley before dropping out and enlisting in the Navy. "If grass and speed weren't a factor in your problems at school, what about tripping?"

Duane wiped his hand across his forehead, and as he did so, a car turning onto Market Street illuminated his face through the mist-smeared window of the bar. It was hard for me to believe that the man sitting opposite was only in his early 30s. The burst capillaries and spider veins, the puffy flesh beneath the eroded eyes, and deep scowl lines around his mouth spoke of a much older person, a man in his late 40s who had lived a hard, self-destructive life.

"Yeah," Duane said. "People always wonder about tripping when you talk about Berkeley. But I really wasn't into that, okay? Only a couple times. It was too scary. . . ."

'Paranoid LSD reaction,' I scrawled on my note pad.

"I was only nineteen," Duane continued. "I wanted to be a journalist, and I saw too many wasted, inarticulate people on the street, tripping their brains out."

I asked if staying in school had been important to him as a way of avoiding the draft, or because he didn't want to let down his family.

Duane explained that he had been the first member of his family to attend college, and that his mother had repeatedly expressed extravagant hopes for his future career as a professional man, a journalist or a lawyer. Significantly, Duane did not mention his father at this point, and I surmised that there might well have been some resistance from his father when Duane had transferred down from the school near home to the "freak scene" at Berkeley.

Whatever his motives for attending UC Berkeley, however, Duane found himself in academic trouble and buffeted by indecision in the spring of 1969. Even though there were literally dozens of draft-counseling organizations active in Berkeley at that time that could have helped him maintain his student deferment, Duane allowed himself to run up a series of incompletes and failing grades by the end of the semester: a sure invitation for his local draft board to change his status to 1-A.

"What happened?" I asked. "Why'd you do it?"

"Good question," Duane said, hunkering down in the booth in contemplation. "I'm not sure even now. . . . But I think about it a lot, you know. I think that I was very tense . . . that I got over-anxious about the draft, about trying to stay in school. I knew that I wasn't going to hack through any journalism major, then stay in graduate school until I was twenty-six, just to keep out of the Army." He rubbed his forehead again, wincing at these memories. "I also knew that the draft board at home did not look kindly on long-haired freaks going to Berkeley. There'd been some kids from home killed in 'Nam already, and I knew that they had their eye on me. . . . Anyway, my grade transcripts came in July, and my dad sat me down for this man-to-man talk. Then my mom starts freaking out that

going in the Army would be a waste of *all my education*, so pretty soon we're talking about a choice between the Air Force or the Navy. It's right out front, where the old man stands."

He cracked his knuckles loudly. "The old man had been in the Merchant Marine in World War II," Duane muttered with a tinge of sarcasm. "Both Atlantic and Pacific. He always had lots of war stories for us kids when we were growing up."

"So, you enlisted in the Navy?"

"I cut a deal with the Navy recruiter at home," he said, his expression stiff now, his voice wooden. "It was a three-year enlistment . . . guaranteed training as a yeoman journalist. But three years would really be something like twenty-six, twenty-seven months with an early release to go back to college. He offered all kinds of GI bennies, okay? It sounded slicker than goose shit."

"They always make it sound good before you sign the paper," I offered.

"This recruiter is a CPO, a real shellback. He says there'll be a minimum of sea duty after training and qualification. My old man's sitting there with me and we're all smoking the chief's Pall Malls, like good buddies. The chief looks at me and the old man goes, 'What better training for a young journalist than meeting *Stars and Stripes* deadlines in the Mediterranean?' Some such shit. He never once mentioned the WesPac or the war. I was nineteen, man. My old man was sitting right there with me. What can I say? I was impressed."

"I imagine it sounded better than the Army."

Duane laughed. "Sure as hell did."

"So, you went in that fall?"

"September, sixty-nine. Boot camp, then into yeoman school. Everything was moving ahead on track." Duane scowled at the foggy darkness outside. "Everything except one or two little items. I flunked a couple really questionable tests. Shucky tests they had to keep the black kids from earning rating. But they kept this *white* kid back, too." He thumped his chest with a fist. "Next thing that happens is I'm

up on report like twice for this or that nonsense. Now, you can't stay in yeoman school and keep getting on report. So, all of a sudden, I'm in with ten thousand other guys training as a deck nigger . . . a "deck ape." I lodge a protest about getting dropped from yeoman school, all typed up, official and neat. Finally, they panel me for the protest. Bunch of chiefs and commanders. They've got my file right in front of them and they're pissed off. The head of the panel goes, 'You lodge one more fucking protest, boy, and somebody's going to *lodge* his shitkicker right up your asshole.' They weren't kidding either." "How long after that did you get a ship?"

Duane blew out an angry cloud of cigarette smoke. "Like immediately. Over-complement orders right out of the training depot. I draw a carrier, naturally. So, there I am, a seaman apprentice on a WesPac attack carrier. Worst duty possible. I couldn't believe this was happening. Honest. It was unreal."

I tried to explain that such reversals often occurred in the armed services, but Duane cut me short.

"This was different," he said with dogmatic finality. "They had their meat hooks out for me because of some shit that went down in the barracks and off base. There was this SDS coffee-house where we hung out. This was during the whole uniform war-protest trip."

"Were you an active war protester at that point?"

He laughed. "I was nineteen years old. I'd just enlisted in the Navy. I wanted to become a *Stars and Stripes* journalist, right? What kind of protest is that? I didn't know didley. All I did was go to a couple meetings and sit there, but the chiefs that ran my school got incredibly uptight."

Duane shifted impatiently on his bench and rolled his beer bottle in his hands. Obviously, the memory of that troubled period, 12 years before, was still fresh and rankling. Like so many other veterans of that long war, Duane had not been able to put the past behind him; he was stuck in time, continually reliving the same bitterness and perceived injustices.

I asked him to describe as fully as possible what his life aboard the carrier had been like.

"I was over-complement at first," he said, his voice becoming more controlled. "If you've never been on a big attack carrier that's all loaded and crewed up for deployment, you got no idea what it was like. There were guys sleeping in equipment spaces and stores compartments . . . racks out in the ladder wells. Mattresses in the passageways, not enough lockers, so some guys get their seabags ripped off. I'd never even been *on* a ship before, right? I didn't know where the fire plugs were in my sleeping compartment, and some first class reams me over that like two hours after I'm on board. We were about four decks down from hangar deck. You couldn't just go wandering around. It was. . . ." He ran his fingers through his hair in frustration at trying to convey the essence of his experience.

"Must have been pretty confusing," I offered, "pretty miserable."

Duane responded to my encouragement. "Incredible, man. This was a *ship*, right? But for us, it's more like a prison or a big factory. Right off, first day at sea, I draw Mess Stores. That means four on, four off, humping pallets with maybe fifty cases of canned fruit cocktail on them, or hundred-pound sacks of flour to the bakeries. They've got stores all over the ship, and that's what has to get used up first. But half the kids we had leading my duty sections didn't know where stuff was. And every deck you go on, man, there's some jughead Marine slamming the bulkhead with his club, yelling, 'Gangway for prisoners.' Unreal. Guys in *chains* getting led here and there like so many circus monkeys or something."

I scribbled notes as quickly as I could. Duane was doing a good job of bringing alive his experience. Obviously, he had retained in his mind a vivid memory of those first confusing months aboard the ship. What also impressed me as he spoke, however, was his lack of perspective. He described the Marine brig guards and the master-at-arms NCOs as brutal and the berthing conditions as unusually cramped and unpleasant. But I wondered what he had expected conditions to be like aboard a warship going to war. I also wondered if he had read accounts of life aboard naval vessels during earlier wars.

Probably not, I decided. To a great degree, the Vietnam war was fought by baby-boom Americans who had been shielded from war's ugly realities until they actually arrived at the war zone. Duane, like so many other kids born in the early 1950s, saw World War II through the lens of "Hogan's Heroes." In Duane's personal case, he had never intended to become a wartime sailor; his original view of naval service was colored by the unrealistic recruitment come-on he had been given, as well as by his mother's anxious fantasies concerning his professional future.

His lack of perspective epitomized America's lack of involvement, lack of interest in the Vietnam war. Had he been sailing aboard the *Wasp* for the Coral Sea, 25 years earlier, he would have no doubt felt less confused and troubled. Whatever the cause, however, Duane definitely felt that his generation of sailors was unique in its hardship and suffering. But in fairness to him, I had to admit that the aircraft carrier sailors of the Vietnam war did have certain new problems: racial strife and drug abuse produced shipboard tensions and divisiveness hitherto unheard of aboard American Navy ships.

"There was this incredible racial number on my deck," Duane continued, his voice becoming sing-song, as if he'd told these stories often in the past. "We had Panthers and Black Muslims, and we had White Power guys. There were even a couple of KKK bastards in my compartment, except they weren't your basic cracker rednecks. They were from New Jersey. Incredible. There were shakedowns for knives, shakedowns for dope at all hours, day and night. Didn't make any difference, though, 'cause you never saw daylight. You were supposed to keep the lights dimmed so the off-watch guys could sleep, but we'd get roused anyway . . . shake down your locker, strip your rack to the mattress. Day after day of that. I go, 'Hey, I'm really looking at three *years* of this shit?' At least 'Nam's only thirteen months. I was thinking of signing on for the Riverine Force or something drastic like that because I knew I didn't have a chance. The master-at-arms has got my number from his asshole buddies in Coronado."

I wondered if Duane's fears had simply been paranoia, but then realized the validity of this persecution complex was less important than its intensity. Flipping a notebook page, I struggled to keep up with his rambling monologue.

"... We clear Subic and two days later, we're on the line. They got me as a trainee in Damage Control now. I'm the new kid, so I get to hump the big tool chest . . . all over the place, up these ladders, inside ventilators. Lots of people fucking up because of no sleep. We lost I don't know how many tons of fresh water purging tanks our first week on the line. That means no fresh-water showers for like two weeks, then one every other day. This is the end of the monsoon, okay?"

"Pretty hot?"

He winced. "Incredible. Fungus growing in your crotch, in your ears. Your dungarees stink . . . really moldy. You got mold on the hamburger rolls. People getting roused, day and night. Tension, man. This ASW training day and night. Half of us didn't know what we were supposed to be doing. You had to study for these tests or the chief would ream you. You had to try to get loose."

I nodded in what I hoped was a sympathetic manner; clearly this litany of complaint was an elaborate rationalization for some shortcoming or failure he was about to relate.

"All this time," Duane said, "we're launching strike aircraft and photo planes. Helos coming and going. Those steam-ram cats blasting practically all the time. Hear it all over the ship. The A-6s get launched in flights of two or three and the F-4s in whole squadrons . . . bam, bam . . . bam. We had these maximum effort strikes, and everybody who's got anything to do with aircraft is going around on no sleep whatsoever, trying to put up planes that are down with engines, hydraulic, you name it. Very bad conditions, man. People were pissed off most of the time."

It was during this period of exhausting flight operations that Duane met a buddy from boot camp who worked on one of the catapult maintenance and repair crews.

"This guy says, 'Hey, what about the cat crew, man? We're

the hippies of the ship. We don't get hassled or roused if we keep the cats up. We need three trainees, man.' I go, 'Where do I sign on, brother?' I was ready. One month on the line and I'd seen guys getting burnt with steam lines and chemicals, getting their fingers chopped off in machines they didn't know how to handle. And there's kids walking around stoned out on hash oil or mesc. You had to get loose . . . you know, 'Give me Librium or give me Meth.' But then they'd sound an alarm, and somebody'd get hurt. It was better for the cat crews. On call all the time, but they had open messing. All the flight-deck guys went around wherever they wanted. They had special jerseys . . . green, red, whatever. Outrageous. Master-at-arms wouldn't hassle you. They really were the hippies of the ship. I signed on right away as a probation trainee."

"Was that actually better than Damage Control?"

"Anything," Duane said, "to get out of that Panther-cracker shit in my compartment."

Duane's specialty became cables, greasing and shifting the thick steel cables of the arresting gear and catapult systems. As he spoke of this period, Duane's nostalgic pride was obvious; he and his buddies must have felt that rewarding camaraderie common to young men doing a job well for the first time in an adult world. But the conditions were difficult. "You got to remember that this is the South China Sea . . . salt air and salt spray, line squalls. The aircraft were in bad shape, falling apart, but we kept putting them up and recovering them . . . twenty-four, thirty A-4s, A-6s and F-4s on any given day. In the monsoon. The guys in my section are all individualists, man . . . headbands and beads, Wyatt Earp mustaches. Nobody gave a shit how we looked, as long as we kept the cats and arresting wires up." He grinned now in fond memory of those strenuous months. "Hey, we were like the nigger blacksmith on the Man's plantation. Don't matter if he drinks corn liquor, long as he keeps the Man's mules in shoes."

Months later, when I verified Duane's story as best I could using Navy records, I discovered that his ship had not been

engaged in "maximum effort strikes" in the true sense of the phrase. Duane's first tour in the South China Sea coincided with the protracted bombing pause that began in 1968. His ship was, indeed, launching strike aircraft and photographic reconnaissance planes, but at nowhere near the intensity of earlier operations against North Vietnam. Basically, the planes from Duane's carrier were on photo-recon missions of the North and scheduled interdiction strikes against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Laotian Panhandle.

But Duane seemed anxious to convince me that he was a veteran of dangerous and grueling combat flight operations carried out under the most arduous conditions. Navy veterans with whom I have spoken, however, have assured me that a green over-complement "deck ape" like Duane would not have been integrated into the tightly disciplined flight-deck crew, even as a probationary trainee, if the ship had been working at a "maximum effort" combat operational level.

Apparently Duane, like certain other young men who served somewhere in that vast war zone, and who later got into trouble, was eager to blame his adjustment problems on "combat." But Duane never saw combat, nor was he witness to the suffering of the Vietnamese civilians caught up in the fighting. His service aboard aircraft carriers was unpleasant and uncomfortable, but clearly not sufficient to produce the "post-traumatic stress disorder" that has plagued authentic combat veterans of Vietnam.

As various veterans' groups have pointed out, however, even those Vietnam combat vets who have had trouble readjusting to civilian life have rarely become involved with violent crime or violent radical action. Some of the popular media have perpetuated a myth of Vietnam vets as "psychologically disordered, drugged-up killers," I was told by veterans' advocacy spokesmen, and this myth, in itself, has done much to make readjustment difficult for many vets.

Duane's ship did not stay in the war zone indefinitely. They were rotated back to California, and Duane had to face some unpleasant realities about himself. Working with his young

"hippie" buddies on the cat crew, he had developed a dependence on a variety of illegal drugs: mainly uppers and downers, taken in rapid succession, a practice which he said "did bank shots with my brain." On shore duty in Southern California, Duane began to combine a hodgepodge of street drugs with alcohol. The exhilaration of wartime duty gave way to the "chicken-shit" harassments of a sprawling Navy base.

Off base, Duane's short hair marked him as a serviceman; he said he was shunned by young middle-class civilians. For a while, he admitted, he actively contemplated desertion, but that escape route was too drastic to seriously consider. Instead, he volunteered for more sea duty in order to earn points toward an early release from active duty. He was assigned to a big new carrier on its first operational deployment to the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Although this ship was larger and more comfortable than his previous carrier, the dope scene and the racial tensions were even more extreme than during his first tour on Yankee Station.

"Lots of redneck numbers coming down when the black guys picked up Swedish chicks in Spain," he said. "I saw guns and knives on the beach, man."

Increasingly during this eight-month deployment, Duane took comfort in heavy drugs aboard the ship and devastating drinking bouts during liberty. But this behavior marked him as a troublemaker, and his petition for early release was denied when the ship returned to the East Coast. Without warning, he said bitterly, he was rotated back to California, to the crew of another attack carrier en route for deployment in the Vietnam war zone.

There was no hint of nostalgic pride when Duane spoke about his third year in the Navy. Instead, his language became laced with radical jargon and epithets more common to a politicized convict than a sailor. Early in his assignment to the new ship, he said, he was approached by a buddy who offered him a partnership in a lucrative drug-dealing operation. Because his job allowed him free run of the ship, he was able to "move" large amounts of speed, hallucinogens,

and Nepalese hashish oil.

This successful operation lasted several months, until the summer of 1972. At that time, his carrier returned to Subic Bay near Manila, for supplies. There, Duane's run of good luck ended. He was "popped," arrested by undercover narcotics agents as he took possession of a large quantity of "tab acid."

Because this arrest took place "downtown"—off the base—and was carried out by Marine Corps agents, it was the Marines who performed the initial interrogation. His treatment, he claimed, was brutal.

"If you're smart," he said, "you tell them what they want to hear."

By the time Duane recounted this part of the story, he had drunk five bottles of beer and his words were often disjointed. Obviously, he was undergoing considerable anguish as he spoke of these events, especially of his cooperation with naval investigators.

After his initial interrogation, Duane said, he was shunted from brigs in the Philippines to Japan and finally arrived back in California several weeks later. The investigators induced him to "cop a plea": in return for information about his partners, he was guaranteed immunity from serious drug-trafficking charges. According to Duane, the Navy shifted him from one brig to another so that he could not take advantage of a civilian defense lawyer. Whatever the reason, he said that his first access to a civilian attorney came only after he had given in to the authorities and provided depositions that led to the arrest of several of his former colleagues.

The young lawyer whom Duane eventually saw in California was openly contemptuous of Duane's record as an aircraft catapult crewman and berated him for having succumbed to the pressure of the authorities. Duane dismissed this lawyer bitterly as an "Ivy League asshole."

Eventually, Duane was offered the chance to accept a general discharge under less than honorable conditions: "bad paper," Duane called it.

In the fall of 1972, three years after enlisting to improve his

life, Duane was back on the street, a veteran who had experienced more than most Americans at age 22. His biggest problem after discharge was facing his family.

The terms of his discharge, he said, gave him V.A. medical care, but no GI educational benefits. This loss was an especially bitter disappointment to his mother, who had apparently seen in her first son a chance to broaden her own life, to move vicariously beyond the drab confines of the small logging town. As Duane described his mother's obsessive interest in his education, I began to envision a woman who had long maintained unrealistic expectations. As for Duane's father, it was easy to imagine what his reaction had been.

"That was not my favorite couple months," Duane said, almost whispering as he spoke of the time he spent at home that fall. "When I got off the bus, the old man shook my hand and all, but I could see right away he felt really sick about the whole thing. My mom is really freaking about my GI bennies, 'What about college?' she's yelling. I try to cool her out, but all the time my old man's just staring at me. I felt like warmed-over dog shit."

Duane stopped speaking, and we both stared into the fog. Finally, Duane took up his story. After two unsuccessful months at home, he could no longer take his mother's hysterical disappointment or his father's cold disapproval. He gravitated to the East Bay and moved in with several buddies from his first ship. They worked on a gypsy roofing gang, renovating houses for a local "slumlord." Describing that period, Duane recalled a time of relative tranquility.

"It was pretty good work, outdoors a lot in the good weather . . . stay in shape, get a tan. When it'd rain, we'd kick back. Had a house, lot of women around . . . music at night. Everybody just trying to make their way along, you know."

But, he admitted, there was another side to this decompression period. "I guess it was sort of limbo. At the time, it felt pretty good . . . sort of. Maybe numb. After a while, I got pissed off all over again for letting myself get fucked over by the Navy."

After asking Carol to turn off the tape recorder, Duane described the onset of the crushing fear that overcame him when he realized his written depositions might one day be used in an open court-martial, and his former buddies might seek him out to exact revenge. Some of them, he said, had connections to dangerous prison gangs in the States. "With those dudes," he said, "it don't matter if what went down happened ten years ago. A snitch is a snitch is a snitch."

For a while, he said he had sought help through the Vietnam Veterans Against the War in upgrading his discharge. But he realized he couldn't pursue this effort without making public his role as an informer. His despair over this situation, as well as his deepening fear and guilt, led to a long period of drunken paranoia. "For a while there," he admitted, "I was pretty messed up."

It was during this depression that Duane drifted closer to the extremist fringes of the East Bay radical community. Like other American and European radicals of this period, he became convinced that he was not responsible for his own emotional problems but was rather a victim of an unjust society. Although Duane did not articulate this, I heard in the explanation of his actions a nagging echo of Louise Mueller or of the writings of Ulrike Meinhof.

As Duane became more "aware," his sense of personal dislocation began to acquire a strong political coloration, which soon led to an all-encompassing radical world view. "I started to think about why the hell so many black, Chicano and Indian vets were walking around with bad paper discharges, you know? Pretty soon I flash on a very interesting fact." He leaned forward on his elbows and nodded sharply. "After boot camp, when I got sent off as a snipe, I got separated from the white-boy, middle-class route. I got thrown in with the black dudes and the Chicanos." He smoothed the wet beer-bottle crescents and took a deep breath, as if he were having trouble explaining a difficult concept. "There I am afterwards, living in Oakland, drunk every night . . . stoned-out half the time, and all around the streets you got black guys

with bad paper, getting popped for dope, or roused just because they're black and pissed-off-looking. I begin listening up to the Black Guerrilla thing in prison . . . George Jackson's story and Attica, all that stuff which I never paid any attention to before, okay? I begin to figure something out. There's no difference between the guards who blew George Jackson away or went in there blasting in the yard at Attica and when Lieutenant Calley's people started wasting the whole goddamn village of My Lai." He sighed and lit a fresh cigarette with the butt in his fingers. "From that one little *window* of awareness, I can stick my head through the other side and look around. I start to flash on some things about the U.S. First, I look at the wars we've been into in the past thirty, forty years, okay? *Every* one of them's been a military-industrial complex shuck fought against non-white people engaged in some kind of liberation struggle. . . ."

I thought of my brothers who fought in World War II and Korea, then overcame an urge to laugh in Duane's face. I hoped that *my* face remained calm.

" . . . I'm asking myself, why?" Duane continued. "How come America feels the need to militarily crush these poor, non-white countries? I go to some meetings, and I'm slowly putting some stuff together for myself. It wasn't very long before I realized why so many black vets are screwed up on booze and dope. They've been rejected by their own people because they went out as mercenaries to 'Nam. That's hard for them to handle, right? But that same situation makes me a mercenary, too."

Duane paused for a moment, and I pondered what he was saying. One insightful author has written that the East Bay radical scene in the mid-1970s was a " . . . paranoid community rampant with people searching for identities, or losing them with inordinate ease. . . ." This certainly seemed to have been Duane's situation. 'Identity transfer to black vets,' I scrawled in my notes.

Opening his hands now in resignation, he shrugged. "Okay. I could relate to being a mercenary, too. But I still hadn't seen

clear enough who the hell I'd been a mercenary *for*." He grinned now unexpectedly, as if recalling some silly childhood misconception. "Spring, seventy-three. I'm laying out at home in Oakland, half-wasted on Thunderbird or some shit, watching the tube. It's the return of the POWs at Clark Field. That starts some trip about the Philippines in my head. I see guys coming off the plane and saluting the colors and marching up that red carpet. Feels like maybe the war's finally over. But then, all of a sudden, a *commercial* comes on. You ready for this? It's a *K-Mart* commercial, and there's an announcer saying how proud K-Mart is to bring you the safe return of our POWS." He cleared his throat and went silent. When he spoke again, his voice was dead cold. "I saw something really clear right then. The whole damn war has been *sponsored*, not just the POWs coming back, but the whole goddamn ten years of it. These huge American multi-national corporations like K-Mart had been *bringing* us the war . . . all these wars since . . . I don't know, since before Korea, for sure. The POW TV show could have just as easy been sponsored by Boeing or IBM. I get up from the couch and I go pour that wine down the toilet. I go out on the front porch and I see a cop patrol wagon, one of those blue-and-white meat trucks, right? There's some black kids hanging out up by the supermarket on the corner, and the cops cruise up there and just *sit*; no reason to park there except to roust the black kids. They try to stare the cops down, but then, they split . . . in ones and twos, okay? That's the rule, man . . . not a law, not the Constitution, just a pigs' rule. More than three is unlawful assembly. I look through the window and inside I see these baton twirlers jumping up in the air around the red carpet at Clark."

Duane shook his head, then stared into my eyes with such intensity that I looked away. "All of a sudden," he went on, "I have this flashy thing in my head . . . me getting down with all those black vets, the guys with the bad paper. We'd stake out a big precinct house when they change shifts, right? Then we'd start wasting them with M-16s and mortars, the whole ball of string. The CHiPs and National Guard come in, okay? But

we've got guys on roofs with M-60s and mini-guns. By the time it's over, we've blown away maybe a thousand pigs. Maybe I was fucked up on wine, but, honest-to-God, that was an incredible flash."

He shook his head, possibly embarrassed by this bizarre revelation. "Standing on the porch of that funky house, I can see I'm wrong. There ain't gonna be any like *immediate* black uprising. All those black guys are too down to get it on. But I also realize that somebody's got to do it and that my life's not going to be worth shit unless *I* do something to try to stop it."

I frowned, uncertain of what Duane meant by "it."

Duane returned my frown, impatient at my lack of perception. "The whole fucking system, man. I realized that wasting cops would just be one pissed-off former mercenary taking out some other mercenaries. That would be playing with their deck. You had to go for the power center, for the heart."

A gay couple moved by the window, laughing noiselessly in the fog like improbable mimes.

Duane spoke softly now, describing his contact with a "spin-off" revolutionary group in the East Bay, a group that had been dedicated to attacking exactly those multi-national corporations that he had suddenly come to realize formed the ruthless, war-mongering power center of world politics, the exploiters of working people in America and all over the world.

I realized that Duane had finally discovered a manner by which he could return to his parents' favor: he would destroy the present world system, thus "liberating" his "working-stiff" parents from their hidden exploiters. They would then have no choice but to welcome him as their benefactor.

Duane took three delicate sips from his beer bottle. "I got into it," he said flatly. "I really did. I got into moving some material and making some devices."

He chewed the edge of his beard, staring silently at the bottle rings before him on the table.

"Were those devices bombs?" I asked quietly.

Duane nodded, then explained that he did not want to

repeat past mistakes by discussing the details of his career as a radical protest bomber. He had belonged to a violent group that was no longer in existence, he said; they had been active "for a while around here." But that phase of his life was now "all over." There had been some notable successes—about which he refused to elaborate—and many failures. He would not discuss the other members of the group, nor their numerous "targets," but I knew from my research that the Bay Area had been racked by hundreds of unsolved protest bombings during the mid-1970s, for which dozens of obscure ultra-radical groups had claimed responsibility. Obviously, once Duane decided he had a destiny to do something about "it," there were a variety of groups willing to employ his services.

Duane finally did admit that his personal specialty had been procuring high-quality explosives: dynamite and blasting caps. In this job, he said with quiet pride, he had been one of the most successful people in any West Coast group.

Sitting back with his last beer and a fresh cigarette, Duane yawned deeply. "That's my story. I hope you weren't bored."

I assured him that I had not been bored. Duane leaned forward, straining in the half-light of the booth to see my scrawled notes. 'Radical conversion experience,' I had jotted, 'paranoid,' 'grandiose connection to victimized blacks and world's oppressed.' Quickly, I withdrew the notebook, then struggled to form some plausible question to divert his attention from my notes. But I need not have worried; Duane sat back, absorbed in his cigarette. In a pensive mood now, he gazed out into the foggy street and back into his own tangled past. The long discussion must have triggered an avalanche of memories.

I had been about to ask him if he had felt truly desperate, compelled to violent action against the system, despite the obvious danger of this revolutionary action. I wondered if his small radical group had actually felt they could somehow change the world. But then I realized how stupid my unasked questions were. A person did not go to the risk of making, then planting, bombs if he did not feel compelled to do so. The

intensity of this compulsion was therefore obvious; but the underlying motivation for Duane's radical conversion was perhaps less clear.

As I studied his face in the dim booth, I realized that his radicalization had much less to do with the world's political and economic system than with his emotional state at the time of the conversion experience. For any psychiatrist, of course, this revelation would have been a truism. Now I could see that his sense of worthlessness, his self-disgust at having failed his parents, first at college, then in the Navy, were primary motivations in his subsequent espousal of revolutionary causes. Dr. Herbert Hendin, a Columbia University professor of psychiatry who has studied young American revolutionaries of the '70s, has written insightfully on the radical conversion experience. "Their acute ability to see and feel the flaws of society," Dr. Hendin wrote of young American radicals, "is in striking contrast to their need not to see or know the often devastating effects their family life has had on them."

In Duane's case, I found especially interesting the fact that he had remained almost completely free of revolutionary *consciousness* until the full impact of his parents' rejection was felt through the "numb" shell of his depression. During two years of college and three years of stressful Navy service in the Vietnam war, he had resisted radicalization. Despite barages of radical rhetoric at Berkeley on the one hand, and harassment by "lifer" Navy chiefs on the other, he did not surrender his traditional middle-class identity and embrace a revolutionary cause.

It was only after his discharge and after having spent the intensely painful "couple months" at home that his emotional strength crumbled. Duane had not been strong enough to endure both his mother's hysterical disappointment over her son's wasted academic potential as well as his father's wordless, "sick" shame. Once this emotional wringer became too painful to live with, Duane drifted into the radical fringes of the East Bay, to the supportive company of his Navy buddies from the first ship: young men who reminded him of the most

successful period of his life, friends whose very presence did not exacerbate his sense of failure.

It was during this period that he began to pay attention to the clamor of radical voices around him. But the contradictory elitism and bogus working-class chic of the SDS and the convoluted ultra-Maoism of Venceremos did not really satisfy him. He needed violent catharsis; he needed a new, emotionally acceptable identity to replace that which he had lost in that Trailways bus station at home.

Staring at Duane's ravaged face, I could again picture the scene as he had gotten off the bus on his return home. He had told me that his head was "practically shaved": the public stigma of a brig prisoner, one his father would have recognized. When Duane saw that his father "felt really sick about the whole thing," the young man must have undergone both crushing remorse and silent anger. When his father's cold disapproval was coupled with his mother's emotional display of disappointment, Duane probably felt himself caught in a psychological meat grinder. Surely, within minutes of the family's reunion, Duane must have known he could not stick it out at home.

When he drifted onto the East Bay radical scene in the winter of 1972, Duane might have appeared to his new comrades to be a cynical and self-reliant veteran. In reality, however, he had been as much a desperate emotional orphan as Andreas Baader or Ulrike Meinhof when they had converted to violent nihilism in Berlin.

What I had found especially fascinating in Duane's story was that it so closely paralleled the lives of the two well-known East Bay radicals I had originally hoped to interview: Joe Remiro and Bill Harris, the self-styled urban guerrillas, "Bo" and "General Teko" of the murderous, suicidal Symbionese Liberation Army.

Like Duane, both Remiro and Harris flunked out of college before they sought to change their lives by enlisting in the armed service. Both served in Vietnam. According to published biographies, Remiro and Harris had also both under-

gone serious alienation from their families prior to their radical conversion experiences.

In Bill Harris's case, his father reportedly displayed cold disapproval of the son's academic failure, then adopted a cool, wait-and-see attitude concerning Bill's service as a Marine. Several of Harris's friends noted that his original motive in joining the Marine Corps was to prove himself to this distant, judgmental father. "Bill's dad thought it was a good idea," one friend stated, speaking of Bill's enlistment. "That was really important to him right then." But Bill Harris's father died of a heart attack before Bill shipped out for Vietnam; this was a devastating emotional blow, according to another friend: "His dad had been saying he would never amount to anything, and when he died, it robbed Bill of the one person he wanted to prove himself to."¹ Even more revealing of Harris's depressive alienation was the attitude he reportedly showed toward the father of his fiancée, Emily Schwartz, who eventually became his SLA comrade, "Yolanda." While dating Emily at the University of Indiana after he returned from the Marines, Harris is said to have done his best to break the close, affectionate bond she maintained with her father, a prosperous professional man and civic leader. Bill reportedly showered Mr. Schwartz with hateful derision, which was often couched in radical rhetoric. Apparently, Harris could not tolerate the fact that Emily had a warm relationship with her father, while he, himself, had been robbed forever of such a bond.

In Joe Remiro's case, his father's rejection even more closely paralleled Duane's experience. Remiro returned to his working-class family in San Francisco after an extended tour as a combat infantryman, the last several months having been spent as a LRRP recon man during the savage fighting of the Tet Offensive. In the throes of a post-combat stress syndrome, Remiro was reportedly overcome with anxious guilt over the Vietnamese civilians he killed in the war zone. He sought the consolation of his father, himself a veteran of World War II. In Remiro's published account of this incident, however, his father offered scant comfort. Instead, he refused to listen to

Joe's atrocity confessions. "My father threw me out of the house," Remiro said. "He told me he was in *The War*, and he never saw nothing like that and I must be lying. Nobody believed me."²

I thought of these three young men, Bill Harris, Joe Remiro, and Duane. All three had enlisted in the armed service after losing interest in college. All three had apparently sought the approval of fathers with whom they had trouble communicating. All three had served in the Vietnam war zone, and all three had experienced a sharp parental rejection. For a period following their service, all three had reportedly used drugs or alcohol in a self-destructive manner. Each had gravitated to the radical community of the East Bay. Eventually, they each underwent a radical conversion experience.

It seemed highly improbable that such similar case histories were coincidental. But blaming the stress of service in Vietnam was, in my opinion, a simplistic manner of explaining these parallels; neither Bill Harris nor Duane saw actual combat during their service in the war zone. Perhaps 100,000 young enlisted men had served aboard aircraft carriers between 1965 and 1975, most of them experiencing the same "brutal" conditions that Duane described. Almost a million young Americans served in combat units in Vietnam during this period. If the brutalizing, often dehumanizing nature of wartime service in Vietnam had been the *primary* factor in the creation of violent radicals, America would have witnessed acts of revolutionary violence by hundreds of thousands of desperate, enraged young veterans like Remiro, Harris, and Duane. Instead, the vast majority of Vietnam vets have led relatively well-adjusted lives, despite the cruel, unforgivable ambivalence with which so many were greeted by their countrymen on their return from the war.

It became clear to me that service in Vietnam was only one factor in the complex chain of events that led these three young men to "step over" the line separating rational and extremist behavior. Psychiatrists with whom I have discussed these case histories are unanimous in their opinions: The

relationship between an emotionally cool, judgmental father and his sons, especially his oldest son, is often precarious. If, during a vulnerable period of late adolescence, the son experiences a painful, seemingly final sense of rejection by this stern father, the young man will often become crippled by feelings of "worthlessness and impotent rage"—to quote the language used by one psychiatrist. It seemed that each of these three had exhibited feelings of worthlessness during protracted drug abuse, as well as a seething, impotent anger, which soon took sharp focus through the radical conversion experience they each underwent.

Alienation from a coldly judgmental parent, I learned, often presages a period of angry, confused depression—maybe the "limbo" described by Duane, or the chaotic wandering of John Hinckley before his arrival in Washington—and this depression sometimes culminates with the young person's rebirth as a violent radical. An important goal of the newly reborn extremist is the total destruction of the political and economic power structure of his (and his parents') nation. This destruction is to be followed, of course, by the magical reconstruction of a just, benevolent utopia. Psychiatrists told me that there were usually two phases in the revolutionary's grandiose and violent dreams. The destructive phase might represent symbolic destruction of the parent; the revolutionary's subsequent leadership role in the utopia might symbolize the young person's replacement of the cruel father or mother.

Case histories of the SLA's leaders support the validity of this analysis. Patricia "Mizmoon" Soltysik, the vengeful "Comrade Zoya" of the SLA, was the oldest girl in a large family. According to her brother Fred, whose book, *In Search of a Sister*, is a seminal study of radical formation, her father was often coldly derisive toward her. "The old bastard always used to tell Mizmoon she'd end up in the girls' detention home," Fred wrote.³

The escaped black convict named Donald DeFreeze, who was reborn as the SLA's Field Marshal General Cinque, had

an even more revealing background. DeFreeze was the oldest of eight children. According to later testimony, his father was unpredictably brutal, especially to his oldest son. By the time Donald was ten, his father had twice broken his arm in punishment for minor shortcomings. By fourteen, Donald had dropped out of school and fled home with his mother's blessing to escape his brutal father. Soon thereafter, he developed a compulsive fascination for guns and explosives, which repeatedly led him into trouble with the police.

Fifteen years later, Donald DeFreeze found himself the leader of that rag-tag band of psychologically crippled misfits called the Symbionese Liberation Army. He chose as the SLA's first assassination target not a white corporate leader, but Dr. Marcus Foster, the school superintendent of Oakland, a well-loved leader of the black community whom many saw as a father figure. Unfortunately for Dr. Foster, Field Marshal General Cinque probably saw him in this light as well. The reborn revolutionary became suddenly irrational when Foster's name was mentioned during a drunken discussion of possible assassination victims. "All of a sudden," a witness to the scene related, "DeFreeze sits up and he says, 'Man, we're gonna waste that nigger!'"⁴

It is reasonable to assume that by ordering the murder of the paternal Dr. Foster, DeFreeze was ritually passing beyond the stage of *impotent* rage. Clearly the flamboyant rhetoric of Cinque following the Foster murder indicated that he had entered the phase of magically replacing the slain parent. After Dr. Foster's slaying, every one of Cinque's communiqués made reference to himself as a father figure to the black community; in these taped messages, he also implored his potential sympathizers to "save the children."

The European terrorists I studied also underwent this two-phased revolutionary conversion from impotent rage to focused class hatred; in almost every case, their anger was aimed back at their middle-class roots. Certainly, these European revolutionaries had not been radicalized in Vietnam. Instead, the Europeans and the Americans shared a common

trait in addition to parental alienation. Each of these young people had spent the period immediately prior to his extremist conversion in what I have come to call a radical "pressure-cooker" community surrounding a large university.

These radical communities were often hermetically sealed from the political and social realities of their countries' mainstream. This isolation was certainly true of the so-called youth ghettos around the Free University of West Berlin, the Universities of Trento and Rome, and, of course, the University of California at Berkeley.

In any conversion, either religious or political, a person is usually exposed to a body of information—often called testimony—supporting the new belief system. The more intense and convincing the testimony, the more likely conversions will occur. The absence of convincing countertestimony is a key factor in this process; thus the importance of isolation from the mainstream in a radical pressure cooker like Berlin or Berkeley. When ultra-leftists in Berlin, for example, proclaimed that *most* German corporate leaders were neo-Nazis, the young audience at the University was too emotionally and geographically cut off from mainstream Germany to refute this propaganda.

Similarly, in the radical community of Berkeley, it was an accepted article of faith that all black convicts were, perforce, victims of social injustice, that they were all political prisoners. When Donald DeFreeze appeared on the Berkeley scene, therefore, he was viewed as a potential revolutionary hero, not as a troubled young man with a history of self-destructive behavior. A black escaped convict was judged in the radical community more for his race than his personal merits. The fact that this attitude was itself blatantly racist never seemed to have occurred to the propagandists of Berkeley. Propaganda was, of course, the community's main industry; the hyperbolic political message was non-stop: it appeared in the films in the local cinemas, in the burgeoning underground press and counterculture radio stations, and it blared, day and night, from the scores of soap-box podia surrounding the campus.

It is not remarkable, therefore, that a handful of emotionally fragile young people like Duane, Renato Curcio, Joe Remiro and Andreas Baader became converted to violent revolution in such communities as Berlin and Berkeley. But I do think it is remarkable that so *few* troubled young people embraced political extremism during the intense social centrifuge of the past 15 years.

During its heyday, however, the radical pressure-cooker campus did serve as the spawning ground for every new revolutionary group in Europe and America, with the possible exception of the IRA Provos and the Basque ETA. The Baader-Meinhof Gang rose from the angry counterculture encircling Berlin's Free University; the Red Brigades were born on the turbulent campus of the University of Trento. In the late 1960s, with Vietnam polarizing already radical American campuses, the Weather Underground spun away from its parent body, the SDS at the University of Michigan. The grandiose Symbionese Liberation Army, of course, was quintessential Berkeley guerrilla theater run amok.

Excluding the Black Panther Party and its violent splinter, the tiny Black Liberation Army, nowhere in the democratic West has a revolutionary group risen from among the ranks of the supposedly oppressed workers or downtrodden ethnic groups these groups claimed to represent.

* * *

It was now almost one in the morning, and the bar was closing. Duane finished his beer, snubbed out his last cigarette, and asked if I'd mind driving him to South San Francisco, where he planned to crash with a buddy from work. There was no sense going home, he said, because he had to get up at six anyway.

I asked how he now felt about working for a living inside "the capitalist state."

"Gotta pay the rent," he mumbled, sliding out of the booth. "Kids need shoes, the dentist . . . you name it."

I nodded and watched him weave away toward the door.

We dropped Carol at the motel on Lombard Street, then swung up onto the foggy freeway south. Duane smoked a cigarette and commented listlessly on the hard job the big semi drivers had in weather like this. Obviously, we were both drained by the long interview and were now disinclined to renew the discussion. But I had come too far and had searched too hard to simply let him go with a few inane comments about the hard lot of truck drivers.

"Do you ever regret any of that stuff, Duane?" I asked. "Don't you think about the people who might have gotten killed when the bombs went off?"

"Good question," Duane admitted. "We never hurt anybody. We made a real thing about that . . . but it was always possible that, you know, somebody could have gotten blown away." He shrugged. "That was a crazy goddamn time, man." He began ticking off events on his long, thick fingers. ". . . My Lai . . . Kent State, Wounded Knee, Attica . . . Allende gets dinked in Chile by the CIA and ITT; Agnew gets off with a goddamn *nolo contendere*. . . . Hey, you ever hear about Watergate? What about when the LAPD barbecued the SLA? You catch that one in living color?"

"I was overseas," I answered, throwing back his sarcasm. "I was working as a Peace Corps director in Mauritania during the Sahel Drought. Ever hear of the Sahel Drought?"

Duane frowned, then nodded, but I think he might have been caught out by my question. Capitalist countries sending free food to starving drought refugees and young American Peace Corps volunteers risking their lives in the baking summer Sahara Desert to distribute that food probably did not fit into his paranoid world view. In any event, he did not answer. Instead, he stared out at the yellow fog and cracked his knuckles. In the ghastly sodium-vapor light, he looked like an old hobo.

"Take the next exit," Duane said, pointing off to a string of lights marking a ramp.

"You ever going to tell your kids about all this?" I asked,

slowing for the ramp.

He shrugged again. "All that'll be ancient history by the time they're grown up." He stared up at the sweeping curve of row housing on the hillside above us. Each wooden duplex hung like a pastel jewel in its frame of security light. "I can call my buddy from over there," he said, pointing to a Chevron station on the right.

"It's late," I said. "I don't mind driving you."

Duane smiled warily, then shook his head. "No, man . . . thanks. . . . It's better this way."

"Yeah," I answered, "right." It was still impossible for him to trust me; I represented one armed camp, he, another. There had been a temporary truce, but now he had to re-enter the anonymous underground of the American *autonomia*.

I stopped the car before an aluminum phone booth, its windows splintered by suburban vandals. Duane shook my hand, then ducked gingerly out the low door frame of the Chevette. Turning back, he smiled and leaned toward the window. "Hey," he said, "about my kids. . . . Maybe they'll be lucky and get to live in some other country."

* * *

¹Vin McLellan and Paul Avery, *The Voices of Guns* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1977).

²John Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975).

³Fred Soltysik, *In Search of a Sister* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976).

⁴McLellan and Avery, *op. cit.*

Chapter Nine

Chattanooga, Spring

WHEN DUANE had offered me his account of racial tensions aboard the aircraft carriers on which he had served, he'd made references to "Panther-cracker" polarizations. Within that simple characterization, there was a major assumption: young southern men, "crackers," are universally and violently racist. Scratch a white Southerner, he seemed to be saying, and you'll find a potential member of the Ku Klux Klan.

As many of my southern friends have tried to explain to me over the years, however, the South as a region, and the Klan as a socio-political phenomenon, have been badly misunderstood by the rest of the nation, especially by northern liberal writers.

I certainly had to agree with them concerning my misunderstanding of the South, or, more accurately, the New South: that region of modern urban-industrial civilization that lies like a vast archipelago, connected by the interstate highway

system, across the face of the old Confederacy. Because so much of the New South's urban development and industrialization is recent, cities like Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Montgomery are experiencing the stress of typical Sun Belt expansion, but with an added problematic dimension: publicly ordained racial desegregation.

In the spring of 1982, when Carol and I spent several weeks traveling in the New South and interviewing Southerners, both black and white, I was continually impressed by the incredible social, political and economic changes that have swept over the South since I last visited the region ten years before.

The last vestiges of *de jure* racial segregation have completely disappeared from public facilities and institutions: motels, bars, restaurants, universities and high schools, playgrounds, and parks. Black people are now in prominent evidence in the police, civil service, elected office, private business and the news media. After several weeks of intense observation, I can safely say that the industrial islands of New South prosperity are easily more racially integrated, and there is clearly less visible tension between the races than exists in comparable cities in the Northeast or the industrial Midwest. This obviously does not mean that there is no animosity still existing between the races or that these deep social changes have not left behind a bitter residue of frustrated anger, especially among blue-collar whites. Many white southern workers see themselves as threatened by the twin specters of unpredictable industrial realignments (the loss of jobs in the steel and auto industries) and unfair competition from blacks clamoring for jobs in traditional white occupations.

But, despite this simmering racial distrust, I repeatedly found myself witnessing scenes of racial cooperation—if not harmony—that would have been impossible only ten years ago, and still are not common in many parts of the North.

At a Howard Johnson's restaurant on the interstate highway near Meridian, Mississippi—where freedom riders faced violence less than 20 years ago—we ate in a dining room near a

delegation from a local public education conference. At least a third of the people eating at the long tables were black; several were black women. As I eavesdropped, I heard them discussing the normal problems of curriculum development and budgets: the typical shop talk of educators the world over. Even ten years ago, such a luncheon would have been a pipe dream.

Driving into Chattanooga on the new freeway, a pickup truck on tall "stomper" tires careened past us, weaving from lane to lane at about 80, driven by a bearded white boy in his 20s who sucked on a long silver can of beer. Within a mile, a state trooper had pulled the truck over to the shoulder and was giving the young driver a stern lecture while writing up the traffic citation. The trooper was a black woman.

But I was the only driver on the four busy lanes of traffic who slowed to gawk at this spectacle.

I had come to the South to learn about the supposedly resurgent Ku Klux Klan. After having had my "Future Shock" sensibilities overloaded almost continually by the social realities of the New South, however, I came to realize that the Klan and the true motivations of Klansmen (some female members now insist on "Klanspersons," I'd been told) was not an easy riddle to decipher.

* * *

In the past few years, many thoughtful Americans have been troubled by the widely publicized resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. One of the most notable features of this phenomenon has been the emergence of the so-called "new" Klan, an organization which tries to project an image of simultaneous moderation and militancy. The leaders of the new Klan are often intelligent and articulate young Southerners who eschew sheets and hoods for three-piece suits. They reject the "old" Klan's secrecy and actively court the news media, especially television. Whereas 20 years ago, a Klan leader might well have led a clandestine band of night-riding terrorists, today he is more likely to be seen, well-scrubbed and neck-

tied, on the Phil Donahue Show. These same Klan leaders often appear in public guarded by Klan "Special Forces," dressed in camouflaged-fatigues, brandishing military weapons.

Clearly, however, there is violence associated with today's increased Klan activity. The videotaped murder of five Communist anti-Klan demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1979 and the destructive rioting one block from the White House during a recent Washington Klan rally have given many the impression that a powerful, monolithic organization of violent extremists has risen like a phoenix out of the ruins of the old Klan, which the FBI effectively infiltrated and neutralized in the 1960s. This new group seems to be a dangerous challenge to the voices of moderation and racial conciliation working today in America.

When I began my inquiry into contemporary extremism, a number of people urged me to investigate the motivation and background of new Klan leaders. In so doing, I unearthed some interesting information.

First, there is no single monolithic organization that can claim to be *the* Ku Klux Klan, either new or old. The Klan is made up of small, disparate groups, which owe political (and financial) allegiance to independent leaders, men like Bill Wilkinson or Donald Black, for example, who usually claim the grandiose title "Imperial Wizard." These independent Klan groups are fiercely competitive, one with the other, and have been known to sabotage each other's recruitment efforts. Further, within each Klan faction there is often an ongoing centrifugal process by which internecine warfare leads to splintering into new mutually acrimonious factions.

The demographic makeup of contemporary Klan membership is also interesting. Today the image of the hard-bitten, middle-aged "cracker" with red clay on his boots is no longer valid. Contemporary Klan members tend to be young: 60 to 80 percent between 20 and 35 years old. And they tend to be urban blue-collar workers from the growing industrial centers of the New South.

Despite the moderate rhetoric of the new Klan leaders, the

various groups remain violence-prone and confrontational. The typical new member is worried and angry about the social dislocations that have swept over his part of the country in the past 20 years. And Klan leaders encourage the anxieties and anger of their members by exploiting such emotionally volatile issues as affirmative action programs, mandatory school busing, and rising urban crime.

These leaders are sometimes bitterly frustrated by their own lack of formal education and tend to see their personal problems in a paranoid perspective of racial victimization. The combination of bitter and unstable leadership and angry, confused membership has produced a tendency toward nihilistic confrontation as an answer to the cultural upheaval the New South has undergone.

Contrary to the exaggerated claims of Klan leaders, they have had relatively little success in recruiting Klansmen in the Industrial North.

The total active membership of all Klan factions hovers around 10,000. Proselytizing by energetic leaders like Bill Wilkinson seems to produce new members in approximate proportion to the high rate of attrition. The marked increase of publicity about the Klan, therefore, appears to be the result of concerted, well-organized campaigns to attract national attention. Unfortunately, the desperate hunger for media recognition has been the direct cause for much of the recent violence associated with the Ku Klux Klan. Another factor in this increased violence has been the unstable, megalomaniacal personalities of established and would-be Klan leaders.

One such young candidate for Klan leadership was Bill Church of Chattanooga. His idol was Bill Wilkinson, the self-proclaimed imperial wizard of the most violence-prone new Klan faction, the Invisible Empire.

* * *

In the middle of March 1980, Bill Church had to face the fact that he had a problem with his image. Just as he began a

media campaign to attract recruits to his new Klan faction, the Chattanooga *Times* started a six-part series on the Ku Klux Klan that gave front-page publicity to Church's arch rivals, C. B. Howard and Larry Owens of the United Empire. It suddenly seemed like there were stories on the Klan all over the papers and on every evening TV newscast. But, unfortunately for Bill, there was not one word about Dr. William L. Church, the imperial wizard of the Justice Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Part of the problem, Bill Church acknowledged, was that his splinter group so far had just ten members, and only half of them actually owned hoods and robes. Such a small band did not make for very good television "visuals," and it certainly did not warrant front-page coverage in the *Times* or the attention of a veteran reporter like Barney Morgan, the author of the Klan series.

Another aspect of this image problem concerned Bill Church himself. He was only 23 years old and he was hardly a respected leader in either Chattanooga or the nearby community of Redbank, where he'd grown up. If TV or newspaper reporters looked too closely at his background, they would be likely to discover an angry boy from a broken home with a record of irrational violence dating back to his high-school days, as well as a history of drunken brawling and drug abuse: hardly attributes he wanted splashed across the media. Although he didn't like to admit it, the fact was that he hadn't graduated from Redbank High until he was almost 20. There was also the problem of his grandiose title "Doctor," but Bill wasn't too worried about that. He claimed to be a karate expert who had reached the "12th degree" in this martial art, so he felt he had a right to call himself "Doctor." It didn't matter if this was a bogus title because most of those newspaper reporters and TV people were pretty gullible.

Or so he hoped.

He was confident that he could manipulate the media to his advantage if he could just come up with a publicity ploy audacious enough to attract the attention of the editors and TV-news directors. He was at a precarious watershed in his

fledgling career as an imperial wizard: either he would capitalize on all the publicity that the *Times* series was generating, or he would probably drift into oblivion and watch a pretty-boy "moderate" like Larry Owens drag in all the new members.

Spring, he knew, was traditionally Klan recruiting season. Outdoor activities like softball games, flea markets, and skeet shoots were great places to hand out Klan recruitment flyers, and this spring promised to offer good opportunities, what with all these people getting screwed by affirmative action.

So, having given the problem some thought, Bill Church decided to play his long suit: audacity. He would make a strong bid for media attention, and he would make it in a spectacular manner, simultaneously in two directions, moderation and militancy. In so doing, he planned to exploit all his attributes. The best thing he had going for him, he realized, was his appearance: a good-looking young man almost six-foot-three and 300 pounds, with the build of a pro linebacker, naturally demanded a fair amount of respect from the smaller guys. And compared to Bill Church, there weren't many people who *weren't* smaller. Bill knew that he also had a fair amount of personal charm, especially when he spoke to small groups of frustrated young workingmen, anxious about the impact of affirmative action on job security, inflation, and America's obviously weakened position in the world. In fact, he'd had this group of potential recruits in mind when he'd named his splinter group the *Justice Knights*.

He planned to attack on two fronts. In public, he would flamboyantly offer a truce between the Ku Klux Klan and its traditional opponent, the National Association for the Advance of Colored People. He would then steal Larry Owens' thunder by arranging a public "reconciliation" meeting between the Justice Knights and the local leadership of the NAACP, a publicity ploy that Owens himself had once unsuccessfully attempted. But privately, Bill Church would still harangue potential recruits and new converts about the coming "race war" and urge them to arm themselves and undergo

"Special Forces" combat and survival training a service that he and his group would provide (for a nominal fee, of course).

Again, Bill Church's size and reputation as a brawler enhanced his image as a potential paramilitary leader in the coming race war that certain Klan leaders and rank-and-file members believed in so ardently. Bill actively encouraged this reputation by letting it be known he was a hardened Vietnam veteran with extensive combat experience in elite "Green Beret and ranger" outfits. "I'm one of these 'Nam vets," he told me two years later, "who believes in violence. If someone gets in my way, he's liable to get blown away himself."

There is a tradition in the South of the bitter young veteran, his character forged in combat, who employs his military skills to protect his former comrades and his womenfolk against injustice. Indeed, the original Ku Klux Klan was begun in Pulaski, Tennessee, by six such young Confederate veterans. When Bill Church founded the Justice Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, he encouraged the myth that he was a bitter Vietnam vet who felt cheated out of his rights and prerogatives by the neo-carpetbaggers of the Great Society and by Carter administration liberals.

There was only one problem with this scenario. According to U.S. Army records, William L. Church had never set foot in Vietnam. Bill Church was born in October 1956; he did not turn 17 until October 1973, six months after the last combat troops withdrew from Vietnam. He did not graduate from high school until 1976. His Army records indicate he spent a total of "one year and eighteen days" on active duty, including six months in Germany, an abbreviated overseas tour, possibly cut short by adjustment or discipline problems. Rather than serving as a Special Forces guerrilla warfare expert as he liked to claim, Bill Church went to ordnance metal-working school at Aberdeen Proving Ground, where he was trained in the prosaic military occupational specialty of "metal body repairman."

Having undergone this same training as a 17-year-old Army private 25 years ago, I can attest that the danger and rigors of the forge room or welding shop were hardly enough to pro-

duce a post-combat "delayed stress syndrome" in a young veteran.

In moving boldly ahead on the two fronts of moderation and militancy, Bill Church was following the pattern established by his Ku Klux Klan idol, Bill Wilkinson, who had broken with David Duke's Klan faction in the mid-1970s and named himself imperial wizard of a new and active Klan group called the Invisible Empire. If Bill Wilkinson could get away with appearing to be a patriotic moderate during televised talk shows and then, at private meetings, call for vigilante violence against blacks, then Bill Church could do the same. He was truly impressed by Wilkinson's smooth manipulation of the media, and he had recognized the secret of Wilkinson's success: audacity. One day Wilkinson would stand on the courthouse steps of some racially troubled town in the New South and talk reasonably about the excesses of affirmative action or the need to support the local police and promote law and order; later, during a private Invisible Empire rally, he would strut on the flatbed of a truck, decked out in his beautiful imperial wizard's robe, and proclaim that, "The white people will rise up. The niggers are getting their guns, and so are the whites": moderation one day and dire warnings of race war a while later. This, Bill Church decided, was the path he, too, would follow.

When a person saw a successful model, he knew, it was silly not to imitate it. For one thing, Bill Wilkinson's Invisible Empire seemed to have grown remarkably since he split off from Duke's outfit. A flourishing Klan group meant money for the leader: annual and monthly membership dues, speaking fees, and generous travel expenses. Equally important—a Klan leader was the object of local respect and prestige. Ever since Bill Church had been a teen-ager, nursing the raw emotional wounds of his parents' separation, he had longed for prestige and respect; he'd felt driven to prove himself a leader. Now, just maybe, he had the chance to become such a leader of men, and, by God, he was going to pull out all the stops and go for it.

On Monday, March 17, 1980, the day after the first of the six-part Klan series appeared in the *Chattanooga Times*, Bill Church called the newspaper and offered to take Barney Morgan to a secret klavern meeting. "Doctor" Church, as he called himself on the phone, also laid down ground rules that Barney later described as coming straight out of "a dime novel." Mr. Morgan would have to be blindfolded so as to preserve the secrecy of the klavern's meeting place; he would also have to take an oath of secrecy, swearing on the Bible and the American flag. Bill Church probably figured that such flamboyant trimmings would be sure to land him space on the front page, maybe even as the subject of an unscheduled follow-up article in the Klan series.

That same afternoon, Church contacted a local television station and was able to arrange a taped interview to be aired on the evening news. In this interview, Bill spoke so eloquently about the Klan's moderate concerns for the white workingman that the station actually ran four whole minutes of the tape, the most exposure he had gotten since he had launched his own group. Now that he was on such a good roll, it was time for the second half of the media double whammy.

When Bill met Barney Morgan outside a local convenience store, the young imperial wizard reiterated his elaborate security ground rules, including the requirement that Morgan swear on a Bible and the American flag to preserve the klavern members' anonymity. At this point, Church discovered that the experienced journalist was neither gullible nor easily manipulated.

"We've got a problem," Barney Morgan told him. "I don't swear on the flag, the Bible, dictionaries, or anything else."

This was a sudden, unexpected setback for Bill Church. He had wanted to emphasize the trappings of clandestine Klan ritual, including elaborate secrecy oaths. But, faced with the confidence of this mature, self-possessed journalist, Bill gave in at once. "That's okay," he muttered sheepishly. "That's good enough."

The next setback came when Bill realized he had neglected

to bring a blindfold. A dirty old handkerchief wouldn't do, so he had to improvise by tying a grocery bag over Barney Morgan's head. After five minutes of stops and turns to confuse Morgan, Bill parked in front of the mobile home where the klavern was waiting to meet the press.

The group that sat around the house trailer's small living room consisted of nine men, two young women, and an adolescent boy. There was also a guard outside in the weedy lot. They represented the total membership of Bill's "Empire." About half the men wore robes; everyone except the women and the boy held a gun. Bill had made sure that there'd be plenty of weapons in evidence: rifles, shotguns and some big, mean-looking pistols. Such a display, he hoped, would serve to dramatize the group's potential for violence. After all, a mean "'Nam vet" like Church felt comfortable around dangerous weapons. Unfortunately, Barney Morgan did not seem overly impressed by this display of firearms.

After the klavern's chaplain stammered his way through the opening prayer, Bill Church rose to his full height and addressed his followers in the most grandiose language he could muster. He spoke of the need for constant security during klavern meetings and also of plans to stage an illegal fundraising roadblock out in the county to provide money for an elderly white lady who'd allegedly been raped by a black man. He lectured his people on the need to bring in more members and the plans he had for cross burnings and recruitment rallies. He then grinned and proudly announced that his TV interview had given the group unprecedented publicity. "We got four full minutes on camera," he exclaimed. "That's the most we've ever got."

As Bill Church looked down at the tanned, honest faces of his followers, he could see that old newspaper man at the side of the room busily taking notes. Things seemed definitely to be working out pretty good.

As part of Bill's determined plan to capture and hold the center position on Chattanooga's media-event stage, he unleashed the audacious next phase of his publicity campaign.

Telephoning from his girlfriend Linda Tipton's house, he spoke to George Key, the president of the local NAACP branch. Would Mr. Key consider a meeting between the Klan and the NAACP leadership to discuss ways to reduce racial tension in the community and possibly even to "bring peaceful harmony between the races in Chattanooga"? George Key replied cautiously that he was, in principle, not opposed to such a meeting. Plunging ever boldly ahead, Bill suggested Friday afternoon, March 21, for the meeting. That day coincided with the sixth and final *Times* article on the Klan, and such an unprecedented meeting would be sure to produce a front-page story on the following day. Remarkably, George Key agreed to meet with Church and some of his members.

Linda Tipton was to later give sworn testimony on Bill Church's reaction to George Key's unexpected cooperation. "Bill hung the phone up," she testified, "and laughed and called him a stupid nigger."

But Imperial Wizard Church did not have time to gloat, he had to get back on the phone and invite all the TV, radio and newspaper people to Friday's historic meeting between the Klan and the NAACP. This was *big*. If he played his cards right, the meeting might even result in national press and TV coverage. Events were beginning to move so fast that it was a little scary. But he was committed now, and he had no choice but to drive ahead on the two tracks: benevolent moderation for the benefit of the media, and apocalyptic militancy at private meetings. It took a real leader, a visionary, a man almost as smart and brave as Bill Wilkinson himself to pull off a campaign like this. Bill Church wasn't sure he had it in him, but, by God, he was sure as hell going to give it his best shot.

The meeting on Friday afternoon was not a spectacular or unblemished success. For one thing, George Key and his coalition of black community leaders would not allow Bill's five-member delegation from the Justice Knights to enter Key's office wearing the Klan robes they had hastily pulled on in the parking lot. It was downright humiliating to be ordered around by a black man, especially under the hot glare of the

mini-cam lights. And then, after Bill led his small delegation back, wearing their street clothes, the blacks insisted that the meeting take place in private, away from the reporters and camera crews. That was definitely *not* the way Bill Church had planned the event. He had probably envisioned plenty of good videotaped “visuals” of himself—the huge, handsome imperial wizard in regal robes—towering above the cringing blacks. Instead, George Key proved himself to be more than Bill’s match in handling the media.

At the end of the meeting, both groups addressed the reporters, and Bill Church was able to recoup some of his losses. For one thing, George Key gave the Justice Knights some unwitting backing in their drive for legitimacy and status as an ostensibly moderate group.

“I think they came in good faith,” Mr. Key told the reporters. “We didn’t shake hands to begin with, but we did shake hands at the end.”

Unfortunately for Bill Church, this historic handshake occurred with him in rumpled work clothes, not his robe. He was, however, able to further promote himself as a moderate when he addressed the press. His conciliatory goals for the meeting had been accomplished, he said. Then, speaking like a real community leader, he added: “Now we can get together as blacks and whites and try to see where we’ve been going wrong. Maybe we can see that if a man is laid off from his job it’s not a black man or a white man but an American.”

The cameramen pressed closer and Bill rose to his full, impressive height. Now was the time to exert his true qualities of leadership. “Together,” he proclaimed, “we can do a lot of things for everybody—old people, the police, the whole community. Maybe the meeting today has changed the whole outlook.”

Typically, however, Bill was not able to leave well enough alone. When questioned about a cross-burning incident two nights earlier in a racially integrated apartment complex, East Lake Courts, Church conjured up the militant-racist side of his fractured persona.

"I'm not going to say I burned the crosses or that I didn't burn them," he told reporters. "That's a matter for speculation."

Obviously, Bill Church had discovered that "speculation" was the quintessence of continued media interest. He had also learned that displays of firearms made good copy. When reporters asked why there was a shotgun lying in plain view in the back of the car Church had driven to the NAACP "reconciliation" meeting, he smiled coyly and said that the gun "just happened to be there."

The mini-cams whirled and the reporters scrawled hasty notes. Church preened himself in the warm spring sunshine. His audacity sure was paying off.

* * *

The next week was hectic for Church. Events seemed to be careening ahead with an uncontrolled momentum. Now the local PBS television station wanted to tape a panel discussion between Bill Church's Klan group and George Key's NAACP people. Right there on television, a whole half hour! It was an exciting, if not frightening, prospect. Because the television appearance was a vital additional step in establishing himself as a moderate leader, Church accepted the invitation with alacrity.

At the same time, he pressed ahead with this private campaign of illegal militancy. He had to be a leader to *both* groups of potential Klan members, the moderates and the violence-prone boys who liked to get a snootful of liquor and march around with their shotguns and quasi-military weaponry.

One way to appease the militant wing of his small faction was to stage an illegal fund-raising roadblock out in Hamilton County to collect funds for the old white lady who people said got raped by niggers. Klan roadblocks gave the boys a chance to practice a little intimidation and to stand up and be counted for being on the right side. Such fund-raising methods were also a valuable source of revenue, and the legal risks involved

were minimal compared to the potential psychological and material rewards.

But a problem developed right off with the Justice Knights' fund-raising roadblocks. Some of the boys were obviously raking off part of the proceeds. They were *stealing* the money they collected for that poor old white lady. Bill Church knew that this was a direct challenge to his authority and that his position as a leader depended on his ability to keep discipline among his members. At the next klavern meeting Church accused the offenders of disgracing the Klan and summarily expelled them from the group. These men did not take expulsion lying down, however. In an argument typical of Klan groups all across the country, they angrily charged that it was Church himself who had stolen the funds collected at the roadblock: \$160, right into his pocket. Not a penny, they yelled, had reached the poor old white lady.

After more vituperative accusation and counter-accusation, the meeting broke up. Later, Bill Church admitted that he had, indeed, pocketed the \$160 collected for the lady, but said he had no choice in the matter. He needed the money to cover "Klan expenses," and, besides, he had said right from the start of the fund-raising effort that he would not contribute anything under \$200 to the rape victim.

Smarting from this first open challenge to his erratic leadership, Church cast about for means to consolidate his prestige. Using the scheduled half-hour PBS panel show, "Points of View," he repeatedly broke into the discussion to stress how "nonviolent" his Justice Knights were. In so doing, he appeared to some viewers as an earnest young man who had taken an unorthodox path toward racial reconciliation, but, nevertheless, a young man of obvious sincerity.

But in order to entrench himself more deeply as a militant champion of justice for the beleaguered white workingman, Church formulated a secret, flamboyantly violent scheme. Linda Tipton testified about this murderous fantasy two years later. If George Key could be lured to a cross burning, Church told her, "someone else" could be found to shoot the NAACP leader.

It is difficult to judge how valid this threat actually was. Reacting to the accelerating media attention, Bill Church frequently sought relief from the stress of these seemingly runaway events in alcohol and marijuana. Church later told Barney Morgan that he had a "problem with drinking and dope" during this period. Like other paranoid personalities, Church's dreams swooped between extremes of world-saving benevolence and vengeful destruction of his enemies. Such grandiose fantasies, of course, usually become more extreme when the paranoid individual is intoxicated with drugs or alcohol. This may well have been so in the case of Bill Church's threat against George Key. On the other hand, it is possible that the limelight he had received served to solidify the sense of invincibility that Church apparently felt after the television show.

Possibly motivated by this swelling sense of destiny, Bill Church telephoned Imperial Wizard Bill Wilkinson at the "International Headquarters" of the Invisible Empire in Denham Springs, Louisiana. In a confused, rambling conversation, he offered to join forces with Wilkinson, perhaps to form a mutually advantageous partnership. To prove his bona fides as a Klan leader of national stature, Church boasted of the press coverage he had received during his first meeting with the NAACP in Chattanooga. He was obviously not prepared for Bill Wilkinson's response.

Wilkinson "chastised" the young man over George Key forcing Church's Klan members to take off their robes. "I told him about the robes," Wilkinson told me later, "that was just not the way to do things. Either you should have worn your robes or not, but you shouldn't have backed down like that; you should have stuck with it."

When Church apologized and tried to explain that he was only trying to do what he thought was right for the Klan, Wilkinson again upbraided him. "You're going to have to build yourself a reputation," he told the crestfallen young man, "before we talk about you joining up with us."

Discussing this telephone conversation two years later, Wil-

kinson was contrite that his harsh words toward Church might have been in any way responsible for subsequent events. "I guess he must have misconstrued what I meant by 'reputation,'" Wilkinson said. "I feel terrible about that, and I'm a lot more careful now what words I use when I talk to people."

The incidents about which Imperial Wizard Wilkinson felt "terrible" were the culmination of a train of events that acquired momentum during the first three weeks of April 1980. After Bill Church expelled the klavern members over the stolen-money dispute, he realized that his fledgling "empire" was on the edge of disintegration; he had to recruit new people in a big hurry before his media prestige cooled down.

Unfortunately, he had plenty of competition in the local media, much of it from Bill Wilkinson himself. On Saturday, April 5, the day before Easter, Wilkinson was the featured speaker at a much-publicized Invisible Empire recruitment rally held on private farmland just south of Manchester in central Tennessee. The imperial wizard used this rally to unleash one of his regular alarmist warnings on the impending "race war." At this occasion, Wilkinson spoke from the flatbed of a truck parked in the grassy field. On either side of the truck, husky, robed Klansmen armed with semi-automatic rifles and shotguns formed a militantly scowling honor guard for the benefit of the press.

After warming up the assembled crowd of over 200 Klansmen and curious spectators with such predictions that America was heading "straight for a race war," he told them that, "Affirmative-action programs promote the niggers and other minorities above the white people."

Shouting now into the microphone, Wilkinson challenged the audience: "You're a yellow-livered, gutless coward if you don't fight."

When Wilkinson concluded his speech by "robing out" in his gaudy imperial wizard's garb, the audience reportedly gasped and sighed with admiration.

Obviously, Bill Church had sought just such admiration

when he launched the Justice Knights. But he had a long way to go, especially now that he had been "chastised" by the imperial wizard of the Invisible Empire.

Stymied in his bid for an alliance with Wilkinson's group, Church launched a frenzied recruitment campaign, concentrating part of his efforts on several bars and lounges along Brainerd Road. Although he was able to harangue and cajole several young men into joining his group, others at the bars and private drinking parties openly ridiculed either his public stand of moderation or his half-baked barroom talk of race war and paramilitary training.

During one such drunken discussion in the middle of April, Bill Church's trip-wire temper sprang and he exploded in a violent rage. It took several police officers to subdue him so that he could be formally charged with "two counts of assault and battery." One of the arresting officers was a muscular black man with considerable experience in handling violent drunks.

According to later reports, several of Church's Klansmen "ribbed" him the next day about letting a black policeman get the better of him. How could a big guy like Bill, who was supposedly a "12th degree" karate master, be so easily handled? Church was reportedly chafed by these accusations, and with good reason. His friends did not know it, but his grandiose status as a "12th degree expert" was the purest of fantasies, a bogus title he had conferred upon himself, a pathetic attempt at macho prestige similar to his claims that he was a bad-assed "'Nam vet."

However, Church could not admit this to his men, his followers. Instead, the guilty hangover he experienced the next day soured into self-contempt, which then flared into rage. On Friday, April 18, his rage exploded once again; this time the target was Linda Tipton. Although Tipton was reportedly "overweight and several years older" than Church, she had shown one very attractive attribute: loyalty to him. Now, in his confused anger, he accused her of infidelity and beat her savagely.

Warning her to keep quiet about the violence, he seized the keys to her red Mustang and stamped out the door of her home, thirsty for a drink and hungry for the company of loyal comrades, young men who would listen to his tales of dangerous Green-Beret missions in “’Nam,” guys who would display their admiration at his impressive mastery of the martial arts.

It was in this frame of mind that he met his diminished klavern the next morning, Saturday, April 19, 1980. The small group assembled on Suck Creek Road, not far from historic Signal Mountain. It was a warm, partly cloudy spring morning, the first mild weather after weeks of heavy rain that had caused widespread local flooding. With birds singing in the surrounding dogwood thickets, Bill Church pulled on his imperial wizard robes and called his small band of followers to order. The business at hand was the initiation of two new members. As they took their oaths on the American flag and the Bible, Bill Church might have temporarily forgotten the hammer blows of embarrassment and defeat that had recently struck him, beginning with the klavern schism and Bill Wilkinson’s upbraiding and continuing through his arrest and the violence with Linda. The sun was shining, and Bill Church had interesting plans for the rest of the day.

First, he would treat his two new Klan buddies, Larry Payne and Marshall Thrash, to a half-gallon of good whiskey and a case of cold beer. At least these recent converts were loyal to him; he knew that. They were tangible, living affirmation that he really *was* the leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

When the ceremony ended and the sunny morning stretched into a pleasant spring afternoon, Church and the two other men continued drinking beer and hard liquor. They went deeper into the woods and cut several trees that Church had decided to use for cross burnings. At some point during that drunken afternoon, Bill Church must have remembered his first meeting with George Key of the NAACP. At that time, Mr. Key had exacted a public promise from Church that the young Klansman would “never come down to East Ninth Street and

burn a cross." Now, as he sucked down warm bourbon from the bottle and chased the liquor with icy swallows of beer, Bill Church apparently made his decision. They would not burn *one* cross in nigger-town; they'd drive down there when it got dark tonight and burn *two*.

After several false starts and a certain amount of Keystone Kops confusion, the drunken Klansmen realized that the large tree limbs would not fit very well in their cars for the trip to the center of Chattanooga's black community. Some anonymous, reasonably sober member of the klavern suggested they use two-by-four boards, precut and assembled. Imperial Wizard Church gave the order to proceed.

Before the small convoy of Klan cars entered the black neighborhood on East Ninth Street, however, Bill Church drove the red Mustang to Marshall Thrash's home. Mr. Thrash staggered into his house and returned cradling two long .12-gauge shotguns. Asked later why he felt the need to carry the weapons to Ninth Street, Thrash answered, "I didn't want to go there without some sort of protection."

It was after 8:30 p.m. and quite dark when the Klan cars stole beneath the railroad underpass in the 600 block of East Ninth Street. Even though the men were "crazy drunk," as Church later described their condition, they worked with reasonable efficiency, propping up the two wooden crosses and drenching the boards with gasoline from a red metal can. When everything was ready, they backed away and threw matches at the gasoline puddled on the cracked pavement. The flames shot up with a dazzling orange flash, and the crosses blazed with a beautiful, defiant glare. Now their only problem was that no black people were there to be terrified by the display of Klan militancy.

Nevertheless, Bill Church was not going to stick around to see who showed up. He sped off into the darkness, Marshall Thrash beside him in the front seat and Larry Payne behind him. The three Klansmen were heard to whoop and holler as they drove away from the burning crosses. Apparently, however, this outrage was not enough to satisfy Church's frustrat-

ed anger and deep publicity hunger. He circled back along East Ninth Street and sped toward a more densely populated neighborhood of wood-frame houses. There had to be some way to draw these "stupid niggers" attention to those burning crosses.

As the car neared the corner of Ninth and Douglas, Church felt a sharp thump on his back. He spun in his seat to see Marshall Thrash leveling one of the shotguns out the driver's side window. The blast of the gun was incredibly loud inside the small Mustang. Almost at once Thrash fired a second blast from the other gun.

Church yelled something unintelligible and floored the accelerator. Thrash had fired blindly, and no one had seen where the shots were aimed. Although the streets were crowded with people out for a stroll on this warm spring evening, Church was either unconcerned about who the two shotgun blasts had struck, or, more likely, terrified of possible vengeance if he stopped to give assistance. Whatever his emotions at the time, he did not stay very long in the neighborhood.

The shocked people who ran toward the corner found four elderly and middle-aged black women sprawled wounded on the bloody sidewalk. Viola Ellison, Lela Mae Evans, Katherine Johnson, and Opal Lee Jackson had received the *justice* of Bill Church's Justice Knights, Ku Klux Klan. A fifth elderly black woman, Mary Tyson, lay sobbing hysterically but unwounded next to her companions. Although hit with multiple birdshot pellets, none of the women was critically wounded. Fannie Crumsey, an elderly woman who lived on East Ninth, had been struck by flying glass slivers from a car window shattered in the second blast.

Within minutes of the shootings, as ambulances raced toward the corner of Ninth and Douglas with their emergency lights spinning, Chattanooga Police Department patrolmen Don Long and Mark Tate had pulled over the red Mustang and extracted the three drunken Klansmen at gunpoint. When they stumbled from the car, the shotguns and several red plastic shells clattered to the pavement. Approximately one

hour after Bill Church had wheeled the Mustang back onto East Ninth Street, he and the two others were each being charged with four counts of felonious assault with intent to commit murder.

Police searching the car for evidence later that night discovered in the glove compartment an unstamped envelope, addressed in Bill Church's childish hand to Bill Wilkinson, Box 700, Denham Springs, Louisiana.

The letter in this envelope was dated April 8, and was apparently in response to the telephone reprimand Wilkinson had delivered to Bill Church a few days earlier.

Mr. Wilkerson! Imperial Wizard, the letter began. (Spelling was not the letter's strong point.)

I am very sorry I messed things up, Church continued. *I just wanted you to be proud of me. As a klansman you have been my idol for a number of years. I just wanted to be like you, (I have a long way to go, I'm 23 yrs old). But I hope with your help I'll make it.*

Continuing in this vein, Bill Church begged for forgiveness from the older Klan leader.

I hope that you and your organization will accept my apologie. For people are not doing enough lately. Blacks playing with whites and all the intergrated schools teach that now! I hate it. I don't want my children around them lett loan go to school with them. Niggers & whites married & having babbies it makes me sick. I have already visited a couple of them. They don't date no more.

This last line was an apparent reference to the cross burnings at the integrated East Lake Courts apartment complex.

I just wanted to be a great leader like you, Bill Church went on. *And I will continue to try. I contacted the times today. After all I'm "trying". I told them I would not invite no nigger to no rally of mine, I would not pull off my robe, I would not have anything to do with no NAACP communist Party. . . . I'm a dedicated man. But I'm sorry I got off to a wrong start. But in the future I'll learn and be better.*

The pathetic tone of a chastised child continued with Bill Church's references to his Ku Klux Klan family heritage, claims which were apparently as much a fantasy as his Vietnam service and martial arts expertise. The picture that emerged from this letter was of a frightened, confused child living inside the body of a violently angry giant.

My fathers Grandfather was the Grand Dragon for the Dixie Klan. I've been with him since I was 11 years old. And as a klansman, it means alot to me.

This was apparently an apocryphal reference to his parents' separation; from this passage, Bill Church seemed to imply that he had either lived "with" his great-grandfather, the purported "Grand Dragon for the Dixie Klan," or with his father. In either case, the pathetic claim was false.

In closing the letter, Church again begged for approval from the older Klan leader.

So I hope you'll see I'm trying and hope one day you can be proud of me & I can work with you.

The handwriting broke down at this point, as if Bill Church might have been drunk or agitated. He closed the letter with this confused passage: *I have already trying to to improve on our White Rights for Wights.*

Hopefully friends someday.

Bill Church

Justice Knights of America of the KKK.

I wish you would write back and tell me your feeling, & help me run it Right!

Church included with his letter an additional message in reference to a Chattanooga Times editorial on the Klan that he had clipped from the newspaper. In this postscript, his mood swung from contrition to wild overconfidence. Referring to the local critics of the NAACP meetings, he wrote:

Some think it was Publisity some think it was good, but I know just how to go about doing this. But if you and your organization don't want me to meet with them I won't. So I wait to hear from you! Soon! Some say everything will be OK.

(Until the war starts or the Klan has vilence or starts on its move, I've started my move against the DAMN Niggers). . . .

He signed this postscript:

Friend

Bill Church

Imperial Wizard

Justice Nights of America

Ku Klux Klan

A psychiatrist who studied Church's letter to Wilkinson told me that it was possibly an appeal for parental approval, that possibly Wilkinson, the publicly acclaimed "imperial wizard," and Church's mythical "fathers Grandfather" had somehow become intermingled in the young man's confused fantasies. Whatever the possible interpretation, the letter clearly seems to have been written by an enraged, emotionally immature young man.

* * *

In the summer of 1980, the three Klansmen whom the Chattanooga police had pulled from the red Mustang, stood trial on felony assault charges. It was impossible to prove felonious intent on the part of Larry Payne and Bill Church after Marshall Thrash testified that he, alone, had fired the two shotguns. Thrash was then convicted of reduced assault charges and ultimately served three months of a nine-month jail sentence. Larry Payne and Bill Church were acquitted.

Two years later, the three young men were not so lucky. As defendants in an unprecedented federal class-action civil suit against the Ku Klux Klan, they were assessed a total of \$535,000 punitive and compensatory damages stemming from the drunken shooting. They were also enjoined from partaking in future Klan activity. Bill Church declined to participate in this federal trial.

* * *

Sifting through the confused record and interviewing the

principals involved in these events, I began to gain insight into the mentality of both Bill Church and the better known Klan figure he had so desperately sought to emulate: Bill Wilkinson. During my initial research, it seemed probable that the relationship between Church and Wilkinson had been one of a psychopathic young zealot, Church, rising up briefly to challenge an established national leader, Wilkinson, a man who had obtained his prominent position by a combination of political skill and ideological motivation. As I examined Wilkinson's career in greater detail, however, I began to see a number of psychological parallels between the two men.

They were both audacious, long-shot gamblers; both were obsessed with racial superiority. They both saw themselves as natural leaders who had been propelled by a strong sense of injustice from working-class obscurity to positions of well-deserved prominence. Each of the two men displayed alternating public personas of joviality and bitter rage; their seemingly incompatible ambitions to be considered simultaneously the armed prophets of a coming racial apocalypse and also the moderate, nonviolent champions of white workingmen's rights, were an example of this emotional duality. And, finally, both Wilkinson and Church appeared compelled to audacious self-promotion.

In this respect, both Church and Wilkinson showed personality traits common in historically notorious extremist leaders: Lenin, Hitler, Andreas Baader and Donald DeFreeze, the Field Marshal General Cinque of the Symbionese Liberation Army. Although Bill Church's ludicrous references to himself as "Doctor" William L. Church, the "12th degree" karate expert, and his compulsion to transform his military record as a peacetime Army metal worker to that of a Vietnam combat veteran were the obvious traits of an unstable personality, Bill Wilkinson, a man viewed by many as a moderate, predictable leader of the "new" Klan, has resorted to equally spurious self-aggrandizement.

In 1981, Wilkinson circulated a promotional mailer entitled "A voice from the Invisible Empire, A Profile of Bill Wilkin-

son.” This single-sheet flyer contained the following two paragraphs:

The undisputed leader of the Klan movement is BILL WILKINSON, 39, of Denham Springs, Louisiana. Born in 1942, Wilkinson graduated from high school in 1959 and enlisted in the United States Navy. His excellent military performance brought about his transfer to the nuclear submarine program. Mr. Wilkinson was assigned to help in the building of the nuclear powered, Polaris submarine, the USS Simon Bolivar. He also served as a member of the Blue Crew on the maiden voyage of the Simon Bolivar. He held a top secret cryptographic clearance and used top secret war plans as part of his daily duties.

While Mr. Wilkinson was aboard the Simon Bolivar, Russian destroyers attempted to ram and sink the submarine. Only through diligent maneuvers employed by the officers and crew of the sub, did the Simon Bolivar escape sinking. On one occasion the sub was chased for over 100 miles before the Russians gave up the chase.

After reading this description of Wilkinson’s naval career, of which he has stated he is “very, very proud,” a reasonable person would infer that he was a man of heroic stature; he had, after all, risen through the ranks, with only a high school education, to the point where he “used top secret war plans” on a daily basis. Moreover, he had been aboard the submarine when it had been attacked by several Russian destroyers that had “attempted to ram and sink” the vessel. A reasonable person might also infer that on another occasion while Bill Wilkinson was aboard the sub, the *Bolivar* was “chased” for over 100 miles by Russian warships before they abandoned the effort.

A man who performed his duties well under such conditions deserved the respect of a grateful nation. Certainly the patriotism of such a Navy veteran could never be questioned.

All across the country, television-talk-show hosts and newspaper reporters accepted the validity of this promotional sheet without question. Just as Bill Church had tried to attract militant young Klan members by offering his record as a combat-hardened karate expert, Bill Wilkinson promoted him-

self as a veteran of secret offshore naval encounters with Russian destroyers.

But, I knew, a Polaris submarine's ability to cruise submerged, deep and silent, undetected by Soviet surface vessels or hunter-killer submarines was one of the fundamental pillars of American nuclear deterrence strategy. Obviously, if Russian destroyers had been able to catch a vessel like the *Bolivar* in water shallow enough for them to attempt to "ram and sink the sub," America had a terrible strategic problem. Also, if Russian surface ships had been able to "chase" the *Bolivar* for three or four hours—presumably by maintaining an unbroken sonar fix on the sub—then the wartime life-expectancy of our ultimate nuclear deterrent, the Polaris fleet, would be brief indeed.

Troubled by Wilkinson's description of his naval service, I wrote to the Department of the Navy and asked for a confirmation. This was their reply:

Navy records indicate Bill Wilkinson served aboard the USS SIMON BOLIVAR (SSBN-641) as part of the precommissioning crew, during her construction at Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, Newport News, Virginia. . . .

He was a Radioman First Class. He held a top secret cryptographic clearance. He was a member of the Blue Crew during the BOLIVAR's first POLARIS patrol. He performed his duties well.

The other statements referred to above are imaginary.

Mr. Wilkinson did not have access to war plans because he did not have any need to know.

The first Blue Crew patrol, of which he was a member, was a relatively uneventful patrol. SIMON BOLIVAR remained undetected during the entire patrol. She remained clear of all contacts and had no confrontation with a Russian destroyer while on her patrol.

* * *

Six months after our first conversation, when I asked Bill Wilkinson to explain this discrepancy, he replied with appar-

ently genuine contrition: "That's one that leaves me with a red face."

He went on to explain that an overzealous, unnamed writer had "gotten carried away and exaggerated" Bill's naval service. Wilkinson also said that there had, indeed, been a "strong sonar contact" audibly pinging on the *Bolivar's* hull as the vessel returned from the patrol. When I asked him to elaborate a little, he admitted that the men aboard the submarine did not know, nor did they even guess that the source of the sonar pings was a Russian destroyer or destroyers.

"There was not a verifiable detection," he admitted. But he did say that the *Simon Bolivar's* commanding officer had ordered evasive maneuvers for several hours.

It sounded to me as if the sub's skipper possibly made use of an opportunity to carry out a realistic training exercise, a far cry from a near ramming or a 100-mile "chase." After discussing this self-promotion with Bill Wilkinson, I was almost tempted to believe his plausible explanation that an eager writer had simply gotten carried away and embellished on Wilkinson's admirable naval record. But then I began to note similar tendencies toward spurious exaggeration not only in his descriptions of himself, but also of the claimed size and membership composition of his Klan group, as well as in his political rhetoric. Looking more closely at Wilkinson's record, I discovered a pattern of arrogant audacity, a seemingly consistent need to exaggerate, whether the issue under discussion was his own perfectly honorable naval record or an analysis of the negative impact of affirmative-action programs on the white workingman.

In this regard, he shared a common personality trait with a number of demagogues; Senator "Tail Gunner" Joe McCarthy was one that came quickly to mind. Another was L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the large Scientology cult. Hubbard, a Navy veteran of World War II, claimed to have been crippled by wounds sustained in combat, and to have cured himself of this crippling. But, like Joe McCarthy, he was never in combat. Wilkinson, like McCarthy, appeared unable to leave

well enough alone. Both men seemed compelled to push outrageous claims to extremes, almost as if they dared the world to denounce them as frauds.

When I interviewed Wilkinson at his "International Headquarters"—a concrete bunker set in the pinewoods east of Baton Rouge—he told me some wildly outrageous things, even though he knew I was tape-recording the interview and that I had access to a considerable research staff to help me validate or refute my findings.

He claimed, for example, that the only people who attacked his Klan rallies were white leftists. There was a *kernel* of truth in this claim; the Trotskyite Progressive Labor Party, whose slogan is "Fight, Fight, Fight for Communism," is one of the groups that consistently seek publicity by demonstrating in protest against KKK rallies. But the NAACP, the Urban League, and a variety of moderate black community-coalition groups across the country also demonstrate against the KKK. Wilkinson, however, must have felt confident in his position that I would accept without question his statement that "... the people that are attacking us are not black. . . . They're Communist, self-avowed."

It was a widely publicized fact, however, that Wilkinson had used violent confrontations with black civil-rights demonstrators in Mississippi and northern Alabama to draw media attention to his Klan faction during the late 1970s. There were repeated clashes with black demonstrators in towns like Tupelo and Okolona, Mississippi, and Decatur, Alabama, at this time. The people with whom Wilkinson's men clashed were definitely not white Communists but black protest marchers.

Such media blitzes provided Wilkinson a forum to spread his image as an angry militant. During these clashes he was credited with such extremist rhetoric as:

"We are providing vigilante law for Decatur. If they [law enforcement] are unable to enforce the law, we will."

"We'll go to the limit to keep the peace, including violence if necessary."

Was he so arrogant as to think that I would not look into the

public record and consult the leaders of national black organizations? Perhaps. Certainly Wilkinson had gotten off reasonably unscathed from a number of prior encounters with news media and writers.

In a similar vein, he unequivocally asserted that the Reagan administration does not have a *single* black person "qualified to go into high government positions." I wonder if he actually believed that I would leave unchallenged such an accusation.

I later had occasion to discuss this foolish audacity with my friend Carlos Campbell, the assistant secretary of commerce for economic development, the second-ranking black official in the Reagan administration. Carlos refused "to dignify" Wilkinson's racist slur by directly responding to it. Instead, Carlos highlighted some of his own qualifications to hold "high office."

He is an administrator and author with an impeccable academic background and extensive experience in private industry and both the domestic and international branches of the federal government. He is multilingual. He was a member of the board of directors for the American Society of Planning Officials. He also had a distinguished career as a U.S. Navy officer, serving overseas as a navigator and air intelligence officer. During the course of this service, he was awarded the Secretary of the Navy Achievement Medal.

I found it ironic that Wilkinson, a poorly educated demagogue with spurious claims to a heroic naval career, would choose to denigrate both a man like Carlos Campbell and the administration that selected him for high office.

Wilkinson's brazen exaggerations might actually indicate delusions of invincibility. In this respect, he would be very similar to Bill Church, or, for that matter, to Renato Curcio of the Red Brigades, or Andreas Baader of the Red Army Faction. Jim Jones, standing in his scarlet robe at the pulpit of the Peoples Temple, had also exhibited similar audacity. As Steve Katsaris has pointed out for me, such pathologically ambitious personalities have trouble differentiating between reality and a successful deception; in fact, they often *preferred* the de-

ception. Such people usually possessed a kind of magical belief that if *they* said something, no matter how outrageous, the assertion would somehow prove true.

For years, Jim Jones had been accustomed to drawing himself up in his pulpit, puffing out his chest, and offering as inspired prophetic vision any manner of outrageous nonsense that happened to pop into his head. Clearly, Bill Wilkinson has not yet reached such proportions. But when I interviewed him in Louisiana, he definitely seemed to believe his own rhetoric about the impending "race war" and the absolute biological superiority of the white race.

Wilkinson also had obvious delusions about his own historical importance. He unequivocally stated, for example, that racist, right-wing extremists such as the Ku Klux Klan had exerted a definite influence on national political trends. At one point, he sat back and calmly asserted that the policies of the Reagan Administration reflected the goals of the extreme right, "about as close as it could without having a Klansman in office."

If the Republican administration sought Klan support, I asked, could he explain why President and Mrs. Reagan had made a much-publicized visit to a black family that had been the victim of a cross-burning outrage.

Bill Wilkinson scowled a moment. "Theatrics," he said flatly.

I then pointed out that Ronald Reagan, as a candidate, had used the Klan issue as a way of attacking Jimmy Carter. How could Bill rationalize that?

"I don't know," he admitted; maybe the President was "courting the black vote." Wilkinson then shook his head with obvious concern. "I just hope that he doesn't go too far because, if he does, he's going to lose a lot of support on the far right." Bill puffed on his cigar thoughtfully. "I'm staying with the man as far as I can, and I don't see any turning back right now."

We were speaking in Wilkinson's small paneled office inside the windowless concrete bunker set in a pine grove on an obscure country road in the Deep South. Fifteen hundred

miles away, the President of the United States was in the Oval Office, consulting with the leaders of his government or the Congress about important matters of state. A reasonable person would surmise that the President was not unduly worried about losing the support of Imperial Wizard Bill Wilkinson.

But I honestly believe that Wilkinson did not share that surmise.

For a long time he talked earnestly about the excesses of affirmative action and forced school busing, about welfare chiselers and lack of moral fiber among the younger generation. Wilkinson had a firm stance on each issue. "I'm out to build a national organization," he proclaimed, a political power base that would bring back "our right to segregate."

When I asked him how many members he now had, he would not give a figure, but did say the group was sizable enough to require "a computer" to handle mailings and dues collections.

Informed government sources and anti-Klan groups, such as B'nai B'rith, told me that the membership of the Invisible Empire fluctuates around 2500 members, mainly in the industrial New South, about the size of a small labor union or large country club, hardly the "national organization" to which Wilkinson had alluded. I wondered how such a small group supported the expensive administrative overhead I saw around me, the address-labeling machines, the small printing plant in the back of the building. And, I asked myself, what about the cost of Wilkinson's own expensive travel schedule?

When I had sat down in front of Bill Wilkinson's desk, I'd noticed a half-completed American Express Card application form lying on his blotter, so I assumed he must have a fairly high and stable income.

Later I discussed the question of Klan finances with Randall Williams, head of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Klan-watch. His organization had consistently contended, he said, that a leader like Wilkinson was active in the Klan out of financial motives. "Wilkinson," he said, "is basically a con man interested in money, not ideology. He fought continually

with his Alabama people over money.”

When I asked Bill Wilkinson about the financial sacrifices involved with being a Klan leader, he replied:

“I’m committed. I closed my business for it [the Klan], and of course I have enough real estate that would hold me. Money doesn’t interest me. That’s one good thing. . . . They can’t buy me; so far they haven’t been able to scare me.”

After I left his headquarters, I talked with the Livingston Parish Tax Assessor’s Office in order to ascertain if Wilkinson did indeed have “enough real estate” to “hold” him. The total value of Wilkinson’s local property holdings, I was told, was approximately \$36,000. Recently, the spokesman said, Wilkinson had tried to transfer this property to a tax-free, quasi-religious group called the “Universal Life Church,” but the Tax Assessor disallowed this attempt.

When I learned the assessed value of his local real estate holdings, I began to wonder about the provenance of Wilkinson’s actual income. One man who knew Klan finances well was Jerry Thompson, the courageous Nashville *Tennessean* journalist who infiltrated Wilkinson’s Invisible Empire and wrote about his experience in the insightful book, *My Life in the Klan*. I asked Jerry about the financial rewards of being an imperial wizard.

“Initiation dues for a new recruit are now up to twenty dollars,” he told me. “A new recruit also pays four-fifty a month regular dues and forty-five dollars annual dues . . . if you multiply that by ten thousand people—which I don’t think he has anymore—that’s a damn sizable piece of change.”

I answered that even 5000 members would provide a huge income for Wilkinson.

“Bill Wilkinson,” Jerry Thompson told me, “is a damn effective con man.”

When I multiplied \$119 per year by 5000, I got a figure of \$595,000. Generating that kind of money with bogus claims of naval heroics and alarms of racial apocalypse was, indeed, the sign of an effective con man.

In fact, the Invisible Empire was an efficient and vora-

cious fund raiser. "The biggest reason Wilkinson had trouble with Klan factions in Alabama," Randall Williams told me, "was disputes over money. His group really goes for members' money. They try to get all that they can after initiation. The members have to buy a robe, then there's always other contributions. . . ."

I now began to realize why Wilkinson was such an active recruiter. Even if new members did not remain active in the Klan very long, an annual membership average of 2500 would generate a minimum of \$295,500 *tax-free* income, not bad for a country-boy naval hero who had assured me with such palpable sincerity that Biblical admonitions against racial mixing were his principal motive in leading his segregationist crusade. But Wilkinson never did show me the Biblical passages he claimed inspired his cause.

Established Christian clergymen have certainly been quick to condemn the Klan and all it stands for. One white southern churchman I spoke with has been especially adamant in his anti-Klan protests. The Reverend Melvin Perry of Madison, Tennessee, is a conservative pastor of a fundamentalist Bible, Presbyterian-church congregation. He has marched in lonely, silent protest against most of Wilkinson's recent recruitment rallies in Tennessee. On several occasions, he has been taunted and threatened with violence by Wilkinson's Klansmen. These Klansmen obviously did not share their imperial wizard's professed reverence for Biblical matters.

They cursed Reverend Perry with obscene epithets and called him a "nigger lover" because he carried a placard that read: "And God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son . . . for *all* the people." At one Invisible Empire rally in central Tennessee, a violent young Wilkinson follower strode across the lonely country road where Perry was picketing and threatened to knock the clergyman's "brains out." Luckily for Perry, a helicopter carrying a television-news team arrived at the moment of the confrontation, and the robed Klansmen quickly formed an armed phalanx to provide good visuals for the cameraman. "If the media had not been

there," Reverend Perry told me, "I'm sure that my life would have been in danger."

I told Reverend Perry about Wilkinson's claim that Biblical admonitions against racial integration had motivated his crusade. "Wilkinson's Klan group was claiming that black people are not going to heaven," Reverend Perry said bitterly. "But these Klansmen don't know anything about the Bible. I don't see how you can be a Klansman and also be a good Christian."

I am certain, however, after having interviewed Bill Wilkinson, that he somehow believes his perverted vision of Christianity is more valid than that of Reverend Perry, a member of a denomination that teaches lifelong Bible study as a means of salvation. In a similar manner, Jim Jones arrogantly proclaimed that the "Apostolic Socialism" of the Peoples Temple was the natural "evolution" of traditional Christianity.

Whatever the true motivation of Bill Wilkinson, I believe he was dead serious when he asserted that the President of the United States was influenced by racist zealots like himself. I neglected, however, to ask Bill what he thought he had done to achieve a position of such prominence. Certainly, he had not contributed any constructive public-policy recommendations. In fact, almost all of Wilkinson's stated policy goals and the programs he envisioned to implement them were of a retrograde nature. Rather than work for better race relations in the armed services, for example, he favored a return to segregated units, a concept he called a "great" idea.

In order to abolish the evils of racially integrated education, he proposed adopting a three-tier system, with separate schools for blacks, whites, and for those students who wished to attend integrated classes. Assuming that he intended this system to extend from kindergarten through graduate and professional schools, I asked him how he proposed funding such a huge added financial burden during these times of shrinking resources.

Wilkinson seemed troubled, perhaps angered by my question. Running such a three-tier system, he insisted, would not be as complex or expensive as administering the present

forced-busing program. He was adamant on this point, and I realized it would be a waste of time to discuss the matter in depth; the complexities of establishing, for example, three "separate-but-equal" medical or law schools in a tax-poor state like Mississippi were obviously not issues he wished to discuss.

He did seem eager, however, to get on the conservative bandwagon and to publicly ally his extremist cause with that of the law-abiding and energetic New Right in America. Although he clearly wanted the coloration of conservative respectability, he seemed totally unable to outline any practical programs to ameliorate the current social and economic imbalances he deplors. At one point in our interview, he claimed to know that black people preferred to live in inner-city ghettos, and that the only solution to civil disorder in such areas was Draconian police measures or white vigilantism. He also suggested that his Klan "Special Forces" would be happy to serve as the hard core of such vigilante groups. Such clear indications of his underlying nihilistic anger were apparent throughout the interview.

During his public recruitment rallies, Wilkinson has developed a firebrand's intensity in denouncing the excesses of federal affirmative-action programs and mandatory school busing. Most of the 20 or 30 minutes these speeches last is given over to angry rhetoric, not to the complexities of suggested alternatives to the programs. Also, the subject of the impending race war almost always finds its way into such speeches.

It is interesting to note how Wilkinson tries to juggle his various public images. In most interviews with journalists, he uses the term "blacks" or "black people"; in public rallies, he often says "Negro"; but at private rallies he consistently shouts the dehumanizing epithet "nigger." Clearly, this small hypocrisy is indicative of a deeper contempt for the political institutions he seeks to manipulate.

Repeatedly in our discussion, he stressed how nonviolent his group was. Yet, almost in the same breath, he admitted

happily that a parading, hooded Klansman was undoubtedly a figure of terror to a black person.

When I asked him if he meant that a black might reasonably equate a robed Klansman with lynchings, Wilkinson became indignant and launched into a convoluted defense of Klan robes, describing them as being "almost identical" to traditional clerical garb: obviously as benign a costume as one could imagine. To me, this exchange offered an interesting perspective on extremist mentality. He appeared sincere in wanting the Ku Klux Klan to claim simultaneous title to two diametrically opposed attributes: traditional, near-clerical benevolence, and nightmarish malevolence. As a leader of such an impossibly contradictory organization, he had been eager to present the two mutually exclusive images: nonviolent, neo-conservative champion of the downtrodden white workingman, and uncompromising paramilitary prophet of the coming racial apocalypse.

No wonder a confused young troublemaker like Bill Church had written Wilkinson to say, "As a Klansman, you have been my idol for a number of years."

An extremist zealot like a Wilkinson, a Donald DeFreeze, or a Jim Jones, did indeed present an enviable model for a young person with an aching void at the core of his personality. By emulating the antics of such a figure, the young follower just might be able to briefly acquire a sense of value, out of which he had been cheated by a brutal parent or the trauma of a fractured family.

Certainly, when I studied the short, unfortunate career of "Doctor" Bill Church, imperial wizard of the Justice Knights, Ku Klux Klan, such a pattern of compulsive emulation became obvious. Wilkinson, an unpredictable nihilist with a grandiose vision of his destiny, had become the pattern that Bill Church, an even less stable personality, had so desperately tried to follow.

One law-enforcement officer I asked about Wilkinson's potential for violence had assured me that, "Old Bill is harmless."

At the time, I'd agreed with the lawman. But then I pieced

together the obscure train of events that occurred in Chattanooga during the spring of 1980. It seemed obvious that there was a clear connection between Bill Church's audacious telephone call to his "idol," Bill Wilkinson, and the night the shotgun blasts sent those elderly black women sprawling to the Ninth-Street sidewalk a few weeks later.

No matter how much Bill Wilkinson or his young idolater, Bill Church, might strive for media recognition as respectable moderates, they are anything but "harmless."

Chapter Ten

Washington, Autumn

IT WAS ONE OF those crisp Saturday mornings in November when a person feels like chasing a football or maybe even raking leaves. Around the Mall, the orange foliage of the elms and maples stood out beautifully against the marble of the monuments. But the 2000 young people milling around at the foot of Capitol Hill had not come to play football or gawk at the autumn colors. They were here to demonstrate against a march by the Ku Klux Klan, scheduled to begin at noon.

Donald Black's Alabama splinter, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, had managed once again to upstage Bill Wilkinson's Invisible Empire, by obtaining a parade permit for a march up Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to Lafayette Park, directly across from the White House, where they planned to hold a rally protesting recent liberalization of immigration laws. Two weeks earlier, Wilkinson had staged a "support your police" rally, during which 24 lonely Klansmen gathered

briefly within a hermetically sealed ring of police and troopers in an isolated park in Rockville, Maryland, just outside Washington. At that rally, the police and media representatives had outnumbered the Klansmen ten to one.

On the Mall this bright Saturday, it looked as if the anti-Klan demonstrators, many led by leftist coalitions and radical groups such as the Progressive Labor Party, would probably outnumber the "several hundred" Klansmen scheduled to march by at least that ratio. But, unlike the Rockville rally, there was no way the Capitol and District of Columbia police could seal the entire length of Pennsylvania Avenue and thus separate the Klan marchers and the anti-Klan demonstrators. Given this long parade route, and given the fact that Washington has the largest percentage of black citizens of any American city, the possibility of violent confrontation was obvious.

The speakers on the wooden platform set up by the Labor/Black Mobilization to STOP THE KLAN, apparently recognized the crowd's anger and potential for violence, and they seemed to be doing their demagogic best to stir up hatred. I entered the Labor/Black demonstration area on the Mall, which had been cordoned off with snow fence, and shoved forward to get a better look at the speakers. The young white man who leaned close to the microphones, his face contorted and his body stiff with rage, reminded me of an actor in some made-for-TV movie about the campus radicals of the 1960s. His ginger mustache positively quivered and his red-knuckled fist slashed through the air as he screamed vindictive rhetoric.

Around me, the crowd, mostly young black men in their teens and 20s, applauded, stomped approval and punctuated his speech with chants of "That's Right!" "Right On!" and "Smash the Klan!" Photographers and mini-cam crews shouldered their way through the audience to document the scene. Across the width of Constitution Avenue, a double formation of police in riot gear waited in the sunshine, adopting the classic expressions of watchful boredom common to police the world over. The young man on the platform yelled louder, as if trying by sheer volume to inflame the audience. But yelling

was unnecessary, as the Mobilization was equipped with a stadium-class amplification system. His vituperative rage could no doubt be heard clearly a mile away. Now he was vilifying the evil forces in the government that allowed the Klan to come here.

"Everybody's against black people," he screamed hoarsely. "Everybody's against working people. Reagan understands that the system is beginning to crumble. That's why he's given the green light to the Klan. They are his dogs of war; they are his *killers*."

The crowd roared, a sudden, guttural rush of sound which made me flinch.

"He says to his killers," the speaker shouted, heartened by the response, "He says . . . 'Go ahead, organize. You have the blessing of the United States of America to kill black people' . . ."

The crowd of young black men around me snarled.

" . . . 'To kill Mexicans' . . ."

Again there was a rush of shouting.

" . . . 'To kill Catholics.' That's what he's telling them. . . . This march today means that the Klan is going to get hundreds and *thousands* of new members. It means that people are going to be *killed*, that's what it means. . . ."

He stepped back expectantly from the microphones, and the audience responded with angry chants. I glanced around me; some of the kids were laughing, as if after a good play at a ball game; others were silent, brooding.

"We're not pacifists," the speaker shouted, leaning aggressively into the mikes. "We don't want trouble, but that doesn't mean we're pacifist because *pacifism never got nobody nothin'*."

Beside me, a young kid in a shiny bomber jacket turned to his buddy and whispered, "He tryin' talk *black* now."

His friend snickered, looked at me, then turned politely away. Whatever he said, the boy in the bomber jacket doubled up with laughter on hearing it. Their mirth seemed out of place, but I had to agree that the speaker's attempts at "tryin'

talk black" had been ludicrous and patronizing.

I pushed out of the throng and worked my way toward the press enclosure at Senate Park, a quarter-mile up Capitol Hill: the site designated for the start of the Klan march.

Halfway up the hill, I could still clearly hear the amplified diatribe of the ginger-headed radical. "The Klan is getting bigger," he shouted, "and you'd better be scared of them, of what is happening." He howled about "bombings and fire bombings, every goddamn day for three or four *years*." I stopped and made a quick calculation in my notebook. That young guy was trying to convince these people that there had been as many as 1400 Klan bombings in recent years. He was trying to terrorize his audience. Surely, somebody would challenge such an obvious lie. I realized angrily that he was actually doing the Klan's job for them; he was giving credence to the "race war" fantasies of people like Wilkinson and Bill Church.

"But being scared is not enough," the speaker continued, his voice becoming more controlled now, his reasoning clearly more calculated. "People have to understand that what you see isn't what is, that this is a class society and a class system, and black people have been *put* at the bottom ever since the end of slavery."

Several angry black members of the audience yelled loudly now, railing against the Klan and the government. I turned back and put on my tape recorder, to capture the political pitch I felt sure was coming.

"There needs to be a new kind of party," the speaker called out, "not just a party that goes and votes and stuff like that. Capitalism is not going to be done away with by voting. Understand that. These fascists represent what Hitler represented in Germany. When the rulers, the rich people of Germany, were no longer able to rule by fooling the people with the two parties, or whatever parties they had, they turned these animals loose on the population."

He continued in this predictable vein a few minutes, then summed up his speech, again giving vent to the breathless

rage he had held in check during his seemingly reasoned political appeal.

"They say to you, 'Ban the Klan.' But the Klan is *not* going to be banned, understand? Reagan . . . you think he's going to pass the bill to ban the Klan when he's given his cops the go-ahead to have the Klan march in Washington? That's crazy. The Klan is going to be stopped one way and one way only, by the labor movement combined with the black working people and white working people in this country. . . ." He stared up at the cloudless sky a moment, then lurched toward the microphones.

"Smash them!"

The audience hooted and yelled approval. Without question, the young rhetorician on the platform had succeeded in stirring up the crowd. Cleverly mixing historical allusion with blatant distortions and lies, he had, in the matter of five minutes, apparently managed to convince a couple of thousand young men and women that the Klan was a paramilitary terror force under the personal command of the President of the United States; that this force bombed black homes on a daily basis with impunity; and that President Reagan had it within his power to "ban" the Klan, but had refused to do so. Almost in the same breath, the speaker had linked constitutional, representational government with fascist totalitarianism, and then offered street violence as the only way to combat this oppressive "system." As I set out again for the press enclosure at Senate Park, I could hear the speaker leading the crowd in a rhythmic chant:

"Hey-Hey,
Ho-Ho
This whole damn system
Has got to go!"

Such radicals were the "white Communists" of whom Bill Wilkinson had spoken when he claimed the only people demonstrating against his Klan faction were white and Communists. Most of them had become virtually professional anti-Klan organizers, and traveled the country widely to lend their services to local groups that came together to protest Klan

parades and rallies. The enraged young speaker down on the Mall was clearly such an agitator; several times he displayed ignorance of local politics, once referring to District of Columbia Congressional Delegate Walter Fauntroy as the "mayor or whatever he is around here."

At several other points in his speech, the young man resorted to what I imagine he assumed to be authentic ghetto speech patterns, such as "Dee-troit" for Detroit. This brought to mind the antics of the white Symbionese Liberation Army "generals," Bill and Emily Harris, who had adopted the same ploy of trying to imitate black speech on the taped communiqués of the SLA during the Patty Hearst kidnapping. Such people probably wished they could somehow *become* black, that they could shed their own white, middle-class identities and metamorphose into rebellious blacks. In so doing, of course, they would acquire an identity that would permit them to give full play to the deeply seated rage bottled up within their white, middle-class bodies. But the speaker on the Mall had been especially vituperative toward members of the Black Congressional Caucus. People like them, he screamed, "should be spat on."

During the course of my research, I had spoken to a number of psychiatrists and read a considerable body of psychiatric interpretation of radical political causes. It was now clear to me that the young white radical who had tried to "talk black" and who came close to enraged tears when he berated liberal black leaders, was seeking a new identity, an instant transformation, perhaps into a messianic black rebel, a new Nat Turner. Just as Bill Church had so desperately sought to somehow become "Doctor" William L. Church, imperial wizard, Justice Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, an adult war hero, a fearless vigilante champion for "rights for wights," so, probably, did the young radical agitator seek to transform himself into the chosen leader of an avenging army of black rebels. Although I had no way to verify my gut feeling, I felt sure that the first victims of this white Nat Turner's rebellion would be middle-aged businessmen who looked very much like his

father. In this violent fantasy, of course, he would be following a pattern already well established by European and American terrorists, both black and white.

Psychiatrist Herbert Hendin has written in *The Age of Sensation* of the psychodynamics of young radicals in the 1960s and of more recent revolutionaries. One of his findings is that "revolutionaries then and now are drawn to violent protest as the means of their emotional liberation. Then and now politics plays a key role in their relations with their families, often becoming the only vehicle for their rage."

When I got to Senate Park, all I found were a hundred or so reporters and cameramen and a long double picket line of Capitol Park police. There was no evidence of the "several hundred" Klansmen who had been rumored to be mustering for the parade and rally. The reporters were in a light-hearted, almost silly mood, and I thought I could recognize the symptoms of some Saturday morning hangovers among the assembled ladies and gentlemen of the press. There were the predictable jokes about wash-'n'-wear Klan sheets and cone-head Klansmen, and a sprinkling of serious comments on the overtime pay for police and speculation about how much this little exercise of First Amendment rights was going to cost the taxpayers.

No one suggested, of course, that the First Amendment was not worth defending. The cost of letting some racist psychopaths and neurotic Trotskyites scream at each other in front of the TV cameras was high, several of us agreed, but the alternative—government control over the freedoms of speech and assembly—was simply unthinkable. I did, of course, find it ironic that Bill Wilkinson had told me with such convincing indignation that the Communists should not be allowed to preach their views. He said he could accept Communists being allowed to further their political goals democratically, "But when they start standing up and saying we're going to overthrow the government, *this* government, by force, then I say it's time to lock them up for keeps." In other words, he and the young Trotskyite shared a common extremist dogma: there

are political limits to the First Amendment rights, and *I* (insert either Wilkinson or the Trotskyite) shall decide those limits.

As I chatted about these interesting truisms with another writer, the reporters began shuffling for position behind the police lines. A clutch of sheepish-looking men and women moved hesitantly toward us from the entrance to an underground garage, shepherded by several Park Police lieutenants and sergeants. It was "the Klan." I counted 21 people; some were dressed in jeans, T-shirts and gimme caps, and could have been extras on a "Dukes of Hazzard" episode. Others had on three-piece suits. The women Klanspeople wore slacks and sensible shoes; a couple seemed to have gone overboard on hairspray, maybe as a precaution to the windy day that had been forecast but had not materialized. One young man was morbidly obese; another quite short, about five feet. Several carried their Klan robes neatly folded inside brown supermarket sacks.

As the group approached, a squad of more senior park police escorted a small delegation of Klan spokesmen forward to meet the media. All around me, motor-drive cameras whizzed and clicked. The Klan delegation formed up, just across the police line.

In the middle of the delegation, a slight, balding young man with creamy pale eyes stepped forward. This was Tom Robb, the chaplain of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. To his right, a man in a red windbreaker bearing the red-and-white cross of the Klan insignia drew up to parade rest; with his neatly trimmed beard he bore an uncanny resemblance to General Stonewall Jackson. Now three weird figures in black uniforms, replete with black motorcycle helmets and sinister black face visors, strode forward to form a guarding phalanx around Robb and his partner. These black shirts affected mirror sunglasses under the dark helmet visors; billy clubs and cheap pseudo-military walkie-talkies hung at their wide black leather belts.

Beside me, a black cameraman broke into satirical falsetto, "Oh," he lisped, "are they ever *thweet*, such big, lovely fellas.

What do they use those *belts* for?"

A wave of giggles swept around the reporters. The black-shirt guardians crossed their arms across their black neckties and clenched their fists inside their black leather gloves. The guards were joined by a strange-looking older Klansman wearing an old-fashioned white motorcycle helmet and a rumpled khaki windbreaker over a hastily knotted tie. His thick glasses and goatee almost hid the ruined features and pinball eyes of an apparently terminal alcoholic. With a certain fumbling pomp, this Klansman unfurled his group's banner, a tattered, vertically striped flag of red and white with the cross-in-circle insignia. A couple of reporters cheered.

"God," a cameraman gasped. "Check out that dude with the flag. What a zob!"

I hadn't heard that hoary phrase since college in the late 50s, but, I had to admit, it fit the standard-bearer very well. He looked like the kind of unfortunate soul who had never had an especially easy time making friends.

I shoved my way to the left, giving in now to the herd instincts of the massed reporters. I wanted a better look at Chaplain Robb. Instead, I found myself pushed almost face-to-face with one of the black shirts. This one had his helmet visor thrust back. His aviator's sunglasses were just transparent enough to allow a glimpse of his eyes. He looked scared.

From down the wooded slope to the Mall, the amplified radical harangue could be clearly heard:

"Smash the Klan
Now is the hour
Labor and blacks have *got* the power."

"Reagan and the Klan
Work hand in hand.
Smash the Klan . . .
The cops and the Klan
Work hand in hand . . .

Tom Robb was trying to deliver his prepared remarks for the reporters. "We have seen this nation fall from the pinnacle of

power to the base of power," he said earnestly, referring to the effect of immigration. "Our foundations are being destroyed, and, as the Bible says, unless the Lord builds the foundations, what can the people do? The Lord will re-establish that foundation upon the principles of Christianity, not upon Buddhism, not upon some other type of alien philosophy that came here with the aliens. . . ."

"Who are the aliens, Tom?" a cameraman called. "Are they E.T.?"

"Is racism a Christian principle?" a reporter shouted.

"Yes, Sir," Robb responded, in the practiced tones of an enlisted man, eager to please his captain.

Robb now proudly exclaimed that a Klansman had gotten 36,000 votes in a California Congressional race. "In one Congressional district in this nation, I can safely say there were thirty-six *thousand* Klansmen. Throughout the whole nation there are people looking for answers. The Klan is not going to change the course of history. The Klan will never do it. But the *people* will change the course of history."

"Hey, Tom," another reporter yelled, "What's the meaning of life?"

We all laughed.

Tom Robb was railing now about ". . . *my* people who built this nation out of the wilderness, *our* people who signed their names to that great document, the Declaration of Independence . . . it was *our* ancestors who fought the battle of Gettysburg and Vicksburg. . . . It was *my* people who built this nation, and, by God, *my people* will fight for it."

A number of reporters were openly laughing at him. Robb strode down the long mob of newsmen.

"What do the black uniforms represent?" a black reporter shouted. Robb ignored him.

"What is the Boat Patrol?" another yelled.

I noticed that the black shirts had square, machine-embroidered patches on the right shoulders, which read: Klan Boat Patrol. Someone next to me explained that these black shirts were supposed to man boats that cruised far out to sea, inter-

cepting Haitian "Boat People" refugees bound for the promised land of Florida. Then I noticed their slippery leather-soled uniform boots. Having crossed two oceans on a thirty-foot sailboat, I knew a little about offshore sailing shoes. I realized that these posturing idiots probably knew as much about "patrolling" offshore as the ginger-headed radical down on the Mall knew about "capitalism."

What we were witnessing here, I saw with sudden insight, was a strange kind of psychodrama, a ritual of role-playing, and wish fulfillment by some pretty flaky people.

As I pondered this sudden psychological insight, I had a swooping flash of memory; for the moment I was back in the Congolese river town of Lisala. It was 1965. The town had been fought through when the mercenary-led Congolese National Army had liberated it from the Simba rebels a few months before. Now it was a quiet backwater to the bush war being waged further north. Lisala was nominally under the control of the army, led by French-speaking Six Commando mercenaries, a rag-tag outfit made up of former Foreign Legionnaires and assorted European adventurers.

One of the "Six Cado" mercs claimed to be a Basque; he called himself Eddie. He liked to frequent the bar of the battered riverfront hotel, swaggering on the terrace in his camouflage tiger suit and maroon beret, evil-looking grenades clipped to his web harness, and an equally malevolent "captured" Russian rifle habitually cradled in the crook of his arm. The few young reporters and Foreign Service types who ventured the 600 miles upriver from Leopoldville were often taken in by this fellow, and stood him to many a cold liter of Stan Or beer in exchange for war stories.

On my third visit to Lisala, I discovered that Eddie was really an Angolan Portuguese named Tony who had a contract to provide quartermaster supplies to the army; he had never heard a shot fired in anger. But I remembered well those hot nights on the hotel terrace when Eddie would hold forth, a *carte* Michelin spread on the beer-wet metal table, thrilling us all with vivid tales of rebel ambushes and daring Six Cado

thrusts to rescue captured missionary families. To this day, I am convinced that Eddie actually *became* a veteran *para dur* when he regaled us, flourishing his dagger point in the flaring light of the kerosene lanterns.

It was also in Lisala that I discovered a pile of photo-studio prints taken during the rebel occupation of the town. They showed young Simba rebels, dressed up in bits and pieces of army uniforms, posturing with captured weapons for the camera. One boy wore a major's hat and a battle-dress blouse fetish-trimmed with the fur of colobus monkeys. He grasped a flare pistol, the wide snout pointing toward the camera lens. I imagine he believed this relatively harmless device was a miniature cannon because of the large bore of the barrel.

After I acquired this collection of strange pictures, I came to realize that I had stumbled on some authentic artifacts akin to the phenomenon the anthropologists call cargo cults. These strange groups developed in various parts of the world, especially in the Melanesian islands of the Pacific. The cults reached their zenith after World War II on islands where societies had been convulsed by the sudden, confusing intrusion of the 20th century caused by the war. In 1945, they suddenly found themselves bereft of "cargo," that cornucopia of modern supplies the military occupation had miraculously provided.

The members of the cargo cults built strange ritual airfields and ports; they earnestly wore discarded military and naval uniforms; they developed prayer-chants to a mythical figure they called "John Navy," a demigod whom they felt would return out of the sky, bearing canned food, bottled beer, penicillin and jeeps, if he were properly invoked.

Those benighted Pacific islanders felt that they had been miraculously transformed into SeaBees and sailors when they donned the moldy old uniform remnants and marched in shaky formations around the symbolic airstrips, chanting for John Navy to deliver his precious cargo. In this respect, the cargo cultists were the spiritual forebearers of the Simba rebels in their monkey-skin epaulettes.

But it would be simplistic to assume that only primitive "natives" succumbed to this irrational superstitious nonsense. Surely, these young Klan bullies in their tailored black shirts and gleaming boots had come to believe in the potency and reality of the Klan Boat Patrol; they had exchanged contemporary logic for comforting, primitive totemism. Simply call yourself the Boat Patrol, and such a paramilitary force actually *became* real. Scream for the "black working people and the white working people" to turn their backs on democracy and march toward the revolution, and you actually *became* a revolutionary leader.

Thinking about this, I began to reach some tentative conclusions. Perhaps my answers were truistic. Certainly they were arrived at subjectively. But their rightness convinced me.

The chain reaction of accelerating technological, political and social change that had ripped unchecked across the planet for most of this century had taken a heavy emotional toll. Perceived lack of permanence and the predominance of unpredictable change were now widespread in almost every society. Like the Pacific islanders who had sought magical transformation and the return of omnipotent John Navy and his "cargo" from the sky, hundreds of thousands of their contemporary counterparts in the Western world have floundered about in the past 15 or 20 years, seeking instant new identity and a variety of salvations through drugs, cults, sexual reorientation, political radicalism and terrorism.

The renowned psychiatrist, Robert Jay Lifton, has suggested that the classical myth of Proteus, the shape-changer, who continually transformed himself to baffle opposing wrestlers, was an apt metaphor for the citizen of the contemporary world: Protean Man, Lifton called him. Lifton also suggested that these shifts of identity were a positive aspect of modern social mobility. But other social psychiatrists feel differently about such chaotic personal mobility. Dr. Herbert Hendin has written that contemporary youth seek defense against painful personal insight through changing identity: "... young people today use a shifting self-image, a sense of playing different

roles as a defense against emotional self-knowledge." They use this "fragmentation" behavior "to respond to a world that seems impossible to affect, change or cope with in traditional ways."

The need for this Protean shape-changing might well lie in the young person's inability to define the nature of the rapidly shifting world around him, a situation which could lead to widespread identity loss. And, without question, the past 20 years, especially in Western democracies, have been a period of *explosive* change.

Given the 100,000 years that people have lived in one form of civilization or another, the span of 20 years is almost invisible. But in that period—the last two decades—cataclysmic, unprecedented social, political and technological changes have convulsed almost every society, especially in the West. The anthropologists and archaeologists assure us that there were in prehistory long periods, some perhaps of several thousand years duration, during which some societies underwent absolutely *no* perceptible change. Yet, in only 20 *years*, Western society has been dramatically altered. In this brief period, the "traditional" nuclear family, which coalesced after the Industrial Revolution, has been ostensibly shattered. Most women who now marry—and many do not choose to do so—will work outside the home, propelled into the work force by a variety of economic and social pressures. Marriage itself has undergone wide disfavor as an institution, and divorce now ends about half of all first marriages and 40 percent of second marriages.

In America, a huge population bulge—the baby boom—has stretched the recognizable shape of traditional institutions, especially the schools and universities.

The traditional role of religious institutions in Western communities has also undergone remarkable transformation in Europe and America, with the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Judaism being the most altered. (Perhaps the inordinate number of young Roman Catholics and Jews in cults should not surprise us.)

Human sexuality and sexual practices, which most behav-

ioral scientists consider part of the fundamental moral underpinning of any society's identity, have changed to an incredible degree. One of our species' strongest instinctual drives has become the source of casual amusement, a game devoid of emotional connections or moral repercussions.

Extremely potent psychoactive drugs have become the source of widespread popular "recreation" in the West. Today, it is relatively common for a schoolchild as young as eight or nine to have access to chemicals like LSD, synthesized THC or PCP, which most pharmacologists had never even heard of 20 years ago. And this pattern exists from the Villa Ada in Rome to the school yards of Muskogee.

In the past two decades the colonial empires of Great Britain, France, and Portugal have virtually disappeared, and a plethora of over 40 Third World nations have come into existence. And in this Third World, there has not been a single day without armed conflict in one or more of these new countries during this period. Some of these "wars and rumors of war," of course, have been especially cataclysmic.

The ten-year American struggle in Indochina was the longest war in this country's history, but it was never declared a war by Congress; the country was never asked to mobilize militarily, economically, or psychologically. During the Vietnam War, there was no home-front propaganda effort to marshal support for the war effort, as had been undertaken with such notable success in World War I, World War II, and even during the Korean War. Instead, of course, the bloody, seemingly disorganized small-unit actions and probes of the bush war were transmitted in shocking color into American living rooms on a daily basis. As much of the heavy fighting took place at night, however, and television cameras did not produce good "visuals" in the darkness, the civilians of "the world" rarely had occasion to witness the savage and sustained losses suffered by the Viet Cong and NVA. But the chronic daytime booby-trap and sniping casualties of the Americans—characterized by breathless TV commentators giving play-by-plays of wounded boys being medevaced from

muddy jungle trails—became the nation's self-perception and symbol of a lost cause. Or, in a similarly ironic manner, the Communists' desperate, 'bloody gamble of the 1968 Tet offensive, during which they brought the bush war to the cities, was reported as a Communist victory by the world's news media, despite their obvious failure to spark a popular uprising and the truly horrendous casualties suffered by the Viet Cong and NVA. Now, of course, reformed liberals like me recognize the nature of our earlier misconception. Even the *Washington Post* editorializes about "the exaggerated response to the communists' Tet offensive in Vietnam."

Armed conflicts were not the only bitter struggles being waged in the world during this 20-year period. In America, over ten percent of the population was black; and in 1963 this minority was being actively denied political and economic justice on a *de facto* and *de jure* basis all across this country. In only 20 years, much of this injustice was redressed. Widespread racial distrust and racist scapegoating are, of course, still with us; they are historically venerable and deeply seated, but institutionalized, *de jure* racism in this country has proven to be amazingly fragile.

In the wake of the successful American civil-rights struggle, a variety of unrelated drives for social justice have mushroomed unexpectedly in the past two decades. Feminism, gay liberation, and children's legal-rights movements were, to a large degree, almost totally unexpected when they exploded onto the world's consciousness during the past 20 years.

Widespread ultra-Maoist political terrorism in prosperous Western democracies was equally unexpected by most thoughtful observers. Certainly the futurologists of the early 1960s never predicted this savage, confusing epidemic of seemingly inexplicable violence.

And when the past two decades are eventually placed under historical scrutiny, the expanded threat of nuclear annihilation cannot be ignored as a major causal agent of anomie. Surely, the chronic threat of predictable, instant vaporization-by-ICBM is about as intrusive an example of the modern

world's chaotic nature as one can imagine. As even liberal columnist Joseph Kraft has recently pointed out, however, these same ICBMs have provided the post-war world "the true guarantee" of whatever international security the world has enjoyed since the last world war.

But the nuclear holocaust is only one manifestation of apocalyptic threat felt by many young people today. Ecological collapse—actual destruction of the life-supporting ability of the world's biosphere—is currently believed possible by a sizable segment of the growing environmental movement. Their concern ranges from such doomsday scenarios as destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer to the chemical poisoning of the oxygenic layer of photoplankton in the world's oceans. This nuclear or environmental apocalypse parallels, of course, the more traditional Armageddon so currently in vogue among certain Christian and Muslim fundamentalists and so many cultists across the world. Whether any of these scenarios of nuclear holocaust, environmental collapse, or even Biblical End Times doomsday are in any way *probable* is less important from a social observer's perspective than the fact that they came into widespread acceptance during these emotionally anguished past 20 years.

Again, Dr. Herbert Hendin has proven to be an especially perceptive observer. Speaking of such young proponents of doomsday, he has said: "They predict they will die young either in the revolution or in some nuclear or ecological disaster that will end the world. The prediction of cataclysm for the world must be seen partly as a projection of their inner world since the inner revolution that consumes them is already in progress, their personal environment has already been poisoned, and the bombs that have destroyed some of them have been of their own making."

* * *

I pushed my way out of the jostling line of reporters and cameramen and stepped back to take a picture of the specta-

cle, a kind of droll contemporary document, a record of an occasion that one reporter had called "another goddamn media event, I mean a *non-event*."

The three black-clad Boat Patrol heroes guarded their spokesman from the jibes and sarcasm of the hundred-odd representatives of the world's press. Fifty yards away, 26 sheepish misfits shuffled about uncertainly, their Klan robes clutched in paper bags under their arms. Down on the Mall, 2000 young black and white people were being led in hypnotically rhythmic chants by the anonymous Trotskyite agitator I had come to call the Gingerman. On the surface, this strange "non-event" appeared to be comprehensible in the traditional pattern of demonstration politics: an extremist group wishes to publicize its strength by parading in the capital; opposing political factions seek to demonstrate their popular support by marshalling *their* members to protest the extremist parade, and the neutral press acts as dutiful national observer.

By this model, there should have been reporters and camera crews down there on the Mall, interviewing the left-wing speakers of the Labor/Black Mobilization, the Progressive Labor Party, and, of course, their audiences, about their actual political beliefs and the true size of the organizations. As far as I could tell, no one from the press did this. Up here at this circus of a speech-cum-press-conference, only a couple of reporters queried Thomas Robb about the actual, verifiable size of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; no one asked him to discuss the rivalry and acrimonious distrust that existed among the various factions and splinters of "the Klan." Most of the black reporters seemed content to taunt Robb; the camera people settled for good visuals of the Klan "zobs."

The local press corps was not alone in its misinterpretation of Klan activity. Even normally perceptive national reporters have succumbed to the simplistic view that economically hard times breed increased Klan violence. Actually, the *reverse* situation prevails; during the prosperous but socially disrupt-

tive 1920s and 1960s Klan membership and violence peaked. During times of recession membership and violence decline. On this November day the national observers of the press were passive to the point of gullibility. Many of them seemed ready to accept this charade as a bona fide national event. But, clearly, this was not an event of valid national or international significance.

I had heard reporters in the crowd comparing this "symbolic" Klan march with the rise of the Nazis in Germany and with the huge demonstration of Ku Klux Klan power in the 1920s. But surely people had to see that the comparison was ludicrous. On August 8, 1925, over 30,000 robed Klansmen had marched up Pennsylvania Avenue, 22 abreast, for three full hours. At the time, the *Washington Post* called the parade "one of the greatest demonstrations this city has ever known." Supportive spectators had stood ten deep to cheer the march by the hooded Klansmen. They had represented almost every state, and included massive delegations from the Northeast. They had carried banners denouncing Irish and Jewish "control" of the press and industry; the marchers had denounced the liberal immigration policies that allowed America to be overrun by the Roman Catholic "scum of Europe."

Over 30,000 robed and hooded Klansmen had paraded for over three hours to the cheers of spectators standing ten deep on the sidewalks. That had been 1925.

In 1982, fewer than 30 nervous representatives of a small Klan splinter huddled inside the ring of protecting Park Police, awaiting the decision on whether their planned parade was prudent, given the angry opposition down on the Mall. Their leader, Donald Black, was not even there. He was appealing his conviction for an ill-advised, idiotically grandiose bit of nonsense: an attempt to "invade" the Caribbean island of Dominica and overthrow its government. Yet over a hundred members of the national and international press were here to record the posturing antics of this rag-tag clutch of Don Black's followers.

And, down on the Mall, the Gingerman had the crowd chanting:

“Hey, Hey . . . Ho, Ho
This whole damn system
Has got to go!”

“One, two, three, four
Time to finish the Civil War
Five, six, seven, eight
Forward to a worker’s state!”

Hearing these chants, a person might have been tempted to believe that angry masses representing “labor” had come to Washington from all over the country to protest the racist and unjust practices of “this whole damn system”: capitalism. On the mall, I’d even heard one earnest, rather gimlet-eyed young woman compare the crowd of black ghetto teen-agers to the Bonus Army of 20,000 unemployed World War I veterans who had marched on Washington in 1932, the depth of the Great Depression, demanding from the moribund Hoover administration their war-service bonuses and better social welfare. She had yelled to the small group of gawking black kids trying to follow her rapid-fire rhetoric that “Douglas MacArthur’s tanks crushed the workers right on this grass in 1932, and Reagan’s cops’ll do the same to you people today. So . . . *be careful.*”

Her analogy was about as valid as the reporter who had likened Tom Robb’s posturing Klan Boat Patrol to the swelling ranks of Nazi storm troopers during the social and economic centrifuge of the Weimar Republic. Yet, as she spoke, I saw a network mini-camera crew stride up to tape her. That night, her face and her rhetoric might well have been broken down to digital bits and relayed by satellite around the planet: the angry voice of “labor” protesting the economic repression of the American capitalist system.

I left the press enclosure on the hill and wandered back down toward the Mall; if the handful of Klansmen were foolish enough to go ahead with their march, this was where they would first come in contact with the crowds that the leftist

speakers had been working on for the past three hours.

"All right, everybody listen!" A shrill young woman had the microphone now. "This just came in from the *Washington Post* . . . the *Klan* is standing up there on top of that hill like trembling little rats. They're *not* going to march." The crowd exploded. The young woman radical did not smile in her moment of victory. Instead, she grew rigid on the platform and took up her chant, as humorless and dutiful as any Moonie or Hare Krishna:

"Stop the Klan
This is the hour
Labor and blacks have got the power."

* * *

I got out of the taxi near Lafayette Park just as the first mounted policemen charged the advancing demonstrators. The Klansmen had never marched; they'd been bused instead, by the police, to Lafayette Park, across from the White House, where they'd held a brief, "symbolic" protest; then they'd been whisked out of town. Now the angry "labor" forces from the Mall had surged up Pennsylvania Avenue to take out their frustration and anger for not being allowed to "smash" the Klan.

The mounted-police charge bore a striking resemblance to a well-rehearsed rodeo act. But then I saw the officers and a couple of horses being cut with chunks of brick and broken beer bottles. Into this swirling chaos cops on snarling little motorbikes swung in formation to back up the mounted officers. People were running, waving banners; bull horns blared and squeaked with feedback. I was running with the crowd, now toward the fracas, now pounding away as the tear-gas canisters popped and cops began flailing with their long nightsticks. The combined scooter and horse lines of the police were advancing now. The horses stomped and shook their heads in the tear gas. Dodging and dancing in the street, the scattered bunches of protestors gave ground, but some regrouped briefly to hurl sharp pieces of cinder block at the

mounted police. A cop was hit on the back of the neck with a broken bottle; a black cop chased down a young black rock-thrower and clubbed him about the head and shoulders.

The police line reformed and moved the protestors down Madison Place, past the historic brick federalist homes of the founding fathers of the republic. I got a sour whiff of tear gas now, an unmistakable vomity stench that took me right back to the 1960s and to riots I had witnessed on three continents. To my right, I saw cops in gas masks and helmets, trotting my way in a club-waving flank. I clutched my camera and tape recorder close to my chest and sprinted toward New York Avenue as fast as I could. In the middle of the block, I slowed down when I saw that the flank of riot cops had formed up behind me to seal off the park. Then I heard a nasty cacophony of shouts and screams to my left. In the gap between two stately old buildings, I got a splintered glimpse of some kids smashing windows of historic homes with sticks and rocks. Then there was a surge of young men toward a white station wagon. In a moment, they had the heavy car up on its side and were smashing its windshield with clubs fashioned from tree limbs. The next moment, the big white car lay on its roof, rocking like a road-killed armadillo on a Texas highway. Then the mass of cops broke through, and the violent *tableau* was clouded by tear gas.

There were sirens banshee-wailing all over the place now. I was torn between going back to watch the rioting and getting the hell out of harm's way. Finally, I decided that once you've seen one riot and experienced the nasty excitement, there was not much to be learned from seeing more. So I crossed H and I Streets and entered McPherson Square.

Here, there was still a noisy but peaceful political demonstration in progress. Up on the platform, a stocky black woman was railing against "all the bigoted reactionaries," whom she identified as the "KKK, the Reagans, the Nazis, the Moral Majority. . . ." Social change, she shouted, was "imminent." "We will live our lives openly and proudly as who we are. . . ."

The last sentiment seemed oddly irrelevant to the rioting a

block and a half away. I asked one of the spectators who this speaker was.

"Third World Gay People's Alliance," I was told.

That was an interesting, if grandiose, title for an organization that I assumed was made up of non-white American homosexuals, banded together into an emotional support group. I wondered what the connection was between the speaker's demands for "eminent" social change—I suppose she meant the constitutional right to "openly and proudly" proclaim herself a black lesbian—and stopping some closet leather-boy racists from exercising *their* constitutional right to make asses out of themselves on Pennsylvania Avenue. Could it be that she was suffering emotional dislocation over her personal condition and that she felt the need to blame the "KKK, the Reagans, the Nazis, and the Moral Majority . . ." for this? Could it possibly be that her *parents* might not approve of her *life style* (that wonderful Protean Man expression)? And that she felt compelled to link the emotional chaos and the cul-de-sacs of her own life with broader crusades and liberation struggles?

The vehemence of her rhetoric left me little doubt that she certainly did feel strongly about her crusade. But, then, so had Louis Mueller, so had Claudio, and Duane, and so, too, had "Doctor" Bill Church. It was much easier for a young lesbian—whose right to practice her chosen sexual role was fully protected by constitutional right and contemporary legal precedent—to blame the social rejection she continued to experience on life forces than it was to examine her own emotional underpinnings.

Her posturing on this speaker's platform about "Third World" alliances reminded me of Bill Church's grandiose initiation speeches on the slopes of Signal Mountain while his personal life was falling apart. Jim Jones taught us that when a person draped himself or herself in sufficient flamboyant language and ritual, he or she could momentarily forget the empty core inside and the frightening chaos of the perceived world around him or her.

In studying the origins and nature of attraction to violent

methods, Dr. Herbert Hendin has said of such crusaders: "They are drawn to political violence as the means of transforming themselves. Through politicizing their rage they hope to sever themselves from the personal origins of their frustration and despair."

The Third World Gay People's Alliance, I decided, would be a readily comprehensible entity to the cargo cultists of the Pacific islands.

"The People, united, will nev-er be de-feated," the speaker was chanting now. She droned on, humorless, militant.

Score one for John Navy, I mused.

The next speaker shouted for a while about international conspiracies that linked the Klan with various sinister events in the world. Bill Wilkinson would have loved the hyperbolic powers this young man attributed to the Klan. Speaking with obvious feeling, the young man noted that there was no mere "coincidence" between the arrival of "the Klan" here in Washington today and the arrival of the South African prime minister in New York "on the very same day." There was, he said, a direct relationship between these two seemingly separate occurrences.

Right, I mused, and if we all just march around this nice flat lawn long enough and chant in the right way, John Navy's silver bird will arrive here today, too.

As I strode out of the park, two boys approached me, bearing stacks of printed handouts in the crooks of their arms. They wore that loose, smiling deadness on their faces that said "cult." Sure as hell, they were distributing flyers for the Tony and Susan Alamo Christian Foundation.

I took a flyer and scanned it; unfortunately, it was one I already had in my collection of weird literature. This one was entitled "TRICKED!!" Beneath a colored photo of Tony and Susan beaming hand-in-hand at the camera, there was a dense column of confusing text that linked "agents of Satan" with the Democratic and Republican parties, the news media, and "U.S. Government tricksters" bound to "destroy, demoralize and weaken our once-great nation."

The two boys stood grinning mechanically at me while I

scanned the text. Three blocks away, the riotous sirens warbled.

"We have some more information on our organization," one boy began, "... if you are sincerely interested."

I felt a sudden, clenching anger below my throat. The Alamo Foundation was on the Citizens Freedom Foundation's list of recognized destructive cults. Alamo's group was being sued by the U.S. Department of Labor in a case that alleged the cult exploits its followers in violation of Federal minimum wage and overtime laws. Alamo himself was a former rock-music promoter who had converted from Judaism and changed his name from Bernie Lazar Hoffman in the 1960s. Since founding his group, he had actively proselytized among young Jews, dramatically regaling them with twisted interpretations of the Bible's apocalyptic prophecies.

I looked up at the two cult members; they had hot, mobile eyes like Karen Ryan, like Mehdi. "Six-six-six," I hissed in what I hoped was a diabolical tone.

"Huh?" the taller boy blurted out, taking a step backward. "I beg your pardon."

"My Social Security number is 666-66-6666," I managed with something near a straight face. "Can you tell me what that means?"

"Sir?" the shorter one said; he licked the sores on his lips.

"Have a nice day," I said, and resumed my stride out of the park. Looking back, I saw the two boys staring with obvious alarm. The hot anger in my chest dissolved. Maybe they could get together with the Third World Gay Alliance spokesperson and that geopolitical-conspiracy expert and have a really *meaningful* discussion about the "eminent" social change, about the vastly powerful Klan, the Mark of the Beast, and other colorful paranoia connected to "these last days."

* * *

Forty minutes later, I watched the closing moments of a non-political anti-Klan protest on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. This group was called "Citizens United Against

Hatred and Violence.” Their handouts spoke reasonably of the need to educate young people, to work toward community reconciliation and understanding. Their speakers were low-key and persuasive. No one talked about global conspiracies by “bigoted reactionaries” or the need to establish an instant “Worker’s State.” No one lied about the size of the Klan or grossly exaggerated the extent of Klan violence. When the speakers had finished their remarks, the hundred or so quiet spectators linked arms and sang “We Shall Overcome.” I did not see any camera crews in evidence to record this group of rational citizens exercise their rights of free speech and assembly.

The sun was shining, and kids fed pigeons and sea gulls on the walks along the reflecting pool. I could still hear sirens spiking from the streets near the White House; a cop told me that there had been some looting of stores and about 15 police casualties. Off to my left, another small group had formed in a circle to sing the old civil-rights anthem again.

“Deep in my heart,” they sang, “I do believe, that we shall overcome, one day.”

I leaned against the cool marble of the memorial. Nineteen years and four months earlier, I had come to this monument to take part in the famous March on Washington. I had linked arms with perhaps 200,000 of my fellow citizens, black, white, yellow, brown, and red, male and female, young and old. We had sung that same stirring song. Martin Luther King, Jr., had stood almost where I was standing now, gazing out on that truly vast crowd gathered in the humid August afternoon sunlight. “I have a dream,” he proclaimed.

And we had all cheered.

I had cheered with special fervor. At 23 years old, I was a rookie Foreign Service officer, a young liberal basking at the crest of the New Frontier’s optimistic wave. It was August 28, 1963, our last day in America. That night our good friends Bob and Kay would drive Carol and me to the airport, where we would board one of the gleaming new DC-8 jetliners and be whisked off to our first assignment in Africa.

I had stood in that vibrant heat, buffeted by the cheers of the crowd; inside I was churning with happy excitement. Everything seemed so *right*, so benevolently fortuitous. Having taken an active and supporting interest in the nascent civil-rights struggle while I was at college, I was especially proud to be here, just as I was about to leave for overseas to begin my career, proudly serving my country in what we had been taught to call "the less well-developed world."

I can remember that hot afternoon 20 years ago as if it were last summer. I can clearly recall my surging, naïve liberalism. I can still feel the smug optimism I had radiated when I'd received my assignment to Africa, the newest of newly independent regions. I would be going out to guide and assist these struggling new nations on their sure, steady road toward prosperous democracy. In my training, I had received expert instruction in the marvelously innovative techniques of "counter-insurgency"; I would thus be able to wage enlightened and benevolent psychological warfare in any possible struggle for the hearts and minds of the developing world.

On a chilly January day 30 months before, John Fitzgerald Kennedy had stood at a rostrum at the other end of this Mall and had convinced my generation to "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

And I had been one of my generation who had answered that call. As I sang the civil-rights anthem in the August heat, two years after Kennedy's inaugural address, I felt it was especially fitting and proper that I would be going off to Africa. Out there, I would help clean up the mess the bumbling imperialists had left behind, while here at home the quest for brotherhood and democratic prosperity would be managed by such capable leaders as Dr. King and President Kennedy.

Only five years later, they were both dead and buried. Africa was in flaming shambles; so were the centers of several American cities. My country had committed over half a million men to circumscribed combat in the red-mud gullies and in the velvety green scum of the Vietnamese rice paddies.

Almost 20 years after that warm, inspiring August afternoon, I was beginning to reach a more mature understanding of the forces that buffeted and shaped human affairs. I now considered myself more realistically optimistic.

I also realized how lucky I was to have been a reasonably mature 23 years old in 1963, not 6 or 7 like Ronnie Love, Claudio or Bill Church. Or not to have turned 19 in time for the Tet offensive and Woodstock, as had Duane. Or, like Bruce and Jackie, to have entered adolescence in the mid-1970s.

But I also realized, strolling across the fallen leaves of the Mall toward Constitution Avenue, that the vast majority of young people who had come through adolescence and into maturity during this tumultuous past 20 years had survived the chaos and confusion with their minds and spirits intact. Many of them had done so by overcoming truly unprecedented difficulties, which left them wiser and stronger for the struggle.

* * *

Without being consciously aware of my direction, I had wandered from the Lincoln Memorial to the hollow that sheltered the new Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I stopped. Before me in the chill afternoon sunlight, the black granite panels of the memorial cut their stark geometry into the curve of the earth. The sod on the new lawn had not yet rooted; there was mud and dusty gravel. Rusty stanchions with hemp line served as a temporary fence to channel visitors away from the unfinished lawns, toward the unpaved walk that fronted the dark, shining panels bearing the names of the dead and missing.

Much of this mud had been created by visitors' feet. Two weeks before, over 100,000 Vietnam veterans and their families had come here for a five-day memorial reunion: the first such mass public ceremony to honor the young men who fought and those who died in the mud and dust and hot green

darkness on the other side of the planet. I was on that sloping walkway now, moving behind a middle-aged black couple who gripped each other awkwardly by the flesh of their forearms, as much, I guessed, for the emotional succor of warm, living tissue as for physical support.

Down here, at the vertex of the paired granite wedges, I stopped. The middle-aged couple were asking a volunteer guide who carried the large directory for the location of a name. I leaned closer, curious to hear the name of their young relative. Was he a son, a nephew or cousin, a kid from down the block?

"William Davis," the older man said with quiet dignity. His wife lowered her face, and tears slid down her cheeks to dot the collar of her blouse.

The volunteer wore a lovingly preserved camouflage bush hat. His face looked almost as battered as Duane's. I waited while the black man thanked him for finding the panel and line location of William Davis's name.

The young veteran came to a deferential stance close to attention. He bowed slightly toward the man, then to the weeping woman. "You're welcome, sir," he said in a quiet southern voice. "You're welcome, ma'am. You all take your time. This here's your memorial, too, just like it's ours."

Suddenly, I was overcome with a confused rush of angry shame. This goddam young redneck was patronizing the grieving couple, even suggesting that blacks needed some kind of special dispensation to mourn their dead relatives. But then the woman spoke, and I realized the stupidity of my error.

"Thank you, son," she said, glancing at the gleaming black slabs and then to the temporary flagpole at the western entrance to the memorial. "This *is* for all of us now . . . for you boys who went, and for the boys like William that didn't come home. And for the country, too."

"Yes, ma'am," the young veteran answered, "that's what I wanted to say, 'cept you say it better."

The couple moved up the walk along the long rank of

granite panels, which bore the tens of thousands of names dating from the savage combat of the late 1960s.

Bill Wilkinson had, through nasty innuendo, implied during his interview that black GIs had performed poorly in Vietnam. I wondered how Wilkinson would have reacted to that lady's words . . . or to the Defense Department records which show that almost 20 percent of the men killed were black, or that blacks won 12 percent of the Congressional Medals of Honor awarded by the Army and Marine Corps in Vietnam.

I asked the guide for the location of two names: Air Force Captain Lance Sijan and Navy Lieutenant Gerald Pinnekar. They had been a couple of years behind me at Bay View High School in Milwaukee, and I'd known them on committees in the Hi-Y youth club of the Bay View YMCA. I remember them both as bright, eager young guys, active in student government and athletics. With that naïve arrogance common to high-school seniors, I had once told Lance Sijan that I felt pretty good about going on to college, knowing that I could leave the future leadership of the school in capable hands of boys like him and Jerry Pinneker.

When they graduated from Bay View High, Jerry won an appointment to the Naval Academy, and Lance was selected for the new Air Force Academy out in Colorado Springs. They both graduated from their service academies and went on through jet pilot training. Jerry became an aircraft-carrier attack bomber pilot and Lance qualified as the pilot of an F-4 Phantom.

On March 20, 1966, Lieutenant Junior Grade Gerald L. Pinneker was killed in action while flying an A-4 Skyhawk on a combat strike, supporting ground troops 30 miles southwest of Saigon.

On the night of November 9, 1967, Lance Sijan was on his 53rd combat mission, flying as back-seat pilot to Colonel John Armstrong, the commanding officer of the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Their target that night was the Ban LaBoy Ford on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the steep jungle mountains of Laos near the DMZ. Their F-4 Phantom exploded in a

fireball on its bomb run into the narrow valley, and Lance managed to eject. Although badly injured in the low-altitude bail-out, he hid successfully from the NVA patrols that swarmed out to capture him. During a massive Search and Rescue attempt two days later, he refused to allow para-rescue men to rappel down from the hovering Jolly Green Giant helicopter because the enemy was too close.

Then for an incredible period of *six weeks*, he somehow evaded capture by the North Vietnamese, even though they searched for him day and night, and he was suffering from shock, a compound fracture of his leg and other injuries, and was severely debilitated by lack of food and water. When he was finally captured, he overpowered his guard and escaped again, dragging himself backwards into the jungle. After the NVA recaptured him, he was placed in solitary confinement and denied medical treatment. He was savagely tortured, but refused to give the military information his captors sought. On January 22, 1968, Lance Sijan died of pneumonia and untreated wounds in Hanoi's Hoa Lo Prison.

In 1976, the newest cadet dormitory at the Air Force Academy was dedicated as Sijan Hall. Recently, the Air Force also began the Lance P. Sijan Leadership Award, to honor officers and airmen who exhibit the qualities of dedication to duty and resourcefulness that Lance did in Vietnam.

On March 4, 1976, President Gerald Ford presented Lance's parents his posthumous award for heroism, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Lance Sijan's name was on panel 29 east, line 62. Jerry Pinneker's name was on panel 6 east, line 26.

I had a hard time at first understanding the arrangement of the casualty names; then I studied the memorial brochure the vet volunteer had given me. Panel number one begins with the first American advisors, killed in July 1959. The names inscribed in the dark granite panels proceed from that date and move to the right, the east wall, chronologically, in alphabetical order, line by line, panel by panel, "as though the panels were pages in a book," all the way to the last thin

wedge of the east wall; then the long list begins on the west wall and proceeds in its somber order to the tall panel at the terminal vertex, "until the names of the last casualty (in 1976) form the last lines of panel number one on the west wall, above the date '1975.'"

The circle of casualties is then complete. There are almost 58,000 names on those dark stone pages.

The sun was dropping fast across the river, as it always does on late fall days. On the walkway leading up the east wall, I could still see the elderly black couple, staring at the silent ranks of names.

In this hollow—some have called it a trench—I could no longer hear the sirens. Probably, the rioting had stopped by now. There would be smashed store windows, and some tear gas burns. There would also be plenty of good visuals for the evening news. "The Klan" would be pleased with the publicity and with this ostensible evidence of the imminent racial apocalypse. The Trotskyites would no doubt be ecstatic at the proof of "eminent" social change. The TV crews would be happy at the overtime pay, so close to Christmas.

I studied other names, densely arrayed on the stone panels. Amalio Gonzales, Delno B. Collingsworth, Billy W. McGhee, Michael X. Sullivan . . . American names.

A young American woman of Asian ancestry, Maya Ying Lin, had won the design competition for this memorial. Her achievement was, in my opinion, quintessential evidence of our pluralistic society. The competition entries had been anonymous; a young, non-white, female architectural student had produced the design judged most appropriate.

As my eye scanned the alphabetical sequence, and the somber equality between captain and private, I began to grasp her genius. American names . . . Jewel L. Rainwater, Charles E. Youngblood, William J. Block, Edward Zamora, Larry Adams. . . .

In Vietnam, they had died in the bush or in the base hospital or had bled away their young lives on the vibrating aluminum decks of the dust-off choppers. They had served together, but

they had been returned to their homes *alone* for burial. Now they were together again, silent ranks, reminding us to take pride in bad days like March 20, 1966, or January 22, 1968. The long circle of men and years was complete.

I wiped the tears away and moved stiffly up the slope of the east wall. There were too many names to absorb; the emotional burden was too great. Standing on the plain of the Mall again, I stared down at the shadows in the hollow. There were still visitors, and the lanky young veteran kept his post. Away to my right, the Lincoln Memorial rose, white marble, in the sudden autumn evening. I was exhausted after a long, troubling day.

But I was also rested, peaceful inside, in a way I had not been since beginning this book. My own, personal circle of years had closed; it was complete.

Almost 20 years before, I had left his same grassy mall and gotten on a jet airplane and flown away to Africa to serve my country. In the two decades since then, I had undergone my share of emotional buffeting and doubts about the present and the future. For a number of years, I'd been convinced that the world would soon be destroyed by nuclear weapons; for one long period, I'd been certain that the threatened democratic institutions of the West would crumble into a swamp of political oppression and economic injustice. Like so many of my generation, I had been troubled by seeming political and social chaos, by the dangerous unpredictability of the world in which I had come to maturity.

But now, after all these months of travel and painful interviews, after the long weeks of research and quiet thought, I was no longer pessimistic; I no longer saw in the modern world an unpredictable, violent chaos.

In the course of my research, I had traveled from the Straits of Malacca to San Diego, from a prison hospital in East Texas to a hot stone pier in Anzio, and to a mildewed, muddy lane in Mashhad. I had spoken with madmen and criminals and a large variety of zealots. I had come to know insightful social scientists and bereaved parents. I had met young people

whose brains had been shredded by drugs, and whose lives had been shattered by social upheaval and political fragmentation.

They had been casualties for whom this book will be the only memorial.

But there had been survivors, too, certainly more than those who had been broken by the harsh wheel of unexpected change. And, as a culture, the Western world had jointly survived these corrosive decades.

I crunched through a drift of oak leaves and breathed in deeply; the evening air was soothing. From where I now stood among the bare trees of the Mall, I could see the alignment of the major monuments, each seeming to float in its floodlit cocoon against the gunmetal sky. The Capitol stood, away to the east, untroubled by the sirens and amplified hatred of the morning. In the sunset's afterglow, President Lincoln sat in his marble temple contemplating national disaster, social change, and reconciliation. The black stone angles of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial sliced into the grassy hill. There were still a few visitors, moving thoughtfully down the sloping rosters of American names, the pages of this nation's recent history.

The sirens had stopped. I was tired, but happy to be home.

Washington, February, 1983

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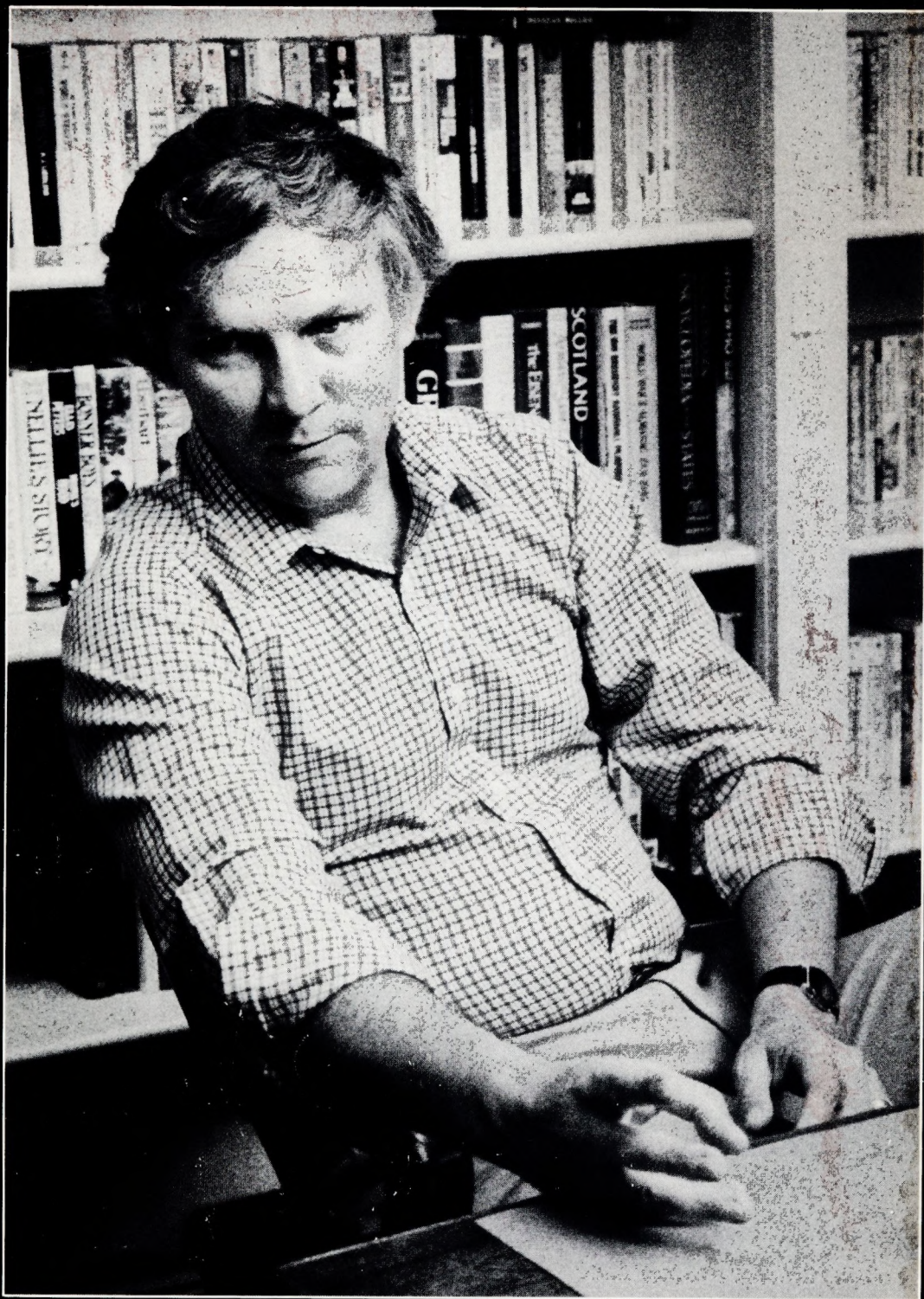
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