

Now it can be
told—the amazing
story of one of
the great escapes
of all time!

**Timothy
Leary**
Confessions
of a
Hope Fiend





**Now it can be
told—the amazing
story of one of
the great escapes
of all time!**

**This unbelievable—but true—
personal account could not have
been published before now.**

**Dr. Timothy Leary, international Pied
Piper of the counter-culture, tells his
own hair-raising story—escape from
an American prison—underground adventures
fleeing the U.S. for sanctuary in
Algeria—imprisonment by Eldridge Cleaver
and the Panthers—flight from Africa
to temporary safety in
Switzerland, only to be caught again.**

CONFESSIONS OF A HOPE FIEND
**reads like a thriller. Here is the fully
authenticated account of what
happened to Timothy Leary,
the headline hero who dared to
gamble with his life.**

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in He and She of et.

237 did not say "Eldridge
etc

essentially racist &
dishonest

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Editor's Note

If there are two words in the English language which set the editorial heart throbbing like no other, they are "in confidence." So when the well-known international lawyer Alan U. Schwartz, friend and representative of important authors and publishers alike, came to my door in the summer of 1972 with a manuscript purportedly written by Timothy Leary, the heart did indeed beat faster as the nerve endings began to tingle expectantly.

I read the manuscript and was completely taken by its combination of candor, poetry, adventure, sly humor, political intrigue, sex and jagged turns, twists, gaps and edges. I thought that it was a remarkable literary document, an exciting escape story and a juicy journalistic account of life with Eldridge Cleaver and crew in Algiers. With some clarification of its more mysterious connections and references, some sandpapering of the edges, I thought, the manuscript could be published to the delight of hundreds of thousands of readers. Two colleagues, one younger, one older, read the manuscript and agreed. Mr. Schwartz and I met again. Time for some questions.

Was this wild tale of escape and escapade genuine? Yes, certainly, and the fugitive could be produced if necessary to bear witness.

How did it come into your hands? Well, now, there is a business acquaintance in London, a Polish film producer, Gutowski; he was in touch with Leary and with one Monsieur Hauchard, a resident of Lausanne, Switzerland.

Why is this manuscript in confidence with a paperback publisher? Very simple—the world publication rights should be under one roof—the publication might very well be in paperback originally (there is some topical urgency here). Besides, it would seem obvious that such a headline-making man and flouter of the Law had the world literally waiting for his story every bit as much as the children, fathers and mothers of the Drugged Generation in America.

And so a contract was negotiated and drawn—the “papers” as they are called. A quick trip to Geneva was arranged. The scene shifts.

We gather in the lobby of the hotel Le Richemond, sedate, velvet-upholstered, haunt of nineteenth-century British vacationers. And a strange gathering it is. From London, the stocky young lawyer for Gutowski; from the south of France, Gutowski himself; from Lausanne nearby, Monsieur Hauchard, tall, white-haired and gilded, host and guide for the New York trio; and now the man of the hour, Leary, enthusiastic, slightly Mephisto-

phelian, ready to work, very *real*. The scene shifts again.

A small private dining room, with a large rectangular table covered with green felt. Us and the papers. Talk about clauses, warranties, payments, accomplices, editorial changes, yes, no and no maybes. We know what we must have; we have what they want; the machinery purrs on. And overlooking this curious group is a picture postcard painting of Christ all aglow and the Disciples listening intently. What would such an event be without a love feast? Monsieur Hauchard has ordered—elaborately—and we are joined by friends of Leary: the famous Brian Barritt of the manuscript and a young woman, Garboesque in her beauty. And then the food and wine. Cheerful conversation rippled, ego strings plucked and soothed.

So easy then to finish the editorial part of the job in an afternoon and evening. Timothy Leary, actor, writer, teacher, priest, perched cross-legged on a side chair. Can we say this in the book? Yes. Change that? Yes, but maybe do it this way. All present, actively involved. Timothy Leary, now to settle in Switzerland, to live and write, make movies and records, wait for the signal to greet the press and talk about *Confessions of a Hope Fiend*. Each and every page of the manuscript was initialed with a flourish. Since that happy August day the tightly woven strands and connections have been stretched, broken, twisted, and here and there repaired. Were agreements broken—and by whom? Will the

grand plan for book and film come to pass? Leary and Switzerland just couldn't last, shall we say. The country does not lend itself to charismatic figures in search of a lost audience. And as for escape to Asia with another beautiful young woman—something snapped. The long, lazy arm of the Law must reach out from sunny California, clap on the manacles and bring the man home.

There was swift trial on the escape charge and conviction. Yes, the defendant is guilty of that crime, saith the jury (crime?). And yet the defendant Tim Leary states that he had a fair trial. Case closed.

Now the book is here, with a life of its own. It is still a remarkable literary account. The man opens his mind. It is a wild, wandering adventure and a raw, jarring look at the reality of existence, both in our country and the world around us.

MARC JAFFE
April 1973

Confessions of a Hope Fiend

TIMOTHY LEARY



A NATIONAL GENERAL COMPANY

CONFESSIONS OF A HOPE FIEND
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Orange County Superior Court

Just around midnight the jury came in with the verdict. Deliberations had lasted all day. The District Attorney was worried. We were bored. *Bonne Chance* deals the cards. A pack of fools, lovers, and jugglers. This deck had been shuffled long before this day of judgment. We had gone through the two weeks' proceedings in that somnambulant courtroom stupor. It had been a year of melodramatic trials and tribulations in Texas, New York, and California. Three posses of the United States Law Establishment slowly closing in on us. The government had armies of prosecutors. We were relieved that the climax was about to happen. Judicial procedures by this time were boring charades. During the day of waiting comic congeniality had ruled the courtroom. Two weeks' confinement with the court clerks, bailiffs, and sheriff's deputies had produced a cautious acceptance like shipwrecked survivors, passengers, and crew thrown together on a lifeboat. It was an important case to the District Attorney. He had assembled a jury of hanging men and women, John Birch stereotypes, but the long wait had him

frightened. When the jury sent out a request for coffee he grabbed the bailiff's jacket, shoved the cocked hat rakishly over his forehead, and tiptoed around the courtroom in waiter pantomime. Big laugh for the DA.

The verdict surprised no one. We were all found guilty of possession, the wizard crime. She was condemned on two counts: ten years for some morsels of hashish and ten years for a few volts of LSD. The young Jack was guilty of the same. I was condemned for two roaches which had appeared in the hand of the policeman who had searched the ashtray of the car I was driving. In both this trial and the federal trial in Laredo, Texas, my lawyers had put up no defense. We hoped to win the case in higher court. The attorneys assured that I would be immediately released on Appeal Bond. The Constitution of the United States and all legal precedent guaranteed bail. But the magic mantra *guilty* produced a dramatic change in the Judge. The good-natured handball partner of my lawyers suddenly regressed into a grim inquisitor. We were unprepared for the vindictiveness. He announced that I would not be released on Appeal Bond but remanded at once to the custody of the Orange County Sheriff as a danger to society and a menace to the community. The fluorescent lights of the Courtroom shimmered off his shaven head as he waved damning documents upon which he based his convictions. The sheriff's deputies approached.

— We will handcuff you out in the hallway so that your wife and son won't see.

— Come back soon, she said.

They pulled my hands behind my back and slipped on the cuffs. We rode to the Orange County Jail in a squad car. It was very efficient. The receiving gates were opened by remote control. Radio messages crackled back and forth between the cruiser and headquarters. I stood under the hard glare in front of a reception panel. The door of a holding cell clicked open and slipped shut behind me. There was a concrete floor with no benches. The guards gathered around in New Testament style and looked curiously, laughing at the new martyr.

— For you we throw away the key. If we have our way you'll never get out.

My cellmate, dozing, head on knees, was roused to interest.

— How come they tell you that, man. What you done?

— God knows, I said.

Then came those weary, lonesome jailhouse blues. I won't be in her arms tonight.

After a long time the cell doors clicked open and I walked into a large receiving tank. Two cons in green trustee uniforms were behind the counter.

— Strip. Hold up your arms.

A bored con points a squirt gun and sprays my armpits and balls with DDT.

— Bend down and close your eyes.

The hissing spray wets my head. After a shivering shower I dress in green jail clothes and passively cooperate during the long process of fingerprinting while the guards beat up a drunk Black man in the corner.

I carried my jailhouse records up the escalator.

Guards watch silently behind armored plate glass. It was a modern Orwellian jail. A trustee hands me a plastic-covered mattress, sheets, blankets, and a towel. I fell on the soft pile with the other depressed kids.

After a while a metal voice ordered:

— On your feet. Go down to K tank.

Behind the glass a crew-cut khaki guard points down the hall. Control room panels around him flash red and green. I walk down the runway, past several eight-man holding cages. A door slides open.

— Take the upper bunk.

I threw the mattress on the metal slab too tired for sheets, climb up, tune out.

Early morning light and noise wakes me. Seven cellmates coughing, shitting, washing, grumbling.

— What's happening?

— Breakfast. Sleep if you want to.

I sleep and wake to TV clamor. I sit up on the bunk. My cellmates cluster around. A family reunion of smiling misfits.

— You got lots of friends here.

A trustee passed cigarettes and candy through the bars. A long-haired saint hands me the gospel of the Buddha. There are many illuminated God-intoxicated men in the Orange County Jail. The buzzer sounds for lunch and the door slides open. We march single file to the mess hall. The first jail meal on a tin tray loaded with mucky porridge, a tin cup with chlorinated water. I sit next to a surly hulk with thick low brows and black hair swept back low-ride style. His bulging arms were covered with tattoos. There was a sky-blue nude

girl, a disney orange devil with pitchfork, a purple etched brunette with her haunting cunt trembling where the vein crossed for accuracy. A needle and spoon with the motto "Junk is Fun." He flexed his arms and rippled muscles. I said:

– You have everything there but "Born to Lose." He laughed.

– That's there on my shoulder. He pulled up his short-sleeved shirt.

– Why the number eight? – Heroin man, eighth letter of the alphabet. – You dig heroin? H₂O is my favorite, I replied with an aristocratic smile. – Yeah man I love heroin, it's me, he said.

I would like to have talked more but the guard flicked his finger ordering us to the garbage cans.

Back in the cell the PA system called my name: – Roll up your gear and hit the beach.

In this Orange County Jail they call the runway in front of the cells "the beach." In the Los Angeles Jail they call it "the freeway."

I roll the plastic-covered mattress round the blankets while my mates cluster round.

– Good luck, man, you're bailed out.

I float happy to the tier end. Barred gates click open. The loudspeaker rasps: Proceed to D tank. The invisible eye watches me. – Walk ten feet and turn right. The metal gates slide apart. I was in a new tier of single cells. – Put your gear in D3. The third cell was empty. Metal bed, metal table, metal toilet, metal washbowl. I threw the mattress on the bed. You have your choice of cell lockup or dayroom. Ten men were sitting around the dayroom watching TV.

A secret club smile made the circle.

— You know where you are now? Murderers' row. The elite. This is high-power. Protective custody for killers.

We start the ancient prisoner meeting ritual. Whose case, what case, where case. The loud-speaker rasps again:

— Roll up your gear.

An unseen dial opens the cell and the metal voice directs me down hall to another cell tier.

— Welcome to N tank, protective custody for bad actors, noncooperators, snitches, messianic acid heads. We used to have child molesters, baby robbers, motherfuckers, and assorted sex thieves but they've been moved next door.

Here in N tank was a pretty slim boy lover, the little brotherfucker telling tender tales of lusty sucking twelve-year boys, pants down on the sofa, when mother comes and screams "Police!" And here was beautiful junior Jesus, a bearded speed-wired acid head. Another drug martyr, mind etched with acid and then hooked into the incessant humming methedrine word tape. He was wired day and night with a crazy smile to some neptunian switchboard chattering authentic galactic vibrations and telepathic computer messages nonstop. And here was "Bully Boy Wendel," protection muscle king of the jail, calling soft threats down the tier at fearful titillated sissy girls who threw him chewing gum, sweet chocolate kisses, sugar-coated licking sticks, and anal twists.

And the silent Chicano snitch kid trembling in the corner of the cell.

And the silent giant Black who nursed psychotic

jungle rage in the shadow cave and never left for meals.

And Tom Lynn, a twenty-year-old weak blond Aries. He sits next to me in the TV room telling tales of Vietnam, marijuana, Tokyo opium, acid love rituals in army hospitals, hashish concubines in Bangkok, shooting horse in the ladies' rooms of filling stations where he worked. At night he stands outside my cell pretending to sweep, leaning on a broom, babbling me hip tales until the bull bellows him back to his cell. Silence on the tier and then each night the eerie murder voice comes singing through the ventilators from the next cellblock.

— Fuck you bastard, Lynn, get ready to die, your days are numbered.

Tom Lynn wore the jacket of snitch. He was in protective custody to keep the midnight knife from his back. He told this story about once upon a crime a bad guy, Willie Madden, a low-riding armed robber, smashed down candy-store owners screaming for help. Willie and Tom used to shoot horse together. Now Willie faced three life sentences. He is a mean mean dude. He beats his wife, he beats his mother, he beats store owners, he beats his victims. His speciality is asshole-raping weak prisoners. Blood, blood, blood. Willie blames sweet Tom for his troubles.

As I listen to this dark tale I shiver in the cold prison mist.

Twice a week on visiting day we were herded down to a crowded room where we looked through the glass at our visitors jamming into the hallway.

Each prisoner sat at an open booth and talked by telephone through the glass window to family and friends on the other side.

She was sitting behind the glass surrounded by friends. She had a sad story to tell. The Judge was unrelenting. The lawyers helpless and confused. Newspaper editorials praised the crackdown law-and-order policy. We felt the fear that I would never get out from this glass separation. The danger dials were jumping and enthusiasm low. Her face was pressed to the glass, eyes full.

— I'll free you love, she said.

After twenty minutes the line clicks off. We act out the silent pantomime of farewell. I return to the metal box four feet wide, twelve feet long, ten feet high, arrange the mattress so that it cushions the metal stool, place a yellow legal pad on the metal shelf, and start writing this book. For nine days in murky pale shadow glow, sharpening the pencil with a razor blade held in a match cover, I wrote this jailhouse story and a detailed plan for overthrowing the government of the United States without violence. I wrote in a careful legible script while eating candy bars and smoking. When my hand cramped I walked to the mirror to peer at my pale face, do yoga, fall in bed. Books to read were contraband. Books to write forbidden. I hid the sheets of this manuscript under my mattress and waited for a lawyer's visit to smuggle them out of prison.

A few days before my sentencing I was called down for a probation interview.

The PO was an excited tall broad-boned western woman coughing cigarette smoke at me. I was genially dignified, resigned to martyrdom and classified not an escape risk. She interrogated me about schooling and military record, income, assets, stocks and bonds, criminal record, drug use, marital history. She took notes diligently. She wore a few strands of black hair on the back of her hands. I dug her.

After lunch the loudspeaker squawked:

— On the line with gear rolled up. You're checking out to Federal Court in Texas.

Down in the basement clothing room they handed me a plastic bag with my London mod flannel suit and soft leather desert boots. I sat waiting for three hours in the holding cell until two burly Blacks shouldered into the room. The Feds. County jail guards crowded around respectfully.

— You from the FBI?

A sharp look of disdain. — Federal Marshals.

They pat me down professionally. As they bend over I see Soviet shoulder holsters with genuine blue-steel guns. I follow them handcuffed into a squad car. At the Los Angeles Airport we drive behind the terminal and switch to a local squad car, drive on the runway dodging jetliners, and park under the wing of a waiting plane. Three guards watch as the handcuffs clip off and I climb

onto the plane. They keep me isolated in the window seat until we land at Phoenix, Arizona. — We are going to do you a favor and drop you off at the Federal Detention Camp. You won't like it at the Phoenix City Jail.

They stashed me in a Federal cattle cage for two days and nights and returned bleary-eyed with whiskey breath. We flew all night to Houston. Unshaved and sleepless I was shoved into a Federal Courthouse holding cage. Two Marshals held my arms as we walked into the Courtroom. She was sitting in the spectators' seat flashing love. My lawyers looked worried. A wooden gavel banged. His Honor, the Judge, black-robed shoulders bent, peered down at a little gray criminal. The Judge had a senile eye and facial twitch. His Texas drawl clipped words like meat cleavers.

— You are a thief, the Judge said to the small man. — And apparently a clever thief. His face ticked.

— I sentence you to fifteen years in the Federal Penitentiary. Twitch. The little thief sat next to me. Our eyes met and we shrugged.

I stood below the Judge. He would not look in my eyes. It was afternoon TV, the frowning Judge, his twitch betraying indictable repressions frozen into law; the Court Clerks doddering old men with crepey faces. The fat Federal attorney covered his three hundred pounds of white baby fat with a dark blue suit and white socks. The veins in his neck throbbed as he described aloud sexual fantasies about young girls and bo-ays, Your Honor, being perverted, Your Honor, corrupted, Sir, led

astray, Sir, debauched, destroyed, if it please the Court.

We were a classic cast of outlaws. One cashiered Harvard Alchemist in chains. One beautiful long-haired wife with trembling dark eyes. Two plucky young lawyers skillfully trapping the enraged Judge into reversible errors.

I was sentenced to ten years in the Federal Penitentiary for being in a car in which someone else possessed less than half an ounce of marijuana. Like his California colleague the Judge illegally denied normal Appeal Bond as a threat to the social order. The lawyers forced the guards to let me spend exactly two minutes with Her. She came in my arms; for the first time in weeks we made contact. Then the Marshals moved in to break us up.

My lawyers asked if I could write a short statement for the press. They tore off a sheet of note pad and I scribbled quickly. Love cannot be imprisoned.

Handcuffed, I was hustled out the Courtroom door grinning at the leaping pack of reporters and photographers who tripped over backward into the bushes while cameras whirled through a forest of microphones. I was shouldered in the squad car and we roared away to the airport.

— You have ten years to think about what a big wave you made in Houston, said the Marshal.

I was happy to get back to my friends in the cellblock of the Orange County Jail.

At this time I met Bud Bennett. He was a forty-year-old junkie in for sale of heroin. He had spent

ten years in various prisons and another ten studying yoga, smoking hash and opium on the banks of the Ganges. He was an adept. He had neatly balanced the Time-Space equation.

— The prison cell is my home in Space. It's enforced meditation. In Time you will find me in Benares, dirtiest city in the solar system. The smell gets stronger like a monstrous fart stinking of wet earth. It's nice. Pilgrims stream in, pray, wash, meditate, and cut out with added merit, each adding to the aroma of burning flesh and open gutter sewers. Hindus who die in Benares go direct to heaven, a sort of baksheesh from Shiva chuckling in the purple throat and pulling up bunches of Hindus by their tails like mandrakes. India is free like psychedelic drugs.

Bennett offered me enlightenment straight from headquarters, hermetically sealed and sold legally everywhere along the Ganges.

Sitting by a deserted burning Ghat, waters of the swollen river smash the crumbling stone, his trust in reason streamed out of the top of his head and mingled with the smoke of funeral pyre. Logic died. Bennett knew he knew nothing.

— Sitting next to me was this old patriarch, the ninety-nine names of Allah etched in Arab wrinkles

cross his face. The hookah pipe has curved stems bound at intervals with copper wire and laid with pale blue mosaic. Not the straight type used in religious ceremonies that drag the smoke down into your belly. These are gentle and smoked sitting down. Every now and then one takes a long draw and illuminates the dull red nova of glowing charcoal. The water in the clay bowl gurgles like a happy baby.

Thus Bennett began transmitting Atman Tantra, the yoga of self-love, the secret Sadhana of self-devotion. He said it was an ultimate key, a neurological technique for eroticization and maintaining a state of rapture.

He taught the 108 meditations of Atman Tantra. You get off on strong hashish. Then sitting in the lotus position in a silent room you produce an erection thinking of the most salacious fantasy that imagination can conjure. You maintain the flowering stem while recalling one by one the 108 sexual visions. Deprived of external stimulation the prisoner's nervous system grows on memories. At each memory he flips a meditation bead. When he reaches the 108th he screams HREE and explodes into a cosmic orgasm.

B.B. told me this story:

In Benares he met a saintly old man named Yo Henbene. He had been a professor at the University but dropped out. The old man said that all one needed in life is a crust of bread and a little hashish every day. His disciple, Tambi, each morning brought him a bit of hashish. He lived in a small room totally unfurnished except for a prayer rug, a shawl, a water jug and hookah. In the next

room was a cripple with no arms or legs. A very successful beggar. One of the local prostitutes would carry him out to the street in the morning, and carry him back in the evening to feed him. Each evening the girl that he favored would put him in a basket and pick him up to fuck him, jiggling him up and down. He was very virile with a big prick. As a matter of fact that is all he was. Just a head, a trunk, and a prick. The prostitutes conspired to see who would care for him. He was rich and such a weird fuck. To find a guy like that was a treasure for these girls. They had tried everything else. The old professor next door would meditate and dream and listen through the wall to the music from the beggar's room.

B.B. passed on his high solitary version of HINAYANA Buddhism. A summit ASANA which produced an ultimate detachment. He called it the Serpent Circle, songs of praise to the hermaphroditic world snake devouring its own tail. The adept, sitting in the lotus position after long hours of muscle stretching, reached that point of relaxation where he could incorporate his own organ of reproduction. At this moment, said B.B., evolution ceases, day merges with night, male with female. The final connection reestablished, one softly rolls off the wheel of external desire. What else is left to a confined nervous system? B.B. lent me his beads, which were alternating, smooth phallic and oval yoni forms polished by erotic reminiscence.

After dinner B.B. would squat Hindu fashion by my side in the TV room and transmit his message. During his long prison terms he had turned on

his entire body by means of a systematic sequence of neural associations.

The first step was to develop total control of erection and orgasm: a simple matter according to him if the adept is provided with hashish and solitude enough to let the visions emerge.

The second step was to transfer erotic current from one part of the body to another. His instruction for charging the anus was of particular interest and aroused buggery flutters. Anal receptivity was maintained by assuming in the mind Her graceful positions. Her moist expectations and Her breathless reactions. Imagine her as a fourteen-year-old, cock-hungry and eager. Imagine the Caribbean beachboy, the lusty airline pilot. Imagine her first fuck, with the high-school football star. Imagine the first time she experienced each sexual position. Become her sexuality. Do her trick. Stretch and writhe murmuring. Your asshole will grow until it becomes cunt of the world, he said.

The goal of this autoerotic Tantra was not, however, to satisfy oneself. It must be dedicated in purity to Her amorous distraction and Her sensual pleasure. Once you have learned exactly how the erotic impulses are hooked up in your own body, then you can think about making love to Her in the style and elegance which She deserves.

And so days passed quickly, reading, writing, lying on the soft couch of memory, listening to the jailhouse sound tapes, four TV sets blaring different programs, usually cops and robbers guns blazing and western movie shoot-outs. The eternal

clack of domino ivory on metal tables. Heavy clang reverberations bouncing around the four-story metal building. The iron doors clicking open, slamming shut and way down below on freedom street truck engines grind, auto horns bleep. From the neighboring cellblocks continual arguments, curses, and the soft rush of blood through my arteries.

The day of sentencing arrived. I was crowded with fifty men into a small basement holding cell. We changed our jail wraps for street clothes. A strange masquerade party, each man shedding the common uniform and emerging, strange metamorphosis, in the costume worn at the time of the jail crime. We all sat together on the floor suffocating with the smell of sweaty feet for two hours before the court bus arrived.

I was escorted to the Courtroom crowded with flowered hippies, flashbulbs, TV cameras, reporters clamoring for statements. She came over with a deep kiss. The TV cameras pushed closer.

My lawyer asked postponement of sentence for five days. The Judge sentenced Jack to ninety days observation in the state prison. She was given twenty years probated to six months in jail, but is released on Appeal Bond. Perfect. She walks free.

Tom Lynn had a court appearance too on the fifth day but he didn't answer the 4:00 A.M.

speaker. In the dressing room I talked to Black Panthers about the Chicago trial. In the corner of the room my friend the low-browed tattooed man waved. He was in the center of a group talking about Tom, denouncing him, condemning him to death.

I asked if it was not true that Willie Madden's own father had given him up. My question puzzled the tattooed man.

— Hey. I'm Willie Madden. Do you get sentenced today? Good. Me too. We'll go up to prison together on the Chino chain. You can run with us. We'll protect you. We'll get you one of those nice young bitches to fuck. Willie's face twisted in a perfectly evil smile. You pick a weak kid. Tell him bend over. If he don't you just fire on him. Smash. Make his blood run. Willie made violent motions with his hands. Knock him down. Kick him around. OK, punk. You ready now? Take your fist like this and push it against his face. OK, little soft punk your tender asshole ready now? Pull his pants down. Run some soap on your prick. Punk him good. Punch him if he struggles. Hear him scream. After that, he's your eager bitch. Runs errands for you. When he sees you coming he's glad he's your bitch 'cause you protect him. Willie was smiling in a friendly way.

The guard came to the cage door. Lynn. Is Thomas Lynn in there? There was an electric silence. No one talked.

— They didn't call him down from N tank, I said.

— He's on the list for court. I'll get him.

The bull trampled off to get Lynn. Tension in

the room. A horror movie was starting. No one talked. Willie's gang surrounded him.

Then the guard unlocked the gate. Tom Lynn, looking miserable, hesitated, waited, then walked one pace forward. The gate brushed his back as it closed.

I was standing next to Willie facing Tom, who stood hands by his sides. He looked at me beseechingly. I left Willie and walked to Tom. We got on the Courthouse bus together. The bus drove into the basement of the Courthouse. The Superior Court cases were locked in a large holding room. There were benches around the sides and a bench in the middle. I sat with Tom in the middle. Willie and his gang were behind us. Danger meters flashing red. A few moments later it struck. A blurred swift movement in the air. The noise of flesh crunching. Tom was standing arms at his sides, face bloodied, dazed, his glasses smashed on the floor. Willie was dancing, fists moving in to attack. I stood up and moved between the two.

— Wait a minute.

Willie was surprised. Tom swayed. The three of us were poised, waiting for something to happen. I spun out some West Point memory tape.

— Guard!

As the bull approached I said, — Take this man to the hospital, he's sick. The guard almost saluted.

A wave of muttering moved through the room.

— Man, what did you do that for. Motherfucking snitch should die.

I sat down shook up. The tattooed swastikas might be mad at me. After a long silence the Black Panthers called over to me, waving to join them.

— Got any of that bad acid man? They laughed and we went on talking about drugs and revolution.

After a while I went over to Willie. He talked with jittery speed.

— Man you should never have done that. I almost fired on you out of instinct. I had to kick ass. That's our way, man, with a snitch.

I was called upstairs to the Courtroom and given a ten-year sentence. She cried. The Court was crowded with hippies who were chanting OMMMMM. The Judge shouted that if that humming didn't stop he put them all in jail.

The guards pulled me out of the Court.

Back in the dressing room Willie told me more about Tom.

— He's a weak sniveling punk, man. A born snitch. He caused me trouble before. We had this place near Palm Springs. Used it for a hideout. It was loaded with guns and heroin. One weekend there was this underaged girl that the heat was looking for and man, they came to the door, man. They were looking for this girl, man, and I said get a warrant. They said they would. So the other dudes covered the side doors, man, and I got a shotgun and two pistols and waited at the end of the hallway. I told my old lady to answer the door but when the heat came the sixteen-year-old girl went to the door and gave herself up.

So we piled the guns in the car, man, and drove back and I was in my kitchen, man, and someone said, Tom Lynn is in the living room. I went in and he said what's happening Willie, I want to talk to

you. I asked him if he had given the heat our address and he said, yeah, I did it for your own good. I started to move on him man, and he was backing away holding his hands down like this saying, wait a minute Willie. Lennie said kill the fucker and my old lady said blow the dude away. He backed out the door and I fired on him and he fell off the second-story porch and ran away.

He's weak. He lies about stuff too, pretending to have a heroin habit. Hey man, I'm strung out. Give me a fix. So I gave him a quarter spoon and he fixed and man in five minutes he was dying of an OD. Dying, man. Everyone said throw his body in the car and we'll dump him, but I said no, and dragged him to the bathtub, and filled it with cold water and gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and got ice cubes and put them under his balls and saved the fucking dude's life, man. Ask him about that when you get upstairs.

— You rob to support your habit?

— I gotta have my stuff. Heroin is me, man. That's when I'm myself. I'd rather fix than fuck anytime. He turned to his assistant. Mike, you rather fix or fuck. Mike produced an honest grin.

— Fuck man. Fuck. He pushed his right fist up and down masturbatory over his vein.

— If heroin was legal you'd be out of a job, I said.

— You're right, but we'd still need guns against snitches.

— If heroin were legal snitches would be out of a job too.

2

The morning after sentencing the orders came through transferring me to the State Prison. Emigration from short-time County Jail to long-term penitentiary. In the basement holding tank, stripped of county wrappings, I dressed for the final time in mod fiannels.

I was stored in a special isolated holding tank until the County Jail bus drove through the smoggy freeways to the Prison Reception Center at Chino, California. The welcoming committee was grim and blunt.

– Strip naked. Throw your personal belongings in the box. Bend over for body inspection. Run your hands through your hair, both your ears. Open your mouth. Wag your tongue. Lift your balls. Turn around spread your buttocks. Left foot. Right foot. Shower.

I dressed in the new prison uniform. A tall Black in blue danced over. He gave me ten hand-rolled cigarettes. The rumor wind was blowing round me. They gonna put you in the hole. The Captain wants to see you. They gonna ship you to the Medical Center at Vacaville. You're getting bailed out tomorrow.

The sergeant checks us for long hair and orders

me to the barber. I get a last mirror glimpse at forest hair and moustache. — Leave as much as you can I ask the barber, but he grunts and clips. In the mirror I see a strange high-headed youth.

— Don't complain man you look twenty years younger.

I took sheets and blankets and followed the sergeant to solitary confinement. It's bad-boy lockup for you.

I walk by the cages of the dangerous wild men. They shout in pleasure to see me. A Black shouts: — Hey man we gotta talk to you. We cannot see each other. Just cries from cage to cage. A nasty Brooklyn voice denounces me. — Oh he's that bad man! Hang him. Another Black defended me. Shorty's Brooklyn voice turns friendly.

— Hey Doc, look at these pictures. A hand from the next cell appears holding color snapshots. Sad-eyed blue wife and clear-eyed kids.

— Hey Doc, here's a record of my trial. Read it.

— Hey Doc, you want some cigarettes. — Hey Doc, you need some stamps and envelopes. — Hey Doc, you wanna a *Playboy* magazine?

Dinner was passed through a slot in the bars of the narrow white counter box. Then began the evening sport. Blacks using mirrors to catch the setting sun, playing sunshine tag, racing reflected birds of light against the wall. Laughing and shouting. At the hour of romance, from Her solitary cell a young lady sadly coos a soft message and a Black voice rumbles back: — You Sandy I going to get you ass. What I'm gonna to do to you girl! Hooooeee. I got me twenty inches for you. You my pussy.

— Oh no big boy, I'm my own girl from now on. No more marriage for me.

— Great God almighty, I gotta get me some sweet red meat. I sick to death of my own right hand. Wheeee—here I come Sandy. Ohhhhh what I'm gonna to do to you sister. I gonna to split your velvet asshole girl. Stuff my tool up your belly, split yo kidneys girl. Gonna penetrate your guts little girl. Gut you baby so you gonna never be able to walk again.

Sandy's voice came softly breathing:

— Oh Mr. Guard let that man out. Oh let him loose. I needs that man. Roaring laughter sweeps the three-story house. Eighty males poke head through cell bars and dig the action. Like love play always the pulsing action peaks, subsides, and then Shorty's voice shouts:

— Hey Doc, look out. He cackles laughter. My head through the bars I look down at a fire blazing on the floor below. Flames six feet high leap up burning sheets, blankets, discarded clothes. Wild screams, pleasure, rage echoes through the prison hall. Yeah man burn the motherfucking joint down. Yeah man burn it to the ground. Burn baby, burn.

A momentary reflex, fear of being trapped in a cell holocaust was calmed by the cement steel of maximum security. One angry Black voice protests the fire but he is howled down. 'An incendiary quarrel flares up between two African powers.

— Why you shit-faced motherfucking sissy gonna to burn down this establishment. You stay out of this you hear.

— Yeah bo. You'se dead you fool. If I get out of

this cell tomorrow I'se going to whip yo ass so hard you gonna die. Motherfucker. You hear me?

- Yeah bo, you scare me.
- Don't yeah bo me. What's yo name?
- My name is Shackleforth baby.
- Well you poor fool Shackleforth, you dead.
- Oohhh. I'se frightened.

Next morning I am called to the Captain's office; sit watching trustees run the prison, typing, phoning, filing, serious responsible people working proudly. They flash condescension. I'm a new arrival. Into the room tottered an old prizefighter, face seamed with veins, warts, and blemishes. He was wearing khaki and silver bars. Captain Brean waved me into his office.

- We've finally got you, huh. You are going to be with us a long time. Ha ha. His little eyes peered out through skin drapes.

- You're smaller than on TV. I guess we cut you down to size, huh. He leaned back in his chair.

- I am going to talk to you man to man. You could cause us a lot of trouble here if you wanted to. I can size up a man. You are a born leader I know. I am too. You could start a rebellion if you wanted to. I know that.

He leaned forward poking his finger at me.
- But we know our business here. We are watching these long-haired hippies hanging round outside. Same like that Cleaver in Vacaville. A big crowd came around wanting to release him. A thousand hippies could storm this place and get inside the gates. Yeah, I grant you that. But I tell you not one of them would get out of here alive.

I sent gentle thoughts to his head and soothed

his fevered neurons. This is the moment to suggest that I am a cooperative nonviolent person.

He was smiling to himself as I left the room. I was hoping he would tell them up in Sacramento, — I know how to handle him, he'll cause no trouble.

The next day I am moved to the main line. The prison is crowded. Eighty men sleep in double bunk beds on a tier floor. I share twelve square feet with seven criminals in smooth harmony. Jiggs, a lifelong addict, thin as a needle, spoons up to my bunk. — Answer me one question. How long man? How long is this going to go on?

On Easter Sunday, our sepulchers are rent by a comedian guard who swaggers down the aisle, cop cap rakish shouting:

— Easter egg hunt starts in twenty minutes!

After breakfast the guard walks up to me and smiles. — We're moving you to a cell. You got a new cellmate. I waited at the bars and watched. After a while a rustle of excitement and coming through the gate and carrying his blanket, his beard gone, his long hair cut, young and vulnerable comes Jack. His face lit up. We went out into the yard and sat on the grass exchanging notes, happy to be together.

We stayed up all night talking. He was to leave in the morning on the chain to Tracy Prison. After a silence I said: — If I get out first I will do everything I can to get you out.

— If I get out first I will do everything I can to get you out, he said.

At 3:00 A.M. a flashlight in the cell. The guard whispered:

— Roll up you gear for transfer.

I could see Jack's shadow form collecting his prison things. As he left the dark cell he whispered:

— Good-bye, I love you.

— Good-bye, I love you.

I haven't seen him since.

New prisoners remained in the Reception Center for an average of six weeks. After psychological testing, observation, and case worker interviews a decision is made as to the long-term prison. Usually the counselors were the deciding voice.

I spent the first week asking questions, listening, and watching. Trying to figure out how this Reception Station worked. The lawyers were still talking optimistically about getting me out on bail, but the jailhouse gurus warned that this Government would keep me in prison for the next ten years.

They were throwing the book at drug cases.

The prison administration could deal with armed robbers, murderers, and normal criminals but not these defiant guiltless long-haired dopers. The guards said armed robbers and murderers have guts. Drug users are cowardly escapists.

Each inmate had a file called "The Jacket." Every unusual action by the prisoner was entered in The Jacket. But the case worker's recommendation was the key.

I found out about the network of the California

prison system, listening to sad vacation discussions about the selection of prisons continually reviewing the escape possibilities.

Tehachapi Prison is in the mountains. Fresh air, no smog, new buildings. Too remote for visitors. They send young cons there.

- Are there gun towers?
- Yeah, it's escape-proof.

The California Institute for Men, abbreviated CIM, offered color TV, a golf course, a swimming pool. No wall. They'll never send you there with a ten-year federal hold. CIM is treatment oriented. They call you mister.

San Quentin is the Monte Carlo glamour, sex, dope prison of the system. Near San Francisco. Plenty of action. Gambling, educational courses, and special visitors from San Francisco. They might send you to Quentin, making an example out of you. There is no escape from Quentin.

Then there was Folsom Prison. Lissen man, I put twenty-three years in Californian prisons and I tell you the best joint is Folsom; any experienced con will tell you that. No kids there. You do your time quietly.

Then there was Soledad. Dread pit of solitude for the toughest gunsels muscle benders. They called it the "Gladiators' School." When you check in there they issue you a sword and a garbage can lid. A continual fight to prove how tough you are. Homosexual rape of soft kids. Soledad. The name itself sent a chill through every spine.

CMC East—California Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo is the new science-fiction prison. Four separate quads, TV monitors. Big brother eyes watch

every move. It was called medium security, but don't believe it. Huey Newton is there. Gun towers with sharpshooter guards can kill at a mile range. No one escapes. CMC West—California Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo is the old man's home. They send professional long-term prisoners there. It's a country club for elite cons. The best prison in the world. It's an easy escape.

No wall. The highway runs nearby. They send only nonviolent prisoners there. They will never send you there not with two dimes hanging round your neck. There is a rule that with a federal hold they cannot send you to minimum security. The State of California owes the Feds ten years of your life.

The Vacaville main line is a mental hospital for violent maniacs. They might send you there to use your psychological training. It is maximum security. No one escapes from there.

Then there are the Forestry Camps. That's ideal, man. You work up in the healthy mountains. There's plenty of dope, no fences, you work along the highway. It's simple to run away. Cons jump Forestry Camp all the time but they get caught. They always run back home. They get a Dear John letter from their wives or suspect their wives fooling around, they flip, take off, and hitchhike home. They walk in the door and bang the State Police are waiting. The first thing they do if you escape is stake out your home. There is no chance they'll send you to a Forestry Camp, not with all the time you brought here. They will take no chances with you.

Lying in my bunk at night creating realities.

Transfer to a Forestry Camp or to San Luis Obispo. I am a nonviolent person with no risk of escape.

After dinner, just before the night lockup I am leaning over the third-tier railings and looking through dirty windows to the sunset lawn below. The cabin class deck of a slow liner going nowhere.

— Here we are again man.

He is waiting for the Vacaville chain and pumps me for information about the sissies there. He dreams of Vacaville Prison as a bawdy sexual paradise. The beautiful queens of Vacaville dig the cells with mirrors.

— Oh mercy me, he bellows. I can't wait to meet those luscious young ladies at Vacaville. I'm going to walk up there with mah dick in mah hand.

A comedian guard tramples by our cells, his shoulders hunched.

— Timothy, do you want me to help you get out of here?

— Sure.

— OK. I gotta a great lawyer.

He walked past my cell then reappears going down the stairs.

— Except I gotta get him out first ha ha ha.

I am a temporary process case: one who comes and goes every six weeks. There is a permanent work crew, abbreviated PWC. These men are serious bureaucrats who sleep in a special honor dorm and strut through the prison like junior guards. Among them are five men who run the five key offices in the prison. The PWC runs the show. For the first two weeks I am watching them and

they are watching me across the gulf of mutual surveillance. I need their help to plan my escape. They are checking me out of curiosity.

By this time all the smart hustling new process cases have managed jobs in the prison offices.

The apparent power center of the prison is the Receiving and Release Section. The action is there. The coming and the going. The center of trade and commerce. I spend my free time doing yoga in the sun and playing handball.

A trustee named Talbot called me into his office. He ran a small records office. He was the most influential man in the prison: intelligent, affable, and a born rebel. He was the jailhouse lawyer. He spent much of his time using the prison mimeograph machine to prepare briefs for other prisoners. He was cool about payoff. No heavy ransoms. Perhaps a carton or two of cigarettes. Everyone knew he was writing briefs for kicks. One out of every twenty briefs he wrote resulted in some action. The prison administration tolerated him as a good dealer all round. His briefs kept a thread of hope alive in the permanent work crew and if the trustees were happy the prison ran smoothly.

Talbot expressed interest in my appeal briefs. After a few explanatory legal conversations he offered me a job as his assistant. It was a plum. An office of my own, larger than the Captain's. I would spend twenty minutes a day typing out a few file cards. I move to the honor dorm, have the day free to write my own briefs or read in the serenity of my private office. I would be considered as a candidate for the Permanent Work Crew.

— Do you think the Captain would approve of me getting an inside job?

Talbot smiled. — We tell the Captain what he is supposed to think. The Captain is coming round to see that it would be a great feather in his cap if he could keep you quiet in the prison system.

In two days I was transferred to the honor dorm. The top cons began treating me with solicitude. Our dining room was the officers' mess. The barbershop in our cellblock offered face massages and special shampoos. Prohibited magazines appeared in my cell. Free from cell lockup both day and night. At the Friday night movie I could sit suicidally depressed in the front row eating trustee popcorn. And there was dope. The lunch pail express, sideline of bribed guards who kept the flow of illegal contraband moving in and out.

I had a single cell with all its implications. The quest for the serpent who swallows his own tail. It is just a matter of connecting neural wires he told me.

A friendly Chicano ran the psychological testing room. I was tested individually and not in the routine group. The Chicano was smiling and made me coffee. It's a joke for us to be testing you he said. You designed some of the tests we use.

The test of intelligence is to get the highest possible score. The test of personality is to appear normal and to avoid manic-aggressive manifestations. Vocational tests revealed aptitude in forestry; nature, farming, and incompetence in clerical tasks.

I spent every free moment on the prison yard

either at handball, yoga, or lifting metal weights to the point of pain-strain.

Prisoners here talk about their case, their arrest, their trial, and the next destination. Everyone has a hope habit of one kind or another.

I am getting to know the permanent work crew trustees. For the most part they are older white-collar criminals with potbellies. My two protectors were sincere libertarians. We had long discussions about my appeal for bail, and failing that which long-term prison would be my next home. They were hoping to keep me with them at Chino but I asked them to help me get the no-escape-risk ticket so that I could be sent to Forestry Camp.

In one of the offices the trustees have posted a big red calendar on the wall. Each day a number was removed. I noticed the big red arrow always pointed to tomorrow. There was no number for today. I asked the trustee about it. He said that in con terminology when you wake up in the morning that day is as good as over.

I was interested in the composition of the prison population. Half of the prisoners, the younger half, were dopers, guiltless spirits, Black and White, totally detached from the system, certain of their alchemical beliefs.

The alchemical magic spread swiftly. After ten years there were millions who chose the superstitious perspective, seeking to stay high.

The prison guards are retired enlisted men. They act like motel clerks opening the dining room, locking and unlocking doors for us. They walk the tiers at night while we sleep; fatigued

men with flashlights slipping mail under our cell doors. Their work centers around keys.

The lawyers say that any day the California Supreme Court will grant me bail. My advisers shrug skeptically.

An older guard suddenly gets down on my case. He orders me to the barbershop, searches my cell and finds dust, orders me back to the barbershop for a closer trim, writes me up for petty misdemeanors.

He stops me as I swing high and happy down the cavernous hall of the main line and orders me to remove the red handkerchief tied around my throat.

We stand in the prison corridor looking at each other separated, his eyes dull with tired hatred. – Watch yourself, he muttered.

Talbot the trustee watched the interaction through the glass window of his office.

– Well, there you have it, he said, the basic confrontation of politics. The guard and the prisoner. Two men are looking into each other's eyes defiantly across the abyss of slavery. Everyone in the world is on the side of the guard or on the side of the prisoner. Police, lawyers, judges, prison guards. Criminals are the opposing militia. The forces are exactly even. Law-and-order people control the press and the media of communication and education but they fool no one. At any moment at least half of the world population is in open conscious opposition to government. Most cops accept that it's a war on crime. So do most prisoners.

The prison dope supply became irregular and during periods of neurological famine, waves of nervousness would overcome me. I was waiting for the verdict of the California Supreme Court, waiting for the call to the sergeant's office to receive the telegram.

I was waiting for the Counselor's interview. I learned all I could about her. She was a Black social worker, nicknamed "San Quentin Sally," famous for hard custody-oriented maximum security recommendations. She was cynical and suspicious of being conned. She respected convicts who told the truth, so I did. I had heard details about her domestic problems, her marital history, her previous employment, her emotional characteristics, and her neurotic symptomatology. I walked into her office smiling politely.

The same guard continued to ride me. When I asked Talbot about it he tried to explain.

— You see, that particular guard has a teen-aged daughter. He knows she smokes pot and low-rides with a kid who deals reds. In his mind he can see the nipples of his daughter Penny trembling under the hypnotic passes of dope pushers, her thin white legs contorted in yoga positions, offering her flower cunt for the demon drug. His daughter Penny, with fingers of limp hair be-draggled with cannabis smoke and the expression of total rapture on her innocent face. Man, he can see the pusher in his mod suit with satin

cuffs propped up among the pillows on a fur-coated bed resting ermine boots on the antique coffee table, running the palm of his evil hands across the hard sharp nipples of Penny's breasts. He sees her kneeling unzipping his pants. And you wonder why he hates you? He's not the only one. They say you don't deserve equal treatment. Can you dig that? Equal treatment.

After breakfast a sturdy executive elite con named Milton, the sergeant's clerk, came over to my table. — Were you expecting some sort of Court action?

— Yes, it should be here today.

— Well, I just heard on the radio that they shot you down. The California Appeals Court denied your appeal, you and Huey Newton. I'm sorry to be so blunt, but you might as well know about it.

— It is up to Justice Douglas now, I said.

I spent the day inside of gloom. My legal life now depended upon William O. Douglas, naturalist, rebel, friend of youth, solace of the persecuted, outspoken libertarian, hope of the friendless, the husband of the girl, protector of wild flowers and clear streams. But, he is old. It all depends on whether his young wife smokes it or not.

During the next few days I reclined in the monastic peace of single cell reading newspaper stories about the pending impeachment of Justice Douglas. My case comes before him at a crucial time in his life. Freeing me on bail will bring down on his head more angry outcries. It's a soap opera.

The lawyers assure me I'll be freed by Justice Douglas in five days. I am still working on the escape plan while the trustees gather around to

share the fruits of prison grapevine. The administration is meeting this week to decide where I am going to be transferred.

I will be out on bail soon so it doesn't matter really, but what are the possibilities?

The espionage system reported that Custody was easier on me than Treatment. The psychologist wanted to send me to Quentin to make an example of me. — Captain Brean here thinks they should keep you here.

— I can't stay here, I said. I want to get to Forestry Camp or San Luis Obispo where they let prisoners have gardens.

Talbot smiled.

— What you are asking me to do with the Captain is to do nothing, right? I can dig it, he said.

It was Monday morning in the office. I've been in prison for nine weeks. Friday night is the worst time.

I visit the next-door neighbor to hit his coffeepot. He tore off three numbers—Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Something good is going to happen this week. During the morning we make arrangements for writing each other when I leave.

Late in the afternoon a clerk leaned in the door. — Well, you are going. He was waving a mimeographed sheet.

— Shipping out to CMC West.

The trustees came crowding round. — CMC

West is a country club, man, the best prison in the world. They have a golf course. No lockup. It's three bunk counts a day. There's a bowling alley. They are all long-term cons just living quietly. There are no young cons there burning sheets. Picnic visits on the yard. Visitors can buy lunch at the visiting room. Fried chicken. You eat like a king.

Some cons love it there so much they hate to leave. When they get paroled they violate so that they can get sent back. You have private radios there. No smog. Near the ocean. You can plant your own garden. Contact visits! Conspiracy of breath. Touch. Change. New scene. I'm thinking about that fence near Highway 1.

Spent the rest of the day collecting my personal gear to ship out. Two ball-point pens, some rubber shower shoes given to me by an old murderer, two packages of rolling tobacco. We travel light.

- No gun towers or walls there?
- Just low fence. Minimum security.

3

Dying on the prison mattress my mind peers at itself through the window of a luxurious beach house in Santa Monica.

She is lying naked in front of the fire. Janis Joplin sings from a portable tape deck on a low womb-shaped table almost buried amongst the furs. The breath of the fire moistens the room.

— All I want is to feel good, she says and falls back amongst the cushions.

He is nervous. — I haven't fucked in a month, baby.

— Just keep me high, she murmurs. Guilt is an abstraction, pleasure is real.

She lay unmoving, evidently under the effect of some narcotic. He raised her leg, showing the words "Made in St. Louis," walked to the window and pressed his face against the glass.

She stood naked in front of the fire, weeping.

It was three o'clock in the morning. A flashlight whispering yellow. Get up! You're on the list for transfer. Roll up all gear. Report below. Your cell's unlocked.

I leave the rodent cage, run right down the molecular runway, left down lattice stairs turn right.

Forty-eight men in blue waiting in a dark tunnel of the maximum security prison, rolling weed, coughing smoke, reciting their sorrows. Career cons. The impenitent nobility. Gallant slaves.

As the world of an empress is decked with pennants, Hers was decorated with desire. Wherever she went She was invested with this cloud of male vitality.

I walk the length of the Release Room of the State Prison, a naked captive, carrying shoes to the exit cage counter. Gentlemen, I'm checking out. Could you have my bill ready? The guard frowns down at levity. Yeah, you owe us ten long years. Forty-eight men dressed in white jump suits, from a gray line waiting for the bus to long-term. All aboard for CMC East, CMC West, grim Soledad, San Quentin, Folsom, and Forestry Camps north.

Each man walks shivering in the morning fog to the loading platform. Searched, handcuffed. After pat-down, I hold hands up for bracelets. The Lieutenant grumbles.

— Skip the cuffs for him. He's minimum security. You pass out matches and rolling smokes.

I walk down the bus aisle. Fasten seat belts gentlemen and ladies. Select your weed. Inside dope. Acapulco Gold. Tehachapi Red. Quentin Green. Metal-clad hands reach up beseeching nicotine.

As the mobile prison rumbles along the polluted L.A. freeways, we look down at commuters droning to work.

Around Ventura the bus bursts out of the L.A.

fog to wide blue Pacific seascapes, sparkling visions for prison eyes.

Slender girls twisting long sunny hair on the Ventura streets. Our shackled slave wagon climbs the hill to a white-marbled courthouse. Picking up long-haired parole violators. In the rear-cage compartment the armed guard pushes brown-paper food sacks through a metal slot. I serve lunch and as a good trustee get a double helping. I give it to a young Black carrying a life sentence.

Bouncing along Highway 101. A scenic tour. Gulls circling wind-swept beaches. A boy and girl walk hand in hand. At Santa Barbara rainbow oil slicks gleam in the noon sun.

The old Black junkie next to me offers a filter cigarette, lights a Pall Mall for himself.

I doze dreaming that she and I ran away from Mobile Alabama in September. We escaped by jumping over the fence. We had never been to Algeria before and were very anxious to meet famous, sexy people like Jane Fonda and Huey Newton. Our fantasies did not include the calculated ogle of the pimp's talent scout. We expected to find a friendly community of East Village freaks and comrade revolutionaries.

On our second day in Algiers a friendly middle-aged Jewish social worker told us we could stay with her cousin who lived in an apartment near Muhammad Cinq. We said no. She was a true believer of some sort. She took us to meet a long-hair Yippie who convinced us it was all right.

We taxied to the apartment where we were locked up with another runaway, a beautiful black-

haired Algerian girl our age who explained what was expected. We were to call and write our friends to come visit us. The first day the friend arrived it would cost him a hundred dollars. If he stayed longer it would cost fifty dollars a day. We would get ten dollars or more a day depending on how long we could keep him.

For the first month, two out of every six visitors would be working for the Boss. If we tried to use any of our johns to escape, our cheeks, our foreheads, or the back of our necks would be cut, and the boss psychiatrist would pronounce us insane for wanting to escape. If we tried to escape a second time, our faces would be cut from above our left eyes, across our noses, to below the right side of our jaw. And acid would be thrown on our heads. That final punishment was intended to destroy our credibility. The assumption was that our credibility meant more to us than our freedom.

We told everyone, friends, family, lawyers, political leaders, that we were being held against our will. Of the first ten visitors, two turned us in. The eight friends promised help, but were too scared to do anything.

Sometimes we felt guilty for wanting to escape and for not cooperating. We wondered if we could learn to like it. After all he did want us, wanted to keep us, saw us as having a certain value; whereas our friends seemed to think that it was our fault for running away. Sometimes it seemed to us that the world was just a series of prisons and all we could do was to choose the jail that allowed us to be together.

— Hey man. There's your new home.

California Men's Colony West. San Luis Obispo. Minimum Security. Just what I wanted.

The bus turns off the coastway and groans up the winding road past army barracks. I'm glued to the window looking for the fence. It's metal link chain. Twelve feet high. Plus three strands of barbed wire.

Guards open the gate. Enter here the city of desolation. Sorrowtown. The instinct to imprison is genetic. Segregate the mutant seed. Penitentiaries filled with virile Blacks. Lost creation. Spilled sperm on the prison sheets. Wooden barracks. Flower lawns. Blue denim inmates watch us. Justice is the architect. Chuckles on the bus.

— Hey man. This is the end of the line. Old cons come here. It's the criminal retirement village. The Department of Correction sent you here to die.

I'm the only one dropped off here. Crinkled convict faces. Dead eyes watering the gardens, watching, incurious. I wave farewell to my shackled bus friends and walk into the Receiving Room. The guards stare. It's like checking into a paid vacation retirement village. I radiate docility. Lay down all hope you that go with me.

An old, long-time bail boy takes me to my cell-block with tender dignity. Musty smell of caged bodies. *Beloved husband. We left San Francisco Airport four hours late.*

Clothing distribution. I draw three sets of new stiff blue denims. *Jobie swept us up at the airport in a limousine:* My number stenciled on the clothes. A crowd of inmates round my bunk. I go to the prison library to see what old friends have written.

Alan Watts. William James. Lucretius. Epicurus. Pythagoras. Time-Traveler post office. *We stopped for papaya juice on 86th Street. It was delicious.*

Dinner call. Stooped men in blue scrambling to the mess hall like hungry children. Roses green and red in prison windows. *I thought to visit the Millbrook estate while I'm east.* Sensual impressions are a form of food. On metal trays.

A guard shakes his head. — You don't belong here, he said.

Leaving the mess hall a friendly fellow shows me the prison grounds. The totally institutionalized are sent here. Professional prisoners. *It must be lovely there this month my love.* This is a graduate school of crime.

— Library. Spits. Music room. Education building. Laundry. Spits. Barbershop. Spits. Lemme give you some a-vise. Doan truss no one here. Spits. This place is filled with snakes and lyres. Sons of snitches. Spits. Break your spirit. Spits. Old cons are cranky. Spits. Man, they're dying like it's going outa style. Spits. Doan be a fool. Sure it looks nice here. Flowers and trees. But it's a dismal place. Spits. People come around to give you a-vise. Spits. Listen! Don't listen to them. Spits.

Return to my bunk. *It's dawn now in Manhattan.* *The sky gray over the East River.* There's a visiting lawn with picnic tables. *You are not yet asleep back there.* Where we can visit weekends. *I am with you.* The old Black on the next bunk, wise reptile, neck craned, watches fellow swamp creatures. *I kiss your mouth with my hands on your cheeks.* He is sewing leather bags. He chuckles. Everybuddy come look for you. They ask where

that man that sleep here. He laughs. *This is my perfume.* This is not life. And yet it is not death. *I love you, husband.*

When she comes gleeful fucking she smiles like a little girl and her eyes shine in pure joy.

— Lookit man. They coming now to talk to you.

A tense shrew sly pornographer. Bzzzzz. I'm like you. I fight the system. Bzzzzz. They hate me here. The parole board won't give me a date. Bzzzz. I used to be a member of the establishment. I'm bitter now. Bzzzz. What I've seen! Filthy rotten bastards. Now I am a revolutionary like you. Pigs! Bzzzzz. You have no idea how much money I made outside. Let me give you piece of advice. Lissen seriously. It's a jungle! Do not, I repeat, do not trust anyone! Do not listen to any piece of advice. Beware! I'm telling you these people are sick! Bzzzzzz. Neurotic, psychotic, psychopathic. Do not believe anyone. Only one out of twenty here has his marbles. Bzzzzzzz. Sex perverts, child molesters, snitches, robbers, murderers, psychopaths. Do not trust anyone.

A sullen thug calls me aside. Grrrrrr. Listen, Doc. I'm your follower. On your side. Grrrrrr. Listen to a piece of advice. Cocksuckers. Grrrrrr. Need anything, Doc? Cigarettes? Envelopes? This cock-sucking place. Grrrrrr. Don't trust these cocksuckers. Grrrrrr. See that fellow on your bed. Grrrrrr. Cocksucker. Doan truss him. I killed a man. Now the cocksucking parole board think I'm violent. Grrrrrr. I don't take no shit from them. Cocksuckers. Why do they think I'm violent? Grrrrrr. I'll get get you cigarettes, Doc. Remember I told you.

— Bzzzzzz. See that fellow there who claims he's

your follower. He's an old murderer. Don't trust him!

— Hello! I gotta question to ask you. Do people bother you asking questions alla time? I been here three years. A bum rap, I told the board, listen, a guy in 347 killed four people and they give him a three months date, I bin here five years, they shot me down two years. HE KILL FOUR PEOPLE! What kinda justice is that?

— Hello! Lemme ask you a question. Doan trust anyone. If you gotta do time, this is the best place. Don't trust anyone. I tell you what to do. I give you one piece of advice. Don't listen to these motherfuckers. They keep an eye on you. Everything you do. They gotta give me a date this time. All they can keep here is your body. You'll like it here, it's the best place to do time.

I slide legs down the cool sheets, lay my head on the pillow, and slide directly into sleep.

Report to custody. The Captain wants to see you.

Captain Koffman is a brisk no-nonsense correction veteran. He quelled Quentin. He mastered dread Soledad. He ran the slave caravans from Folsom down to Tehachapi. He manned the gun towers of Chino. He fired gas guns at weeping prisoners. A tough, clipped gray-haired jaunty commander.

— I won't waste words with you. We took a big risk in accepting you here. This is minimum security. If you have to do time this is the best joint in country. But minimum security means minimum trouble. Any bullshit from a troublemaker and I'll have his ass on the bus for Folsom in twenty-four hours. If you act like a horse's ass here, we'll treat

you like a horse's ass. If you act like a scholar and a gentleman, we'll treat you that way. We know how to handle political cases. I was at Quentin when Chessman was there. And we've got your friend, Huey, the Negro agitator next door. You'll be watched carefully. You can do hard time or easy time. It's up to you. Starting tomorrow morning you report to work in the custody office. We want to keep an eye on you.

Sitting at a desk in the Custody Headquarters, nerve center of the prison. Professional cons run the joint with cynical efficiency. They control all records. See all, hear all. I am freaking out holding wet palms waiting for the phone to ring with news of freedom. Take a walk, keep moving.

Standing by the fence looking down at the cars on the highway I notice a prison maintenance truck drive up. The driver, about thirty-five, dressed in mechanic's clothes. He motioned me over.

— *Bonne Chance*, he said. His face and his voice reflected a cool, humorous detachment. Almost insolence. I picked up heroin vibes.

— Who are you? I asked.

— I'm called Brian Barritt. You should call me Whisper. I work here. It's an interesting job. I'd like to tell you about it.

Another friendly social worker type, I thought. He'll probably confess that he thinks marijuana should be legal. Barritt was leaning out of the truck window looking at me quizzically.

— Dealing current. That's my specialty. If you need any juice, just ask me. Wattage, voltage, amps, generators, transformers, resisters, amplifiers. I know the circuits and the wiring. Listen,

would you give me a hand for a moment. It will give us a chance to talk.

He leaped out of the truck and gracefully moved to the rear. He had a dancer's build, slight. The skin on his arms was smooth and covered with tattoos. He unbolted the rear panel and handed me a coiled wire, while he busied himself with the tool kit.

— How are you planning to get out of here, he asked.

— I'm getting bailed out this week according to the lawyers.

— No one gets bailed out of state prison. The government can't let you out. It would be the ass of any judge or politician. To get out of here you're going to go over the fence. Inside dope man, do you want some?

He spoke with assurance and a discernible laugh in his voice.

— What do you mean? I remembered all the warnings.

— I see that you're confused by the nature of my game. Look. I'm a dealer of enthusiasm. I've been a dope pusher for fifteen years. I've done time myself. I work here now to bring a little freedom, to help prisoners escape one way or another. For me it's a buzz. I've got a key to the side gate. I'll loan it to you. You just unlock the gate, run to the highway in ninety seconds; your wife picks you up and you're free.

— Why are you doing this?

— Oh, if you can give me some bread I'd take it. But I'd do it for just the charge, the flash that your escape would cause. Can you dig the flash?

Whisper glanced up.

— It's dangerous to be seen talking to you. Think over what I said. You are suspicious. That's wise. I'd like to leave something with you to read. It's some script I wrote about prison. Maybe you'll accept it.

He handed me a sheet of white paper, leaped into the cab, smiled, started the engine, and drove off. I walked to the office and read his "Whisper" script.

THE EARTH HAS ORBITED HALFWAY ROUND THE SUN SINCE I WAS FIRST ARRESTED AND MY CHEMISTRY IS WORKING AT SPEEDS CONDITIONED BY BEING LOCKED ALONE IN A CELL FOR OVER SIX MONTHS. DEPRIVED OF EXTERNAL STIMULI, THE PRISONER TURNS HIS SENSES INWARD AND LIVES OFF MEMORIES INTERLACED WITH LUST. HIS MEDITATIONS, PROGRAMMED BY THE PROBABILITY THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG AT HOME, ROOT IN CONTAMINATED SOIL AND GROW MONSTER DEFORMITIES INVOLVING HIS MOST VULNERABLE ATTACHMENTS. THE MORE HE BROODS THE STRONGER HIS DELUSIONS GROW UNTIL IT BECOMES A RACE TO SEE WHICH IS RELEASED FIRST, BUT WHICHEVER WAY, HIS PARANOIAS BECOME HARD FACTS.

SHE JOKED WITH HER LOVER ABOUT YOU WANKING OVER HER PICTURE; A PALE STRANGER OFFERS SMARTIES TO YOUR CHILDREN; WATERY EYES AND LONG THIN FINGERS TITILLATE THE SACRED SHRINE. THINK ABOUT IT, YOUR BEST FRIEND SATISFYING YOUR WIFE. FEEL IT, ITCHING INSIDE YOUR THIGHS. THAT MELTING DEEP DOWN INSIDE? THAT'S THE PRISON SEX KINK. WITH A MAD LITTLE GIGGLE A ONE-ARMED BANDIT PULLS HIS OWN CONTINUUM AND WINKS AT HIS TORMENTORS.

AND THE DEEPER HE DELVES INTO HIS ABOMINATIONS THE STRONGER HIS SEXUAL URGE BECOMES.

THE WORST THINGS HE CAN THINK OF ARE THE EASIEST TO CONJURE AND ARE NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, PROBABLE, BUT HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

I read the script once, read it twice, and the third time caught the formula and said aloud,
— He's a fucking genius.

The chief clerk filing cards on a wheel across the room looked up.

— Who's a fucking what?

— The electrical man is a fucking genius, I said.

At 10:00 P.M. a steam whistle summons us back to bunk count.

At 10:30 the whistle flicks lights off. The sixty-man sleepship slowly settles, bedsprings squeaking. Coughing barks ripple the quiet sea. Here and there a flare of match lights a cigarette. A tired, shuffling parade of men back and forth to the shitter. Slowly, the trampship sinks in night sea. The bullfrog chorus restlessly snores. A few last lung-wrench coughs clear the decks for night thoughts.

Weaving plans to climb the fence. Pickup cars. Wild police chase. Hideouts. Roadblocks. Now the guard comes, flashlight dancing overhead, jerking his head, right, left, lips silently counting. Next come the creeping lovers. Tiptoeing down to hobby-room rendezvous. Usually au pair. Sometimes a third man stands in the hall as point lookout. The air is redolent of furtive sex. Alarm clocks.

In the bunk next to the toilets the sleepless chief snitch listens to his earphones, watching, watching whom who's fucking. There are no secrets in prison.

I am making a dream movie without a script. It's a recurrent megalomaniac habit. The Carnival at Rio was background this time. There was a German producer with a four-man crew, an underground magazine editor from Buenos Aires and his girl, a Swedish model. Five Brazilian friends protecting me. And a Brazilian movie crew making a movie of the German movie.

She was a jet-set love addict who hated drugs, dancing with a sleek South American rhythm. She was always there. I'll love for two she said. When the long conferences got boring, she'd play a Bossa Nova record very loud and dance. We spoke French and Spanish and never got hung up in head games.

I was accelerated, upleveling each structure as fast as it formed. (People often get disturbed by this.) The Brazilian director dug the movement and kept flashing smiles. The German director was magnificent under the circumstances. He had been sent over to get a serious talk-interview. He kept agreeing to let the action tell the tale. Vapor trail design is a valid art form.

We spent every night whirling through carnival streets in masks. She moved with us. The first two nights she'd murmur around three o'clock and we would return to the hotel. She would toss her black hair back and forth on the pillow and murmur, *sí, sí, oui, oui, sí, plus, encore plus, ô chérie, fais-moi l'amour.*

The last night of Carnival she said she'd wait for me. I stayed out until sunrise and the last drumbeat.

Then I missed her and raced back to the hotel.

I was relieved to find her sleeping in our bed. Her bare arms embraced the pillow. Lying on her stomach was a book. *The Anatomy of Man*, a medical book in German. With diagrams. She was far out.

I began to whisper lovingly. I turned out the light and touched her. She moved away. To make room for me? I smelled of debauch. She stirred. I pulled off the fool's costume. Drunken husband fucks sleeping wife. She turned into an Indian girl, submissive, raped by the European conqueror, going through the motions.

She sat up in bed. Her eyes kept straying to the door, to the window. She rattled in fast Spanish that she had called Albert in São Paulo and he had forgiven her for being away from work. She began reproaching me gently for my stupidity.

She lay back on the pillow. Her eyes kept moving to the bedtable. She reached over for a small tube and unscrewed the top. She delicately inserted the plastic phallus in her left nostril and inhaled luxuriously drifting off in reverie. I called to her. She reluctantly opened her eyes and moved the tube to the right nostril.

— Qu'est-ce que c'est?

— C'est bon. Il me fait sentir si bonne. Tu veux un peu?

The tube had a hole in the end. I put it in my nose. The odor was medicinal, sweet familiar. It

put my head into a soft warm infant place. Breathing gently I could hear gas flowing from the tube. It was the ultimate narcosis. I started to drift into gaseous bliss. It didn't matter if I ever got back. Just before I blanked out some survival reflex screamed a warning. I moralistically pulled the tube out of my nose and screwed back the top.

She was lying back smiling. — *Es bueno, eh? Paradiso, eh chéri?*

She reached for the tube and moved erotically. Then she inhaled.

— What is it? I asked prudishly.

She opened her eyes. — *C'est contre le froid. Parfait, non?*

She clutched in her hand a small tube that took you to instant heaven. If the world becomes dull, unpleasant, she can just take a sniff and float. I examined the tube with disapproval. The end was white. The body green with red lines. Large white letters spelled VICKS INHALER. The small-print instructions were in German.

Her eyes followed as I put the tube on the far edge of the bedside table. I told her that there was another alternative to anesthesia. She frowned and said: — *Dis-moi, quoi. Quelle est la meilleure alternative.* Her eyes kept moving to the table.

— Love, I said. She listened with interest.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH FORM
CALIFORNIA MEN'S COLONY WEST
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIF.

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE DOUGLAS COPPED OUT.
YOUR BAIL DENIED. TERRIBLY SORRY. SEE YOU
THIS WEEKEND. PEACE AND LOVE.

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

It's election year after all. And so ended my contract with the Constitution of the United States. Justice Douglas freed me. I'm now forced to go outlaw, underground, exile. This little experiment is getting complicated, Professor.

The count-clear whistle pulls me from my bunk. I shove the manuscript Whisper gave me under the mattress. It is a warm May night. I smoke a cigarette watching Spica in Virgo. I need an inside guide. I walk to the north cellblock to Burroughs's cell. Two beds, two lockers—trim, tidy, military. He is precisely rolling cigarettes, one-third Bugler, one-third Top, one-sixth mentholated Kite, dash of Prince Albert, pinch of 602.

— That's the best tailor-made custom-built Rolls Royce of a motherfucking cigarette in the world. So the Supreme Court shot you down, huh?

— No, that's just the first round.

— Better keep singing that loud 'cause They watch us carefully here. Anytime a prisoner get bad news they put him on hot file to watch him close in case he kill himself or escape or get in

fight. Sometimes they transfer a cat out of here to maximum security if he gets bad news like that.

— What do I do now?

— I expected this. No one bails out of here, man. You've got to con your way out. Just takes time and you've got plenty of that. Hibernate man. Sleep through the bad times. Ain't no animal taught you that yet? Weave a soft heroin cocoon around you.

He's a fussy, junkie alchemist, briskly rolling cigarettes, adjusting his false teeth, carefully tucking in his blue shirt preparatory to an evening stroll.

— Dig man. I waited three years here working as a patient slave until the coffee-runner job opened up. You gotta tailor your reactions perfectly to theirs. After a while you know just how they think. It's not hard. Two years after I got the job — Shazam! I got my date. Quick and easy. I just push my coffee cart into every one of their office minds. Assistant Superintendent, Captain, every counselor in Building 310. Even the parole board. They're always hung over in the morning and their glazed eyes light up when they see me. You can have my job when I leave.

— What about just going over the fence?

He looked over my shoulder in warning. He jerked head toward door. — Let's take a walk.

Out into the yard, a brisk evening stroll. We are always alert to approaching cons or guards. Keep voice soft, eyes moving.

— You shouldn't have said that about escape.

— I was joking.

— No matter man. This place is crawling with

snitches. The walls are paper, man. Anyone hear you mention escape you be transferred to Folsom in a second. This is a good prison. Dig the grass and the flowers and the blue sky. And all the dope you need. Freedom to move around this way after evening chow. This prison is paradise. In Folsom you don't relate to sun for weeks at a time. Escape's a desperate fix. Look at that gun truck.

At each corner of the compound from six evening until six morning park the gun trucks. Armed guards watching five hundred feet of roadway leading up to fence.

— Those gun-truck guards are killers. They always put the meanest bulls out to the gun trucks. Those mothers stir up trouble with cons so they sit out here all night with their fingers on the trigger. There's *no way* of getting over that fence without your being seen. By time you at the road, there's an alarm that puts a hundred squad cars on the highway looking for you, Dad. At night the fence is lit up every six foot. During day, they deal snitches to watch each section of fence. Check it out tomorrow. You see those cats sitting with transistor radios just watching the fence. They see someone go over, in thirty seconds they're on the phone screaming to Control.

— Why do they do it?

— That's their trip for getting out. Bootlicking. They get little favors. Canteen ducats. Most of these cats here have no family or friends outside that give a fuck for them. To hustle that five or ten dollars a month for cigarettes they do the snitch trick. There's another thing. In the custody building there's this Escape Room. I been there.

Dig. They gotta map of California and the western states, with a series of rings centering on San Luis Obispo. When the escape whistle blows automatic plans go into action. They gotta phone hookup to local, county, and state police and FBI. They estimate the time of arrival of the escapee at different distances from here. Sheet man, it's simple. They just call out roadblocks. At plus ten minutes they seal off all roads within a fifteen-mile radius. At plus thirty minutes they start blocking state highways. This prison is strategically located. It's out here in nowhere halfway between L.A. and Frisco. Just two highways north and south. Escape is the million-to-one shot. Use your time here to learn what you don't know. Stick a needle in your arm. It do some good, it do no harm. Heroin is the best way to escape. Want some?

I wanted to be with Her heavenly body, so I thought of the electrician's offer instead. For the past few days I had looked, but his truck was nowhere to be found. I asked Burroughs about him.

— Barritt? He laughed. How did you get hooked up with him? You don't waste time, do you? He's the connection. Barritt is OK. You can trust him. He's a turned-on cat. But don't be seen hanging out with him. That would get you both in trouble.

4

Prison leads to thoughts of violence. Should I use force to escape death?

Huey Newton's presence in the next prison courtyard was tangible. Is self-defense against the lethal machine an act of violence? *Millbrook was lovely. I went with Jobie and Gabriel and June.* Two thousand years of Christian dogma? Politics keeps Christ on the cross? Hummingbirds spin by ripping off insects. *At Lunacy Hill we dug up sassafras roots.* Cycles of eating and being eaten.

Spanish conquistadores and Norman crusaders and Southern Baptists. *On Ecstasy Hill I loved you. Didn't go to the Meditation House but drove past happy to see Tibetan paintings.* Should we resist? *I miss you so beloved.* If a Black defends against the slave master is he violent? *I wish I could sleep until your return.*

The time is growing very long. Passive submission to slavery? Personal suicide? Racial genocide? Socrates in the hemlocked death cell? Would I kill to be free?

I found a magazine under my pillow. A white sheet was folded inside. Another "Whisper" script from Barritt. My bunk-neighbor bank-robber mur-

derer, kidnapper of state police kindly bespectacled potbellied *Digest* reader watching me.

— Did you notice who put this magazine under my pillow?

— No. Maybe a guard.

— A guard?

— I seen a screw other day putting something or taking something away from your pillow. Be careful. They watch you.

Is this an elaborate trap? Like the Berrigans? Or maybe Uncle Sam wants me to escape. Shoot me fleeing? Or let me go, good riddance? I lay on the bunk and opened the magazine.

IN HERE

IS A LITTLE HELL

AFTER MY OWN HEART

NOT TOO CRUEL

WITH A FEW NICE DAMNED TO FOIST MY GROANS ON

IT IS IN THE TRANQUILLITY OF DECOMPOSITION

THAT I REMEMBER THE LONG CONFUSED EMOTION

WHICH WAS MY LIFE

AND THAT IT JUDGE IT

AS IT IS SAID THAT GOD WILL JUDGE ME

AND WITH NO LESS IMPERTINENCE.....

The Thirty-fourth Degree Mason, advanced adept of Rosicrucians, savant of Egyptian lore, White Knight of the Mystic Temple of Oriental Occultism waved his plump hand. He was dressed all in purrs from his bald to his heel and his face it was twinkling with wheel and with deal. When what to my wondering ears should declaim but a copy of Gurdjieff, a bag full of names. On Krishna. On Bailey. On Manson and Crowley. So crumpled his

togas, so shallow his yogas, this merry old bawd, I laughed when I saw him in spite of his fraud.

— Let's take a walk, he said.

We strolled down the prison halls him holding my arm spinning pink clouds of cotton platitudes. He was doing a long term for real-estate fraud. Millions, my dear. Two Rolls-Royces in the garage. Would you believe it?

— I shut you up last night when you talked about helping me escape from here. Take it easy man. I'm getting out on bail and I don't want to get transferred to Folsom.

Shrewd glance.

— Sure you're getting out on bail. We all are. But don't worry about my escape plan. It's not criminal. It's occult. Powers of consciousness. Leave the physical plane entirely. What are we doing down here in these ugly bodies anyway? We beautiful souls.

I'm a sleek leopard padding by his side.

— What's the plan?

— Simple. Focusing of consciousness. There are ten men here who meet regularly in Mr. Bray's theosophical course. Some night, when the astrological situation is perfect (I'll write away for a reading) we form a circle with you in the middle, and we center cosmic consciousness and with us as your launching pad you ascend into the astral plane. From whence Blessed One, you will in your mercy and compassion send down aid to us.

I laughed at the thought of ten middle-aged men in prison garb under a full moon chanting me over the fence.

At noontime the call came: YOU HAVE A VISITOR. Slickly cleaned and dressed I walk down to the mail room. Yes, your wife is here now with special dispensation. You can see her today, but she must obtain authorization for future visits. Now stand there arms up, check no wristwatch, pat arms, pat shoulder, pat down sides, two swift motions up crotch down pants legs. Your wife can purchase items from machines. Inmates are not allowed to touch money. You can receive five packs of cigarettes, five candy bars or peanuts. You may kiss or embrace upon meeting and upon departure. No lascivious touch or caress. OK. You may go in visiting room now.

Swinging doors into third-class salon of a Polish ocean liner. Prim-grim rows of wicker chairs and sofas chastely confronting wooden tables. Wall paintings. Inspirational prayers from Alcoholics Anonymous leading down to a cluster of coin-operated dispensing machines and the purser's counter. Your wife is on her way over from the waiting room. From the window I watch the graceful dark-haired beauty, walking across the ramp through open doors into our arms at long last.

We kissed, for the first time in eight weeks. Then the Pavlovian ritual. Dropping quarters in robot slots, pushing levers like well-trained laboratory animals rewarded with cigs and candy.

— How was New York?

— We lost three thousand dollars in the Bail Benefit. That fence isn't electrified, is it?

— No. And I got a key. I'm ready to leave as soon as you . . . I'm whispering in her ear.

I've already talked about that with Irene in New

York. She says she knows how to do it. She's making inquiries now about other countries. She says she needs four weeks and ten thousand dollars.

– Which we don't have.

– It's a simple trick to get the money She said. Too soon the lights flick signal for leaving.

The guards watch carefully as we kiss.

Back to my cellblock. I sit on the stoop facing the western sun burning scarlet holes in my optic tapestries. Listening lazily to the lapping liquid of endocrine tides. The section runner taps my shoulder.

Custody wants you on the phone.

I walked to the section office and picked up the phone. Soft persistent whisper.

– Can anyone hear you talking?

– No. The runner's in the hall.

– Your wife was here today.

– How do you know?

– Did you tell her that I'll help you escape?

– She said it sounded crazy. Who are you and why?

– Tell her that I am an addict of experience—good or bad, with a bias for intensity. She doesn't trust me. She's right. You shouldn't either. That's why I'm sending you the scripts. Are they worth your freedom. If you want to use them to get out of here have your wife line up a getaway car and a fake passport. I'll keep sending you notes. I'm trying to get over to your side of the prison so we can talk in person.

– What about you? What do you get in exchange?

– All I want is a buzz.

A wheeler-dealer con approaches, his face solemn with conspiracy. He is the mail-room trustee and a prison politician. We walk out the cellblock to the ramp.

— Listen, you get a lot of letters here that you never get to see. Did you know that?

I nodded. He is a twenty-year top whose main hope for freedom is to snitch somebody off. The administration here reads your letters. Every day we send your mail to the warden and they get kicks from the letters you get. He handed me an envelope from his pocket.

— Here's a letter you might want to read. Be sure and destroy it. I could get in trouble.

I looked at the blue envelope. Without knowing why, I suddenly thought of fucking. The snitch was wiggling his nose.

— Funny smell. Does it come from that envelope?

I could smell it too.

— It smells like cunt to me.

The snitch laughed.

— You been locked up too long.

Back at my bunk I put the envelope to my nose. No doubt about it.

Dear Prisoner:

I am writing this letter in hopes of connecting with you. I always wanted to meet you and then I heard that you were in prison. Can I write you? Can you write me?

My life goes like this. I am living alone in a

small stone house in Italy. I am free of children, husbands, lovers, jobs, parents, America. It's hard to be alone. I want people. Am learning that there is no right or wrong. Think I should dig the aloneness, even when I don't. Now I think I'm cool.

Sometimes I can't believe how stupid I am. I smell like cunt all the time. (Do the prison authorities read these letters? I hope not.) Well, anyway my desires cannot reflect unfavorably on you. This is an unsolicited letter from a lustful groupie. Do I smell like cunt more than most women? My own smell drives me mad with wanting. Does that make you feel good to lie in prison and think of me lying in the sun naked in southern Italy dripping wet thinking of fucking you?

So here I am lying in the courtyard of my stone house, with a thin layer of sweat covering me; thighs sticking together and opening to the cool breeze; a slight salty smell coming off my armpits. I rest relaxed and warm, thinking lascivious thoughts of your tongue curling into my mouth and cunt and here I am alone penetrated by sun and wind, nearly satisfied, letting my mind take my body through pleasures. It isn't a bad way to spend a day.

When I get very intense rapping to people they seem to understand the concepts I am into. My desire is so great to talk it out, be understood. It fucks me, this hunger. No orgasm. I'm always out there somehow, very intent and intense and dangling. It's no good for my body. It's lonely. I don't want to be alone. I want to be with someone on the trip. I wish I were in your cell with you. Maximum security.

You might not want to be bothered reading this.

Mary Jane

The call from Whisper came at lunch break.

– I keep rereading your notes. It's as good as anything Beckett has written.

– You make me want to write more. Your wife?

– She's still lining up a car and ID.

– Tell her not to delay. Every day adds to the chance that you might be transferred. I've been thinking a lot about it. You are as good as free.

Cheers from TV room. Shouting joy. Huey Newton is going to be free! The Supreme Court reversed his case. They're freeing Huey. He'll get bail in two months.

Many souls are happy tonight. The prison air is clearer.

I shave and shower, waiting for her visit. A shy starched embrace. Smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, we plot the flight. Connie and Blyde.

– Well the dealing brothers won't be able to break you out. They're scattered. Mexico. Hawaii. Pakistan. Boats from Lebanon. On the run. And John Griggs is gone. He would have loved to drive the getaway car! Now let me tell you about Aries. I'd seen him several times at the Berkeley house. Hanging out. When he asked to speak to me in private I thought he meant to offer us money for

the appeal. We went to the edge of the sun deck. I didn't think we'd be talking about anything too illegal so I didn't suggest walking to the park where I usually go to get away from bugs and taps.

— I deal acid to a group of turned-on revolutionaries who want to free Timothy.

— Great, I said. We could use money for the lawyers. Maybe they could put some energy behind the Jimi Hendrix benefit.

— Oh, no, he said. They want to bust him out and help get the two of you out of the country. Or go underground.

— Let's walk in the park, I said.

So we sat under a tree in the botanical garden smoking grass, my paranoia button depressed.

— Who are you, Aries?

— I'm a chemist. Graduate school dropout. I've been making DNT, MDA, and I perfected a formula for acid.

— You make your own?

— Small quantities. I give it away to people I know who will use it righteously.

— Who is this group that wants to do it?

I must have looked dubious.

— You want a reference?

— I nodded.

— Call Pat. Check me out with her. I'll be by tomorrow to follow up on it.

— When I got back to the house I phoned Pat and told her I had to see her at once. She seemed to know what was happening and told me Aries was OK. We'll know next week.

Black brothers lounging around stoops in sun laughing rapping wave power fists. Burroughs gets up and joins me.

– Saw you on the visiting lawn. Whew!

– How'd I look?

– The bulls were watching you. Be careful. Don't look so high.

– How?

I walk the yard alone thinking about escape. I need inside help from a stir-wise con who knows this terrain. Details about patrol cars and fences and timing and traps. Is Whisper a setup? Could this dull-minded system invent an ambush with mystery and elegant prose? Could that poetry be faked?

Today another anonymous letter from Italy.

Dear Captive One . . .

With a joint in my left hand and this pen in my right, I write you a letter. It doesn't have to be to that group of molecules forming flesh structure, brain structure called you. It could be any goddamn human form on this earth. Am I too much to handle? I am so full of myself and life that I have to hold another conversation of flesh and neuron to expand. I'm lonely and sad because it's so stupidly alone in this world. Everyone is so fucking scared.

Whiz baby, it's so fucking hot here it's like a jungle. The vegetation is up to my waist. Outside the bedroom window are millions of red poppies. Sitting naked, covered with oil. I will write awhile in here and then go back to the sun. A Dutch boy walked up to my cottage

yesterday. Without a word we took off our clothes and sat in a golden Yab Yum. Not a word was said. We sat for a while looking into eyes and then I moved onto his lap and he lifted me up to some cloud floating I swear to you that we levitated. Whew! Can you dig how that blew my mind? I figured I knew about sexual energy . . . men, women, boys, tender, mean, love, lust, belly hanging over lacy bikini pants and silky shirts . . . beautiful people climbing in-and-out-of-bed, making love, pissing, eating, singing, maybe coming. Oh yeah, I saw it all from the beginning and in the beginning, I ate the apple (orgasms a bonus with a ten-shekel purchase or more) and then, whiz baby, sat on his lap and got whirled up to some new fantastic place. Whew! Explain it! I was left so confused. He was so cool and matter-of-fact. How often does this happen?

Do you mind my asking these questions now? After all, we've never met.

Galaxies of new energies centered on my cunt and suddenly I became his cock and he was holding me like a tree growing out of his pelvis. What are we going to do with me now?

Mary Jane

Every day I wander the compound looking for Whisper's truck. He spends most of his time on the east side. He has become a magnetized center for my hopes.

Looking out the window of the custody office I see his wagon flash by. I run down the stairs

across the lawn and down the road to the tobacco factory. Cons glance at me curiously. I slow down and look casual. My heart is pounding.

– No letter from Aries?

He smiled tenderly.

– You're wired up, aren't you. Maybe I should give you some heroin to turn off your red-alarm system. No, I've been checking the post office every morning. I guess Aries is scared.

– You look a little worried yourself, I said.

– I've been seen talking to you. Maybe reported. I gotta be careful. There's another problem. I can't unlock the gate for you. No matter. That plan was too risky. There are other ways out of here.

– How?

– Just climb the fence. I'll tell you when and where.

Climb the fence is a scary idea. It sounded so easy just to stroll out.

– There's the right time and the right place to do it. I'm not going to tell you now. You'd end up staring at the fence and get snitched off. There's another way too. I'll check it out.

– But in any case I have to do it myself?

– Yeah. You're going to have to be in the best physical shape of your life. Do you push iron?

– Not much. Handball and yoga.

– Not good enough. Start tomorrow and spend an hour each day building up your arms and shoulders. You gotta run like a deer and climb like a monkey. See you.

5

Burroughs drops by my bunk and hands me a magazine.

— Run these through your video. Porny shots in color of the Frisson queens. Oh yes, I remember you, Mother Opium, Womb Queen. Pink golden boobs ripening, liquid smile, legs inviting. Sprawled, soft papaya cunt tasseled slender finger opening smooth lips. Oh, do come climb inside my soft cocoon, she murmurs.

And Mistress Alcoholia, the Stupor Queen, wanton bending forward saucy face turned over Her shoulder. Oh please fuck me rearly. Her round buttocks wiggling, velvet slit whispering, oh now, oh now, honey, you're going to honey fuck my honey ass. Cha cha cha.

And Princess Cocaine, the Go-Go Queen, dancing naked on the shiny crystal tabletop. Her platinum hair swinging, her high heels clacking. Do it to me! Oh do it! Do it to me. Do it! Do it! Do it!

And Mademoiselle Aphrodisia, the Orgasm Queen, her big saucer black eyes smiling, mini-skirt pulled up, black stockings, cream thighs curled black cunt hair spread open murmuring pussy mouth pouting, come, kiss me, come kiss me, make me come, come, come.

Burroughs is grinning. The nervous system feels

no pain. With the right dope and good pictures in your head you don't need nothing more. Want some heroin?

The mail desk brings another letter from Italy.

Poor Enslaved One . . .

What a cruelty to lie in the sun alone. Do you get horny when you feel the sun licking your skin and moisture forms? And you with all those men! I could dig it. I imagine your body firm and brown and virginal now. Do you have secret occult ways of dealing with sexual energy in prison? I hope the terrible hassles you've been through haven't marked your face with sorrow wrinkles and bitter lines.

I have just eaten artichoke with aioli, that's Midi mayonnaise with garlic, rice; tamari sauce, concoction of honey and apple pancake, finishing off with coffee and a cigarette. Was propositioned by Julio, a neighbor peasant. He's the only local I'd fuck but I won't fuck him either. He came over the other night to tell me there was no vineyard work on Tuesday and he'd like to make love. I tried to tell him it wouldn't work. He listened happily while I expended energy explaining and then he grabbed me and kissed me hard. I had to fight loose, angry because he was being so heavy. All ended friendly. I wish you were working in the garden with me. So cool going down the rows with you in the hot sun, talking or not.

What did you think of my meeting with the Dutch boy. Afterward we walked and drank wine and climbed into bed. It was all so routine. He just moved on top of me and in with one motion.

Again, no word was said, and I'm the most verbal person alive. It was so fucking domestic. He moved slowly like some craftsman to that place of fear in me and past it. Crushing my breasts, my legs, clinging to his back, my body hanging onto his body past the pain place and my body told him fuck as hard as he wanted. I remember getting scared and crying. My strong mind and egocentric will gone, man. I wept to be enslaved, juice oiling our legs. He was like some relentless pressure searching every corner of my cunt and I knew he would never stop. Wine on his breath. He was worried about the noises I made. We slid into sleep.

Is this interesting? How strange to think of you reading this in your prison cell.

His body was so delicious stretched the length of me. Later I curled into his back, wanting him some more but timid; waiting for him to move first but I couldn't keep my hands from moving along his chest and belly and down to his cock. Then he asked so shyly in Dutch can I fuck you in my cunt he was soothing and caressing. Orgasms seems old-fashioned and histrionic, a lower level of consciousness. You know he never came in all the times we connected. I thought a lot about that.

In the morning without a word he told me that it was time to leave.

Mary Jane

Burroughs is high, lecturing me on pimps and whores:

— I'm working three girls on the main line in Frisco see that arm (thin-chicken limb extended) I put seventy-five thousand dollars pure coke in

that vein in one year on the bus from Memphis she was about fifteen I said well baby you've met just the man'll show you around the big city. I had two at that time, Ethel and Peaches working houses along Pine Street when she'd go to the bathroom she'd shout "Whistle Chinatown Daddy" he was my best friend but when he got back in town and found out I'd turned out both of his sisters. I was riding the main line on the hairy oyster you know so I couldn't hear her tinkle turning tricks up and down the coast with fifty thousand workmen on the Alaska highway girls and dope said he'd shoot me on sight the golden clam man the oval cash register shot up twenty-five bills in a month she'd come home at three in the morning and throw the bread on the bureau every cent of it man she made me fifty thousand and I never had to spend a cent on her found this sixteen-year-old Eurasian and threw her out only two kinds of men in the world tricks and junkies not like the good old days only two kinds of women in the world hustlers and madams only two kinds of men in the world johns and pimps. The sexiest chicks love skinny junkies cause we fix them the ultimate fuck in the main line.

I am standing by the handball court keeping tally, pushing the score peg down the number slots, waiting to play the winner. The sun is hot and my brown Mexican skin gleams with sweat. I am in the best physical condition. In the corner of my optical screen moves a flash of brown. Whisper is standing by the corner of the cellblock. When he catches my eye he disappears.

– Manuel, take tally will you? I'll be back in five minutes.

He was bent over examining an electrical box. A letter was on the ground beside him. I sat down, ripped it and read quickly.

– What does Aries's letter say?

– His group will spring me for twenty-five thousand dollars. They are up in the desert now getting the overview and planning the caper. They want to know if it's all right to carry guns. To use if necessary. His people are on the run too and don't want to get captured helplessly.

– That's irrelevant, said Barritt. Do you agree?

– I'll run it through my head, I said. There's another problem though. Aries doesn't like the idea of you being involved. He thinks it's a setup.

– I can dig it.

– He doesn't see any reason why we need you. He says, string you along, get all the information from you. Tell you that I'm going to wait for the appeal. Then, when the time comes, hit the fence.

He smiled.

– I think the same way. I don't think we need Aries and *his* big operation. It's bad security to have a large bunch of freaks in on the plan. Someone is bound to talk. I think that I should drive the pickup car. You'll save your twenty-five thousand. All I'd need is bread for the car and for a fake ID for myself in case I have to split.

– If only Aries could meet you.

– No, that's out. That's not good for him or me.

– Well, if he could only read your "Whisper" script he'd be convinced. Will you mail some of your writing to him?

— No. That's too dangerous.

I wrote another note to Aries telling him to contact league members to get the twenty-five thousand. And telling him to trust me and my trust of Whisper.

Standing starchy waiting Her visit. She said she'd hitchhike. For thirty minutes I lean out the window watching. Mountain maiden, she comes in colors.

— I walked three miles down the mountain fog. It's hard hitchhiking that early. Finally a middle-aged couple from Topeka took me as far as Hearst's castle. There was another hiker in the back seat. A white kid from Mississippi. James Dean type. I started walking down the highway to get away from him. Walking through the morning mists. He followed saying things like If you weren't married I'd ask you to hitchhike around the world with me and What's marijuana really like? Finally we were picked up by two long-hairs. They said, Who are you visiting in San Luis? I said my husband. They said, Oh your cousin! When the sign came California Men's Colony West 1/2 Mile I said let me off in half a mile. Getting out I said, Do you want some grass? The kid driving said, Oh, no, we've got enough gas. The other one said, Wait a minute, did you say grass? They said, Give our love to your cousin. Do you like my dress? It's from Pakistan. The week is a long slow road to Sunday.

— What news of the escape?

— Good news from Irene in the East. The po-

litical people approve. They'll get us out of the country.

— Where?

— I don't know yet. Maybe Cuba. Or Algeria. Or Chile. It all seems like a faraway dream to me.

Whisper asked: — What did your wife say?

— Aries is pressing for details. Like which night? And what time? And how much time before they know I'm gone?

— The best time is a foggy Saturday night. Around 8:30. Most everyone is at the movie or TV rooms. That gives you hour and half if you aren't seen leaving.

— Suppose I'm seen?

— It will take ten minutes for the alarm to be called in and for them to get cars out on the road. It's a breathless chase that way but they can't stop you getting to the road.

— You can be seen by the gun trucks. The key plan is definitely out. They've chained all the side gates and I don't have the new keys. You have to go over the fence. Have you been working out with iron like I told you? There's a secret way out of here! I heard about it from an old Quentin veteran. Every time he got shot down by the board he'd tell his wife to meet him on the road next weekend. She talked him into waiting five months for the next board. He finally got a date and passed the secret to me. Down by the visiting room a wire cable crosses the road high above the fence. It's above the lights so it can't be seen. You sneak into the yard, go up the pole, grab the cable, and

pull yourself across. The cable is thick and strong. About twenty feet high. Way above the fence. The pole has metal foot spikes like that one.

My eyes walked up a nearby light pole.

— You mean I dangle hand over hand?

— No man. You wrap your legs around the cable and shimmy across. You're wiry. Scamper across like a monkey. The only problem is: Who will drive you away? You should scratch Aries.

— He feels the same way about you.

He was silent for a minute.

— The heat is coming down. I'd rather not spend the rest of my life in Folsom to get you free.

— Do you want to split the country?

— More and more.

— OK. Let's work on that. You need a passport and some money.

Lying on my bunk rereading Whisper's scripts. This man has to be trusted. The whistle snuffs the lights. I lie in bed measuring the panels on the ceiling. The wire across the road is forty feet. Each reach of hands is two feet. Twenty pulls. I count. One pull, two pull. Three pull. Twenty seconds to cross the wire like a rapid raccoon. Reach up for the pole. Swing around. Slide down. Run free.

I spend the long night reviewing the plan. Run to the road. Pick up a car. Drive fast to helicopter. Fly south. Refuel at Joshua Tree in the desert. Fly to Mexico. Rendezvous on highway near Hermosillo. Drive to Veracruz. Rent a small boat to Cuba. I

sit up and fumble in my locker for the Bugler can and roller. Dump in the tobacco. Lick the paper. Roll it. I sit on bunk edge red tip glowing.

The continuous escape discussions with Whisper.

— I was drawn compulsively to the cable. I located it. It runs over Building 324.

— I'm sorry you know. You've got to stay away from there.

— You should meet Aries so he'll know you can be trusted. Or at least, as a start, Aries should read your script. Won't you mail it?

— No. I don't put Aries down for distrusting me. You're the one that's out of phase. Lives are at stake. I don't want to meet him or to know his plan. He feels the same. The scripts I write are for your eyes only.

— Suppose I smuggle some of your script for them to read.

— I gave the script to you.

How can I smuggle out some pages of Whisper's manuscript. I start typing on thin onionskin paper in top upper left corner. Single space. No paragraphs. Telex escape message.

An unexpected visit. I shower quickly, and stick the folded message in my shoe. An old friend has

dropped by to pay a call. I duck into the men's room. Snatch off shoe and palm the missive. Returning, I slide it into his coat pocket.

— This letter is of crucial importance. Will you airmail it to Her tonight?

She hitchhiked down on visiting day.

— There's a new development with Whisper. He's under suspicion. He'll have to split when I do. He gets blamed if I leave.

— Can't you just agree to avoid each other? Let him go his way and we'll go ours. Aries is more and more uptight about him. He says his work is done. Pay him off and split. Aries is willing to give him five thousand dollars. But he can't be told when or where.

— But Whisper has risked himself. You and I and Whisper are the known suspects. No one knows that Aries is involved.

— And that's the way he wants to keep it. Nobody knows that he knows either you or me. The money for Whisper is OK. I'll see if they'll go for the ID.

At three in the afternoon she takes a taxi to the San Luis Airport. Then a small plane to L.A. Then a plane to San Francisco and a helicopter to Berkeley. Then she hitchhikes home. She never missed a visit, faithful woman.

Monday SLO time. I wake unrested. Powdered coffee, powdered sugar, powdered cream, scalding hot sink steam. Make bunk sweep floor. I tenderly watch the wake-up rituals of thirty strange deadfellows. Old bald toad sits up in long johns

solemnly stretching new white socks. Each morning at 7:17 A.M. he rips the tops of two new socks. He works in Clothing Distribution and has an unlimited supply of factory-fresh socks. Old gray mouse sitting in shorts on bunk unwrapping brown bag stale sandwich. He works in the kitchen and has unlimited supply of brown-paper sandwiches. The Lovers, sitting on adjacent bunks smoking together a quiet domestic breakfast cigarette. He is a thin, white, cocky redhead. She is a tall, shapely Black, who piles their lockers with floral arrangements. Their love labored long to reach the bliss of side-by-side twin beds. It took him two months to get moved to the same dorm. For the last five weeks we've watched the slow process of their union. After five days he moved four beds down. A trade for two cartons. Next week he slipped five down and across the aisle to reach her side. (She never moved. Just sat weaving flowers.)

Eight o'clock in the office. Coffee. News of last night's events. The fights, ODs, busts, freak-outs. I type a ducat list for twenty minutes. SLO time. Five hours till mail call. Wander to the library. Check back at office. Smuggle blue shirt and pants into the laundry. My handball compadres sweating shirtless at the pressing tables. Starch for Sunday Pepe? Four and a half hours till mail call. Six days till She comes. SLO time. I sit at my office desk studying the sex life of insects, working on utopian blueprints, drawing double helixes.

Eleven ten. SLO time. Early-line lunch for the prison elite with special passes. Eleven thirty. Outcount in the custody office. Thirteen blue

robots sitting on a hall bench while the bull counts bodies pointing an inventory finger at each one two three twelve thirteen nods pleased.

One o'clock in the afternoon. SLO time. Three hours till mail call. Yoga on the lawn. Waiting for Chicanos. Handball speeds time. At four o'clock the section bull enters the cellblock holding letters. MAIL CALL: Cluster round looking for the orange envelope. Early line for dinner four fifteen. Read the morning paper. Walk the grounds with Burroughs. From ten till two tossing on the lumpy mattress thinking. SLO time. Drift into a five-hour restless sleep.

That's Monday.

That's Tuesday.

That's Wednesday.

That's Thursday. Slow time. Past halfway. The week slides toward Sunday. SLO time.

One hundred and sixty-nine hours of SLO time before She comes.

And Burroughs keeps telling me – Turn off, man. You're keeping yourself uptight like a zoo animal pacing the cage. Hibernate. Time-travel. Sleep through this bad time in the cunt of Mother Poppy. I know he is right, but I'm afraid of heroin.

The problem. Whisper is wrong. There are no spikes to climb the pole to reach the cable. There is a tree growing on the fence side of 356 from which I could swing onto the roof. But how to reach the tree? Jump out the corridor window? Risky. And the room next to the tree must be empty or the con lying in bed looks up and sees me. Crawl under building to reach the tree?

I wander down to the west side just before the

8:00 count. The handball court is deserted. I pretend to be picking up handballs in a bucket. I lean down, peer under building. It's a shaded love nest. A convict on his knees dog-style his blue jeans pulled down, white buttocks gleaming. He is rocking slowly forward and back, his eyes closed, his head turned to the side thoughtfully. Mounted behind him a denim mastiff pumps slowly, his head hidden behind the wooden floor beam. There is not a sound but the heavy breathing and shoes sliding for traction.

Beloved—

Kerosene lamp again. Firelight. Wonderful wood, madrona, light-colored dry burns into soft ash like manzanita only tree-sized. I've half a cord and more promised. Use leaves as kindling it ignites so easily. About ten now. The moon is glowing on the sea. Jupiter is sitting behind the mountains. A lonely lazy day yearning for you. Frogs very vocal while sunbathing today. Tree above me full of hummingbirds and humming bees. Watch insects more closely now after your stories. Dragonflies landed near me observing me curiously. Sent Susan \$100. Joe will give Jack \$200. He sent you fifty. All from Richard Alpert's check. Will write him from the house here he was alleged to have inhabited.

Today's horoscope: Catch up on correspondence to faraway friends. The star map is meaningless without you. I miss you so my beloved. Meditation house stillness sounds of energy. I've developed a nervous tic. Have to keep clearing my ears by yawning, adjusting atmospheric pressure. Tarquin says it's because I have a vertebra out. I do have a stiff neck.

Determined and bored. Oh dear. I've let the pregnant cat in. She wants to be between me and the letter. Washed the skylight today. I'll have to do another spate of work. Feeling guilty about being lazy. I'll get on the phone organize arrange. Apply for welfare to get a driver's license. Ease M. and J.'s passage. Raise bail money. Bail money how glorious to have to think about bail money. Oh my love perhaps in a month. I feel so hopeful. I wish our telepathy were perfected.

It's almost too bright to sleep outside. I've arranged a sleeping place on the roof outside the study in Berkeley. It's been too foggy to use it. I'll be so happy when the house is empty and quiet and I can work with the archivists. I yet dream of making the study a serene and uncluttered place. My beloved I sit with you and watch the sky. You shield the flashlight with your hand and look at the map and say it must be a spaceship there's not supposed to be a star there. I love you. Come back soon.

Your Wife

The prisons are filled with heroin vibrations. Junkies involved in the ancient cult devotion to Mother Opium.

I came to prison with certain naïve, liberal hypocritical prejudices against self-defense. Insulated from the threat of violence, starvation, disease, brute force, I was nonviolent, seeped in middle-class serenity not shared by the majority of the world population. Now I had to figure out what I would do when armed violence threatened my life and my freedom. The needle or the gun?

I entered prison with a fear of heroin. Logically

I knew that anyone had the right to put anything in his body. But I maintained a moral superiority about junkies. Now I listen to the thoughtful words of men who understand and truly love heroin.

Burroughs says:

– I was making a heroin tantra with this singer, the most elegant user I ever fixed, a heroin with a mind like a looking glass, Lady H herself. We were fixing each other with such gentleness and love man (H in the arm and physeptone in the ass). Identification becomes complete. I can no longer separate the woman from the drug. All was SHE, every cell in my body whispers Her name. You just got to have respect for Lady H. Like any other woman she's a goddess when loved but a whore when abused. She's the Sphinx woman, the foxy chick that turns you on so much that you flip so crazy for her that you throw everything away just to be with her.

Chicano, a handball partner, calls me aside.

– Don't tell anyone but I gotta transfer out of here to forestry camp. I won't see you for a while. I want to leave you a present. I tell you how to escape from here.

– I'd rather not go out illegally.

– OK. But if you ever need to escape I tell you two ways. The east gun truck goes off at midnight. Also there's a cable wire over the west fence near the visiting room. If you have to split the country go to Tijuana. Hacienda Bar. Tell the bartender there you know me. He'll get you papers and hide you out. Bring some money though. Adiós.

FOLLOWING NAMED MEN REPORT AT ONCE TO CUSTODY: PRESTON, KELLY, LEARY.

Walking back to Custody a dozen men call:
— Hey what they want you for?

Flanagan is serious in the Captain's office.
— There's been an escape. Some Mexican who works outside in National Guard just jumped in a jeep and drove off. Chicano. You know him. He plays handball. Man I wish they'd clear me for outside work. Just drive away in their machines.

— Why did they call us here?

— The photography office is printing 1,500 wanted cards. We have to stuff them in envelopes.

The Officer of the Day swaggers in:

— I hate to call you men out on Saturday night. We got envelopes here addressed to every police chief in western states. Have to stuff these wanted flyers.

Wallet-size cards. Escape: Rogelio Chicano, age 33, Mexican, 5' 8", 157 lbs. Crime: rape, possession of narcotics. Wearing blue denim trousers and shirt. If apprehended notify Superintendent California Men's Colony West, San Luis Obispo, California. I pray for his safety.

— Don't worry about him said Flanagan. He's got relatives just down the coast. He'll change his clothes. Hell, by now he's cross the border to T.J. That's his hometown. They'll never see him again unless he's dumb enough to come back.

Flanagan will laugh when he stuffs my picture in the brown envelope.

She floats on a lysergic cloud Her hair scented with firesmoke.

— Was the money wired to Whisper?
 — He's doing it today.
 — If it comes tomorrow I can split in two weeks.
 — There's been such confusion. Some of the lawyers promise bail in two weeks, but the brief hasn't even been filed. Two months have been lost. It will be four months before bail. The lawyers say wait. There's 80 percent chance you'll be out legally by November 1.

— I'm going over the wall in two weeks.
 — I agree. There's a big debate on whether guns should be used if necessary. The lives of the rescuers will be at stake. The pigs will be armed and shooting to kill.

HE: — You don't have to flee with me. I'll split. You stay here like Kathleen Cleaver. I'll find an exile home. You come when you are ready. Or you fly to Mexico with Gabriel. Be free.

SHE: — I have to go with you. They'd bust me the the day after your escape.

HE: — You could prepare solid legal protection. Disassociate yourself from my escape. Maybe divorce me publicly.

SHE: — No. I couldn't do that.

HE: — OK. Then you go to New York this week to ask Irene to get a secret apartment there. Whisper will drive the car. We don't need militant Aries.

Handball in the hot sun. I am learning the back court. Fragile timing. Shoulder-arm whirls the ball high away from forecourt. An ancient sweating, healthy game. While waiting my turn I notice a telephone repairman's canvas tent hung from cable. Reassuring. It must be strong. Two repairmen cons are stringing wire.

— What's that doing here?

— We're stringing telephone wire from the support cable.

— Is that cable really strong enough to hold a repairman?

— You better believe it. It'll hold eight hundred pounds.

— Hey Teem, you got next game tally?

— I need a partner. How about Pepe? Everyone looks at the bench where Pepe lies motionless sunning and they shake heads smiling.

— Pepe, he don't feel like playing today. I walk by the bench. Pepe's face is relaxed. He's gone in heroin dreams. He's a trembling stamen floating in the petals while his body rests in a state prison. The guard just walked past my bunk. Someone begins sending me midnight TELEPATHIC RECEPTION TAPES . . .

LISTEN . . . TOMORROW NIGHT YOU HELP ME
. . . YOU'RE THE ONE I'M TALKING TO . . . I
LIFT HEAD LOOK AROUND BARRACKS . . . WHO'S
SENDING THE MESSAGE . . . TOMORROW AFTER-

NOON BORROW A HOE FROM THE LANDSCAPE SHACK . . . TAKE IT BEHIND THE TOBACCO FACTORY AND BREAK THE HANDLE ABOUT A FOOT FROM THE BLADE . . . HIDE IT IN YOUR COMMISSARY BAG IN YOUR LOCKER . . . WHEN BULL COMES DOWN DORM AT MIDNIGHT AFTER HE PASSES YOUR BUNK WALK DOWN TO THE SHITTER CARRYING THE BLADE . . . WHEN HE RETURNS STEP OUT IN HALL AND CLOBBER HIM IN HEAD . . . ONE SLICE SPLIT HIS SKULL LIKE WATERMELON . . . STUFF HIS BODY IN THE LAUNDRY CLOSET . . . WALK DOWN TO THE NEXT SECTION OFFICE . . . WAIT BEHIND DOOR UNTIL SECTION BULL ARRIVES . . . CLOBBER HIM THE SAME WAY . . . IN FIVE MINUTES YOU HAVE KNOCKED OUT FOUR SECTION OFFICES . . . THEY'RE ALL DOZING . . . I'LL DO SAME ON OTHER SIDE . . . WITH THOSE EIGHT BULLS OUT . . . THE ENTIRE PRISON IS UNGUARDED . . . EXCEPT FOR CONTROL AND CUSTODY . . . CONTROL IS LOCKED IN . . . LEAVE IT ALONE . . . CUSTODY IS NO PROBLEM . . . YOU MOVE INTO WATCH LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE AND SLICE DOWN SERGEANT . . . I RUN UPSTAIRS FLICK START PA SYSTEM ON BAKER'S DESK . . . TURN IT UP TO HIGHEST VOLUME . . . FEEDBACK SCREECH BLASTS EVERYONE AWAKE . . . THEN WE MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT . . . WAKE UP! . . . YOU ARE FREE . . . THE GUARDS ARE OFFED . . . CLIMB THE FENCE . . . ESCAPE . . . GO HOME . . . (I'M TRYING TO THINK OF SOFT FLOWERS . . .) AS YOU RUN DOWNSTAIRS TIP OVER CAN OF PAINT CLEANER . . . THROW MATCH ON IT . . . WHILE I'M ANNOUNCING THE ESCAPE YOU START FIRES IN 310 AND THE WEST AREA . . . WE RUN TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF FENCE UNGUARDED BY GUN TRUCK AFTER MIDNIGHT . . . NINETY SEC-

ONDS LATER WE'RE PICKED UP ON THE HIGHWAY
. . . IN TEN MINUTES WE HAVE SLAIN TEN
GUARDS, FREED THE PRISON, BURNED DOWN THE
JOINT . . . AN EXEMPLARY ACTION . . . KILL
US ON THE RUN ROBOT MONSTERS FOR WE WILL
NOT LIVE AS CAGED ANIMALS WE WILL NOT LIVE
AS DOCILE CAPTIVES WE CANNOT LIVE IMPRISONED
WE CHOSE TO DIE FREE RATHER THAN LIVE EN-
SLAVED (end tape).

6

I burst through the swinging doors of the visiting room. She waits in the most private corner, table arranged with Coffee, Rolls, Cigarettes. She has a Persian beaded bag. She is beautiful. She has strange news.

— The Whisper manuscript finally arrived and I really dug it. It justified all your claims. Aries was eager to see it. He's not a literary person, so he gave it to Michael Horowitz and Bob Barker, archivists of the Fitzhugh Ludlow Memorial Library in San Francisco. They immediately identified Whisper's writing as plagiarism. Some of it from Samuel Beckett. Most of it stolen from a young English writer named Brian Barritt who wrote a book called *Whisper* a collage of words smuggled out of Her Majesty's prison between November 15, 1966, and September 19, 1969.

— Now I know what he meant when he said he wasn't an author. He's not even Brian Barritt!

— Aries's suspicions were right all along. This mystery of Whisper and his influence over our lives! The whole thing is counterfeit. Read this.

She gives me Xerox pages from Samuel Beckett's book *The Unnamable*.

— I smuggled out the most poetic parts. But

there are many prosaic pages that come from his own experience.

— They discussed that. Whisper is part plagiarist and part paraphrast. If that's any comfort.

— I told everyone it was the finest prose of the twentieth century.

— Everyone admires your literary taste.

— But he *is* wise. He's consciously counterfeiting. He's copying verbal formulas to produce the desired solution. He kept saying, I've got a copyright. He's a good plagiarist.

— Not good enough.

— What does Aries suggest?

— He's amused. And amazed. He's ready to go in two or three weeks.

— What about Whisper?

— Aries says pay him and get him off the scene.

I gotta talk to Whisper.

— She says that your book is plagiarized from an Englishman named Brian Barritt.

— What did you say to her?

— What could I say? Who are you, anyway?

— I'm a script writer. A prescription forger.

— I had you touted as the greatest writer of the century. We were getting you a job with Grove Press. To edit your own writing.

— I'd like that. How much does it pay?

— What about plagiarism?

— I told you plagiarism is the only honest literary form. I write script. If it's done accurately, I get it filled.

— Aries says to pay you off and hope you'll be quiet.

Whisper is irritated.

— Still hanging on to labels? I'm not interested in their single information level. I push enthusiasm and its side effects. If that script is accurate it will get you free. If I can help you by splitting, I'll do it. If you want me to drive the escape car or hide you out, I'll do that or if you want me to just go away and leave you alone, tell me. Just don't blow my cover and leave me here. I've got no money for bail and no way to free myself. *Whisper* is just prison script. If I were a better engraver I'd print the three thousand dollars and the ID. I told you it was risky to smuggle that script out. To decompose is to live too.

Waiting in the corridor outside the visit room, looking out the window I see Her arrive in a taxi. She said that Aries was ready to do it. We talked of Jonathan Jackson, seventeen, walking into the Marin County Courthouse armed with love for a convict. All free men in prison have dreamed of a Jonathan Jackson. The enthusiasm level mounted.

— There's still my promise to Whisper. You'll have to meet him. Give him the getaway money. Get diagrams and details on breakout from him.

— That's no problem. Have him come to Berkeley.

— Monday's his day off. Wait for him tomorrow. Work out with him the details on when and where I get picked up Saturday night.

I put the question to Whisper. — Can you leave tonight or tomorrow to meet Her in Berkeley?

— Why so soon?

- Because I want to go over the wall Saturday.
- OK. I'll go.
- I give Whisper the numbers, codes.
- I'll be back here Tuesday with the word.

Whisper comes Wednesday a long day late.

- What happened?
- Fuck-up all around, man. Couldn't make it to Berkeley. Started driving to Monterey Airport Monday morning. A terrible drive along a deserted burning twat with the daughters of the swollen manges splashing the crumbling stone. I got thinking about the danger of my being seen taking a plane to San Francisco. I saw the whitewalled wheels of life hanging in the sky. A smell of burning rubber, incense. God was praying to his God, flicking the vehicles along their asphalt rosary beads. "Holy Mother of Jesus don't let me be late" says an accident statistic racing toward the rendezvous. I decided to drive to Berkeley past cars dragging black bellies on metallic highways, copulating with beetles at central junctions, excreting cogs and black oil. Cellulose orgasms snapped passers-by with big iron cunts, shattered eye lamps, and mindless mechanical screams. Then my car broke down, seduced by a huge red bus. I was spread-eagled over a traffic light and brutally assaulted. Cheering passengers masturbate with torn-off arms, ejaculating over NO SPITTING signs, shaving genitals with broken glass

and vomiting black oil. Missed a day of work waiting.

– Why didn't you go on Tuesday?

– Because I went up on Monday. By bus? It didn't feel right. It's a mistake for me to go to your house. You told me the place is staked out, man. It's too dangerous. I'll go up Monday and meet your wife in some neutral place.

– Where?

– Tell her straight on until she reaches the cerebral cortex, reverse past the thalamus at Lahore by the Badshi Mosque, then follow the sunshine until she reaches the heart, India. Or better yet, I'll meet her here in San Luis Obispo next Sunday night after her visit. Don't be impatient. You gotta learn the prison lesson man. Patience. Your impatience had me hurrying all around the state exposed to amphibious slug creatures evolved from recessive mutations and mechanical rape. We'll work it out down here.

– I'll write her to bring the money.

– There's no hurry. Your written words jump about like stranded fish, fusing into fantastic moving sculptures, rearranging themselves in palindromes that read the same from any angle. If she doesn't get the message we'll meet the next week.

– But I am in a hurry. The Poughkeepsie sheriffs may come this week. Most likely they'll come Monday the thirty-first. I'm due in court there on Tuesday after Labor Day. You phone her tonight and tell her to bring the money so that the whole thing can be worked out this week.

– Keep cool. Labor Day is September 7. That's

all these pigs are talking about these days. A three-day holiday for the yags—hairless khaki-colored baboons with bunches of yellow fingers and enormous permanent erections that weave back and forth like cobras and strike at any aperture within reach. We'll work something out next Sunday the thirtieth. And you split the following Saturday. September 5. That's the perfect weekend to do it. Yag force will be cut in half. They even pull in some of the gun trucks on holiday weekends. Only new inexperienced yags on duty. They'll be snowed with work, lead, and boiling piss. September 5 is ideal.

— I'd like you to phone Her tonight.

— No. Your phone is tapped. The sound system is operated by spider men, coil-headed pink lizards who weave the mercurial plasma along which the sound is carried. A tapped call from San Luis arranging for escape money and a meeting? Cool it man. Be patient and you'll be free.

She is a slim brown soft-eyed girl waiting for me in the visiting room. She had a busy week.

Aries came by Tuesday morning. He was pleased about Whisper's call. Said it was time to move. Ready for the escape this week.

Aries told me to pack my bag and get ready for a sudden trip. It was to meet my contact person in a restaurant.

Monday evening I jumped every time the phone rang, expecting a call from Whisper or my con-

tact. At last it came. A girl's voice. Hello. This is Pam. Haven't seen you for a long time. Let's get together tonight. Usual place? Nine o'clock. I left J. to wait for Whisper's call. Dressed in dark colors and started walking down the hill. It was a soft night and as far as I could tell no one following. I stuck out my thumb when I saw a sister in a car and she drove within a couple of blocks. I chose an inconspicuous table and a glass of wine. A beautiful electric-green-eyed girl walked up to the table . . . and said how good to see you. I looked into her warm laughing eyes and stood up and we embraced and I knew I had met a sister. She told me to get a car for tomorrow and be ready to leave the house for a three-day trip. Super Jay managed to borrow a car.

Tuesday morning he drove me down Telegraph Avenue until I told him to stop a block from Pam's motel. He didn't know what was happening but he didn't ask any questions. He gave me the keys said the gas tank was full and asked if there was anything else he could do. I knocked on Pam's door. She was ready to go. San Jose was unfamiliar territory but we quickly found the wig shop and photographers in the phone book. We had a heavy schedule. Wig makeup, photographs, license bureau, library, social security card.

Getting a new head took the most time. I never knew there could be so many kinds of wigs. Every plastic lady on the street must own one. I eyed the long luxurious darkfalls and the high proud Afro scalps arranged around the mirrored room. Blondie was bad. Blond and curly was worse.

But Pam said that's what it had to be. The Keith Richard's Venusian birds plumage was out. Too stylish. Looking at myself in the mirror I saw the faces of my midwestern cousins. Oh lord must I look this way? Fresh from the beauty shop plastic lady. The longer I looked the less I liked her. But have a little sympathy. What's her story? Twenty-eight. Single. She needs makeup her skin is too sallow. What's her name? Margaret Ann McCreedy. Catholic. Lived with her parents until last month got her own apartment in Berkeley. Supersecretary for an insurance firm. Not quite a virgin. Might be having a little affair with a married junior executive. Wears sturdy white underwear. Must I buy a bra? Just gave up wearing girdles.

Let's see what emerges after some makeup. Department store cosmetics. Orange-pink lipstick. Dark brown eyebrow pencil. False eyelashes. Need help there. The salesgirl was obliging.

OK Pam. Behold Margaret Ann McCreedy. I felt weird. What a change! Young people didn't see me. I got eyed by military types and middle-aged lusters all over town, but kids looked right thru me.

We arrived in New York late the next day. I was nervous checking with the desk clerk. I'd used so many fake names I'd forgotten which one I planned to use. I had no ID for that name. I felt illegal.

Next morning to the passport office in the cold-steel federal building. I filled out forms using national holidays for my parents' birthdays. My

occupation is student. I'm the only grandchild. My grandmother was born in London. Blah. Blah.

I was worried about the driver's license so I held up my right hand and pledged allegiance smiling and thanking him. He told me I could come back and pick it up that afternoon. Leaving I checked out the elevators and stair exits in case I had to split fast!

Went to a health-food store and drank carrot juice. I felt paranoid about the youngish crew cut at the next table. Back to the hotel and returned to the passport office at four. It was almost empty. Heavy men's voices from inner rooms. A fat woman clerk was talking on the phone with an index file in front of her. A long wait and she asked me my name. I couldn't remember it! I flushed and dropped my bag. I prayed. I stood up and said Margaret Ann McCreedy. I took the passport and fled back to hotel. That night we flew back to San Francisco. I wish you could see my passport picture. It's so funny. I've got the passport buried under the bamboo on the sun deck at Berkeley. I hope it doesn't rain.

Then I waited for Whisper. When he didn't show that blew it for this week. I was furious. Waiting is frustrating and dangerous.

— Whisper is coming to Berkeley tomorrow. He'll come this time because he's planning not to come back. He'll take the money and the ID and split.

It was a slow week until the next visit.

— I thought we'd never meet here again. What happened?

— Well, Monday Whisper didn't show. Once again I was glued to the phone all day. All night. Aries kept calling. 'Cause the moment Whisper would show the word would go out that the escape was on. You didn't know any of this of course and I wouldn't write you. Tuesday same thing. All day and night. Aries calling. His entire apparatus was poised. His people have come down from the mountains or somewhere. Dozens of them waiting around so they could free you last night. It was torture. Same thing Wednesday. By this time I'm confused and depressed. Wednesday around seven Aries calls for a final check. He's with all his people. When I said Whisper hadn't showed he was very disappointed and said he'd have to send them all back and that we'd have to postpone the escape. For several weeks. Until after your Poughkeepsie trial. The gloom was thick. Then fifteen minutes later Whisper showed up. Wasted. He could hardly stand. I immediately called Aries. But it was ten minutes too late. His people had just left.

— Next week?

— Maybe. If the Poughkeepsie police don't take you and if Aries can get his people together again. It's costing them time and energy and money to sit around week after week. I gave Whisper the

money and the ID and asked him for the diagrams. He just smiled and mumbled something about wanting you to go over the fence in broad daylight. He kept laughing and saying "broad daylight." He kept mumbling about the Book of Job, iron maidens, abortion gorgers, drug traffic, hail Mary, lone-time, cannabis, wars, time-space, sub-lunia. He had a written list of wog cars and kept mumbling about laser danger, electron watch, and the torture barracks outside the fence. He was scared and spaced out.

It was our last talk in prison. I told her that I couldn't let myself be captured passively and live the rest of my life in a metal cage. Tell them they can carry guns in the escape.

– I've gone through the same changes. Telepathy.

– The Marin County shoot-out Jonathan Jackson?

– Me too.

– I'm going to write a political escape message. For Aries. Shoot to live. Aim for life.

Then She told me to make my words ring solid like the clang of a steel chisel on stone.

The escape manifesto. I wrote in code.

There is the day of laughing Krishna and the day of grim Shiva. The conflict which we have sought to avoid is upon us.

It is a comfortable, self-indulgent cop-out to look for conventional economic-political solutions.

This is a war for survival. Like Huey and Angela. They dig it.

There is no choice left but to defend life against the genocidal machine.

There are no neutrals in genetic warfare.

Do not be deceived. It is a classic stratagem of genocide to camouflage their wars as law-and-order police actions.

Remember the Sioux and the pogroms and the black slaves and the indignation over airline hijackings!

If you fail to see that we are the victims of genocidal war you will not understand the rage of the blacks, the fierceness of the Weathermen, and the pervasive resentment of the young.

Our government is a lethal instrument.

Remember the buffalo and the Iroquois!

In this life struggle we use the ancient holy strategies of organic life:

- ESCAPE 1) *in the loyalty of underground sisterhoods and brotherhoods.*
- ESCAPE 2) *passively, break lockstep . . . drop out.*
- ESCAPE 3) *actively, sabotage, jam the computer . . . trash every lethal machine in the land.*
- ESCAPE 4) *publicly, announce life . . . denounce death.*
- ESCAPE 5) *privately, guerrilla invisibility.*
- ESCAPE 6) *beautifully, create organic art, music.*
- ESCAPE 7) *biologically, conspire with seed.*
- ESCAPE 8) *spiritually, stay high . . . blow the mechanical mind . . . dose them . . .*
- ESCAPE 9) *physically. Aim for life and shoot to live.*

WARNING: I am armed and should be considered dangerous to anyone who threatens my life or my freedom.

Tuesday, September 8, 1970, is the 203d day of my captivity. I am waiting for the decision if the escape will be in four days . . . slow time . . . I miss talking to Whisper. No one to write to because She's en route to our next meeting. I check the sky. The weather reports predict blue and cloudless. The moon is approaching full . . . the wind is from the west. Tonight there's an ominous clear lunar glow. . . . Aries won't do it if there's a full moon. . . . He's cautious. . . . Everyone said wait until a foggy winter night . . . I'm the one who is impatient . . . it's my life.

Wednesday, September 9, 1970, 204th day of captivity. Strange hush calm . . . waiting. . . . I am called into the legal office. The pigs tell me that I leave in handcuffs for New York on Tuesday, September 15. The chief con clerk walks into office. — Hey man do you want to move to a two-man cell . . . you're eligible for a move. We'll pick you out a good cellmate. . . . — Where is it? . . . — Just where you want to move to . . . 324 . . . down by the handball court. . . . It's a miracle to be moved next to the escape wire . . . So perfect I'm suspicious . . . who is the roommate? Angelo . . . he works in Receiving. . . . I spend all my spare time with Burroughs asking him questions about escape. He wonders why. The weatherman sees clear skies . . . every-

one knows I'm leaving for Poughkeepsie. . . .
— Hey man, when you leaving. . . . — I may
leave Saturday . . . or Tuesday . . . I may not
come back . . . Angelo my cellmate is a tense
good man . . . He shows me pictures of his Cad-
illac agency . . . he's in for receiving stolen prop-
erty . . . cars . . . his wife comes every week.
. . . There are only five cons in the prison whose
wives come every week. . . . Angelo spends four
hours every night writing his wife letters with in-
structions about car repairs . . . he is a kind
devoted citizen with normal larceny. . . . He's
worried about the weather too . . . if it's sunny
we can be with our wives on the lawn. . . . He
tells me to pray for sunny day. . . . The weather
forecast for Thursday. Morro Bay and San Luis
Obispo . . . early morning and late evening fog.
Ootherwise clear and sunny. . . .

Thursday, September 10, 1970, the 205th day
of my captivity . . . no lawyer visit . . . no
word . . . there's less privacy in a two-person
cell than in the large open dorm. . . . Angelo my
cellmate is popular . . . all the business cons
and Italians come to visit and the cell crams with
vibrations . . . he tenderly drives his friends
away . . . we'll keep it private and quiet here
he says. . . . He's pleased to live with me. I'm
glad to look out the john and study the escape
wire. . . . After lunch I change into shorts and
start doing yoga on the lawn SIX FEET AWAY
FROM CABLE POLE. Looking at the cable with
half-open lids while standing on my head. A pig
rumbles up. It's a violation doing exercises here.

A woman might drive by the outside gate and see you in shorts. I wash my blue socks and hang them on the guy wire supporting the cable pool. . . . Good luck to touch the pole. Walk around it.

Friday, September 11, 1970, the 206th day of my captivity. At 7:00 A.M. the prison whistle wakes me. Eye flash to window: Ice-blue sky. The soft gray furry fog of morning has vanished. *A perfect rifle target is a body under full moon silhouetted in the glare of the guardhouse lights.* The ritual of powdered steaming sink-water coffee. Shave, make bunk, three hours until the lawyer's visit, if he's coming. Venus is parallel Saturn. . . .

At 8:00 A.M. I walk to custody office past the old cons sitting arthropods on the law. Blue denim tombstones sunning on the steps and benches staring, sitting spitting talking strolling nowhere on a sunny prison morning. Broken robots pushing shuffleboard disks at nowhere with molasses motions. Watering lawns. Tossing coins at a hole in the ground. Fourteen hundred men doing nothing going no place being no one. I want to build an hourglass fifty feet high for watching grains of time slowly drain down the terminal sewer of American jurisprudence.

At 8:45 I sit at the desk waiting FOR THE WIRE ANNOUNCING THE ESCAPE. THE TICKET TO FREEDOM IS A YELLOW SLIP OF PAPER.

It is now 8:50. I'm studying the clock counting seconds. I split Custody and move quietly down the hallway past old Henry sweeping the floor.

He has twenty years in straight and talks to himself.

Reviewing the escape blueprints. The guard-house lights are in a direct line of sight from the gun trucks. Anyone on that cable is a pigeon. If and when you make a break you'll be in a brand-new situation. There's no help you can call on. Your New York lawyers can't do shit for you then. There's no appeal from a .30 caliber summons. You'll be hunted down by sharpshooters. They don't like escapes. You should wait until December to make your break.

Get transferred to the east end of the compound and some foggy winter night just climb the fence and disappear into the mist.

Fog, man. *Fog*. Or you'll go out of here on a stretcher.

You haven't learned that the first lesson of a convict is patience. You'll be home by Christmas.

By the time I returned to Custody it was 9:40. Drank another coffee, palms sweating. At 10:20 a monotone voice squawked over the speaker.

I am wanted in Legal Office, Building 310.

I walked down the corridor of the administrative building. Two counselors were leaning against the door of Legal Office. The room was filled with smirking policemen. One big fat smile stepped forward to shake my hand. Sergeant Mervers himself from Poughkeepsie.

— How are you, Tim? He laughed.

It was a big moment for Sergeant Mervers. Next to him sat an old deputy and two local San Luis sheriffs.

— We came early to find out if you're willing to

fly back. If you won't fly then we leave today by car.

They were taking no chances on last-minute legal maneuvers. It also gave them a free trip to L.A. They looked relieved when I said I'd fly.

I'm too restless for the office. Too restless for the library. I sit on lawn in lotus position listening to my ears beating and the whisper of inhale-exhale. I won't leave this spot until the word comes. Sweating in the hot sun. Waiting. I hear the faint click of the PA system and the soft hum of feedback.

— Wanted in the control office.

The Sergeant's face was sympathetic. I autographed the receipt and held the yellow sheet.

TELEGRAPH FORM

BELOVED OPERATION TOMORROW DOCTORS FEEL
BEST NOT TO WAIT TOTALLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT
SUCCESS AND NEW LIFE DON'T WORRY I'LL BE
BRAVE WON'T BE DOWN TO VISIT SUNDAY BUT
WE'LL BE TOGETHER SOON I AWAIT YOU I LOVE
YOU CONTACT ME AT THREE TREE RECOVERY
CENTER.

YOUR MATE

I walked into the prison yard and looked west to the sea where the weather came from. Three small dime-sized clouds were drifting in. First friendly weather in weeks. Venus conjoins Jupiter at 4°. Scorpio for tremendous benefits. Either material or emotional or both.

I ponder the timing of the flight. At 9:00 P.M. television programs change and hallways fill with moving cons. Should I leave five minutes before

or five minutes after nine? Precise timing. Hit tree and over roof. Two minutes. One minute to cross the wire. Quarter mile to highway figure four minutes. Half a mile to three trees. That's eight more. Fifteen minutes from trees to getaway. There's a fifty-fifty chance I'll be seen and will have to make a fast break in the dark for the highway hoping to intercept the pickup car.

— We ain't gonna be out on the lawn Sunday with our wives, Angelo complained. I hope it clears up.

If I climb the tree at 9:05, I'll meet the car at 9:20, or better yet run out onto highway and flag it down. But no time for delay. One person standing in the hallway could keep me from going out the door. If I split at 8:55 I'd have a ten-minute cushion. But if the alarm sounds it's dangerous waiting along the highway.

Walking to the gymnasium for the Friday night movie I saw a cloud bank moving in from the west. The moon was rising almost full in the east.

When the movie ended at 9:00 P.M. the clouds were thicker. If this weather holds I'll be free tomorrow.

Back in the cell I started clearing out my locker. I gave Angelo all my food and supplies. Menzies, a sly runner from Control, came by and flagged me out. We stood at the end of the hall. He watched behind me and I watched behind him.

— Moore and the goon squad were checking your property list. They were hot about your books. Superintendent Field from East Facility called over. If you have anything fishy going on with books you better cover your tracks. Maybe it has something

to do with that Black militant they just shipped out to Folsom. Have you been loaning books to Blacks? Don't let on you were tipped off. They could trace it back to me.

I drove over to Burroughs's cell.

— Hey man, where's that Bobby Seale book, *Seize the Time*?

— I passed it on to one of the Brothers.

— I got to have it back.

— I can dig it. Come with me.

We drove to the next cellblock. I stood by the door while Burroughs reached under the mattress and pulled out the book.

Lying in bed I reviewed tomorrow's schedule. The guard's heavy boots trampled along the corridor, his voyeur flashlight fingering the dark privacy. Tomorrow night at this time you'll have a buzz, my friend.

7

Angelo woke me up. Eye sprang to the window. Soft gray misty clouds. Security blanket. Good weather for a night flight. Angelo was complaining.

– Fucking clouds. We won't be able to see our wives on the lawn tomorrow.

Angelo brought me steaming coffee. I lay in bed reviewing the twenty-two tarot cards. *One* wait for moonless night. *Two* wait for fog. *Three* on a Saturday night wait until the patrol car returns from CMC East with the snack-bar trustees, around 9:00. *Four* just before flight paint white trim on sneakers black. *Five* write farewell note and leave in locker. *Six* exit must be made before or after the TV break when prisoners flood hallways. *Seven* wait until the central corridor is empty or when all prisoners walking have their backs to side door. *Eight* slip out side door and walk to the tree five seconds. *Nine* climb tree five seconds. *Ten* leap to roof silently. *Eleven* remove sneakers. *Twelve* lie on roof checking security location of guards and patrol cars. *Thirteen* if seen be prepared to make visible desperate break, counting on five-minute delay to notify control tower. *Fourteen* crawl along the roof of corridor

to Building 324 sixty seconds. *Fifteen* silently creep along roof of 324, avoiding TV antenna wires sixty seconds. *Sixteen* put on sneakers and handball gloves. *Seventeen* hang from wire by hands and feet and pull self across ninety seconds. *Eighteen* slide down pole on other side of fence five seconds. *Nineteen* climb down bank and cross through outer prison compound avoiding barracks, alert for the fire watch. Reach highway in four minutes. *Twenty* turn right on Highway 1 and run half mile to turnoff with three trees four minutes. *Twenty-one* wait for pickup car with right blinker flashing. *Twenty-two* my contact is Kelly. My name is TINO, and the Soker's wild Angelo brought me back.

— Hey man. What are you thinking about? Seeing your wife Sunday, right?

— Making plans.

— I'm going to miss you when you go Tuesday. You'll never come back here. I've heard them talking in the Release Office. They expect you to get bailed out. But if you pick up another conviction and a third sentence in New York you'll be carrying too much time for a minimum security prison. Once you leave you better not come back to California or you'll be in a dungeon at Folsom. Pack all your stuff in a box, your radio and typewriter. The cons in R and R will keep it for you and have it mailed out wherever you end up.

Two in the afternoon. The sun breaks through. But friendly clouds are waiting off the coast.

Counting, I pace the yard. Four minutes to the road. Five minutes to the three trees. I join the line for early chow. The last supper on metal plates. I drive back to the cellblock and sit in a

darkened TV room watching the Stanford-Arkansas football game.

Lying on bunk for four o'clock count. The seconds moving fast now. The four thirty count clear whistle loosened. Tramping feet to chow. Angelo was combing his hair.

— Coming to dinner?

— I ate on the early line.

Waiting for the cellblock to clear. Now. Move to locker. Rip white laces from sneakers and rethread brown. I sit crouched facing the locker, a newspaper in my lap. Unscrew Flanagan's black print tube. Slash pigment over white stripping on sneakers. Hasty daubing. Hear steps. Jangle of guard keys. Shove shoes in locker. Wait. The guard goes. Sweaty hands are black from smearing pigment on smooth rubber. I shove the shoes in the locker to dry. Put on handball gloves. Brush black on backs. The paint leaks onto hands. Toss in locker and shut door.

I scrub hands with coarse bristle brush. Mop paint off floor with a towel. Shove under my mattress.

When the eight thirty count clear whistle is sounded Angelo splits. I whisper ommmmmm as gears click in motion. Bending over to lace black sneakers. Put on dark blue denim jacket. Eyeglasses. Shove Her letters, prison IDs, meditation beads in pocket.

It's about time. 8:53. I drive to the end of cellblock out to the corridor. Walking down corridor to the intersection praying the coast's clear. Two cons watch me drive by. A patrol pig approaches.

— Are you still here? We're tired of seeing you around.

— I'm on my way. Wish me luck.

— Good luck, said the guard.

Drive up hallway and U-turn back. They're still there watching me roll past.

Turn the corner and make a pass through neighbor cellblock.

I stand indecisive. Trapped, feeling the clock moving. Gotta hurry. I'll miss the highway pickup. Suspicious standing. I slowly head down the hall again. Praying. Look left. The two cons are still there. Keep moving on the side corridor to end. Circle back. Time wasting. Gotta hurry. Hit corner. They're gone. Moving surely toward exit door. Look right. Inside door of cellblock three cons talking. They feel my hesitation and look up. I drive past next two cellblocks. U-turn. Have to bluff it through. If I move smoothly to door I'll be invisible. At the last second before reaching for the door handle I flick a glance to the cellblock. Three heads turn to look. I walk past. Blew it. Should have slipped through. Gotta move. At the intersection I turn north. Past Metcalf the snitch. New plan. There's another door to the exercise yard down the corridor. Have to walk across the yard. At night? Strictly off limits. If seen they sound alarm. No choice. I opened the door and walked out onto the hard lit by floodlights. I moved silently across yard. Fifty windowpanes watched my desperate path. *No one walks the yard in dead of night.* Not even the pigs. I stood in front of the tree. The tree stood directly in front of window. Inside the corridor facing the window stood Met-

calf braying at two cons. I can't climb a tree two feet in front of the snitch!

I sat down on the steps leading to the hallway. Trapped in the spotlight, wandering in verboten yard with paint-blackened sneakers. If I sit in the glare for the guards to see, I'll get busted with blackened handball gloves in my pocket and the farewell notes in locker? Time froze. I watched the leaves of the tree glistening and the muffled sound of Metcalf's voice. Now or never. *Now*. I got up and walked to the tree. I'll have to climb in front of Metcalf. It will take him five minutes to sound the alarm and another five minutes to get the two-man gun trucks on the road. Make or break. As I approached the tree as in a dream I heard Metcalf's voice booming good night and saw him turn away from window. In escape, as in impregnation, cellular intersection, and tantric union the margin of life-death is seven seconds. My neurology shifts into some ancient, primate, dreamy survival pattern, I grabbed a branch, wrapped foot around tree limb, swung upward foot-hand-foot-hand balanced on a slender branch leaned across the void and dropped softly fourfoot on the roof of the corridor.

I sat breathing quietly on the tar-paper slant listening to voices trampling in the hallway below. I could look down over the entire prison camp. The empty yards floodlit. Across to the custody office where I could see lounging brownshirt pigs. Guards in squad rooms. I was hidden in shadows above the searchlights. I was a forest creature scanning the camp of humans.

Sitting on the jailhouse roof I stripped off the

sneakers and holding them in left hand crept silently along the roof to the end of the corridor, climbed up the ridge slant and down to the roof of 324. The rough roofing rasped, my feet creaking, snapping, popping. BE QUIET, REMEMBER THERE ARE 100 SNITCHES BELOW WHO'LL HEAR YOU AND RUN TO PHONE GUARD. A sudden start. I bumped into the TV antenna wires. I could look down on either side into the neighboring cellblocks. My silhouette was exposed against the sky. I laughed. By this time I realized all was out of rational control. On autopilot. Every detail of the plan gone wrong. It was all programmed by some higher computer.

Slowly picked my way to the roof end looking down over road, fence, compound, and way below car lights on the highway. I sat down and laced the right sneaker.

The socks in my pocket. I put on the left sock and tied the sneaker. Pulled on handball gloves. I lay down on the angled roof just under the cable. Grabbed it with hands and hooked ankles. I reached my hands above my head and pulled out on the wire.

It was hard going. The cable had wire looped every ten inches holding a telephone cord below. My legs bumped and tangled in the wire. There were no smooth easy sweeping pulls. Reach hands. Pull body ten inches. Pull leg. Hands up. Pull body. Haul legs. The cable bouncing and swinging. A strain to hang on. Wrenched my hands. Strain legs. Weird wrestling motions, my body clinging to the swaying wire. Sweating. Heaving awkwardly. After fifty pulls—a pause. Horrid discov-

ery. Completely exhausted. Lungs gasping. Arms drained of energy. Body limp and weak. Can't go another foot. Only one-third across the wire. Hadn't even reached the road. The wire was longer than expected. Two-thirds to go. Exhausted. My hands can't hold the weight of my body. With desperate sexual writhing I embraced the cable with elbows and knees. Rested. The cable was slowly swinging. Nightmare thoughts. What are you doing this time? Inefficient wizard dangling from a cable twenty feet high escaping from life imprisonment in full view of two gun trucks? Once again the little experiment has gotten out of hand, Professor. Turned my head horizontal toward the gun truck. The interior light snapped on. He's seen me. Put on light to sound alarm. The word is flashing. I'm pendant waiting for patrol cars to scream up. Will they poke me down like a wild raccoon with sticks? Dangling, I had to laugh.

Dangling from a swinging wire I start squirming toward life. Five more wrenching feet. Stop. Wrists and arms exhausted. Panting. I should have quit smoking. I should have pushed more iron. It seemed so easy. Now I know why no cons have escaped this way. Olympic gymnastics on a high wire in the gunsights. I should have waited until the winter fog. Maybe they leave the cable strung over the fence as a trap? They're hunters waiting in trucks, rifles cradled on knees, waiting for wild animals to blunder into the ambush? The slaughter hole. My hands trembling could hold no more. With desperate lunge I hooked elbows over the wire, with clumsy crablike grabs pulled body along by elbows. Stop to rest. Look

down at macadam road sixteen feet below and over into TV rooms where cons watch the shadow tube.

A sudden glare of light. Forty feet away a patrol car slowly turns from the compound road toward me. I'm captured. The auto rolls closer, a soft crunch of tires on gravel. My blue denim arms turned yellow in the headlight. I looked down directly at the guard leaning over to crush his cigarette in the ashtray. Car rolled by to the corner and disappeared.

Now tumble into some delirious trance. Arms crossed, elbows hooked to wire inching caterpillar crawl. All hope of escape given up. My only goal to reach the fence so I'd fall to freedom outside the perimeter. I must remember when I fall to let feet go first. My hand kept getting tangled in the phone wire loop. A compulsive wrench to free my hand sets the cable bouncing wildly. Mouth gasping, face bulging, glasses twisted, sweat dripping, face grimacing. Another skin of the teeth. I wanted Errol Flynn and out came Harold Lloyd. I felt very alone. Forty-nine years and 325 days of this life built up to this moment of ordeal. My life hung on a needle point. In trance of Sun Dance initiates whirl suspended by hooked burning pain in the chest muscles. There was no fear only a nagging embarrassment. Such an undignified way to die, nailed like a sloth on a branch! Other men and women in prison would be pained by my failed escape. My fall would please the guards. See we told you. You can't escape. There is no escape.

No more thoughts. From some inner reservoir

of LIVE! LIVE! LIVE! SURVIVE! came an energy flow and a curious erotic lightness. Hands reached up in easy strong pulls, legs kicking, body wiggling, arms flailing, shoulders pushing propelled by uterine squeeze. My glasses fell but my arms smoothly reeled cable. Thus I butted head first dripping wet into this New Life.

Hand over hand till fingers hit the pole. Hanging by my legs (I'd practiced it a thousand times in my bunk) I reached right hand over head, grabbed metal spike, dropped legs, twisted body, wrapped legs around splintery wood, slid down. Exultant feet hit liberated ground! FREE!

8

SHE: I was packed and ready for Salt Lake early. Called my favorite freak cabdriver. I met Pam at the bus terminal and we headed for the airport. At Salt Lake we dropped off at one hotel, walked through the lobby with our bags, split out the side door, and cabbied to another hotel.

We ate at a Steak House near the hotel. Pam checked the number of the pay phone on the parking lot next door.

We got back to the hotel around 8:00 and I sat on the bed and started to center myself. I threw the I Ching, consulted the tarot, took the beads and prayed with all my might.

OM MANI PADMA HUM

I was fully alert from 8:25 to 9:15. Poised. Some far-out electronic music came over the radio around 8:30 like someone running, rushing energy up and up and a voice kept chanting FAR, FAR, FAR. At 9:15 came a great feeling of relief and the tension disappeared. I felt calm and peaceful. We listened to the radio until 11:00. I said, I'm going to go to sleep, everything is all right. I slept soundly.

I was swaying sweating panting. I saw the glasses lying on ground outside of fence. I adjusted them on my nose, funny professor gesture. I looked around. All silent. Electric lights shining on the steel fence and the green grass. Cellblocks forty feet away shining still in the night. No motion.

I staggered to the wall, slid down, lay head against the stone, drained, deeply breathing, listening. Alert fox hiding from hunters, waiting for pursuit cars to scream down road. Silence. I started down the bank. The barracks of the open-prison compound lay scattered below. Lights were on. Watch for fire patrol. Steep decline. My first steps dislodged a rock avalanche. I slipped and slid, stones rattling around me. Hit the hill bottom and started loping carefully, probing, wary like a kickoff return.

THERE'S A DRY CREEK BED CUTTING ACROSS THE FIELD. KEEP TO THE LEFT. WATCH FOR BOULDERS. BE CAREFUL NOT TO MAKE NOISE. THE FIRE WATCH MAKES ROUNDS. A BIRD-DOG SNITCH. WHAT WILL I DO IF I MEET HIM? YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE TOLD WHAT TO DO. ONCE YOU CLIMB THAT FENCE YOU ARE A HUNTED ANIMAL. KILLERS ARE AFTER YOU. IF THE FIRE WATCH GETS IN YOUR WAY YOU'LL DEAL WITH HIM OR YOU'LL NEVER DRAW ANOTHER FREE BREATH.

I watched myself on the projection room screen. B movie fugitive in blue denims skulking past

guardhouse. Halfway across the field I saw them coming. From behind building shadows fifty yards ahead two dark pig figures moving slowly beating the dark bushes. The alarm is out! I had been seen! The area swarming with pursuers! Guards with guns a-hunting! I stopped. Senses alert. It was all mammalian, shadow men moving up the hill toward me. I fell down on my back, still heaving breaths, nerve endings twitching, waiting. My glasses steam from sweat. I wiped the lenses on my sweater and peered down into shadows. Black trees silhouetted in the yellow glow from the barracks. The road ahead lit by street lights. The men now hidden in shadows were moving slowly. Hallucinations Doctor? Can't lie here helpless. Gotta go. I walked slowly at full moon toward freedom. The coast was clear. A thousand prison windows watched me run across the field, feet leaping, heart singing. It was all go now. I galloped by the barracks, jumped down into a ravine, scrambled up to the main prison gate along the brilliantly lit road past the prison entrance sign CALIFORNIA MEN'S COLONY WEST FACILITY in full view waving adios under street light to the railroad tracks loping north parallel to Highway 1. It was dreamlike simple. There were no actors on the set that didn't belong.

Car lights approached from the rear. I dove down on the tracks my face against cool steel, hands in gravel. A middle-aged couple driving north. Dangerous running, hiding along the tracks. I picked a way down to the ravine bordering the tracks.

Breathing hard legs exultant. My first free wild

run in seven months. Leaping joyful. Car lights approaching. Dove into tall grass. Lie panting, watching. If the right blinker flashes I'll run to the road. I was regretting every Italian resistance movie I had seen. Ridiculous sweating heroics. Memo to central casting: No more adventure flicks, please. Make the next one a South Sea island porny.

Cars roared past. Get up running. Lights coming. Hit dirt. Car lights coming. Hit dirt. How far is half a mile?

Up ahead I saw the dim outline of trees next to the highway. Climbed out of the culvert and ran to the first tree. Standing five feet from highway at the base of the second tree, I saw three trees joined at the root trunk. Well, they have the symbols right.

A long wait for the pickup. Scanning the cars roaring by. Two minutes. Five minutes. Ten minutes. Suppose they don't come? Maybe they got busted? Accident? Fuck-up in plans? Hitchhiking north on Highway 1 in prison garb?

A car is coming. Right blinker flashing. It pulled up in front of the tree. I ran from the shadows. The car door swung open. A girl with long dark hair leaped out. Code words swapped.

— Kelly!

— Tino!

We embraced. I ducked into the back seat grabbing the hand of the blond girl behind the wheel. Kelly jumped in slamming the door. Motor gunned we roared off.

— I'm Maru, said the driver.

— Where is She?

– In Denver waiting for you. You'll see Her Monday.

I had mixed feelings. I hoped She was out of the country safe but exultant we'd meet in two days.

Kelly was talking fast.

– Brother, we're glad to see you! We made two passes by the pickup spot. We were worried. You were late. I was going to start walking back the tracks to look for you. In case you were hurt.

– How old are you?

– Eighteen.

– How old is Maru?

– She's nineteen.

Kelly pointed to the back seat. – There's a new set of clothes. Change. I started stripping off prison denim.

– Give them to me, said Kelly.

– I'd like to save them. For Barker and Horowitz the archivists.

– No. We're going to transfer your clothes to another car. They'll drive south near L.A. and leave them in a gas station restroom. To make the pigs think we're heading south.

– How many cars do you have operating tonight?

– Four. You'll only be in this car for five minutes. We have a camper in Morro Bay to take you to Oakland. A third car goes south. And the fourth has the shortwave set to monitor police calls. How much of a lead do we have?

– I don't think I was seen leaving. So we have two hours before they discover I'm gone.

I passed over my prison ID, farewell note, Her letters.

– Save these for the archivists.

– There's a wallet and set of IDs in the pocket. Your name is William McMillan. Your birthday is November 14, 1929. Your address is 2925 Northridge Road, Salt Lake City.

The car slowed down in the Morro Bay. Saturday night traffic. A quiet town. We turned right.

– What happens here?

We have a lookout posted. The car slowed by the service station. The attendant, young, long hair waved. Our car picked up speed.

– We flashed the message that we had you and he flashed us that there is no police alarm yet. So far so good.

Maru was driving smooth and easy. In four minutes we reached a road by the beach. Car stopped. Maru turned back grinning. – OK brother. You get out now. I'll see you in Oakland.

I pulled the knit ski cap over my head and followed Kelly out of the car over the sand dunes down the beach. It was still a B movie, spy thriller, World War II.

After a hundred yards Kelly turned away from the sea, over dunes to a parked camper. A beautiful woman waited. We kissed. A sturdy gray-haired man came around the side of the camper and we shook hands.

– Welcome.

Kelly motioned me in back of trailer.

– I'm going to dye your hair now. A strange trailer just pulled up. They look suspicious. We

don't want to pull out suddenly. We'll hang around here for a few minutes and then hit it.

I sat on the edge of the bunk bed. Kelly standing at the sink filling a pail of water. She squirted spray-can hair dye on my scalp and began massaging. After a while she stopped and smiled.

— Kelly is my code name, not my real name. I'm not always a beautician. My father is Senator ——— and the name of our tribe is the Weathermen Underground.

I began to laugh. It all figured. The manic reckless guerrilla tribe. Scourge of the FBI.

— We had to keep it secret. We hope it's all right with you.

I suddenly flashed on the meshing of underground energy systems. Dope dealers raise twenty-five thousand dollars to finance the breakout. And the bread goes to the manic guerrillas.

— The twenty-five thousand went to buy dynamite? Kelly laughed.

— Dynamite, hair dye, and fast cars.

I was sitting on the floor of the camper, head in the bucket, Kelly splashing water, when the door opened. Frank poked his head in, cool, calm fisherman.

— Reckon it's about time to split.

The truck engine revved up, I was standing by the sink toweling my hair when we pulled away. Kelly was laying out the plan.

— We drive to intersection on Highway 101. I'll drop off there and switch to another car. You'll drive north to Oakland. We'll follow you with a radio car. If the pigs start throwing up roadblocks we'll stop you and pull off to a stash pad and wait

it out. If the coast is clear we'll drive to Oakland and then tomorrow to Salt Lake City. Bernadine, Jeff, Tom, and Mark are waiting for you there. You'll work out the next phase with them. They would have come down tonight but they are fugitives.

The camper stopped. Frank was at the door.

— We're in the parking lot near the gas station. This is the intersection of 101, said Kelly. I'm dropping off here. We'll be behind you all the way. See you in Oakland.

Frank was tugging at the license plate with a wrench. He pulled off California exposing Utah plates. The bumper sticker said: AMERICA LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT.

— Do you want me to ride in the back.

— You can ride in front with Martha and me and the girl if you'd prefer.

I climbed in the cab. A ten-year-old girl with shoulder-length brown hair was sitting next to Martha. Frank started the truck. I was sitting with Heather on my lap with my right arm holding her and my left hand was in Martha's. Frank was an American Legion hunting-fishing guy and Martha was soft Mrs. Middle America and Heather was everyone's TV girl—a Holy Family.

Martha ran it down. Heather had known about the escape for six weeks. They explained how it would help if she came along. And what the risks were. — Will I go to jail she had asked. Heather decided to do it. She said: — Jonathan Jackson was only nineteen and look what he did. The hardest thing for Heather was that she couldn't tell her older brother.

– This memory will be one of my most proud. Rescued from prison by an eleven-year-old girl.

– I'm ten, said Heather.

I started telling Martha about the escape. For the first time the whole seven-month charade became a comedy. The complicated double game. I thought of all the surprised people who would be rerunning memory tapes and began to laugh.

Frank leaned over and asked me to run down the options.

– When will they find out you are gone?

– At midnight.

He checked his watch.

– We'll be in Salinas by then. Figure it takes the State Police half an hour to be mobilized. The danger of a roadblock will come between Salinas and San Jose. If we can make it to San Jose we'll be in heavy traffic and they can't run a roadblock.

It was magic. The prison walls of Mordor. The darkened moon. The three trees. The perfection of the casting. Maru and Kelly as mythic heroines. The pigs conscientiously practicing to act like pigs, trimming their hair, rattling keys, dutifully fattening their asses, sticking out bellies. And the Holy Family elegance of Frank and Martha and Heather.

Frank told me when it was midnight. I started thinking aloud, laughing at the drama back in prison. Right now they've discovered me missing and phone messages are flashing back and forth to Control and Custody and over to the east side. And my cellmate Angelo, excited, amused, puzzled, and a little scared wondering (as every con wonders when anything happens) will this affect *my* parole? They are calling for a recount now

and checking the grounds and when I'm still missing the big whistle will blow its stack for long minutes and everyone in the east and west facilities will know there's been an escape. There are going to be a hundred unhappy guards and three thousand laughing inmates.

Frank checked the rear-view mirror.

— The follow-up car is with us. They'll let us know if the alarm flashes. Pretty soon Martha asked Heather if she wanted to sleep in the back and Frank said that maybe I should hide out there too so Heather and I moved back.

There was chilled wine in the refrigerator and I fell out listening to San Francisco rock and rolling north to freedom. I could feel Heather thinking so I called to her.

— Are you asleep?

— No. I'm too excited. When will we reach San Jose?

— Soon. I want to thank you for helping free me.

— Oh that's OK. It was fun.

I stood leaning my arms on her bunk; she lay her head on the pillow and we had a long adult rap. She explained how they had made two week-end trips to San Luis for dry runs. She handed me a round thin beveled sand-dollar disk with five leaves.

— Would you like this for a souvenir?

— Thanks; I'll take it to my wife. Do you know what the five leaves mean?

— Yes.

Heather was looking out the front window:

— What do you see?

– I see a sign saying SOLEDAD PRISON NEXT EXIT.

After a while Heather whistled.

– What do you see?

– The sign said San Jose. We're beyond road-blocks now.

We shook hands smiling.

– This was more exciting than any TV show.

Soon we're rolling along the freeway past the San Francisco Airport like any homecoming past Candlestick Park, up the ramps to the Bay Bridge across to Oakland.

It was three o'clock in the morning when the camper pulled up to a duplex in the slums of North Oakland. The pad glittered with psychedelic lights, the Stones were rolling on tape. Kelly and Maru grinning. First thing was a hot bath. My elbows and knees were starting to ache and my body was stiff, exhaustion coming on. Maru dumped bath oil in a steaming tub and sat on the bowl laughing while I soaked and told her the story of the high wire. Next came the kitchen. Scrambled eggs and bacon and cheeses, milk, juices. For first time in seven months my stomach opened up to free food. My legs and arms were throbbing sore when I lay down on the mattress and fell into free sleep.

9

Maru opened the curtains at nine thirty, flooding the room with light. How good to see a beautiful woman in the morning. Time to move. My suitcase with straight McMillan clothes was packed. Kelly started pasting a trim moustache over my lip.

— For security we've parked the trailer two blocks away. Frank will be waiting for you. Kelly and I will catch up with you by sundown when we rendezvous with Bernadine.

We embraced. Suitcase in hand, I stepped out in the bright California morning sunshine. It felt strange bouncing along public streets on limpy legs.

My heart sang and moustache flapped merrily loose in the breeze. Kids playing hopscotch watched curious as I stopped to press the stubble tape against my right lip. I turned the corner and saw Frank leaning against the camper. A man washing his car grinned as I stopped to press back the flapping left moustache. Frank tossed my suitcase in the rear. We both climbed in the cab and rolled out east on Highway 40. Frank watched me struggling with the moustache, smiling.

— Now that we're out of the traffic you can rip that off.

It was all normal. Two fishermen heading out for the high Rockies. Beyond Richmond the highway rolled down into the Sacramento Valley past a sign *California Medical Facility Vacaville*. I looked over the green fields to the metal wire fence and gray dungeon cellblocks.

I shuddered seeing the guard in the gun tower.

— In the center of that prison there is a cellblock for the most violent men in the State. They are kept in cages with walkways above so it is possible for guards to stroll around and look down into the pits. There is no furniture in those cells except a drain-hole toilet. When the men go out guards carrying clubs surround them.

After Sacramento, I drove.

— Pig patrol car coming up on rear, said Frank.

The rear mirror's full of high-antenna-waving dome light, black and white. CALIFORNIA STATE HIGHWAY PATROL. As it passed the pigs looked us over and sped away on rubber wheels.

Easy routine developed. For food-fuel stops I rested safe behind the camper's curtains, leaning against the sink in the middle of a Reno, Nevada, shopping center parking lot, sipping tea from a ceramic mug, reading Rap Brown. Frank was telling me the history of the Weathermen roller skating through the convention halls of radical debates their burnt flower eyes scraping dust from Trotskyed rhetorical molds and the marbled busts of revolutionary piety. No student of American politics could fail to see the inevitable uprising of this revolutionary tribe of young psychedelic activists, political mutants of the first television-Einstein-multidimensional-simultaneous-immediate-energy

generation. All the power dials were turned on. Jet streams across eyes of blue acid, crackling transistorized erotic charges sweeping through the high-school corridors turning on fourteen-year-olds (whose information input is greater in one week than Grandfather's in a lifetime). Wise ancient children, the smartest, best endowed, healthiest. Time's sweet pollen laughing answer to the lethal pressure of computerized machines. Blow up the wire-tapped, red-line, wire-tentacled computer. "The pump won't work 'cause the Vandals took the handles."

Frank described Bernadine Dohrn the Weatherwoman driving her motorcycle up the marble steps, her graduation gown cut mini to receive her law diploma. The flashy-leg child witch of the Revolution.

Was it days or nights we drove alternating? It was dawn when we crossed the Mississippi at St. Louis tired but smiling, drinking beer and dancing all night at the truck-stop café. At sunset Frank found the sign to Rendezvous National Forest and pulled the truck up a dirt road to some picnic tables. Two girls were sitting on a log playing a flute and guitar. Smoking grass.

Kelly and Maru. We smoked and laughed. One of those perfect moments under the pine trees in the hidden forest. Frank came out of the camper with a whiskey bottle after a big slug said Whew! Since Saturday night he had carried the load of escape. He had delivered the fugitive to the appointed spot where we awaited Bernadine Dohrn and the leaders of the Weathermen Underground. He went into the camper to fry a steak.

A pickup truck came along the road and pulled into the clearing. Two men walked toward us like Robert Redford and Jeff Hunter, turret-jawed heroes selected on the basis of keen living habits to play the Che Guevaras in Hollywood. With them was a beautiful girl. She had a long tidy pageboy. She dressed like no one else in the out crowd. Cashmere sweaters, black Capezio flats. She dated the conventional types, trashers, bombers, dope-smoking poets.

There was great joy among us as we smoked and talked. We discussed the plan. We were to spend the night in a mountain camp. But first Bernadine, Bob, and Jeff had to visit the Indians for permission. They would return by ten and climb the mountain.

The three Graces drove off taking the high energy with them leaving the forest glade cold, damp, fearful.

Who was the girl, I asked, so staringly attractive. But even then there was something sensual about her. Something older, more womanly. Kelly and Maru laughed delightedly.

— You mean you didn't recognize her? Bernadine Dohrn herself? High-school treasurer of the modern dance class to say nothing of Tumbling, Pep Club, Quill and Scroll Journalism Society, Prom Court, Youth Council, Tower Club. She's the rah-rah leader of the crazy motherfuckers from the Girls Athletic Association running down the aisles of American Airlines borrowing food from people's plates. Worst of all there's her unforgettable sex appeal. She has the most amazing legs. Penny a cocker spaniel completes the family. The

FBI posters will give you her height (5' 5"), weight (125), build (provocateur), and breathless details about her social security number. But that is all they can tell you. I can tell you Bernadine took the Sunshine with Her when She left me in the dark car listening to radio rock.

My prison clothes had been found in a service station near L.A. suggesting that the fugitive was heading for Mexico. The FBI had been called in on the case. We listened to a tape of Prison Captain Koffman's voice glum and bureaucrat playing down the escape. He just strolled out of the minimum security prison he did. Just hopped the fence like missing bed check at summer camp.

I was nervous. Should I hide in the woods? Kelly was tapping her hands to the Grateful Dead. Their confidence in the power of good vibrations warmed the air. Trust the young.

Bernadine, Bob, and Jeff returned with good news. The Indians had given permission to use the mountain camp. They knew I was a fugitive from the paleface law.

I climbed into the pickup truck and we bumped happy up the mountain road. Who are these Weathermen who move so freely in and out of every youth scene in this country? They are not in hiding but are invisible. If you want to find them, this is where they are. In every tribe, commune, dormitory, farmhouse, barracks, and town house where kids are making love, smoking dope, preparing for the future. Bernadine was rapping about the Weathermen trip. — We fucked up a lot anyway. We didn't fight around Bobby Seale when he was shackled at the Conspiracy trial. Four con-

secutive years we won the trophy for the best Homecoming float. Everything that everyone else debated about the Weathermen being tired, having abolished monogamy, invading high schools and tying up teachers to show teen-agers how simple it was, and, of course, dropping acid in communes to test the center: daze of rage and rites of love.

One terrible climactic day in March, three dear Weather souls were blown to pieces in a Greenwich Village town house. That forever destroyed our belief that armed struggle is the only real revolutionary struggle. It's a spiritual revolution.

Bernadine's serious eyes met mine understanding. It was what I was waiting to hear.

— The revolution is totally new, seven liberations: genetic; neurological; sexual; cultural; economic; political; and armed struggle only when it is forced upon us.

I do not see the Weathermen as violent. They violate no life. They dig human life. They realize that love is the key to the revolution. They live the new life-style! The political strategies are being expanded. The models and philosophies are not tired Bakunin, Trotsky, Marxist dogmas. The American Indians are one model. Living in the mountains close to land. Sitting around the council fire. Smoking up the peace pipe. Watching the white machinery destroy itself.

The truck passed some cabins with chimneys smoking. A brown-skinned man in a hunting jacket and long black hair waved.

— He's the Chief, said Jeff.

Near the mountaintop the road ran into a clearing. We jumped out and walked along a path into

the forest. After ten minutes we could see a fire ahead and the trail that led down into camp. A tall hippie sylvan kind, long hair, beard, and warm smile, was standing by the tree. It was a classic elvan commune scene. Stone fireplace circled by logs. Rough board kitchen table. Tents. From the shadow came this woman, forest dressed and smiling. I felt at home.

We sat around the campfire like fugitives have always done, flames flickering on outlaw faces, laughing, retelling recent escapades. Safe in forest rendezvous, rejoicing, celebrating the reunion once again of the ancient brotherhood and sisterhood. Smoking, drinking mint tea.

We walked back to the truck, unloaded sleeping bags, and spread out in a deep-grass meadow. Scorpio hung brilliant above in the clear star sky, wind in the pine trees, earth beneath our bodies. This is the way to escape.

After breakfast we hiked up the ridge to a peak panorama and sat on a giant log, high, looking down with mountain vision on space machines gouging green earth, throbbing power centers, tubular pneumatic fists smashing fragile cobweb flower bodies up endless moving escalators of prisoner conveyors and the war goes on and on. Here in sunshine on the guerrilla mountaintop we made our plans.

— What do you want to do? Where do you want to go?

— If you can use us here we'll stay underground in America.

— You're too hot. You should leave the country. Maybe to Algeria to join the Brothers.

— Where are the Panthers really?

Thoughtful glances.

— Who knows. On the run. Under the gun. Fucking up. Holding on. Learning, we hope. They say they want a popular front with whites and browns and reds and technicolor kids. They see the old structure crumbling. They sense the change. Like everyone else they want to channel it their way. Who can blame them? They say they want to work with white kids. Maybe they want to use us. They're under pressure from everyone. They say they are nonracists, internationalists. They publicly back every antisystem group. Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver have supported long hair, dope, new life-style, women's lib.

They insist they are the vanguard. The coming few months will tell a lot. Huey Newton has called a constitutional convention in Philadelphia. That sounds good. Huey calls himself Supreme Commander. That sounds bad. Eldridge Cleaver is always a ruthless enigma. There is only one way to find out where the Panthers are. Go to Algeria and try to turn Cleaver on. We'll come and join you. We'll have to get approval from Huey and Cleaver. The problem is: for security and secrecy we can't contact them until you are out of the country. There are too many informers in their group. Go to Algeria quietly with a false ID and then contact Cleaver. We'll send people to see the Supreme Commander here.

– We'll figure out how you split the country when we get to Salt Lake. Let us spend today turning on together.

I was not centered. My knees ached swollen and I yearned to be with Her. I was still jumping with prison security reflex. The Weathermen, confident after eight months of heterosexual underground, radiated serenity.

Bob smiled.

– You will always look back on this day in the sunshine.

We walked along the ridge. Down below two hawks floated over the valley. We stood watching as they rode air currents up and circled back closer closer ten feet above our heads.

Lunch around the campfire. Organic flour pancakes. Fresh vegetables. Steaming soup. Tender good-byes to our forest hosts. For ten years we had seen the underground network form in the communes. We had ridden with the dealers and talked over tepee fires with the new tribes. Now the outlaw guerrillas were learning how to swim like fish through counterculture urban pads, college-town collectives, surfer beach cottages, mountain communes. The Weathermen were recreating the original nose-thumbing, independent free American life-style. I was happy to be with them.

We drove down the trail to the Indian camp. The Chief welcomed us formally. His face was solemn but his eyes shone affection for the Weathermen. We sat around his wooden table. His wife brought beans and a meat stew. There were animal skins and rifles on the wall. Drinking coffee and puffing with deep thoughtful pleasure

from a cigarette, the Chief spoke quietly of the prophecies. That the white machine men would destroy themselves with greed. That the Indians would persevere and preserve the earth. That a young generation of whites would let their hair grow and return to the tribal wisdom and the brotherhood of all wild animals. He blessed me with his handshake; his left arm on my right shoulder.

Frank was waiting in the National Forest at sunset. Farewell to the Weathermen. See you in three days. I climbed into the truck and we continued the journey east. By midnight we were just hours out of Durango. I was eager to press on. Frank was businesslike. We are supposed to rendezvous at a highway camp tomorrow dawn. I slept fitfully. Aching knees woke me when I tossed and turned.

We cooked bacon and eggs in the camper, door closed, window curtains drawn. Frank kept peering out looking for the contacts. It's always nervous when you're late in the underground. I was churning to get on the move. I was worried that the people parked next to us on the beach the night of the escape could have copied the license plate number. Frank remained cheerful.

— Good. There they are.

I could see Frank laughing and back slapping with three Mexicans in front of the campsite toilets. They handed Frank a brown manila folder. He gave them an envelope and a handful of money.

It was ten in the morning and the sun half high in the sky when we started. My eagerness made it

a slower drive through the used-car-lot suburbs of Dallas. We inched through downtown traffic and left the city southwest. In a half hour we were out in the country again.

— Not far now said Frank.

We turned off the highway on to a side road and drove past irrigated and well-tended farmlands. We crossed a stream bridge into a wide valley.

— The house is about a mile ahead. I'm going to drive past it. There'll be a sign in the window if it's cool. Then I'll drop you off down the road. We don't want anyone to connect the camper to the ranch.

The old farmhouse was set back quarter of mile from the road. Orange curtains in the front window.

— All's cool said Frank.

The road curved east beyond the ranch. Frank braked the camper and waved to the door. We shook hands. I grabbed my suitcase and jumped down.

— I'm going to hide the camper and rendezvous with Maru and Kelly.

I started walking along the deserted country road. Fast. I wanted to run. When I got to the entrance to the farm road I saw a redheaded girl open the door and come down the stairs looking and waving at me. She ran back to the house. Then the door opened and She ran down the steps and started walking toward me. I was walking

easier. Then we both began to run. It was one of the best scenes ever. We were running toward each other laughing and she threw her arms around me and I lifted her, swinging her around, and held her close and we were in our arms. Home again.

10

SHE: Monday we had breakfast in the hotel room. A knock at the door and a tall gangly kid loped into the room.

Pam said, — Jerry always gets freaked when he has to come above ground in a hotel like this. He's afraid he'll meet his father.

We packed and just before leaving the room Jerry went into the bathroom and took the bars of soap.

An old battered pickup truck was parked across the street.

— That must be ours, I said.

First to an import place where I spent \$150 on beautiful things for your homecoming. I bought orange Japanese lanterns that would have looked perfect on that naked bulb in our room, but they got lost somewhere. Anyway I got orange bed sheets from India. Color of sunshine, two orange pillows, incense, candles, Tuberg beer and Chilean and Portuguese wine, Danish cheeses, Holland cheeses, smoked oysters, artichoke hearts. Then we stopped at a health-food store and I drank some carrot juice and bought more food. Then we stopped at a supermarket and bought some Kleenex and a carton of Camels. Then we stopped at a fruit stand and headed out to the farm.

I was a little shocked to see that the ranch house had neighbors right next door but everything else was sunny. Jerry baked bread and we went out and picked apples, berries, plums.

Then Pam showed me the lake. It was so beautiful and fresh. — We've got to build a wickiup for steam bathing.

I found just the spot for it. On the way back we found a forest clearing all mossy meadow and we fell down in the sun and breathed deeply. Underground with the Weatherman.

How many days did I wait for you there? It seemed like two weeks. Fixed up our room and baked bread and cooked meals and picked berries and apples. By the next day I was bored longing for you. I started looking out the second floor window at the road. You weren't expected until tomorrow but I could feel anticipation stirring.

Around three in the afternoon I started to expect something to happen. I was in the bedroom and saw a camper drive by and although I'd seen many such vehicles I was struck by the thought that you were in it.

Pam called to me as I came downstairs. — I think they just went by.

— I think so too. Did you recognize anyone?

— No. I just had a feeling.

Then I saw you running toward the house. I asked Pam, — Can I go to him and she said — Sure. What a scene! The old screen door slammed behind me and I went down the stairs two at a time. And I ran toward you with all my strength to be in your arms once again.

Mounting the creaky worn wood steps through the big farm kitchen leaping upstairs to the bedroom. In bed loving, laughing, at long last. Sitting on the bed. Beaming. Tell me everything. Getting high. Detailing flight, laughing. We hear voices below and call come up. The room filled with Pam and Kelly and Maru and Frank smiling in the corner. Smoking. Celebration.

Champagne corks popping, tape machine playing songs unheard in prison, fruit, homemade bread, reclining couches, almond-eyed houris, caressing, sweet, smooth camembert cheese, hearing cars swishing by on road below, I gotta girl way over town so good to me. The paint peeling off ceiling and wallboard broken wooden beams gaping. Cars on highway below.

Wine, grass, cheese, smoked oysters, incense, perfume, candlelight, and love. I hadn't slept sweet in seven months, running for three days, swollen knees, throbbing muscles, stiff sweet lips. Love is good.

Tuesday we walked by the lake. She led me within a thick grove of low aspens, slender trunks were bent and tied to make a bathhouse. We sat on the sandy floor scraping earth smooth and piling rocks.

— You love to play house.

Kneeling she looks up pushing her hair back laughing.

– Listen. What's that noise?

– A boat motor on the lake.

We were redskins crouching low in the bushes watching ranger uniforms slide by.

– Whitemen. Uniforms. The enemy.

We lay in the sand dune while gulls from Great Salt Lake wheeled above. At sunset the farmhouse burst open to the entrance of the Weathermen chiefs, sexy guerrilla heroes. Bernadine, Robert, and Jeff. Rolling it. The tape machine singing. They were waving stories of Weathermen Underground Help Prison Escape. Photocopy of the manifestos with kid gloves flown to L.A. mailed special delivery in plain envelopes to newspapers. J. Edgar Hoover promised that the FBI would capture the fugitives in ten days.

A family love reunion with the Weatherpeople, cooking dinner, drinking red wine, smoking, reviewing plans for splitting the country. Underground radio stations New York, San Francisco, college stations were broadcasting the escape statement and there was great joy among the tribes.

I had spent two hundred nights lying in prison bunks working out two hundred surefire plans for flight out of the country. A helicopter to a deserted Mexican road, a drive to Veracruz rent a boat to Cuba. Sail to Easter Island.

– It's really not that complicated. Let's use a simple plan. We're having a set of IDs made here. Use a faraway city address. Tucson, Arizona, or Atlanta, Georgia. Friday you go down and get a Utah state driver's license. There won't be time for a picture but your description will be on the temporary license. Sunday you fly to New York. Mon-

day apply for a passport. You can get it in a day. Monday night you fly to the Third World. Surface with Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria.

I was astonished. I never thought of carrying my face into a passport office crowded with feds and asking humbly for a passport. Or standing in an airport line to board an international flight? Ah, Professor, going to Algeria I see. Have a good trip.

It was September 1970. The Palestinians were ripping off planes to free their brethren from prison. At no time in the history of aeronautics was there more surveillance of international flights. And to an Arab country? Take a one-day-old passport past the metal detector and the sharp-eyed experts carefully checking each face for hijack tremors?

I could imagine the flash of recognition on FBI faces. Plainclothes detectives moving in and the click of wrist chains.

— Give me a rowboat to Cuba. I'll gladly hijack a plane to Hanoi. Let's do it with flourish. But not into a tourist trap.

Bernadine grins understanding.

— Let's meditate on it and see what it looks like tomorrow.

We sit around the kitchen table reading newspaper serializations of the life and death of a Weathergirl. It was heavy weather to read the vulgar syndicated version of a beloved sister.

— The town-house explosion really made us

stop and think. We had been swept up on the violence trip. Went to the edge of the abyss of armed revolution and peered in. The big question. When and how consciously you will use force to preserve your life? Siva's rugged yoga of divine destruction? Buddhist kamikaze detachment? The Gita's calm unblinking endorsement of consciously applied force? Captain Calley. Vietnam. Kent State. Manson. America's violence-prone.

The Weathermen simply sing the song of DNA: defend your home, protect your territory. The peace-loving Weathermen blow up war machines, lethal buildings, destroy the deadly *things* that threaten living *people*. The war is against the machine. To the American middle class, destruction of property is violence. The killing of Blacks is not violent. Prison had taught me the hypocrisy about guns. Every American is protected by arms. There is no piece of land in the world not under the protective surveillance of someone's guns.

The Weathermen Underground lives independent of American military and police guns. They are outlaws. They cannot call American police for aid. They consciously choose to protect themselves and to accept the protection of other guns. Rebel guns.

— Apply for a passport or hijack a plane?

— Let's postpone the decision and work on a disguise. If we come up with a good face change, my courage will mount.

What disguise? A beard? A moustache? Pad your weight? Makeup with scar? Brown skin? Blond hair? Dress in drag? Become an old man of eighty? Become a young man of twenty-five?

They'll be looking for me to dress up or hide behind a beard. The strategy is to take it off.

– Take off what?

– Take off my hair. Bald. – Who's the barber?

– Kelly.

I sat stripped to the waist in a kitchen chair while Kelly trimmed the back sides to an American Legion butch. She looked sadly at the scissors in her hand, brushing her long tresses away from her eyes.

– I just hate to do this.

Kelly snipping my top hair close to the scalp. It was a slow process. Kelly is a giggling artist. Standing back studying her work.

– Not bad. Now let's shave it clean.

Kelly drapes a hot rag on my skull and squirts lather foam. Carefully she starts to shave.

– Take it easy, bloody gashes will betray.

Easy gentle little strokes. After while Kelly begins to laugh. I walk to the bathroom and peer in the mirror at a high-domed, chicken-plucked moose-faced baldpate stranger.

When Bernadine, Bob, and Jeff return they gaped at the change. For the first time I feel a flicker of feasibility.

SHE: Tim went into the bathroom to look at himself and came out smiling.

– Well let's go. I've waited for seven months to see that *Woodstock* movie. Bernadine dug the idea.

– It will be a good test for your disguise.

The first public appearance. We walked past theater guards, bought two tickets, two bags of

hot buttered popcorn, ice-cream bars and walked down the welcome darkness to hear Richie Havens singing FREEDOM! FREEDOM!

We found seats near the front and opened our eyes to the bright silver screen for it's a home movie and Tim kept shouting: — There's Mike! There's Hugh! And I kept shushing him. We were really quite public, our commando group behind us exchanging loud comments and cries of pleasure. It must have looked funny a bald-headed man, a virgin secretary, and three young Hollywood actors.

We jumped with Santana and sorrowed with Jimi at the long sad ending. Jimi died the night before.

As we crossed the street after the show we saw a narc waiting on the corner. He glanced at us as we walked by.

Back in the car Tim said, — Now for some plastic goodies at a drive-in. He ordered enormous piles of cheeseburgers, malteds, and french fries. After seven months I was ready to freak out too. As we drove back to the farm Bob kept his head turned half to talk to us and half to watch the cars behind us.

Saturday morning was cloudy.

A tribal council meeting around the kitchen table. The baldhead disguise and last night's trial run gave me courage. It's still the riskiest plan but now I see it can be done. — What ID do I need to get a passport.

Bob and Jeff began spilling jigsaw pieces of identities over the table. — Here's your prison

escape ID. That would have been ideal except that he's already got a passport and he's heavily bearded. Here's another set. A beautiful one with driver's license and all. But the picture blows it. I don't see any way to avoid your getting a driver's license with your own picture on it. That means we'll have to wait till Monday. Then fly to Detroit Monday night. Get a passport Tuesday morning. Hit it for Madrid Tuesday night. If we're going to do that here's the best ID.

Bob pushed a set of cards across the table.

— Birth certificate. William John McMillan again. November 14, 1929. Scorpio. Social Security card. Temporary driver's license with no description.

— The birth certificate gets you the driver's license. And the two get you a passport.

The Weathermen were ready for a day of contemplation but I'm a McMillan businessman.

— We've got to buy clothes today.

— We'll get them tomorrow.

— Tomorrow is Sunday. Get them today. We'll build a peyote shrine by the lake. We spent the afternoon hauling stones and piling firewood. At sunset we headed back to the farmhouse but the Weathermen were tied up in the city.

A rainy Sunday.

— Shall we go on the same plane?

— You could go to Detroit tomorrow with Pam and take the plane to Madrid Monday. I'll meet

you there Wednesday morning. That would be safer for you. Your disguise is so perfect there's no chance you'll be detected.

— My life is in your hands. I'll do whatever you want.

— There is more chance that I'll be captured. I want you to be free.

— What if I'm in Madrid and you're captured? I want to be with you.

Fog-damp morning poured through a window hole. Our projectors were set for fast speed, hurry movements. Have a quick cup of instant coffee. Pack a bag of wrinkled soiled nerve endings. Smoke to slow it down. It's like loving. There's no need to hurry.

Mary Margaret McCreedy, recent graduate of Moore's Business School, patted her short-curled bubble head with shy gesture, brushed her modest dress, wriggled, giggled, walked down to the kitchen followed by the sober brown of William John McMillan, his American Legion bald pate gleaming in the morning light of Bob and Bernadine's surprise.

— Those are perfect disguises. They'll never recognize you.

We trunk the suitcase and climb in the rent-a-car. Bernadine drives. Bob leaning back explaining how to build up a social identity.

— First we go to the license bureau. You take the

written test and the road test. Then we go to the library and get you a card. Then a fishing license. Pam will buy the airline tickets. Then we jam it to the airport.

I stood in line at motor vehicles reading the traffic rulebook. Bad news. No chance for a test today. We have to make an appointment in advance. I tell the news to the group in the car. It didn't bring Bob down. He never takes low for an answer.

— Let's try another office.

We check the pay-phone directory. We drive to a suburban office. No appointments today.

— Look. Just go back there and lay a heavy rap on them. About how you have to have it today because you're leaving town or something.

— That doesn't feel right. The story is too flimsy.

— You could fly back to Nevada tonight and pick up a license there.

— No, we're on the move now. Let's pick up the fishing license and the library card and aim for Detroit on schedule. If we run into identification problems there, we'll deal with them. We'll get that Protestant minister to come down to the passport office to vouch for me or as last resort Pam can do it.

Down in the funky tenderloin of town, next to the fortune-tellers, pawnshops, gin mills we find a passport photo store. I sit in the adjustable chair arranging facial muscles so that bright light hurtling from flood lamps at the speed of 186,000 miles per second reflects from my mouth corner depressions, labial tensities, ocular worry wrin-

kles, stern, grim lifeless lunar frowns, all glancing off my spectacles.

I return in an hour and behold the invisible square American. Would you buy a lid from this man? Would you drop acid with this man?

We picked up Bernadine and Her in front of a department store with new luggage engraved W. J. McMillan.

Hit it for the airport.

Underground with Weathermen in the skyroom restaurant. Champagne cocktails. Boeing engines whining. High, excited, swept up in the jet blast of our own acceleration. The slow cloudy days of indecision behind us. We were on the move.

She and Pam unloaded their bags in front of the airport. Bernadine and Bob drove me to the parking lot.

— We'll say good-bye to you here, you go ahead and check in to the flight. We'll follow in a minute to observe and see it all goes well.

— We love you.

— We'll meet again soon.

Mr. William J. McMillan walked with careful dignity to the ticket counter, his horn-rimmed glasses reflecting that sincere serious no hanky-panky slightly worried face of a responsible businessman. Down the terminal corridors to the gate counter onto the first-class section of the plane. Scotch and soda, *Time* magazine with filet mignon.

At the baggage counter Mr. McMillan was approached by two nice chattering secretary girls who accompany him in a limousine to the Airport Motel.

Miss Mary Margaret McCreedy—for it is she—seems to find the Detroit climate sultry. She complains about the heat.

McMillan and McCreedy blithely disregarding the imminence of early wake-up take advantage of this fortuitous meeting at the airport to renew an old acquaintance which obviously calls for champagne. Champagne in celebration of the last evening on the soil of their birthland before flight into political exile.

Pam and I drove in the early rainy morn to the city and found Kelly sitting in a coffeehouse next to a khaki bag bulging with smiles, hundred-dollar bills, delighted stories about escape reactions, and copies of underground papers.

A nice Detroit policeman directed us to the Federal Building. I recalled coming to testify for John Sinclair and the Seven in Judge Hoffman's court as Pam guided me up the elevator to the door of the U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT PASSPORT DIVISION.

The room was crowded. Pam slid to the counter and brought forms to the writing tables. I pulled out the ID cards and paper with my personal history. My name and birth date. Now create a father's name and date and invent a mother's name and date and a wife named Sylvia and two lovely children. From the wall the face of Richard

Nixon observed every false move. High be his title, proud his name, he watched helpless as I stood in line behind two middle-aged Hungarians in bureaucratic trouble. The clerk, a round-faced plump Irish matron explained patiently and firmly, pointing to the rules with her pencil. Next two old Italians breaking English words to explain their passports had been lost in the mail. My Aunt Bridget shook her head in sympathy and helped slowly fill out the form.

A large sign above the counter listed the requirements for a passport. Birth certificate. OK. Photos. OK. Personal identification with picture. That's the problem. As Italians moved away I stood in front of my kinswoman. I flashed a slight smile of understanding. You'll have no bureaucratic trouble from W. J. McMillan, a fine upstanding Catholic businessman with two lovely children.

Her eyes twinkled. Birth certificate. That's fine, Mr. McMillan. Personal ID? Driver's license? No. I'm afraid I don't drive. Will Social Security card do? She frowned in concern. No it has to have your picture or identification. Pam getting ready to move in to offer voucher.

— Ah, I do have something here.

Aunt Bridget took my hunting license in her plump hand while Pam and I showered positive radiation.

— Yes Mr. McMillan, I can accept this. It has your description, well, it doesn't have your hair and eye color but I can see your Irish eyes smiling and your hair, dear man, the less said the better.

You or your friend can pick up your passport in three hours at the counter over there.

We walked out to the hallway where I lifted Pam and swung her around triumphant.

I bought a Michelin guide to Madrid, phoned Her the good news, and took a cab to the motel.

The plane was to leave for Madrid at 5:30 and we had to be at the airport at 4:30. At 4:00 I said they should be here by now, walked to the window to create a reality, looked down to see Pam and Kelly leaping out of the cab. They breezed into the hotel room flashing the ink-wet passport, airline ticket, and an opaque bottle of shave lotion hastily filled with the juice of Quick Silver. We grabbed our bags and flagged a cab, writing my signature in the passport in back seat.

The taxi driver unloads bags as the airport guards watch. Miss McCreedy shakes hands and thanks me for the ride to the airport and goes off with one of my bags. To waste time I kneel on the sidewalk stuffing the bottle in the remaining suitcase. Pam returns with my bag whispering loudly.

— Don't stay out here, there are all sorts of pigs watching you.

Directly in front of me in the terminal I see Miss McCreedy checking into TWA. I put bags down and watch intently until I realize that this is suspicious. Several men seated are also intently watching. Hijack surveillance agents scrutinize all passengers with personality profiles.

Quarter to five. Forty-five minutes to go. I pretend to make a phone call. Smoking in the waiting room.

At five o'clock I walk around to the TWA counter, request a window seat to Spain, inquire about the movie, smile patiently at the overworked clerk.

Carrying two pocket guides to Spain I walk slowly to the gates. Alarm vibrations. A big crowd has clustered. Four plainclothes agents standing in the runway search handbags, frisk clothes, run metal detectors. Moving forward I see Pam and McCreedy standing watching. They are supposed to board first. I move steadily into line behind a young Iranian couple. As the Arab faces reach the inspection table four suspicious snouts approach. They were trying to beat the overweight baggage allowance by stuffing toilet articles and gifts in the bottom of carry-on suit containers. The four inspectors new on job are alerted by Islamic faces. Two FBI inspectors with badges behind the railing make the agents doubly nervous. The jittery scene relaxed me. I flash a patient "What-a-fuck-up" frown at the head FBI. He said apologetically, — I'm sorry-to-inconvenience-you, sir. Four search agents feel my stern critique of their bungling.

As the frightened Arabs are waved through I step to the inspection table, send a stern look of Let's-get-back-to-normal-you-enlisted-men.

Eight eyes see I had no hand baggage. The first agent asks me to open my coat. He eyeballs for weapons. No need to pat me down. I wait patiently while two agents kneel to adjust dials of the large door-frame metal detector.

With mildly exaggerated longstep I moved through the scientifically calibrated law-enforcement gates, glanced back at six police and the

smiling face of Miss Mary Margaret McCreedy following me.

Miss Silly and Miss Pam at the flight counter. Can I still catch the 5:30 to Madrid? Marvelous. My fiancé is meeting me. Oh Pam, I'm so excited. I wish you were going with me. Yes, please make it round-trip. Will it save money? I'd like a seat in the smoking section.

I had planned to carry the little bag on with me. It contains books. Oh I didn't realize it would require special inspection. Thanks for not charging me overweight. I'll send it as baggage.

Mr. McMillan walks up behind us.

In the bookstore I buy *The Godfather* while Weathergirl Pam steals a book of poetry. The boarding gate was jammed with agents inspecting hand luggage.

— Good-bye sister. We love you.

— We did it all for love.

I watch my man McMillan walking down the ramp past metal detectors. Four pigs surround me. Examine my purse. One winks. I walk through vibrating poles through the accordion-pleated caterpillar tunnel to the smiling stewardess.

I walk past Mr. McMillan who glances up from his magazine and winks.

From the tourist class seat I watch Miss McCreedy picking her way down the aisle. A long long wait for the cabin door to close. The stew-

ardess running back and forth. Twice a top pig with big federal badge walked peering through plane.

I'm strapped in a seat-belt watching rerun in-flight movies.

The nuclear physicist flees Nazi Germany undercover while Storm Troopers search airport. A Russian poet ditches police escort and hops a plane for freedom. It's the last flight from Singapore before the enemy closes the airfield.

The cabin door up front slams closed, engines begin to whine higher and louder. Slowly the left wing swings serenely, picks up speed, and the plane lumbers to the runway. A calm voice instructs us to fasten seat belts no smoking and the giant aluminum-winged tube lurches, turns the corner, hesitates to gather up force and blast down the runway. The wheels leave ground.

The stewardess suggests that if the wing seat blocks view I can move back to the seat directly opposite Miss McCreedy. Our eyes meet exultant. We order champagne and looking across the aisle, we raise our glasses.

We woke as the plane started the sunrise descent to Madrid. It was a picture album moment to remember, touching the soil of Europe. It was a coming home. Tracing the ancestor seed line back. America is a genetic experiment on the part of Europe, Asia, and Africa. We were high on freedom and new experience.

We cleared customs smoothly and cabbed to the Ritz where there was no room. Conventions, block tours, and an army of Japanese visitors were jamming the hotels. After three sweaty hours of futility we decided on a long shot.

For years friends had told us of a Spanish law professor from one of the best families in Spain who had expressed great interest in meeting us. Mario. Mario. What's his last name? We sat in a café flicking mnemonic cards. She remembered. Mario Villanuova.

There were rows of Villanuovas in the phone book. Two were doctors. The first call clicked.

— Dr. Villanuova, my name is Dr. McMillan. From the Menninger Clinic. I am a friend of Timothy.

— A friend of his is a friend of mine.

— We have a message from him to you.

Mario insisted that we come at once to his

home. In the cab we agreed that she would go in to check the scene. If Mario was OK she could identify herself.

Mario lived in a mansion surrounded by an iron fence and formal gardens. She left the cab and I dropped off with the bags at the corner restaurant. In five minutes she appeared with Mario in a blast of welcome enthusiasm. He embraced me.

— His study is a Hindu temple, she said, with San Francisco posters and incense. I looked in his eyes and told him who we were.

Mario was fifty, young, and leaping around with joy. His wife Christina was warm, Andalusian, dark, striking. They were aristocratic people delighted by the adventure of hiding us out. American friends had sent him clippings of our escapades.

We were shown to a luxurious room. After a rest, a moment of sharing and a sauna, Mario and Christina took us to a small but hidden elegant restaurant. We were old friends before the evening was over.

Mario and Christina were bored with Madrid society. They wanted us to stay in Spain. He had a country house where we could live in isolation. He could arrange South American passports with his left connections. It was an intriguing prospect. But we knew that the Weathermen were waiting to see if Algeria could work out for us and for them. So it was decided that I would take a quick trip to see Eldridge Cleaver and sound out the possibilities for political asylum. The choice was to live in luxury underground with false passports or surface in a politically sympathetic country. It

was a repeat of the prison decision. Escape or liberation.

I hit the Algiers airport without a visa but the McMillan businessman aura produced a temporary entrance card. The first hit of Algiers at night was depressing. The streets were quiet, no women were to be seen. I missed Her.

The next morning I set out to locate the Panthers. The hotel clerk said try the newspaper. The editor said try the party. The FLN official said try the tourist office. The McMillan disguise was too good for revolutionary contacts.

The telephone girl at the hotel made the connection. She phoned around to some friends and put me through to the Panther embassy. An Afro-American voice answered.

— Right on, brother. We've been expecting you.

The cab wound up through the fashionable El Biar hills to a stately villa. The gate was locked. The bell was next to a brass plaque etched with the design of the fierce Panther.

Eldridge Cleaver was not at the embassy. I was to be driven to his home later. I spent the day talking with Cleaver's deputy, the Commander, a handsome, strong, humorous man. We had many mutual friends back in Babylon. He recalled that our first meeting was on a TWA flight from New York to San Francisco.

— We were the only ones on the plane. Eldridge and me and two other brothers. We were getting paranoid, see. Suspecting an FBI trap. When you and her got on, we said, sheet, now they really are going to ditch this plane.

The other Panthers at the embassy were im-

pressive, likable heroic men. One had hijacked a plane to Havana single-handed. Another had escaped the police raid that busted the New York Twenty-one by leaping thirty feet from a window and swinging across rooftops. They were glad to see me.

At sunset the Commander drove me to the villa of Eldridge Cleaver. He was at the gate and greeted me warmly.

— There's a friend of yours waiting inside.

It was Stu Alpert, Yippie leader, underground guru, disheveled long-haired legend of the American movement. He had been sent by Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman to prepare the way for us in Algeria.

Eldridge was pleased by my arrival. He urged that we join them, assured that he could obtain political asylum for us. There was much that we could do together, unify the American Revolution etc. etc.

Stu Alpert supported the plan. He was to return to America with good tidings of the grand alliance, arrange for more counterculture people to join us in Algiers. It was a breathtaking perspective. Interracial harmony, high-energy collaboration, a new society of American exiles. A romantic script which met our highest aspirations. I kept thinking of Charlie, Bobby, and Willie, and Everett; how happy they would be. And the circle of Black strength and affection that had protected me in each of the thirteen jails and prisons I had passed through. I kept wishing somehow that Kathleen was here. It seemed off somehow that we were blueprinting grandiose plans, the three of us, when

our mates were absent. It had a faint flavor of prison men talk.

Eldridge and Stu urged that She come at once. I could dig that. It was an old story. We were three half creatures spinning out big plans.

Eldridge drove me down to the hotel tenderly talking of our shared prison past and free future.

I phoned Madrid in a glow and She was ready to come tomorrow. She always answered the call.

She swept radiant beauty through customs-immigration convoyed by a fleet of admiring Algerian sub chasers in her plastic wig.

When we arrived at Cleaver's pad she flipped off the helmet, red-brown hair falling deep around her shoulders and offered to turn him on. E.C. freaked. He asked if she had smuggled any dope which of course was an unfair accusation. While we chatted amiably with the genial Commander, Eldridge busied himself with tape recorders and record players; listening to headphones while we played with affectionate memories.

She was disappointed to find that Kathleen had not yet returned from North Korea. We had such great expectations that She and Kathleen, if left free, would produce the proton intersection, the nuclear energy acceleration which always results from the connection of two liberated women.

As we were about to leave for the beach hotel Eldridge began to question us severely about our sleeping arrangements. He was concerned about our different passports and the security risk of our sleeping together illegally. I asked him what alternative he could suggest. Should we stay in the embassy? I indicated that after seven months of

prison separation we were desirous to be together and that if the Algerian officials were willing to grant us political asylum they certainly would excuse our sharing a hotel room with unmarried passports.

Then and there occurred the conversation that set the stage.

— I don't want to be your parole officer, said Eldridge.

— You wouldn't violate me for sleeping with my wife, would you?

— You can only violate yourself said Eldridge Cleaver, in the classic rejoinder of the parole officer.

I think that any prisoner will understand this conversation. I flashed on the fact that Eldridge walked from prison as a parolee who had conned the man (and the woman) with a good story and no one can fault that. Small technical matters perhaps, but Huey understands. Such things take on importance to ex-convicts.

During the next few days we saw much of Stu and Eldridge. We arranged for our asylum papers. Kathleen arrived, beautiful but tired and not too happy. She hated exile and Algeria. She was homesick, lonely, and lovely.

We were looking forward, looking forward to finding a home where Eldridge and Kathleen could come and be with us.

The Yippie delegation arrived three days before my birthday. E.C. had arranged it as a surprise party. Kathleen called and said sarcastically that our friends were at the airport without visas.

— What friends?

— Stu Alpert and a band of Yippies.

It was embarrassing for E.C. to have to go to the airport and confer with the officials about special entrance passes for a delegation of freaks, trashers, and bombers. Jennifer Dohrn, Bernadine's sister, added fresh charm. Anita Hoffman provided a dash of elegance. Abbie was waiting in Rome. The conditions of his appeal bond from Chicago did not allow him to come to Algeria.

The day before the birthday party an article in the government paper reported that Algeria had extended political asylum to an Afro-American psychologist and his wife who would be working for the Black Panther party. A press conference was announced in two days. E.C. leaked to the press that a Miss Dohrn would also be present. The assumption was that Weatherwoman chief Bernadine had joined us in Algeria. It all sounded mysterious.

The day before the press conference we were all ordered to leave our hotel rooms and remain secluded in an apartment guarded by Panthers. The reason for this restriction to quarters was that Algiers was filling up with newspapermen and TV crews. The government did not want us to be seen on the streets.

For the night of October 22 a large cake had been prepared. On the frosting was written: HAPPY BIRTHDAY. TIM'S FREE, FREE BOBBY. Bobby Seale was also born on October 22. He was awaiting trial in the New Haven jail. Eldridge led the group in singing Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Tim and Bobby, happy birthday to you. She had arranged

with E.C. that I be given a real loaded pistol for my birthday. E.C. was pleased with the idea. He deserves a piece, he said, but the gift was postponed.

Our little band of celebrants was unaware of the ripple caused by the bland announcement about the Afro-American psychologist. The news that notorious drug fugitives had joined Black Panthers under the protection of a militant revolutionary government was an amusing twist in the mass of repetitious political news that passed over editors' desks. The escape from prison and the flight from the country and the Weathermen added romantic flavors to the sauce. Algerian embassies were receiving requests for visas from dope dealers on the run. Algerian diplomats were questioned about their government's position on marijuana. The realities of Algerian politics may have intruded. Our asylum had been arranged by the FLN, the left political faction of the Algerian Government. The FLN had less power than the centrist army, the Foreign Office, and conservative ministries that deal with economic reconstruction. At cocktail parties and social gatherings along the international diplomatic network, the topic of LSD in Algeria offered possibilities for joking questions.

My *Playboy* interview bleep about LSD as aphrodisiac bounced back again. An Algerian journalist assigned to the United Nations during the week of our press conference told me that he had been asked by other journalists and diplomats about Algeria's erotic bomb capacity. At this point the FLN canceled the press conference.

Eldridge huddled with the FLN to decide how

to take the heat off Algeria as the new pleasure center. It was decided to send a Hippie-Yippie-Black Panther-LSD Delegation to Amman, Jordan, to join Jean Genet in a Grande Conférence de Presse Internationale in support of the Palestinian guerrillas.

Why did Eldridge invent such a bizarre international caper? He was reviving with me in Algeria an old script he had used in Cuba. The clue for this nostalgia rerun was provided by Lee Lockwood in his book *Conversations with Eldridge Cleaver*:

In the first place, Cleaver [Leary] told me he had chosen Cuba [Algeria] for his place of exile out of admiration for Fidel Castro [Huey Newton], Che Guevara [Eldridge Cleaver], and the Cuban [Algerian] people, and also because the Cubans [Algerians] firmly supported other revolutionary movements throughout the world . . . The Cubans [Algerians] were upset over the publicity that was being given Cleaver's [Leary's] presence in Cuba [Algeria]. They wanted him to fly to Algeria [Lebanon] . . . in order to take the heat off Cuba [Algeria]. He would hold a press conference in Algiers [Beirut], stay there for a while, and later on he would be allowed to return quietly to Havana [Algiers].

E.C. never made it back to Cuba.

We were uneasy about the separation. The FLN bought the tickets and we were relieved to notice that they were round-trip.

Our hotel on the beach was used by the government to house Soviet delegations in Algeria and

we observed the regimentation. The Russians, dressed alike in 1930 business suits, would march double-file across the village square to the restaurant, eat the same meal, and rise in unison at the sign from the leader.

Although I was the paper leader of our delegation, the Commander, stern and businesslike, functioned as bodyguard in both the protective and custodial sense. In the airport I wandered off to look at duty-free cameras and received a scolding.

The Beirut trip was a dangerous prank. I was making a highly publicized trip through five countries carrying a fake American passport. The Commander and I studied the geographical chessboard with care. Each country would be designated as red-safe or black-risky. We were secure in countries which received their guns from Russia: Libya, Egypt, Syria. We were exposed in those countries armed by America: Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan.

The first stop was Tunis. There was a nearby American air force base. The walls of the men's room were covered with scurrilous graffiti denouncing niggers. We huddled together nervously in the corner of the lounge. The Commander and I felt very close. He was wanted on murder charges in the USA. We were happy to take off for Egypt.

Avoiding the new Cairo Hilton we found ourselves in a luxurious old hotel, a palace built by the King to house the Empress Eugenia of France on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal.

For ten dollars we rented the imperial suite. Our little delegation of American revolutionaries was escorted down sumptuous carpeted corridors lit by candles reflecting the gilt, past servants and harem guards standing stiffly at attention. The furnishings in the rooms were museum pieces.

The Commander, sprawled on silk sheets having breakfast in the Imperial bed, listened to my proposal. Our plane was due to land in Cairo late the next afternoon so I pushed a plan to visit the pyramids in the morning. He had a fear of exposing us in Cairo, asserting that the city was full of Zionist agents, Interpol pigs, and CIA informers.

He gave me a lecture for unauthorized conversations with cab drivers. I kept saying, — Right on Brother in apology. I suggested that we hire a limousine to take us to the airport. The pyramids happened to be on the way. The Commander played the part. He listened to my crafty vizier plan and nodded approval. We were a congenial combination. He's save every scene with a conspiratorial smile. At the Great Time Ship of Cheops we were invited by guides to walk through a passageway into the center of the tomb. The Commander freaked. He felt naked without his gun. He decided to remain outside on guard while we moved down the stone labyrinth to the center of the tomb where Aleister Crowley led his bride. It is a classic Time Traveler's reincarnation capsule equipped with every facility, memento, charm, and convenience to facilitate entrance into the next time dimension.

We shot the next scene at the Sphinx. As our

cab drew up at the parking lot we were surrounded by a three-thousand-year-old tribe of experienced hustlers. I dug the aesthetics of the trap as it closed around us. We were each circled by a group of eight guides, maneuvered by body pressure next to a camel squatting haughty on the desert sand. I was told to sit down on the camel and take a picture. When I failed to obey I was pushed down on the camel seat, my right leg pulled over the saddle. With an enormous triple jackknife-back-forward-back motion the beast rose to its full height. A lash on the ass and we galloped off into the desert followed by a band of running guides. A turban had been shoved on my head. Camel whip in right hand I careened Peter O'Toole across the sands. I looked back and watched the white Black Panther fund raiser from New York galloping behind me followed by another crew of cheering guides.

Beyond the first dune out of sight of civilization the camels suddenly stopped and the guides began shouting demands for money. The price was not exorbitant. I peeled off for Marty and myself and we continued our dash. Mounting a sand dune I halted the camel and watched the Commander staggering across the desert toward me, black leather gleaming in the sun, followed by a shouting crowd of fellahin, one of whom was leading a camel. — Pay these mothers off, he shouted. It was a line used by Napoleon and probably by Julius Caesar. The Commander could hold his own in any such crowd.

Our cover was blown on the plane from Cairo to Beirut by a young long-haired British photographer. He promised not to expose us. We had a friendly chat about mutual friends. He asked if he would be allowed to continue with us to Amman or wherever we were going as part of our party, to take pictures over which we could have veto control. I reported this to the Commander who became angry. I told the photographer no deal. He was amiable enough until the airport bus when the Commander ordered him away from our party and threatened to break his camera. I had an ominous feeling that we were making an enemy. The plan was to check into a hotel and wait until morning when the Commander would contact the local al-Fatah to arrange entry to the Palestinian camps. We ended up by chance at the St. George Hotel which, we later learned, was press headquarters for the entire Middle East. Answering an early morning rap on the door, I gazed into the lens of a CBS TV camera. The reporter held a microphone and began firing questions. I slammed the door. Marty went out to scout. He returned, ashen-faced, to report that journalists, TV crews, and photographers were waiting in the hallway, in the lobby, and across the street where they were studying our hotel windows with binoculars. We were trapped by the press. The Commander shouldered his way down the hallway and out into the streets to locate al-Fatah. Our publicity scene was

so hot that the local al-Fatah referred the decision to Amman. The Commander was alarmed. I was scared. We were dangerously exposed. An American left-wing journalist came up to confirm our gloomy expectations. There was little other news breaking in the Middle East at that moment. Everyone was waiting for the Syrian cabinet to fall. The international press, bored with war, was zooming in on our slapstick feature story. The American embassy was pressing the Lebanese Government to arrest me for carrying a false passport. The Palestinians in Amman were delighted by the buzz and warmly invited us to come, but the problem was how to enter Jordan quietly without embarrassing the King. After long conferences with local leftists a plan was formulated. We would call a press conference for early that evening to be held in the second floor of the hotel. When the press was lured away, I would duck down a rear service elevator, exit the hotel from a side door, be met by a car, and spirited to a hideaway and post thence to the Syrian border a short auto trip away.

As I stepped off the service elevator to a downstairs side dining room, bright television lamps switched on and cameras whirled. The journalists had not been fooled. Followed by reporters and photographers, I went into the street, straight-armed a *Newsweek* bureau chief, jumped in the pickup car, slammed the door, and took off. The Arab chauffeur careened through Beirut.

We were certain that we had eluded our pursuers. The car drove down a side street to a restaurant. I was hustled into a rear dining room. After a couple of minutes the chauffeur ran into the room to say that our journalistic pursuers were entering the restaurant. The chauffeur led me up a stairway, opened a door, and shoved me in. I found myself in a pleasant bedroom/sitting room. An elderly Arab lady and a five-year-old boy in a crib looked at me curiously. She spoke no European. I was forced to make gestures. She nodded and left the room. After a few minutes she returned with a pretty girl who smiled in a friendly way. The old lady pointed us through to another room and shut the door. We were now in a bedroom. The girl crooned an Arab love song. Before I could feel better, the door banged, knob turned. I shoved my shoulder against the door while two reporters outside the hotel shouted questions, appeals, and threats. With the arrival of a third journalist the door began to open. I let go, darted through a door to the rear to the kitchen, and then to a small bathroom. The bathroom door had no lock. In seconds the hunters had pushed in. Standing around an open floor sewer we confronted each other. The *Newsweek* man was cool, — Do you really want to have your press conference here. Why don't we go into the next room? I sat down in a chair in the girl's room. The three reporters squatted on the floor firing questions. My friends were nowhere to be seen. Anything I said, however parenthetical, would be taken as a quote . . .

A few minutes later friends came. As I came downstairs cameras flashed and I waved feebly.

We returned to the St. George Hotel in chagrin. I smiled wanly to the newsmen clustered around the door of the hotel room, told the porter to bring them drinks from the bar with my best wishes. The rest of that night was spent collating reports from informers and formulating plan. The Lebanese Government, having no desire to get embroiled in a conflict between LSD, al-Fatah, militant Black Panthers, Jean Genet, and the American Government would not arrest us but wondered if it would be possible for us to hit the road within forty-eight hours. We knew that radio messages were careening back and forth between the American embassy and Washington. In the underground you keep moving.

At three o'clock in the morning we packed our bags, paid the bill, and grabbed the 6:00 A.M. flight to Cairo. Both the press and the Egyptian Government had been alerted to our arrival. The Egyptians were polite but firm. We had to remain in the Cairo Airport Hotel. There was no plane from Cairo to Algiers for two days. With a stroke of diplomatic brilliance the Commander shouted to the Egyptian official and to the reporters present that we wanted the embassies of China, North Korea, and North Vietnam notified of our desire for sanctuary. Our presence must have provoked amused head scratching on the part of our hosts.

The next morning a delegation of officials visited our hotel rooms. We were told that a government limousine would take us to a hotel and that we were to be given Egyptian freedom until our plane left the following day.

For three days wire-service dispatches reported

that we were being ejected from one angry Arab country to another. In truth the reactions of the Arab countries we visited were humorous and hospitable. The fate of our commando band had been discussed at cabinet level in four Middle Eastern countries and perhaps, just perhaps, we contributed a few moments of levity to the crisis-plagued Middle East.

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Safely back in Algeria we continued our easy routine at the Beach Hotel. We took walks in the sun along the beach and spent quiet evenings together.

We were hoping to arrange for Algerian residence papers and a country house. The political asylum deal was going through but there was a housing shortage and the prospects of a seaside villa became entangled in red tape.

We were somewhat disappointed in the scope of the Panther operation. There was no broad front of exiles working out political strategies. There was Eldridge and a small group of homesick refugees who lived in military restriction, pacing up and down in villas, peering out windows waiting for the Oakland police to attack. The undercurrent was anger and frustration. We were learning to adjust to the new environment.

In asking political asylum from a revolutionary country, we were crossing The Line, fleeing to the Reds, defecting to the Arabs. It was James Bond genetic energy magnet that pulled us to Africa. Abandoning the society of our white forebears, casting our lot with Them, the dark slaves, we became racial renegades, now part of that shadow crew of genetic traitors who haunt white history

books, frontier western scouts who join the Indians, British officers who learn Arabic, smoke Kif, join Holy Wars, Darwinian desperadoes leaping from the sinking white ship, seed opportunities, shipwrecked sailors on North Africa's mutant coast of slaves and slavers.

We began to experience Black, think Black, sense every situation in terms of racial overtones and undercurrent. We said *Right On!* frequently and slapped palms in moments of delight.

We did have trouble with the motto Shoot to Kill. We suggested Aim for Life or Shoot to Live.

Eldridge came to visit us at the hotel. He checked out entrances and exits.

- Seeking escape routes, Eldridge?
- He squinted his eyes and reflected a long time before answering. It was his oriental habit.
- As a matter of fact, I was checking entry points.

Eldridge was moody. At times when I came to the embassy he was rude; other times friendly, inquiring about our move to the apartment in the city, asking interested questions about what we were doing or whom we were seeing. He asked a lot about acid. He inquired about my financial transactions. In comradely solidarity he would join me in berating lawyers, publishers, and reporters. We had a lot in common. It was a new experience for me to be dependent on a strong variable, sexually restless, charismatic leader, who was insanely erratic. I usually played that role myself.

Eldridge did not hide his disapproval of our life-style. Basically he dug it but believed that personal freedom and hedonic experiments should be postponed. The free life-style was an instrument in the evolutionary unfolding. His vocabulary was political. Ours was biological mutation, molting, metamorphosis.

The younger Panthers seemed to welcome my visits but, in general, cheerfulness was revisionism. — Goddamnit, what are you always smiling about? You think you are free?

Sometimes we would talk intimately about our mutual prison contacts. Usually Eldridge treated us with arrogant superiority. He gave me the collected works of Kim Il Sung. He suggested that we have our mail sent to the Panther post-office box in the Grande Poste. A Panther drove down every morning to pick up the incoming letters and packages. It was a communal gesture, having our address in care of the Black Panthers.

After a while She refused to come in the embassy and would wait outside in the car. She longed for contact with Kathleen and the other Panther women. Love gets so twisted.

Twice a week I would drive to the Panther embassy in El Biar to pick up the mail, which was often battered and torn.

The attitude of the Panthers changed after the Beirut debacle. I was no longer Tim. They called me Leary. The Panther scene seemed low on enthusiasm. An uneasy distance developed. I offered my energies to the cause but there 'didn't seem to be much for anyone to do. It was a media trip. They had rooms filled with magazines and daily

copies of the *Paris Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times*. Agents from all over the world sent clippings and newspapers. Husky warriors were kept busy filing paper. It was politically and emotionally frustrating.

The sexual vibrations of the country were gloomy as well. The Algerian men proved during the revolution that they were the toughest fighters in the Arab world. With victory and independence, an orgiastic feeling of free energy swept the country. The lid was blown. Veils were off the women. Bearded, long-haired warriors walked the streets. Then, as after all revolutions, the new socialist rulers closed it down. Political revolutions inevitably lead to restrictions of sexual freedom. The lively variety of the fading empire is replaced by puritan virtue.

Algiers was again a sad, bored, uptight town. The women were back in veils. They moved in gray robes timidly flashing disappointed eyes and ankles. After sunset there were only men in the streets. The young, handsome dudes, shaved, moustached and dressed to flutter collected in nervous crowds along the sidewalk cafés to drink and argue. There was no action. Sexual frenzy but no girls. The Revolution wasn't freeing what everyone longed to have. The male grapevine knew exactly how many unveiled women were in the city. Three Swedish Ballet dancers at the Alletti Hotel. Two secretaries for American oil companies at the St. George. Four girl tourists arrived on the five thirty Air France from Paris. Whispers among the roosters. The kids at the university were seething but no outlet. Fun was forbidden. Rock and roll.

Miniskirts, long hair. Dope. Free speech. All banned by the government. The university ran on the old French professorial autocratic system. The hope there, as everywhere, is with the women. College women refused to wear veils and that took courage. High government ministers had women in government-owned beach houses. There was a small call-girl setup around the two big hotels for visiting oilmen. The kids listened to French rock stations and dreamed of getting out of the country. Ambitious young men with moustaches stuck in socialist offices behind typewriters, saved money for two summer weeks in Majorca to stock up on Swedish girl memories to lie about during the long gray winter in the girlless cafés.

And the Panthers roared along the main street in their cars and strutted up the broad steps of the Grande Poste in black leather. Their noble confidence provoked ennui.

We stayed in our hotel suite on the beach. She is an interior decorator by nature and wove soft rugs and flying carpets of bliss.

Eldridge was often after me about money. His budget was high. I pledged half the profits from writing this book. That was many versions ago. He pressed for specific figures. I said that ten thousand dollars would be reasonable. In America over 90 percent of our income went to the government or to lawyers. The ten thousand was a tax. It's an old biological custom: symbiosis. The oldest political game. The Panthers virtuously demanded everything they could get from American visitors. We were deprived exiles. Algerian shops were expensive and empty of American goods. It seemed

reasonable that visitors who breezed in with valid American passports should leave their excess capitalist luxuries.

Once, a white visitor staying at the embassy handed me a book he had bought. A Panther grabbed it and said, — You been here three days and didn't tell us you had that book. What else you got in you bag we haven't seen.

We were kept isolated. We'd hear about reporters in town looking for us, or friends who couldn't get through the Panther cordon. We were kept silent and immobilized.

E.C. often complained about the political capital he had invested in us and the problem that long-haired hippies and dopers caused him. I said that if our presence in Algeria created problems for the government or for the Panthers we'd be glad to move on. E.C. said that there was no country in the world that would harbor us. Capitalist countries work with Interpol. No socialist country is going to protect a drug advocate. Eldridge made it clear that only his influence with the Algerian Government was keeping us out of prison.

Many of these undercurrent dissatisfactions emerged when the Panthers ousted our friend Randy, a twenty-four-year-old handsome spiritual presence. He moved with the grace of a Tai Chi adept. He came to Algeria from the Middle East. He had been busted by Pakistani police. That cost him two thousand in bribes. And again by the Lebanese customs. He was hoping to relax with us in the freedom of Algerian sunshine.

When he walked into the Panther office, happy to be with outlaw brothers, and asked for our ad-

dress, his luggage was searched. He was frisked. Mug shots made. He was cross-examined. When asked about dope he cheerfully produced a large slab of hashish which he had artfully smuggled. The dope was confiscated, his bags removed, and Randy was instructed to wait in a side room.

Notified hours later of his arrival, I drove happily to pick him up. Where are your bags. He motioned to the office. I grabbed them and we drove off. In the car Randy told me of his reception. He was angry.

The next time I visited the embassy I raised the issue with the Commander. He was indignant that my friend had complained. He defended the security measures. Algiers was swarming with CIA agents disguised as hippies sent to assassinate Panthers. Everyone was suspect. There's no third way. You are either part of the solution or you are part of the problem. That was the sacred slogan.

I argued for a broad political coalition. The Panthers wanted a small hard-core military band. It's the old refrain. Open it up. Close it down.

— We are setting up a revolutionary police force here. We have to be tougher than the imperialists. When we come to power, we're not going to let people take any drugs they want. You know we're no prudes. That hash sure is good. Too bad you haven't gotten to try it yet. Don't forget we have total control over Americans who come to Algeria. We're the official embassy. The Algerian Government doesn't even recognize Nixon's Government. This is liberated revolutionary turf. We can search. We can seize. We can arrest. We can confine people as long as we want. We can do worse than

prison. And we have. We cannot tarry with talk about civil rights.

– Did you say civil rights, I asked.

– Don't mention civil rights to Eldridge or you'll never get your hash back.

The Commander smiled. I'll vote for him for Sheriff anytime.

Eldridge phoned and said he'd be out to the hotel. It was a curious visit. Eldridge and Kathleen arrived elegant and haughty. They were social superiors coming down from the fashionable embassy hills to visit the disarray of our hotel room.

– What's that horrible smell, said Kathleen. I hate incense.

She is a beautiful, intense, strong woman not totally comfortable playing executive wife. She spoke in moralistic certainties. Eldridge and I went next door to discuss business. Eldridge asked me about money. Then he produced the hashish with a smile.

– Good shit, man.

Only a third of the original slab was there.

– Are you going to give us half?

I broke the fragment and gave him the fifth sixth.

– When you move to that apartment in the city we'll spend more time together.

The next visit to the embassy, E.C. spoke with some enthusiasm about a new plan. He would interview me with a tape recorder. Eldridge too had been the subject of a *Playboy* interview. The editors asked me to write a letter to the editor about the interview. It was the only letter printed which

honored Eldridge. Eldridge said that such an interview would enable us to discuss the various perspectives which we shared or did not share and allow me to be presented to the world as a political figure.

Eldridge believed that we had performed service to the Revolution by encouraging dropout. But now that destructive phase was over. It was time to tell the kids to drop back in, turn off, cut their hair, and work diligently for the new Maoist order. — I'm a journalist basically, he said.

The interview never took place. Instead came Bella to our hotel accompanied by an Algerian friend named Ahmed. He was an official in a government industry, intelligent, intense, sincere. He wore short hair, white shirts, dark business suits, and talked passionately about armed struggle and violent revolution. Bella was a New Yorker who had worked for the Algerian Revolution during the war. She was protected by top ministers with whom she had lived and worked in the exciting days of armed struggle. She worked for a government publication but her central role was as a sponsor and adviser to Eldridge and the Panthers.

She was a great woman who lived richly. She was wired to violent dangerous revolutionists, gambling for and using power. She knew a lot, felt deeply, and was always ready for action. Boom, boom, she could tell one of the great woman stories of our time. But the Revolution had disappointed her. Her love was expressed in true believing. Her favorite word was "political."

She came (sent by Eldridge) with the proposal that Ahmed would interview me in French. She

would translate and we would publish a book in English and French which would explain the cultural revolution and our conversion to Maoism so that the European left would understand what Eldridge was doing with us in Algiers. We would make money too. She had talked to Eldridge about setting up a publishing company.

It was agreed that I would come to Bella's apartment in Algiers two nights a week.

My loyal companion came with me to the first meetings and contributed a poignant version of our first meeting and our life together. Then she got bored and stayed home.

The interviews were complex. Ahmed would ask questions in French. I would answer in English. It was all taped. Bella would translate. We would drink strong Algerian wine. Bella would gracefully excuse herself and miraculously produce a gourmet dinner. She was an international wonder.

Ahmed was opinionated. When my answers fit the current Maoist line he would clap my shoulder and beam. He liked my critical analysis of the rise of American imperialism during World War II and the decline and fall during the roaring sixties. He held four cards which he continually produced to trump my logic: Hiroshima, Armed Struggle, Vietnam, and Racism. If I failed to include any of these topics, he would challenge the omission. I would drink wine and produce bawdy Lenny Bruce vignettes of American life, Ken Kesey, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder hedonic-guerrilla tactics turning on the country, corrupting youth, kicking out the jams, blowing minds, encouraging the process of cutting loose, dropping out, living free. Ahmed

would frown and mutter in French unless I closed each rap with the phrase "in order to end the war in Vietnam, crush racism, and destroy the white bourgeois mentality." I used to kid him about loosening his white collar and after a while he started wearing sport shirts.

I was talking too much, getting too far out. It's a lucky thing there was no cocaine around. Bella encouraged me with her pleasure and assurance that when the tapes were typed up we could edit out anything that was indiscreet. Bella agreed with the Reichian theories of the sexual basis for political postures and the importance of adolescent erotic imprints on subsequent political feelings but she felt that it was too personal to be accepted by the serious European left opinion that was to be the eventual judge of our political rehabilitation in the socialist world.

Bella interpreted every event as supporting The Revolution or helping American imperialism. She spoke of Eldridge as the most brilliant political mind she had ever known. She said that Ahmed was the second-best political mind. It was interesting to discuss politics with professional revolutionaries. The universe in all its wonders was reduced to the simple dualism: Is this useful for us or useful to them.

I realized that Eldridge would be listening to the megalomaniac tapes so on them and during our occasional meetings, I encouraged him to act with bold confidence. He was closing off into a suspicious, angry doctrinaire place, denouncing the Algerian Government, the Russian Government, racists everywhere, Arab and European. He was in-

creasingly bitter about political developments in America. He attacked Angela Davis for being a Russian agent, for stealing headlines from the Panthers. "The sweet case of Angela Davis," he would mutter. He heaped ridicule on the Yippies, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Leroi Jones, Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, James Baldwin, white protesters, the Berrigans. He did not like George Jackson's writings. He saw revisionist tendencies everywhere. He refrained from criticizing Huey Newton, whose picture hung in the waiting room. He liked the Weathermen, particularly Bernadine Dohrn whom he called the witch. According to his version, the Weathermen were angry Red Guard heroes intent on violence. He didn't respond when I told him that the Weathermen were nonviolent people open to new models for the world to come and that they were not about to parrot Maoism. But as another disappointed visionary, I knew how he felt.

13

One of the young Panthers requested that I supply him with a certain kind of peppermint candy sold at the beach. Next time I arrived at the embassy he assumed an extortion stance while I pulled out confections from my briefcase like a rich Jewish boy at P.S. 76.

— You sure you got no more, he demanded suspiciously.

I pretended to search, looked in his surprised eyes, suddenly slapped his open left palm in the Panther intimate brother ritual and laughed. They really couldn't deal with freaks.

— Now where is my mail, I said.

He handed me a large, torn-open manila envelope which contained a bulky manuscript. He said some hippie had come looking for us and left a copy of a book he had written. Sitting in the car I examined the manuscript, *Whisper* by Brian Barritt. The writing was the familiar script from San Luis, molecular strings of precise poetic chemistry. I felt that old feeling of mystery, paradox, and magic, good magic to liberate. The message and the style was what my nervous system wanted to transmit. I drove home quickly wondering what it could mean—wondering why the Englishman, namesake of my prison electri-

cian, unknown author of a genius work, was now in Algeria looking for us.

When I handed the manuscript to Her, she said, — Here we go again; he is a great writer. Can he write some script to get us out of this prison?

The next morning the desk clerk phoned. A Monsieur Bahreet was inquiring. A moment later brought a knock on the door. I turned the knob and autopilot jettisoned a time-pimp onto our screen. There stood the genuine Brian Barritt, *Bonne Chance*, the slim-hipped gambler with a girl he called Liz the Cosmic Hoar. Little David, four years new, was with them.

— The Pimp, the Parson, and the Pusher await your desire, he said. Looking for something? Like a woman, a God, a fix?

— We are looking for a space to drop some time in, I replied.

— I hear you got voodoo troubles, Papa Doc juju baby beating drums at El Biar? You are better off with the brown chicks in the Casbah than them phosphorescent green Panthers walled in that liquid pink embassy. He handed me a sheet of grimy paper. Here's a nice space. Used to be used as an army stash during the revolution. As the war raged through the Casbah a pocket of guerrillas were trapped inside so it became a shrine and now the Shira smokers got it back again. It's dug in the side of the mountain by twelfth-century Turkish gnomes right under the rue Diable, a nice hovel to spend a bit of time.

— Where? I asked.

— Where else? In the Casbah, he said.

Brian is an English Untouchable. His shadow

falling across the path of middle class is enough to contaminate twenty lives. He is highly toxic. He wasn't sent to Coventry, he was born there.

Brian was born a dropout. Every month during his childhood his father made a journey to London and returned with four immense bottles of dark brown laudanum, then sat in his wooden chair, spat into the fire, and spent the evening sipping Opium from a silver spoon. At the age of ten, as World War II raged in the shell-shocked sky, Coventry urchins played among the ruins of the city and unearthed unbelievable riches from the bombed-out homes. They squatted under floor boards of mutilated tenements, sucking hollowed elderberry stems, and they inhaled fumes from the sap of scarlet poppies sprinkling bomb craters.

Brian is ancient but not old, for old is a person who expects to die of decay. Young is a person who admits the possibility of dying by other means. He has put as many drugs as possible into his body for thirty-six years and is obscenely healthy, diabolically wealthy, and looks about twenty. He intends to maintain this state for an indefinite period. He is not going to die; they will have to kill him.

We sat on cushions in our hotel room reviewing threads which had led us all to North Africa. Brian was especially delighted by our story of the prison electrician dope dealer who had somehow found a copy of his *Whisper* and also taken his name. We were entranced by all of his tales.

At sixteen, he took one look at the grease and beer stupor of Coventry auto assembly lines, and shipped out to see. His first ship, the *Sugar Pro-*

ducer, was a rusty tub of barnacled depreciation so unseaworthy that only alcoholic scum would keep it afloat. There was a free rum ration. The entire crew had a grog habit. A Maltese fireman turned him onto grass smoked solely for intoxication. Dig this innocent seventeen-year-old, small, wiry, with fresh blue eyes walking through the wicked streets of Kingston town breathing fumes of liquor and perfume of whore. Whenever he'd enter a brothel wide-eyed sailors smiled and the whores clustered around. He quickly learned to use his youth and small stature. (The best comedians and lovers are usually of small stature.) He always told the whores he was a virgin and was consequently engulfed by erotic solicitude—sucked and fucked without having to pay.

His postgraduate training came in the army; three years of AWOL, stockades, marriage, drugs, and mysticism. The British troops in Cyprus were stationed in the post office overlooking Ataturk Square where, as bombs exploded, lascivious girls climbed rope ladders hung down by lustful Tommies. The army mission was to search for arms—an excellent excuse to wander through the back alleys and corridors of leisure. Just about one midnight he got busted for sleeping on guard duty.

It became a sort of yoga pilgrimage for Barritt to spend some time in each British military prison including the grim Colchester.

After discharge, he dropped down into the London underground and lived with various women, painting and pushing grass. He used art as a method of flipping into trance states, hands whirl-

ing, brush flashing color on cloth. It was all magic by this time.

The books on magic, especially those by Aleister Crowley, and his own opium experiences, prepared Brian for the acid which hit London in 1965. It was a classic lysergic education. He had never heard of a bad trip nor dreamed of such ecstasy. He and his wife then headed for India to pass through the conventional stages of the alchemical apprenticeship, Kahlighat Calcutta to touch base with Ramakrishna, elementary chillum smoking in Benares, following the occult trail of Burton, Crowley, Gurdjieff, and Sir John Woodruff to the secret tantric shrine north a bit from Delhi where temple prostitutes with painted eyes and golden bracelets still sit for hours on your cock murmuring nonstop ommmmmm. Then they took the second-class bus from Khategodam which winds up spiral roads through the foothills of the Himalaya to Almora to study with Lama Anagorika Govinda, whose *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* was the hot book of the season. They arrived in Almora a few weeks after we left.

Near Quetta Pakistan, Brian went on a two-day camel journey into the desert to attend a religious hashish smoking ritual.

— So that put me well in with that particular smoking family which was composed of fakirs and wandering holy men. Abi Bulla who ran the hash shop invited us to Menika, a valley snowed in most of the year where the tribal hash was grown, so I could see the whole process and stay in the valley the whole year because there was no

way out for eight months when snow blocked the passes.

It was necessary to buy a couple of donkeys to make the trip so it was decided that Brian and his wife would fly back to London with seven and a quarter pounds sewn into thin waistcoats with lots of pockets and worn underneath their shirts.

Uxbridge, England Magistrate's Court: seven and a quarter pounds of hash on the table smelling of intrigue and Assassins and a pair of glittering brass scales held in the policemen's hand.

— You will go to prison for four years.

He went to prison to get away from chicks like a monastery man. He spent the time in solitary meditation, a spiritual trip, avoiding prison companionship and absorbing Tarot, Cabala, and sensational press articles about the psychedelic revolution. He wrote as a method of getting high.

The scripts were written in minute style on small pieces of paper, rolled and scotch-taped under his penis to escape detection during the pat-down inspection.

Two-thirds of the scripts were never recovered from the recipient friends. The remainder were assembled, typed on small sheets of paper and shuffled into various card combinations. Twenty copies of the first mimeographed soft-cover edition had been sent to a headshop bookstore in Los Angeles which seemed to account for the electrician, whose literary taste could not be disputed.

While Brian talked, Little David Lark drew mandalas with colored crayons, ate apples, and made enigmatic Zen master comments. And Liz, soft and round as Eden fruit with hennaed hair

and pink moist lips, smiled with wise eyes. They floated like Time Travelers do through space, making the planet Earth their private garden of incredible goodies freely offered to the happily unattached.

— I visited the Panther embassy and was amazed. There's no white guilt down in the Portobello ghetto of dropouts, junkies, and hustlers. Just drop out of the white middle class and deal with each person as an individual hustling pleasure like yourself.

Brian pulled another grimy paper from his pocket.

— The eternal racial seed conflict always enormous in scope over time has now been reduced by radio and TV to one big black-white world heavyweight match obliterating the sensual texture of the variegated color boards of lovely local racisms. Mother Earth is a racist. Rainbow colors turn her on.

— What else is new in the casbah, She said.

— Oh, the casbah cafés seethe with Muhammad Ali. He's the worldwide television symbol unifying the self-image of three-quarters of the human race who know they had the world championship stolen from them by some white cat behind a desk up north.

Brian squatted Japanese style in our room and rubbed his hands lovingly along his legs as opium smokers do, his blue eyes laughing. He looks like the Fool in the Marseille Tarot deck.

He told us about an Algerian town named Bou Saada which his Casbah friends recommended for magic. After Brian and Liz and Davie left, we

looked it up in the guide book: City of Happiness, it was called—the Gateway to the Sahara. We decided to split the next day.

We packed the car and drove by the embassy. She waited in the car while I went in to get the mail. As usual the large envelopes were ripped open. The Commander grinned cheerfully.

We headed down the bay freeway. It was slow-going five o'clock traffic through industrial slums past the river stinking of pollution. Out beyond El Harach, farmland and tall trees lined the road. At dark we gassed up at El Arba. The attendant warned about the curves on the mountains. It was dark and raining when the climb started. A hard drive. Corkscrew turns, no road signs or reflectors, and a half-mile drop. Relief when we hit the summit. Europe and all that was behind. We were rolling down to the Sahara. The descent was easier. The road leveled out to a string. She flipped on the tape machine. Orion was visible, the first pure radiation in weeks. You could smell the desert in the dry fresh air. We were feeling better and better.

Just at eight o'clock we sailed over a little hill and saw the lights of Bou Saada nestled in the valley. On the outskirts a sign pointed left to a big red neon light. Hotel Caid. It was brand-new, marble, a desert fortress, the lobby arched and domed. A big bustle of porters and clerks. We were the only guests. While unpacking, the desk phoned. The Chef wanted to know if we were dining.

The waiters were kids just graduated from the hotel academy and they made it a flirtatious

comedy scene. They winked at Her and put flowers by her plate. God bless the young, She said. After dinner we walked up to the roof terrace and looked down on the classic picture postcard desert town, donkey cries, muezzin call. The clearest star-filled sky of all.

After breakfast the next morning, we were told that our guide awaited us. They pointed to the doorman, who made a hand sign. He spoke English. Robed and turbaned. Wise old face.

– Good evening. I am Boubekadir. It's a fine tomorrow, I speak a few good English, he said.

The town was a jewel. We had pushed the time-trip button. Except for a few cars it was a thousand-year landing strip. Turbaned dignity. Slow easy village rhythm. No one hurrying. Everyone seemed to be high, digging everything, blue morning, tattooed desert crones, shoemakers and leather workers on the sidewalk.

Monsieur Boubekadir guided us to a hill above town to a simple strong domed tomb. He told the legend. A French painter and his wife came to spend the weekend in the City of Happiness. They stayed forty years. Everyone loved them. He looked at us. We looked at each other. Well why not? It's the best offer we've had this season. The guide started some diagnostic questions. What did we want to see?

– Is there a place near here, an oasis perhaps, a place of peace and beauty? A spot where people rest and think? He nodded.

We drove through town, down the highway, and cut off on a side road, along beat-up cement sifted over with sand. After a while the road

turned left and ran along a wide flood-river bank now dry. The road was washed out. A row of rocks warning to turn off and climb down and up a gully. Monsieur B. pointed to some striped tents, dogs barking, kids playing, smoke rising.

— Nomads.

The sun was half-high and hot. We shared crackers and bottled water with the guide. Still following the dry river valley we reached rugged country. High bluffs and sand. Just before a knoll, Monsieur B. said to gear down to first and prepare to hit it. The car climbed into sand, the gunning motor just pulled us through.

— *Voilà*. He pointed.

Below was an oasis. The stream was blue sparkling.

— They made the movie *Samson and Delilah* there.

Parked under a palm tree, Monsieur B. trotted to a sky-high dune of soft sand, ran twenty feet up, sat down, took off his shoes, and motioned us to follow. We lay there for half hour no one saying a word, just absorbing the message. Monsieur B. sat up. He was pleased.

— Not bad, eh?

I scrambled barefoot to the top and found just what we were looking for. A little cup shaded and protected by some bushes. You couldn't be seen from below. A perfect place.

— Come up. I've found the spot.

— I'll take your word for it. Tomorrow.

There was a nice feeling in the car driving back. We had drawn close together on the sand dune.

— You have found the spot, he said. The sheer

act of sitting on a favorable spot creates superior strength. He explained that we had replenished our energy.

I asked him if there were other such spots around there. There were many in that area, the shepherds and nomads knew them. I asked if they would mind if we came back. Not if you come for a serious purpose to be quiet and absorb the goodness [*bonté*]. But those who come noisily to drink wine and be foolish would not be welcome and bad things might even happen.

After lunch Monsieur B. was waiting. We wanted to buy a rug and two Arab robes. First the market square. Under arcades men squatted deftly sewing. Smooth manual mantras hour after hour watching, listening, gossiping, weaving fabric of village life. Sewn into the garment of tribal time. For a thousand years they had seen it come and go before their eyes skillfully performing same rituals, holding it together. Men came running with burnouses. A creamy elegance and a soft blue for Her? There was some mild question about price and Monsieur B. motioned us around corner down back alleys to a wooden door.

— Cheaper price here.

The burnouses were not as elegant and one was spotted. We made a second-class bargain. Walking back across the square he said to keep them hidden from the weavers under the arcades.

A friend opened his little rug stall by lantern light. Algerian rugs are stern, spartan, rustic warrior. None of your soft Persian luxury. We got a two-seater that seemed sturdy enough to take the buffeting of outer space.

Drinking mint tea at a sidewalk café we asked Monsieur B. about the desert.

— That's a broad question, he joked.

— People have said that one finds magic in the desert. Is that true Monsieur Boubekadir?

He smiled.

— People say many things about the Sahara. It is hard to talk about [*discuter*]. Each one finds something different there. Men in the oasis have spent lifetimes talking about the desert. Some say that you go to the desert as you go to God. In the Sahara you have only what you have brought and you bring back what you are ready to find. Certain things are obvious. You will not find man-made things. What will you find? Silence? Lonely space. Infinity. Eternity. A knowledge that comes from emptiness and purity [*pureté*]. Some say the desert teaches a man what he needs and what is nonessential. There are two mistakes about the desert. The Sahara is not hot. Most of the time it is cold. And the desert is not dry. It is liquid in slow motion. I go to the dune as one goes to the sea. To lie on my back and float.

The muezzin's call at dawn woke us the following day. I put the rug and burnouses in the car. She put the pipe, a silken veil, the ritual tools in one of two coarse, red camel-wool pillowcases that ripped in the middle. We bought a bottle of water, four oranges, and put them in the other pillowcase.

We drove back out to the side road and waved to the nomads. The sun was hot. Gunned the motor

up the sandy hill. Looked down with anticipation to the oasis and the dune. But it was now covered with sheep. A shepherd lay on the dune near where we had been yesterday. A blow of disappointment.

I parked under a palm tree and went over to talk. The shepherd's face was wrinkled and friendly. He spoke a little French. We discussed the drought, the beauty of the oasis. The shepherds were driving their flocks to town for slaughter because of drought. I explained that we were seeking a place in the desert where we could spend the day quietly. To be still [*silencieux*]. The shepherd seemed pleased by this and pointed across the riverbed to a valley.

— Go with God, he said.

A dune blocked the road so we drove into the riverbed following tire tracks for a mile and pulled over to the side. I took the rug and one burnoose over my shoulder and one pillow around my neck. She took one burnoose and the other pillowcase. We locked the car and crossed the river where it ran ten feet wide over gravel and hiked up into the valley. It was very hot. A strange heaviness made the going hard. I kept throwing down the rug and sitting on it waiting for Her. We were badly out of mountain shape. Her face was red and a bit cross.

— Far out how I'm always following you through deserts.

Up the valley we ran into sand. It was difficult walking.

— I don't think I can go much farther, She

said. And we'll have to find shade. I pointed half-way up the slope to a cup protected by a few scrawny bushes. The only vegetation in sight.

— Can you make it up to there?

— I'll try. There seemed to be some force pushing us back. Making us depressed and irritable. The trick is to find a launching site where no one can see the Time Ship leave. But such places, free from planetary vibrations, are hard to reach.

I stumbled up to the cup. It was ideal. A sweet resting place in the shade. I threw down the rug. She pointed and screamed.

— Snake.

A large viper was coiled under the bush. It was his site. Naturally every shady spot was claimed. Our eyes met. Shall we go back? All the signs seem wrong. I looked up the valley of sand.

— There seems to be another little shade place ahead. On that mound.

— With another little inhabitant?

We trudged on, aware of tracks. Like footprints in the snow. There are no secrets in the desert.

— No humans have been here for weeks.

We could see little animal tracks, mice and insect trails and the curving path of snake.

Approaching the mound I studied the sand carefully. I threw the rug and examined around the bushes. She started arranging things. I walked out the entry track about fifteen feet and then started an electron orbit around the mound. Looking for tracks and leaving human signs. Dragging my feet I made two orbits so that no creature could enter without knowing we were there. Sending friendly creature messages.

After the customary preparations we plunged outward cutting a pathway of law through the tumbling chaos of interplanetary time. We were dropping dropping through layers of pluriverses in a barely controlled escape curve. Soon we must give the order to slow down and halt on one level. We had no idea which one to choose. In the vast multiverse we're all merely scattered seeds—seeds that must survive many elements if we are to grow. In four-dimension space it appeared as solid. From time one could see universes separated from one another by layers. The universes remained unknown to one another, unrealizing they were each part of a composite structure of fantastic complexity. We decided that the next universe irrespective of what it was, should be the one to enter. Our brains were computing madly the data pouring in. First reports indicated that this new galaxy was scarcely different from our own. We weren't surprised. Each layer of the multiverse differs only slightly from the next.

It was a planet of purity. The earth was pure gold, sky pure blue. And that was all. We had found the intersection of form and substance. Coming in from time so rapidly required a certain effort in order to center attention on only one plane. As soon as we relaxed we felt the absolute pleasure of dwelling on all planes simultaneously. We existed in a place where the air was jeweled and faceted, glistening and alive with myriad colors, flashing, scintillating, and beautiful.

She appeared in Her divine radiance, manifesting several images simultaneously, containing a different combination of colors. It was as if She

looked out through a series of tinted, opaque masks covering Her body and interweaving on either side. The image that I took to be the original lay slightly to one side of the multiple image and in better focus than the rest. She smiled.

— Have we become one entity?

— No. It is simply that existing on the multi-versal level, in Time, we are capable of linking neurologies to form a powerful single unit.

On an ocean of sand. Where does it come from? Sand creates itself. Each grain a uniform cutting—crystal blown against cliffs, wearing down mountains, chiseling away promontories of individuality hurled by the waves against the coast.

Sand is an addictive substance. Grab handfuls and drip paint with it. Bas-relief. Build castles, forts, an empire. It's a truth drug. Time's simple message. Draw diagrams. Formulas. Write the one great simple truth. In sand. Love letters in the sand.

I placed my hand on it. Sahara sable is finer than sea sand. Fingers sifted into the warmth. It became firmer harder, moister, cold. We swelter in desert sun while inches below there is a wet cold world.

— It's all desert, She laughed.

Suddenly He came. El Arabi. God of the desert. His message registered in the mind as sound but the ears claimed to have heard nothing. Several thousand years of memory tape. Thirst. Heat. Oasis. Possession. Treachery. Suspicion. Hospitality. Skin hunger for soft oils and perfumes. Ear thirst for sound of splashing liquid. Watching the stars. Fierce struggle to survive. Harsh. Loy-

alty. Treachery. Blood on the sand. Sperm on the sand. Sandstorm.

We could look through sand and see valley of vegetation now covered up by the relentless engulfing grasp of sand. Sand is cancer eating up earth. Mountains of sand crushing down on life. Pressure creating oil.

Sand is essence of mineral.

Oil is essence of life.

Sand is the worst enemy of machine. Oil lubricates. The contest of mineral and biological.

— Which side do you root for?

She laughed. We drank a mouthful of water from the flask and knew what that meant.

I walked out into the desert and felt lonely beyond human contact. I looked back to proton center. She was sitting on the mound of Venus. I leaped back up sculptured footprints. We lit a smoke. She inhaled deeply and held smoke letting eyes and cheeks bulge comic.

The wind blew against our backs softly. We could feel it. Then hear it. Then see it rippling the sand. The sun was setting and from down below we heard the cry of shepherd calling flocks down from the mountain. We packed the pillowcases and folded the rug. Walking down we understood about the veil.

After breakfast we drove to the marketplace. There were some loose ends to be woven. The tailors brought out the stately cream and the soft blue. We were ready for them now.

Checking out, we said "soon" to Monsieur Boubekadir. He had many plans for us.

The highway through the desert. Chipped a bit of sunshine. Floating the highway.

At a crossroads we passed two helmeted motorcycle cops. They waved.

Later in the rear-view mirror we saw them coming hunched over in ominous pursuit. We opened windows to air out the car. Normal alert procedures. They roared by.

Then later they loomed up ahead, bikes parked, flagging us down. Second-stage alert. Stalled car. Two men in robes talking Arab. The cop asked if we'd take them to the nearest town for some oil.

– Oil? I happen to have some with me.

The cop helped me jimmy open the trunk and I produced a can. The robed driver offered to pay.

– No, friend. It is a gift.

– We're so lucky, She said. We keep getting second chances.

The road became a time tunnel. We left the desert, camels, donkeys, women at 900 A.D. and started climbing into valley farmland 1910 A.D. Then the road became a twisting two-lane strip which shifted with each land contour, the sensual kinesthetic motoring of 1935 A.D.

The car slowed down to pick its way through village crowds like a well-trained pony. Sun Ra tapes rolling as we came through farmland 1950 A.D. to the industrial slums of rusty, grimy 1970.

The staff at the hotel were happy to see us. The manager called me aside.

– You had one phone call. They wanted to know where you were. I told them I didn't know.

After carrying bags to the room I came down-

stairs and phoned the embassy prepared to flood the wire with enthusiasm.

— We got so much to tell you Eldridge. You and Kathleen gotta come to the desert with us. His voice came back so cold.

— We gotta lot to tell you. You left town without permission. This is a disciplinary matter for the Commander. He'll be in touch with you.

The next visit to the embassy the Commander was laughing and jolly as he inquired about our trip. His arm around my shoulder we walked to the wall map and I showed him exactly where we experienced the desert. I babbled about broadening our perspectives and getting to know Africa and so on. The Commander kept saying — Gee whiz, and — Far out and — Right on. When I finished he shifted into the tough cop gear, accusing us of leaving without authority. I was ready, zip-zap, and pointed out that Bella not only suggested the trip, but told us where to stay and that I knew that he knew that I knew that they knew at all times where we were and did they want to make an issue of bureaucratic control.

The Commander expressed the opinion that sitting unarmed on a carpet in the Sahara under the probable surveillance of enemy agents was inconceivably reckless and that we were restricted to quarters.

I said that we had a piece with us.

— Fuck off with your peace of mind said the Commander.

Often it was sorrowful to be with E.C. and sense our mutual dilemma. We were both charismatic shamans now trapped by our images. Age and isolation were handicaps. E.C. was thirty-five. He had spent nine years in prison, two years as a public figure running for the presidency of the United States, and two years in exile. Thus occupied he had no chance to bang around in the new creative chaos, remain open to the new electronic freedom of thought, reel in reaction to the humbling insight that everything is changing fast, that the old dogmas are dead. A new generation was taking over, skeptical, tolerant, erotic, disillusioned with the old politics, demanding honesty and open consciousness. No one could talk back to him. I knew the problem.

Whatever our past achievements, it seemed obvious that Algiers was a backwater retirement village, far removed and basically irrelevant to what was happening in America. This fact was hard for both of us to accept. At times in our bitter nostalgia it seemed that we divided the world in our resentments. Most of our energies actually entered on and around the women who loved us, whose growing energies we both loved and feared.

What She and Kathleen did and felt and learned is the important story still to emerge from Algeria.

I tried halfheartedly to pass on the Weathermen hope that Eldridge could create in Algiers a center for dissident voices. God knows that many in America were praying that a broad, unified movement could emerge. Other refugee political groups in Algiers shared the same wish.

One night we met the Brazilian hijackers at a fish restaurant near the Place des Martyrs. They were noble men and women who had resisted a police state, kidnapped officials and planes; won the release of their imprisoned. We honored them. They replied modestly that what is done in Brazil is trivial heroics. Even if we were to overthrow Brazilian fascism it would mean nothing. American imperialism is an octopus with tentacles all over the world. You and the Panthers have fought the enemy directly and survived. We have no voice. The world is not interested in what we say. You and Cleaver have access to the media. Rosemary and I found this sobering.

When we talked to E.C. about this conversation he scolded us for talking to strangers. I urged him to meet with other international revolutionaries, make the embassy a focal point and broadcast center for liberation groups. Announce that we are a wild, varied fanatic collection of many tribes. It's an electronic jihad. Diversity is our strength.

Dig the proud Panthers.

Dig the Puerto Rican Lords seizing empty ghetto churches for homeless kids.

Dig the Chicanos strong as obsidian knives resisting the Central Valley ranchers.

Dig the hippie with the wilted rose in his dyed blond hair, cheap Moroccan cotton wrapped around his emaciated body. Proust would have liked him.

Dig the dark-haired Italians sitting in Milanese Castello-Sforzeca-Visconti Marxist positions around the elegantly decorated rooms on the Via Puccini.

Dig the gay liberation platoons in turtlenecked sweaters fighting the police in the Village bars.

Dig the dope dealers moving among the young to loosen up the old structures.

Dig the rock star minstrels singing about Vietnam.

Dig the Black Nationalists and the Muslims in storefront restaurant temples.

Dig the middle-class ecology freaks sabotaging smokestacks.

Dig the Indians firing arrows at Coast Guard cutters from the shores of Alcatraz.

Most important, dig the flowering of emancipated women everywhere.

Dig the hard-nosed androgyne-looking, sexy in a curious way ASTA German student leaders denouncing in shrill voices imperialism.

Dig pudgy Geismar storming delicatessen shops in Maoist happening shouting — Fuck perfumed Paris and get down to the harsh realities of Renault workers.

Invite them all here to shout on our Radio Free Algeria network. Open it up. The media is the method.

But Eldridge was socially timid, ill at ease in any situation where scowling muscle couldn't dominate. He was afraid it would get out of hand.

Back at the hotel, an easy routine had developed. The beach village was small and we became friendly with the hotel staff, shopkeepers, and officials. Mornings, I would walk across the small square to the restaurant, drink strong coffee mixed with hot milk, and eat sugared rolls with butter and rich jam. Then She would come dancing across the square, sparkling with teen-age delight.

Often, the hotel manager would come over to sit with us. His name was Khali. He was a Kabyle, a Berber from the mountains; handsome, proud, disdainful of the coast Arabs. Khali kept inviting us to his village in the mountains where his wife and children lived. He would talk softly of his life at home: his dog, his cows, his gun for hunting, his wife who was good, docile, and obedient. Like everyone else, he had fought in the Revolution and once, after too much wine, he described the murder of his father by the French. Then he pulled up his shirt and showed us the scars on his side. This experience was not unusual, although Khali soon proved to be. Often in moments of intimacy, Algerians would slowly and solemnly narrate their war experiences. Often they would weep in memory of love sacrificed.

Khali knew Cleaver, too, for he had lived at the hotel. We sensed something protective and almost worried in his attitude toward us. He said that when the Panthers first came to Algiers there was intense interest in this small group of warriors who stood up single-handed against America.

— At first the Panthers acted frightened and confused and that was understandable after what

they had been through. But then they shut themselves in their villas and their rented cars like European businessmen. — They never came out to meet the people. No Panther has ever been seen in a village or talking quietly in a café. It is felt that the Panthers do not like the Black and Brown people of Africa. They are afraid of us and avoid our friendship. They do not sit with us. They cover their fear with aggressive actions. It is often that way.

Before I left Khali looked at me and said three words in Arabic. He had me pronounce the words several times and said that if I were ever in danger and needed help to shout these words in a loud voice.

The move from the beach hotel to the city apartment was to happen the week before Christmas. Olga, a friend of the Panthers, had located it for us. Two bedrooms in a high cluster of apartments built by the French and now taken over by the Algerian Government.

The move involved some delicate intrigue. There was a housing shortage. Socialist rents were low, but we had to pay a two-thousand-dollar fee to the departing tenants, an Algerian engineer and his French wife bored with Algeria, nervously starting a new life in Paris. The transaction was illegal. If news of the switch were to leak, the concierge or any other tenant could move another family in ahead of us. We heard ominous stories of vacated apartments being forcibly occupied by defiant squatters. It was arranged that we would move in the night before the tenants left.

We were happy about having a real home. Harassed and on the run, we had been without a space of our own for two years. We had never lived together in a city and were prepared to make the most of the experience.

An emerging money crisis did not ease the transaction. Shortly after our arrival in Algeria a leftist friend had arranged through contacts in the publishing business an advance of \$7,500 for writing a book. I promised to give Eldridge two thousand. Just before we moved from the beach hotel the Commander and his assistant came out to visit. They began to press for bread, implying that I was holding out. The Commander placed his black attaché case on the table and his pistol fell out with a clatter. I told them that when the money came they would be paid.

The next day at the embassy the mail included a notice from the bank. The money had arrived. The envelope had been opened. I received questioning looks. — The money has arrived I said cheerfully.

I drove to the bank and returned to the embassy with two thousand dollars in dinars. The assistant counted it and said when will we get the rest that you owe us.

When we arrived at the apartment the engineer asked if he could stay with us for a few days. The government, unhappy about emigrating engineers, was holding up his exit visa. He was an intelligent person, easy to live with.

The second night in town Eldridge dropped by. Ariana was with him. She has been discussed in the Panther press but they did not mention that

she was also beautiful, olive skin, almond eyes, a brave, wise nineteen-year-old girl, very much in love with E.C.

He closed the living-room door, walked to the balcony, checked the view, and asked if there was a rear door. He rolled a joint. Ariana looked around and asked if there was a bath or a shower.

We heard a key turn in the outside door and the sound of the tenant in the entrance hall. E.C. was on his feet hand reaching for his belt. Eldridge wanted to know when he would leave. He mentioned that he was going to visit the FLN offices the next day. They wanted to talk to him about some problems concerning us. I did not believe him. He said if we had done anything that he didn't know about, now was the time to confess.

During the Christmas holidays a short time thereafter, we asked Eldridge to drop down with Kathleen but he said that they didn't recognize Christian religious holidays and that they would be down after the tenant left.

Meanwhile, disturbing news came from our agent. He expressed no interest in the first four chapters I had sent. He stressed that changes in the American radical climate had made our position less defensible. He implied that we might be found politically unacceptable, and forced to leave Algeria. He was in close touch with the New York Panther Twenty-one. He said that they were all-out martyrs who knew that they would never be free from prison until the armed revolution succeeded. They had no patience with the cultural revolution.

My manuscript apparently displeased everyone. The message from Algeria was not the strong voice of unity and love out of frustrated complaint. The agent reported that no more money was left from the advances he received and no income from other sources was anticipated.

At this point we felt the first flicker of The Terror. The exile blues. No passport. No money. No home.

Back in the USA we could deal with negative reactions floating through acid holes in the huge, loose, polymorphous system. When bread ran short we could escape to the mountains or find an SDS campus group that would sponsor a guerrilla lecture and split the gate. Living in the demimonde of dealers, forest dropouts, activists, jugglers, show-biz magicians money was shared as communal energy.

But all that affluent American security was gone now. We were stranded light-years away in the socialist world, income gone, Cleaver pressing for payments. When I visited the embassy the Brothers would mutter demands for that ten thousand dollars.

The tenant was to leave our apartment on the eighth of January, a Friday. We planned a small dinner celebration for Saturday night. We invited Eldridge and Ariana and Bella and Ali and Olga. E.C. said he'd think about it.

Friday morning Eldridge called me to the embassy and said that he had news from the FLN. They were distressed that we were living independently from military discipline. It was their wish that members of revolutionary exile groups

be kept under supervision. The Algerian Government couldn't tolerate the looseness of our lifestyle. Etc. etc. Therefore it was necessary that a Panther agent live with us to keep us under observation. And vice versa.

Eldridge knew that I knew that he was just being polite. He smiled and said that we could work it out. He would make it easy for us by assigning to Ariana the task of living with us. It would work well, he said, because he planned to spend more time with us now that we were in the city and we could hang out together and share ideas.

It was a poignant moment. He said that he sensed that we had been lonely for closer contact and that now it would be possible. I said that I'd run it through my head and talk to her about it. It was agreed that Eldridge and Ariana would drop by that afternoon to discuss the matter further.

When I told her about the proposal, she sighed. Tonight would have been the first time in two years that we'd be home alone together. We were touched by the offer. We felt the yearning and love for Eldridge. We were with him in risky exile. We felt the attraction of the polarity. If we could connect, the possibilities were exponential. But we resented the flavor of bondage. We didn't dig being commanded to turn on with the king.

Eldridge didn't show up. Ariana came with three suitcases. She shrugged and said there's nothing to talk about. I've been ordered to live here. It's my job.

Bella and Ahmed were due to come by for

another megalomaniac drunken tape session. She didn't like the vibrations so I decided to take the guests out to a restaurant. I asked Ariana to come and to invite Eldridge.

At the restaurant, Ahmed drank wine from my glass to avoid being seen drinking alcohol. E.C. didn't show. During dinner I told Bella that I'd like to talk to the FLN to protest living under surveillance and to arrange to leave the country if they really insisted on it. Bella looked pale. Ahmed choked on my wine. Ariana quietly left to make a phone call.

Ariana slept on the living-room couch that night.

The next morning in preparation for the dinner She went to the market with Ariana. Ariana saw Kathleen coming down the aisle and fled. Whew! Bella called and said that Ahmed was going to Constantine to inspect a steel factory and they wouldn't show for dinner. I asked Bella about Hamid, a young Algerian diplomat who had stopped me on the avenue to talk about mutual friends in New York. He offered friendship, hashish, and new rock tapes. Bella laughed. Hamid is the jolliest man in Algeria. He's all right. He's frivolous but a good revolutionary. You can trust him. I told her that we planned to invite him to the dinner.

All afternoon Fatima, the maid who came with the apartment, happily cooked couscous. She liked us. Ariana left at five. She said she wouldn't be back for dinner. At 7:30 Eldridge phoned. I asked if he was coming to dinner. He inquired about the guest list, then laughed and said he didn't think he could deal with that.

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At five minutes to eight I was in the study typing this book. The doorbell rang. She came into the study with a funny look on Her face and said a bunch of Panthers were in the living room wanting to talk to me. The Commander and three assistants. His manner was stern. They had come to take us down to the Pointe Pescade apartment where we had been held under house arrest with the Yippies. I pointed out that dinner guests were expected in five minutes and that an awkward situation would develop. We'll come down to Pointe Pescade later tonight or tomorrow. This dinner isn't going to take place, said the Commander, there are people coming and things going down that we just can't allow. I was embarrassed by the paranoia. It is important that we think logically, I said. We met Olga through the Panthers. I checked out Hamid. If you have any worries why don't you stay for dinner. Then afterward we'll go to Pointe Pescade or hang around for ten minutes and I'll explain to them that an emergency has arisen. But do not let us create a situation which we will all come to regret. The four Panthers moved in around me. I'm not going to argue with you, said the Commander. You two will come either willingly or by force. I got a clear prevision and it

scared me. You're making a mistake, I said. We can do anything we want, said the Commander. I demanded to talk to Eldridge on the phone. Refused. I demanded to talk to Huey. The four Panthers moved closer. I shrugged and walked into the kitchen. They're trying to kidnap us. Can't they wait until after dinner, She said. There is enough couscous for everyone. The Panthers crowded into the small kitchen. The Commander moved quickly to the sink and grabbed a small paring knife with a leer of efficient triumph. He made me feel disarmed somehow. Get going, said the Commander, we don't want to hurt you. I'm not going, I said. Huey Newton taught us to resist, I said in a slow and clear voice. The Commander nodded and three Panthers grabbed me. I pulled away and began shouting for help in Arabic as Khali had taught me. Two Panthers grabbed my arms, twisting me down. I was on the floor with one Panther, hand on my mouth, another twisting my arm behind my back. My nose was bleeding, She was shouting don't let them hurt you. The pressure on my arm tightened. Will you come quietly, hissed the Commander. I nodded assent. They ordered Her to get Her coat. They were well trained. Holding my arms they moved me to the door. They must have practiced. Use the stairs, said the Commander, the guests will be coming up the elevator. Two Panthers shoved me down the stairs. When we reached the courtyard they told me to walk quietly to the car. Any noise and we'll vamp on you both. I walked across the deserted courtyard, a Panther holding each of my arms. I kept praying that the dinner guests would show up on time. A Panther

car was waiting by the gate. I refused to leave the courtyard until She came. There were some Algerian kids playing around the car. The Panthers glanced at each other and stopped. After a while She appeared flanked by the Commander and the other guard. We looked at each other and shook our heads slowly. They forced Her in the middle of the front seat and I was shoved in the rear.

They held my arms behind my back and hustled us in the Pointe Pescade apartment. The Commander smiled at us. Well you're really busted this time. There's no bail, no phone call, and no lawyer.

— You told me I could talk to Eldridge when we get there.

— Eldridge will talk to you at his convenience, said the Commander.

We were moved to the corner of the long living room, where we sat on mattresses. We looked at each other. This is a scary movie, She said. Many possibilities were spinning through our heads. Like number one: Did the Algerian Government know what was happening? They could have waited until after the dinner party. They don't have to bother to keep it secret. Cleaver could have told anything about us to justify revolutionary discipline. We remembered the rumors about the famous Brother who mysteriously disappeared and the Commander's ominous reference to what was worse than prison. On the wall there was a poster picture of Malcolm X above the quote "We will stop at nothing to reach our goal."

Four Panthers sprawled on mattresses watching us. We sat facing each other, looking into each other's eyes. We started talking about Flo and

Maynard Ferguson and funny memories from Millbrook. We were high on love ignoring our captors. There was a bustle at the door and a young white man, Jewish-looking, with a wild flaring Afro hairstyle entered the room. He was carrying a video camera. He looked at us and shook his head sorrowfully. After a brief conversation with the Commander he moved close and started filming us. I sent him an unfriendly message. We continued talking. He moved to get closeups of Her face. She turned Her back to the camera. It's getting pretty insane, She said. Maybe they want documentary proof that we were alive before they off us. The cameraman was standing looking down at us with a sad face, I sent him a rejection message and he turned away.

Two guards remained. They kept looking out the windows. It was a thirty-foot drop. One guard said – Don't move from that mattress. If you want to get to the john ask permission. Try anything funny and we'll vamp on you. We lay in each other's arms whispering about escape possibilities and wondering how we could get messages out. Hamid and Olga would know something was amiss. But maybe they are intimidated by the Panthers.

In the morning the guards let Her make coffee and we ate fruit. They ignored my requests to talk to Eldridge. The hours passed slowly. In the afternoon the room filled with guards. We were to be moved. Our hopes that we would be taken home were disconnected by the nervous security measures. We were herded to the door. Ominous warnings were issued. She was hustled into one car and

I was pushed into another. The Panthers were nervous. I was sitting in the rear between two guards. As we roared away one guard said – Hey man, the trunk of the car is open. The driver turned his head back to look. The car was speeding down a two-lane highway jammed with Sunday traffic. The road curved but we were hurtling straight ahead toward the line of Algerian families. In one second a five-car accident would pile up. The police would be called. Sirens. Ambulances. None of the Panthers spoke French or Arabic. I could appeal to the police for rescue with Khali's words. It was a millisecond decision. I felt love for the young, frightened rookies. The accident would cause a terrible racial scandal. Algerian families would be injured in the crash. I would have let a white police car crash. I shouted – Look out man. With perfect reflex the driver swung the car inches away from the startled Algerian Sunday drivers. There was a moment of silence. The driver said, – Who was that who shouted Look out man! The driver glanced back. – You lucky you shouted. You really saved your ass. Racing at reckless Panther speed we swung into Tenampa, the notorious slum neighborhood where lower-class Europeans had lived before independence. We parked in front of some broken-down tenements. There were many Arabs in the street. I considered making a break and shouting the help mantras. But we have a taboo about calling the police. And I was feeling more and more protective of the scared bluffing boys playing delinquent games. We were pushed into a shabby apartment which obviously had not been lived in. I remembered hear-

ing talk of a new pad. We were moved into a second-floor back room. There was a bed and a mattress. The floor was piled with the litter of former tenants. She stood by the locked door while I went to the window. It was an easy ten-foot drop to the neighboring roof. The room was freezing. We lay down on the mattress. Body warmth is comforting in times of stress. After a while a key turned in the door. A guard came in and began pulling at our mattresses. He motioned for us to rise. I complained about the bitter cold. He agreed and said he was trying to score some heaters. He was a good man. It was all love contorted by Eldridge and me. He opened the window and looked down at the back courtyard, his eyes estimating the jump. Don't try anything funny. We ain't fooling with you no more, he said. I asked for blankets. We could hear noises in the hall of moving furniture. It sounded as though they were preparing for a long stay. We huddled together and loved each other. We wondered how we could get a message out. We wondered what Olga and Hamid would think and what they could do. We remembered that Michael Zwerin, the European editor of the *Village Voice*, was arriving in Algiers that evening to visit us. Eldridge had expressed interest in meeting him. No ominous possibility could be rejected. Toward the evening we were ordered out of the room, down the stairs, and into a car. She was in front and I was flanked in the rear seat. We started driving toward the center of the city, past the Grande Poste up Avenue Muhammad Cinq. We were hoping that we were to be

returned home but the car roared on by and pulled up in front of another Panther apartment. It was like the California prison system flying me around from one prison to another with no explanation.

The next jail was luxurious. The rent, I recall, was seven hundred a month. We were ordered to a mattress on the floor of the warm carpeted living room. More ominous warnings were issued. Around ten o'clock the apartment opened and a guard came in carrying two pots. We were called to the dining room. One pot contained barbecued ribs which the two guards ate. They pointed to the second pot. It contained boiled pigs' feet. We ate fruit and bread.

We lay on the mattress. One guard slept facing us in an easy chair in the dining room so that he looked at us from the bottom of the door. They had notebooks and seemed to be writing down everything we said. Pairs of eyes solemnly watched us as we huddled together under our coats and drifted off into sleep in each other's arms.

— I wonder what happened to Michael Zwerin, She murmured.

In the morning, the guards said that She could go to the kitchen to make coffee. Then they told Her to wash the dishes. She looked at the guard and said that She would wash the cups we had used but that She would not work for pigs. It was all love twisted into knots.

We heard people entering the apartment. The Commander came into the living room. A hip-looking white man was with him. She looked up and exclaimed in pleasure.

— Michael Zwerin! Far out!

— What's far out, he said. Weren't you expecting me?

— Not here, She said. We've been kidnapped.

— We are glad to see you.

The Commander was standing at the doorway.

— Tell Eldridge I want to talk to him.

— When the time comes, the Commander said.

Zwerin sat down with us on the floor and recounted the story of his arrival.

Zwerin had been disappointed that we were not at the airport as promised, nor did we answer our phone. He took a taxi and rang our bell. Nobody home. He checked his bags with the concierge and pinned a note to the door . . . taking a promenade. Back in an hour.

An hour later another note was pinned where his had been. Call 78-21-05 and identify yourself. Because he thought the note was our joke he dreamed up some comic identities—not realizing it was serious—finally hitting on the Fox, after our mutual friend Maynard Ferguson, who used to be known that way around Birdland.

— Hell, is Tim there?

— Timothy Leary? An Afro-American accent.

— That's right.

— I'm sorry, he's occupied at the moment. Who is this?

He identified himself for real, no Fox, no place for jokes.

— You'll have to find a hotel.

It was approaching midnight.

— Hey, tell Leary I'll sleep by his door until he gets home.

The voice checked something out.

— I doubt very much that Mr. Leary will be home tonight. I'll help you find a hotel.

Ten minutes later a tall Black man with a fringe beard pulled up in a Renault sedan. He drove fast through the town, deserted at this hour, twisting and turning through the narrow side streets, blinking yellow lights. He double-parked by a downtown hotel, made sure the price was right, and helped Zwerin register in French. No questions asked, no explanation given. He said he'd call back in the morning.

At seven thirty the call came.

— Hello. I picked you up yesterday. If you can get ready right away, I'll take you to Leary.

First they collected the bags from the concierge. The Panther helped Zwerin carry them. Zwerin thanked him, perhaps too profusely.

They drove up hills discussing exile, and parked by a handsome two-story white villa with bronze plaque on the gate: BLACK PANTHER PARTY INTERCOMMUNAL SECTION.

A familiar face was at the top of the stairs, beardless and barbered.

— Do you know Leary? asked Eldridge.

— No, his wife, said Zwerin.

— Would She recognize you?

— Sure.

— Did you bring gifts for them?

— Yes.

— Just lay them out on the couch there.

Michael had heard of the Panther customs and expected a body search and photographs. He did not object considering Bobby Hutton, Fred Hamp-

ton, and all the others offered by people of white complexion. Michael stacked the following items: one pair of double-bed sheets, one pair corduroy jeans, purple, size 33-33, one bar of lemon soap, five cassette tapes including George Harrison, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, the Band, and Billie Holiday, one fifth duty-free Cutty Sark, miscellaneous underground papers, two copies of *The Silent Needle*, a book about Black junkies and their rehabilitation by Michael himself.

— I wish we had the lemon soap now She said.

Cleaver asked a young man who had been reading quietly in the corner to leave the room.

— Do you have any dope or weapons, he asked. Zwerin said no.

— Wait a few minutes and we'll take you to Leary, said Cleaver.

The Commander drove Michael down the hill, honking fiercely. The Commander did not help Michael with his bags. Two locks unbolted from the inside. A sullen face appeared as the door opened a crack.

— And here I found you, said Zwerin. You need a shave and She needs vitamins and a steak.

The three of us settled down into stories about mutual friends, marveling at the overlapping synchronicities in our experience. Michael glanced at the two somber Panthers sitting in the next room.

— In this jail the prisoners are having more fun than the guards.

One of the guards was reading Mao. The other leafing his way through a stack of Black Panther newspapers. They rarely talked.

Michael thought that our jail was actually a pleasant place if you ignored the fact that the door was locked and that we had to ask permission to go to the toilet or open a window. We asked Michael if he had read *The Magus*, by John Fowles.

At 6:30 in the evening the phone rang and Michael was called to answer. He told us that it was Eldridge who had asked him not to come to any conclusions about what was happening until they had a chance to talk. Eldridge said that they would meet in the morning, that Michael could come and go as he pleased but that he would have to go to the embassy before returning. It was all right for him to spend the night with us.

Michael was pleased by the phone call. He said Cleaver sounded friendly and reasonable. We glanced at each other the way prisoners sometimes do.

— Whatever happened to Amelia Earhart, I asked.

Actually we were relieved that Michael was being allowed this freedom. It added a level of protection. We gave him a list of people to contact in case he was not allowed to return. Left lawyers in America, radical friends, Huey Newton.

— Don't worry promised Michael, I won't leave Algeria until you are safe.

Zwerin showed us a copy of *New York* magazine, which contained an article about the New Haven Panther trial. There was a chilling quote from Stokely Carmichael: "The present tactics the party is using to coerce everyone to submit to its authority . . . the demands for loyal and unquestioning followers rather than critical colleagues . . . will

lead the BPP to become at worst, a tool or racist imperialists, used against the Black masses." The article was biased against the Panthers. It told a story of fanaticism, torture, and terror.

Michael started to get a little worried. It was contagious. I asked him what he thought of the Panthers.

— They are plain lonely, he said. Without women. Watch how they read *Time* magazine. They miss America. They must miss their sisters here in this puritanical country where women wear veils on their wedding night. They must resent your closeness, your exclusiveness, your whiteness. You must appear to them as some sort of aristocracy, beautiful people, dilettantes in some jive-ass cultural revolution having little to do with their problems.

We three people slept on the floor until late the next morning. Michael laughed when we awoke.

— I've just had my best night's sleep in months in the custody in the company of a bunch of felons, hijackers, bail jumpers, and alleged murderers. I'll take a revolutionary bust anytime, he said.

— We agreed.

Michael said that he would leave now to check into a hotel and then meet Eldridge. I sat down to write a letter for him to take to E.C. It was a civil rights message protesting arrest without specific accusation. Michael read it and said it was too mild. I figured that the terror had made me docile so I rewrote a Tom Paine strong demand.

It was one of those long slow prison waits for

Michael to return. We had an uneasy feeling. Zwerin had become our lawyer and our jury. We had tried to present our defense to him, knowing that Eldridge, as prosecuting DA and presiding judge, would have his own official version of our crimes and make his own ruling.

Just around midnight the jury returned with the verdict. We leaped up and greeted him with enthusiasm. His attitude had changed. He was no longer a fellow prisoner, sharing our fear and outrage. He was jaunty, cheerful, confident. A congenial handball partner of the judge.

He smiled reassuringly.

— Well first of all you'll be freed tomorrow.

— Tomorrow we exclaimed in unison. Why not now?

He ignored our question.

— And second, he said, you made a terrible mistake in writing that letter to Eldridge. It made him furious and he almost decided not to free you.

The remark blew my sanity. It was Zwerin who had urged me to take the strong stand. His switch was disturbing. Eldridge had got to him. It was heavy magic.

Michael then began a moralistic lecture telling us that we had been irresponsible; that Algiers was filled with CIA spies, that Eldridge was eloquent—what force, what clarity—that we would have to mend our ways. A guard sat by the door taking careful notes on the results of the experiment.

We asked Michael to specify what crimes we had committed. He spoke of our going to the

desert in full view of enemy agents without authorization. Then he began talking about two American oilmen who were on the plane with him from Paris and the pervasiveness of American influence in the Third World. He said that if we wanted to square things with E.C. we should issue a statement about the dangers of LSD.

— Don't moralize, man, just tell us what happened. Prisoners tend to get irritable under such circumstances.

— Well Eldridge read the letter and then handed it to the Commander. As usual sounds were coming from the speakers. The Rolling Stones were singing "Two thousand light-years from home" which I thought appropriate. Cleaver said, Well I accept his deadline. He won't be released today. You are free to do what you want, but I strongly advise you not to call anyone in the Algerian Government. If you are interested in the Learys' welfare, that is. You can call anyone you like, see. But you are not in possession of all the facts.

E.C. wanted to know what "sic" meant. I told him and he nodded. Cleaver said that your letter was so stupid that he wouldn't even bother to explain to me about the reasons for the bust. The Commander said, Leary should have his ass kicked for this letter. I wondered about your fate should Cleaver leave. Cleaver said that you don't realize how serious your position is. He said that you don't realize how the Panthers are protecting you, the only protection you have. You may consider yourself in jail here but Eldridge says he is trying to keep you from going back to prison in Babylon. Your position in Algeria is far from secure. Amer-

ican business interests are pressuring the Algerian Government, which needs dollars, to cease granting refuge for American political exiles. The Algerians are tightrope walking between Chinese, Russian, and American interests and the liberation movements from Brazil, Angola, the Canary Islands, and Babylon itself. Although the Panthers have been well treated there is reactionary pressure from within the bureaucracy. Particularly against you. Former freedom fighters are in prison for dope smoking. Women are terribly repressed. Workers are poorer than before the revolution. Students are unhappy. You have to watch your steps in this Third World power. Eldridge must put security before everything. One thing gone wrong could blow everything. Eldridge said he had to use a lot of political capital to keep you here and that he's not abandoning you now. He's behind you. He's prepared to go down with you. But not for some jive reason.

I asked if I could write about this. Eldridge said OK but they might have to react to my article with a policy statement about the question of gun versus dope. He said I should go back to my hotel and we'd arrange an interview with me and you in a couple of days.

After Zwerin left we stood with dazed expressions on our face. That Eldridge is a heavy magician, she said. It was a scary moment, like the LSD panic when all former reality gets swept away and the logic of one's former life is seen as crazed subjective delusion. If E.C. could persuade Zwerin, sympathetic old friend, fellow religionist, libertarian intellectual, that our kidnapping was

justified, then certainly his eloquent magic could convince the nonpsychedelic Algerian police and the radical constituency which Zwerin represented. The possibility that we were irresponsible lunatics or helpless victims of sorcery must be considered.

We recalled the warnings of our agent-friend about shifts in political thinking and the cutting of our economic lifelines by displeased radical editors. We recalled the fact that we had not heard from our comrades in the Weathermen Underground and also certain facts about white slavery. Perhaps American left politics had taken a turn toward ruthless violence while we went on bleating about Aim for Life.

The spell cast on Zwerin could not be easily dismissed. We had gravely misjudged the situation, underestimated the dangers, both physical and psychic. Before Zwerin's return we had feared for our lives, but now we questioned our sanity.

At noon the next day the Commander brusquely ordered us to leave and escorted us to a car. Driving home he told us that the apartment had been searched, our money was in an envelope in the desk, and that they had confiscated our passports and all the dope they could find. — You stay in your pad and don't try any bullshit. You'll be contacted when Eldridge wants to see you.

It was eerie to be back in the silent apartment. The couscous had been eaten and our bed slept in. Ariana greeted us with Soviet impersonality and watched us from the sofa. We talked in glances knowing we were being listened to. We walked

around like robots in a science-fiction horror flick. I was not happy to recall the hours of prophetic, megalomaniac, visionary babbling relentlessly recorded on Bella's tape and listened to by stern revolutionary judges who would not be amused by declarations that the real revolution, invisible, neurological, erotic, sexual was occurring without theoretical or tactical direction. Grandiose notions about the seven revolutions would seem like dangerous revisionism to Marxist wizard commissars, who now controlled our destinies.

We were unclear about the ground rules of our house arrest. We asked if it was legal for Michael Zwerin to come over. Ariana phoned headquarters and said it was OK. Michael seemed recovered from his trance and back to his witty, urbane self, loving us, hoping that we'd turn him on. He was eager to get me to talk in a tape recorder about the seven revolutions. By this time Michael was in top form, involved in an adventure, a lucky journalist who had stumbled into the hippest story since he ghostwrote the life of Christine Keeler.

He was sitting in the study as we opened the mail which had accumulated during our imprisonment. One envelope from San Francisco contained four Christmas cards portraying a seated Buddha holding in his hand an orange sunshine tab. It was a gratuitous grace we figured. Ariana heard us laughing and came in to see me popping a tab in my mouth and Her doing the same. She handed two cards to Ariana.

— Here's one for you and Eldridge. —

After a while the four of us were sitting around

listening to music and joking about our situation and the government surveillance. Ariana was giggling and making jokes too. Later she cried and said that she was all fucked up and didn't like what she was doing but it was her job. She was a lonely girl in love. Then we heard a honk from down below and she ran to get her coat. As she left we said – Tell Eldridge anything you want but tell him that we wish he was here with us.

During the long night the gravity of our situation became clear. We were without passports or money. We were fugitives, our only connection with the Algerian Government being the Panthers. We could have written to American friends for emotional and financial support but for reasons which now seem bewitched, we were unable to ask for help. Gabriel, who had taken over leadership from Aries, was underground. The Weathermen were out of sight, hunted by the FBI. There were many loving friends who would have sent assistance but the problem seemed beyond their strengths. We had constructed a new reality and we were stuck with it. It seemed like spiritual cheating and a regressive retreat to cry for help back to America. We had left all that behind to join the new society. The position was our unique creation and we had to solve it with new magic.

We had become the first oppressed minority group, the first delinquents, the first mental cases, the first helpless welfare cases in the new Black state. We had to figure out a new solution to the oldest problem. The experiment had gotten out of hand again.

One possibility was to get others to join us in

the new world. We talked to Zwerin about it. If he admired Eldridge so much why didn't he stay with us and help us work things out. He just grinned and soon thereafter split for his hotel.



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We heard the cocks crow and watched the sun come up and then it was time for me to meet Zwerin and report to the embassy for the interview. I was feeling shaky. It was eighteen hours since our release and I was to tape a debate with the King, an unwinnable dilemma. If I were to speak with eloquence Eldridge would simply confiscate the tape and deal with my unrepentance at his own leisure. There is no way for a prisoner to win an argument with the parole board. It was the Russian poet bind.

On another level it was a subtle initiation situation. When all was said and done, our four days of captivity were considerably less than four hundred years and we had been treated with a stylish, professional courtesy that no white police could manage. I couldn't fight against Blacks but I couldn't play out the old pattern of slavery either.

At the embassy we were coldly informed that E.C. would be along in a while. I was ordered to the recording studio to listen to the tape which E.C. had cut. First came a Rolling Stones sound. A hip ambience thus established Cleaver's voice began to speak with force and solemnity.

As I listened I recalled that Cleaver had already sent a copy of the tape to the American radio

stations and suddenly realized that our kidnapping was part of an overall tactic on Cleaver's part to seize control of the militant revolution, to polarize and separate the political from the military, to become toughest spokesman from the left. E.C. had studied the script as it had been played out in Russia, China, North Korea, Cuba, Algeria. Destroy the popular front, move in with ruthless force. Eldridge was the new candidate for the Kim Il Sung club, the elite clique of planetary strongmen, heavyweight champions who have fought their way to power. The politics of despair, the ultimate power kick, the ecstatic pleasure of the man who single-handedly controls a country, sprawled astride leather saddle on the dome of the presidential palace, finger on trigger, spraying machine-gun tracer bullets at whim down the avenues that lead to the orgasm center—that exultant finger on the trigger. It's a familiar vocational aspiration of the oppressed, despairing two-thirds in the world where every adolescent boy has listened to the ancient invitation. The techniques for executing the military take-over are as standard as chess openings or football formations. There are probably a hundred thousand men in the world who dream and scheme about the violent steps which lead to the top.

I left the recording room in a somber mood and joined Michael who had been waiting in the conference room. Eldridge arrived two hours late. I think we were both surprised to find ourselves shaking hands. He sat down and read his mail, made a phone call, and then announced that the interview would begin. Zwerin said with a smile

that he had a question to raise off the record. Would it be possible for him to get back the grass that had been confiscated. E.C. turned an unamused eye and said that it might be possible for the grass to be turned over to the Algerian Government as contraband seized from his luggage. Somewhat meekly Michael began the interview.*

She was waiting anxiously at the apartment. She had wept during the morning and Ariana ineffectively apologized. We went for a nervous walk. We felt surveyed. It's an eerie feeling; got those police state blues. The city seemed drab and dangerous.

Down on the avenue we saw Brian Barritt and Liz and Davie sitting at a sidewalk café. We shouldn't be seen talking to them in this state of terror. They had been waiting a week and were delighted to see us but we just waved and hurried by shouting that we'd be back. Whew, that was risky. Someone in a passing car could have seen the furtive message to Brian and reported us. We dreaded another arrest. Eldridge had told Zwerin that after all the first arrest wasn't so bad, we were left together. The next time he wouldn't be so considerate.

We doubled down side streets to avoid seeing our good friends. We believed that it was immoral

* The interviews in full appeared in Jan. 28, Feb. 4, Feb. 11, 1971 issues of the *Village Voice*.

and dangerous to talk to anyone who was not in the party. It was immoral because it was risky and would betray faulty judgment caused by the excessive use of LSD.

The next few days were tense. Ariana watched every move. She would spend hours in the bathroom combing her hair with the door open so that she could hear what we were saying in the study. We would retreat to our bedroom, lock the door, and lie together whispering and touching. We knew that it didn't make any difference what we said or didn't say. Ariana met Eldridge every night to report, and to please him she would have to produce something of interest. Who wants a spy who never brings news of value?

Michael Zwerin was also around a lot. He had mailed off his first article to the *Village Voice*, and had consequently upset the Panthers by his analysis of their relations with the Algerian Government. Poor Michael was feeling the ambivalence of the journalist-friend. He could not understand our lack of total enthusiasm about being such newsworthy copy.

The next Sunday we bussed out to the beach hotel for lunch. The manager told us that an American friend had checked in looking for us. We were surprised to find Cynthia, a Black girl married to Milt Sweeney, a promoter from Los Angeles. Milt was touring around Spain in a borrowed Ferrari. Cynthia was a friend of the Commander and

his wife. Cynthia was broke and delighted to accept our invitation to come home, but puzzled by our insistence on obtaining Panther permission. With American insouciance she sniffed that no one had to give her permission to live with her friends. We explained that we got four days in jail for an unauthorized dinner and the penalties for illegal houseguests could be heavier and if we didn't like this sort of treatment we were legally unable to leave Algeria.

Cynthia is a gentle, wise person. She began weaving threads of trust between the Panthers and us. To her it was a neighborhood misunderstanding between a Black family on the block and a white family that had just moved in. She worked days at the embassy or in the children's nursery. I would drive her up the hill in the morning and drop her off. In the evening I would park the car in front of the embassy and ring the bell. One of the former prison guards would look down on me from the balcony, nod, and press the button which opened the gate. Scared, I would walk inside the courtyard, into the Panther's cage. I always carried an extra package of cigarettes in case I was detained. Then Cynthia would come running down the stairs joyous and loving and my fears would seem ridiculous, another disturbing symptom of my wobbly reality.

Michael Zwerin confirmed the fact that Eldridge had sent the tape to the USA. We were all waiting for the response. Cleaver had tossed a bomb into the American left and we wondered what the explosion would produce.

Bella was extremely tender to us during the postbust period. She kept coming around with presents and lent me her car when she went to Paris. She implied that she deplored our treatment. But she made light of it. She saw our kidnapping as a fraternity house prank, a good psychodrama, an initiation into the club. Now we were accepted as real comrades. She frankly thought the whole thing was funny. She fervently hoped that she would never see us looking so scared and tired as we did the day we returned from jail. The taped interviews continued, but now I was a wary subject. I felt like a Soviet dissident trying to explain and justify the "dropout revolution" in the U.S.A. for *Pravda* readership.

I asked Bella if the Algerian Government would approve of Cleaver's taking the law into his hands on their territory. I thought that she flinched at the question, but she said that the Algerian Government approved of Cleaver's militancy and disapproved strongly of drugs and hippies. She often said that we wouldn't be in Algeria without Eldridge and that Eldridge wouldn't be in Algeria without her.

An accelerating financial problem fueled our paranoia. Most of our close friends of the last two years were inaccessible outlaw revolutionists or dope dealers on the run. Most of the rest were in such delicate states of surveillance that phone calls or letters from fugitive Algeria would bring unwanted attention and put them on disagreeable lists. Bella said that every international phone call was monitored by the Algerian Government, by the

French and by the Americans, and maybe others. It seemed that the only persons we could ask for help were lawyers and editors of underground papers. Three of them contacted our friends and each wired three thousand dollars; none of which ever arrived.

We were thoroughly penniless. Our poverty was slightly relieved by the arrival of the Sweeneys, who proceeded to paper Algeria with rubber checks. Milt told me that he would straighten out our misunderstanding with the Panthers. He read the second psychotic version of this book and immediately pronounced it a million-dollar best seller. Cleaver was pleased. It was understood that I should work diligently to complete the book. The Panther women relayed messages through Cynthia that they would love to have Her join them at the office or in the nursery. This was exactly what She wanted to do but the pervasive presence of Ariana in the house prevented easy contact with Kathleen and threw off honesty. She felt badly about this and never forgave Eldridge for the triple insult to womanhood.

We wondered how we should handle our inevitable meeting with Olga and with Jolly Hamid. We asked Bella, who was now becoming our channel to Eldridge, what we could say to them. Her advice was not to seek them out, but not to avoid them, to accept invitations but not to invite them to our house. In due course we met Olga on the street. She was discreet. She had called the Panthers the day after the bust and had been told by them that we were all right but out of

touch. We were ill at ease in her living room. There were no Blacks present and the conversation was non-Black, nonrevolutionary. It seemed to be dangerous to be in the presence of someone who rattled on frivolously about her personal life and her personal plans and her personal opinions. She was so blatantly and breezily individualistic. By this time the continual surveillance had created a shell of guarded reticence around us. Olga was a shrewd, sensitive, deeply occult woman who knew exactly what was happening on the diplomatic chessboard. With delicate tendrils of implication she suggested that the Algerian Government did not approve of the kidnapping, that certain officials were ready to help us, that American consular offices sent sympathetic reassurance that Nixon no longer wanted us extradited. Cleaver was wanted because of the nature of his crime—rape.

I reported these conversations to Bella, admitting frankly the attraction of Olga's positive, cheery, free attitude as well as the fear provoked by her pro-American comments.

On Sunday we took a bus to the beach at Mardrague. The hotel manager, Khali, was especially cordial. He had heard of our troubles with Cleaver. There was little excitement in the sedate, prudish city and our arrest provided the scandal of the season. The manager told us that our fate was a common topic of joking conversation in the cafés. You are well liked here, he said. Everyone in this village watches you. They say you are quiet,

pleasure-loving people very much in love and there is anger at the Panthers, who are also well known to us.

He inquired about our living arrangements and frowned to hear about our house arrest. He said that the Algerians had watched closely what had happened since our arrival. That we were under the protection of the Algerian Government. That Arab traditions of hospitality were involved. That Cleaver had made three bad mistakes which had insulted the Algerian spirit. First, he, a guest in the country, had imposed his force and his law on others. This was inexcusable. Secondly, he boasted about this in the press making the insult public. Khali smiled. — You know, after what the Algerians have been through they are not impressed with tough guys. We are too familiar with fierce-talking revolutionary leaders who use the arms we give them against their own people. The third insult to Algeria is the affair with the Algerian girl who has left her home and turned against her own people.

You have been watched very carefully for four months. Everything you have done is known by several groups. Information is power here, as elsewhere. Everything is known. Many things are rumored. You have some enemies but they have no evidence against you. It is known that you smoke hashish in your home. This is no problem since many of our philosophers and ministers do the same, discreetly. You have one powerful friend in the government. He came to your home once in America with some of your rich friends from New York. To avoid scandal he was introduced to you

as a Jewish lawyer. You did not know who he was, yet you honored him and offered your hospitality to him. He has told this story to the top men in the government here and it brought them pleasure. You will learn about the Arab sense of humor. He said that your way of life was rather Arab. He came incognito to your home because he did not want to start the rumor that Algeria was supplying you with hashish. It was he who intervened with the government to get your political asylum after the bungling of your arrival here. Several powerful Algerians have offered the protection of their homes to you and your wife. Including the mayor and police chief of the beach village where you lived. Anytime you wish you can leave the apartment where you are held captive and move to a safe place under protection of the government.

Khali asked me why we had not taken action to protect ourselves against the Panthers. Why I had not listened to his warnings and used the words and contacts he had given me.

I explained that we were taken by surprise. I spoke of the special choreographed relationship that Blacks had created with Whites and Whites with Blacks in America. And of the arrival of Cynthia, the gentle Libran spirit, the Black flower child who believed that psychedelic love and radiance could heal the ancient wound, create a rainbow-colored future. That patience was the balm.

Khali filled the pipe and began speaking softly about slavery which he said was the oldest and most pervasive human social form. His perspective was strange and disturbing. He said that

genocide was the basic law of nature. He said that the pine trees thrust and struggle with the oleander, and that the lion stalks the deer. Slavery exists in various local forms of symbiosis at every level of nature. He, however, seemed to see history and evolution mainly in terms of slavery. Slavery was to him a natural phenomenon like gravitation or the changes of the seasons. Until very recently every human being was either slave or slave master. To him European civilization was of interest because it substituted machine slaves for human slaves. That white colonists used machines to enslave native cultures was to him an ingenious development. Human slavery was too inefficient for cold climates. He was amused at revolutionary rhetoric about colonialism, since politics was simply a matter of who was to be slave and who master. Those who shout the loudest against white colonialism are those who desire to wield the lash themselves. He was both entertained and concerned about my blaming the whites for enslaving the Blacks.

— African people in harmony with nature killed, mutilated, and cannibalized their neighbors for millennia. Most of Africa still follows this instinct. Then came the Arabs who told my forebears not to kill and mutilate the bodies of beautiful young girls and boys but to sell them. What a revelation! The Blacks who now live in America were originally sold into bondage by Black Africans. There is much lying about racism and slavery by demagogues. Every living creature is a racist. You are here in North Africa to experience slavery. That

is good. You cannot be free until you have escaped both from slavery and slave mastery.

He lit the pipe again. We smoked and drank tea. I knew he was deciding whether to tell me more. – Did you know, he said, that less than a hundred years ago there were twenty-five thousand white Christian slaves in this city of Algiers? He smiled.

Ariana calls me into her room. She is naked except for a band of black lace around her thighs. She is holding the phone.

– Eldridge wants to talk to you.

She watches me watch her move around the room, lighting a cigarette and leaning back against the cushions on her couch bed.

– Hey man you gotta come up here. There's a big-shot holy man from India here to see you.

There is something amusing, almost patronizing in his voice. Ariana smiles and offers me a cigarette. I join her on the couch.

Everyone is smiling when I arrive at the embassy. They direct me into the waiting room.

– Your guru awaits you said Eldridge.

He was about forty-five, wild orange hair, dirty madras cotton shirt, tattered cape, a leather bag, sandals, mad glint in his eye. He was a Tarot card stepped out of an R. Crumb underground comic. The ultimate bedraggled middle-aged hippie. With him was a young Black man from the Congo.

The Joker, for that was his name, said that he started two months ago from Algeciras to visit me. Spiritual people all over the world were disturbed by my endorsement of revolutionary violence.

Perhaps I was under some spell. He had come to rescue me.

A young Panther was standing in the corner of the room with a video camera shooting the scene. The film would perfectly illustrate E.C.'s accusations. Dig the God of Acid holding court in Algiers with a follower.

I looked into the camera and smiled wearily. I explained in a slow and distinct voice about racism, genocide, and self-defense; that we directed no violence against innocent persons but that we would resist the machines that were destroying us and all free life. The cameraman was sending me encouraging smiles and making right-on motions.

The Joker then shifted the conversation. He pulled out documents from his leather bag. He was filing a lawsuit with the United Nations. He was English with an Indian passport. The laws against hashish and marijuana were violating the religious rights of Hindus. He wanted me to join him in this litigation. He would go back to London and work through the English courts to free me. He pulled out more documents. They concerned his litigation against the Marine Engineers Union and a steamship company for blacklisting him. He had exposed a plot to sink a ship for the insurance and now he could not get signed on any ships. The Panther moved in for close-ups.

I explained that I could not join him in seeking recourse from British law. We here in this embassy are exiles, fugitives from Western law. We have chosen to live under socialist law. We shall over-

throw these repressions but not by legal means. We are outside that system, do you understand?

I asked Oscar, the young man from the Congo, about his trip. He was hitchhiking to Europe to make money so he could go to America and study in a university to learn things that he could bring back to his country to help his people. He asked the Panthers which American university they would recommend.

I gently reminded him that the Panthers were out to smash the entire American system including the universities. This was not the place to receive vocational counseling in the traditional sense. One of the Panthers handed him some political pamphlets with pictures of Black kids carrying guns.

I accompanied the Joker and Oscar down the hill on the bus. They were both hurt by the treatment they had received at the embassy. Joker talked about ahimsa, bhakti, love, nonviolence; Oscar said that the Panthers were not African Blacks.

When we reached the center of town, I explained that I was going to walk around to visit banks. If they wished to join me they were welcome. I told Oscar that if my money arrived, I would give him twenty-five dollars. It was raining and cold. Oscar said he had nothing better to do.

We spent four hours tramping from one bank to another. Joker and Oscar would wait outside for me. Oscar watched me curiously. After the sixth futile bank interview, I said we would call it off for the day. I shrugged an apology to Oscar.

— Let's go to a café.

Joker paid for the coffee and a pack of cigarettes.

- Are you free and happy here, asked the Joker.
- No.
- Can I help you?
- Pray for us. We'll meet in India. Back home.
- I am free, said the Joker. As long as I am free there is hope.

The next day I met Joker and Oscar at a sidewalk café on the Avenue. Oscar kept looking at me expectantly. I said that I had no money, but that I would make some money for him. I borrowed a dime from Joker and bought a student's notebook at a stationery store. On the first page I wrote, "*Book for Oscar*, by Timothy Leary, Algiers, January 1971."

In fifteen minutes I filled the book with diagrams and slogans about the seven visible revolutions and the seven internal liberations.

On the last page I wrote that this book was currency, a medium of exchange, and would be redeemed by me or by any friend of mine for twenty-five dollars.

– When you arrive in Europe look for a young American with long hair. Tell him you have this book which you will exchange for twenty-five dollars. Oscar looked at me skeptically but took the book.

Cynthia and Milt continued to spend much of their time with the Panthers. Milt told me there that he had straightened everything out. Cleaver was eager to have us join their family to spend

our days working at the embassy and our nights in friendly discourse. This sounded good, but facts were that we were under house arrest, continually surveyed, with no passports. Milt laughed and said that ain't good. He was having a good time as our adviser and diplomatic agent. He believed that we had been selected, like Jesus, you might say, to be central figures in a great historical drama, to be the symbols of white reconciliation. We should be humble, pay dues, see things in the cosmic dimension. It was a great honor.

We told him that we were uninterested in perpetuating any sort of martyr myth, we were Hindus anyway, and if the honor was so great we weren't selfish about it so why didn't he and Cynthia send their passports back to Sam and join us as the first interracial couple in the new utopia. Everyone knew that no man in the Panther community was there voluntarily. The new society was based on fugitive helplessness. We still wanted to live with the Panthers as comrades, we shared the yearning, but we were not going to be drafted into a military organization led by a man whose ambitions we did not share.

On the bus returning home from the embassy I found myself hanging from a strap next to a Falstaffian apparition. A middle-aged man, red-faced, round, twinkling. He wore a brilliant robe; his hair was dyed orange and he smiled radiantly.

— Dr. Leary, I presume.

He claimed to be attached to the U.S. embassy in some obscure way. He was the perfect cinematic caricature of a CIA agent. He loved Algeria and the people and his glorious apartment was large and there were always a few homeless young men to share his hospitality. He exuded cheerful confidence. He invited us to drop around for drinks. I shuddered at the frivolity of the possibility.

He kept glancing at me with amusement. We were both swaying silently like trapeze performers as the bus whirled down the curving streets to the port. He turned to me with a wicked smile.

— You should know that the American colony here in Algiers is very grateful to you and your wife. It's such a dull place and you have provided us with much entertainment.

He smiled. We continued to sway together in silence. With another dramatic turn toward me, he continued.

— The *Paris Herald Tribune* carried a front-page story last week in which Mr. Cleaver claimed responsibility and authority over all Americans in Algeria. My dear, you can imagine the flutter this created in the colony here. He smiled tenderly. Actually the story was so good it went out on the international wire and several people in the American embassy received phone calls from concerned relatives about our being under the control of the bad Panthers. Your activities keep our cocktail parties in conversation, you know. So many people would like to meet you and your charming wife.

I nodded grimly. If I were seen talking this way to an American embassy person? Whew! As the bus swayed our bodies bumped together. He was a

magnificent actor. Each line was rehearsed and delivered with a flourish.

— It's all bravura comic opera, you know. I suppose that any publicity is better than none.

I was trying to smile bravely. After a long silence he turned on me again.

— I do hope that you and your wife are enjoying the humor of it all as much as we are.

The letter from our Madrid protectors, Mario and Christina, came at the right time. Help was on the way. We wrote back telling them to come. They arrived at the airport with that cheerful free radiation that prisoners envy. E.C. had approved of their coming. He was sensitive to certain rumors going around that we were being held in house arrest.

Mario wanted to meet E.C. so it was arranged that we would visit the embassy Sunday for the Commander's prerecorded rap on Marxist theory. When we arrived we discovered that the seminar had been canceled so we sat in the conference room surrounded by liberated video equipment and large wall maps of the world. Eldridge asked questions about LSD and brain damage. Afterward we drove to the beach and watched the fishing boats returning in the sunset and picked out fish which the little port restaurant chef prepared.

Mario was outraged by our captivity. He could not understand our passive compliance. We tried to explain about the unique racial scene in America, about Black rage and white guilt, paying dues, and the special tenderness of heart that Jean Genet said was necessary in dealing with the Panthers. But Mario had a European resistance point

of view and was eager to play a rerun of his youthful antifascist heroics. He sat in the study preparing escape plans. We knew that sooner or later someone would dig the romance and buzz possibilities of our captivity-release. We had sent one message to Mick Jagger to send a boat but the word never reached England. A lot of people knew of our plight and we wondered who would show up to save us. We also knew that many of our friends were getting bored with rescuing us.

We drove Mario and Christina to Bou Saada. He took over the hotel scene with an aristocratic sweep, in contrast to our proletarian humility. The second day we visited the oasis and sat for eight hours in sand dunes watching wind and sun. It was a crucial day in the lives of our visitors. In the late afternoon I noticed a flock of sheep moving down from the heights above us. I rose to investigate. As I walked up the slope an old shepherd with a dog emerged from behind the flock. He was dressed in some timeless bedouin garb. I stood fifty feet below him dressed in silken shirt, velvet trousers, silver Navaho belt, sandals, and a camera slung around my neck. I waved and spoke in French and he replied in laconic Arabic. I smiled, bowed, and waved arms in appreciation and descended to the dune cup where my friends were staring at the sun. The flock continued moving down toward us, herding us out of the desert as nightfall approached.

Back in the apartment Mario continued to organize the details of the escape, complete with elaborate codes, meeting places, intermediaries, and Swiss banking connections. The secrecy was

as much for his protection as for ours since it was extremely risky for him to be identified with Algerian revolutionaries and dope fiends. He was happy about the scam and beamed protective love for us.

After the departure of Mario and Christina we began seeing a lot of Eldridge. He started hanging out at the apartment. The script still called for us to have no money so we benefited from his largesse of cigarettes, sweet rolls, and grass. Ariana would spend the morning shopping and preparing succulent roasts and gourmet sauces. E.C. was hip and funny and wise. He'd ask why we didn't spend more time at the embassy, then laugh and say that he understood why we would want to stay away from the police station. We would smoke and discuss the world situation. Now and then we would dig some Black perspectives in the daily news that he had not noticed. He often remarked that he liked us better after the bust than before. He was lonely in Algeria. There weren't many people he could relax, rap, and smoke with. He wanted to be friends and we wanted the same. Half the time he was the most tender, wise, loving man in the world. In the flush of tender moments he would ask for closeness and we would look at the beautiful prison guard and shrug our shoulders.

— You have kept us away from Kathleen and the community by creating this racial enclave on the other side of town.

He would frown and look away. Once he asked us if we thought he was a pig. She said softly that there was no other way to look at it. He reflected

for a moment and said, — Yes, I am a pig. You have to have pigs. We've got to be ready to deal with discipline and security in the future.

— So you are practicing on us, is that it? she asked.

I remember the first time I met Cleaver, at a love-in near Palo Alto. I gave a short talk about the danger facing Eldridge and asked for prayers to guard him. Eldridge made a long speech in which he spoke about the Man whose finger would be on the button which fired the bomb. He said that he wanted his finger on the button. He wanted to be the Man, that's all.

We met Jolly Hamid in the street intersection, the first time since the night we didn't show up for our own dinner party. We felt exposed talking in the avenue and made a date to meet in his office. It seemed dangerous walking through surveyed streets. I handed Hamid the *Newsweek* account of the kidnapping. He asked what we wanted. I said that we wanted residence papers, which Eldridge had never obtained for us; that we wanted to live freely. He said that he had friends in high places and would make inquiries and sense out of the political web.

Brian and Liz and little Davie came by the flat. Their situation was in such a free contrast to ours. They had no money, no home, no connections and floated through life comfortably and genially. Their sweep and charm allowed them to move through Algeria as honored guests, staying with families in the Casbah, merging into the native life, dining cheaply in little restaurants

incorporated in the benevolent folds of Arab hospitality. They were about to hitchhike a thousand miles down the desert to Tinduf because Brian liked the sound of the name and thought that something magical would happen to them there. Having them at the apartment was against the rules but there was something about them that made us feel safe and happy in spite of their disgraceful unmilitary garb.

We met Olga on the street and sat with her in a café. She delicately indicated that powerful figures in the government were our friends and offered to arrange a dinner to meet some officials. We set the date for Saturday night.

Our poverty was another crippling factor. After the kidnap I had worked frantically to finish the third version of this manuscript. Mario had smuggled it to Madrid and mailed it to New York. We were expecting the \$7,500 advance due upon delivery of the book. This third version was a rambling, flamboyant, insane epic poem which Brian Barritt read in one sitting and pronounced a Joycean masterpiece. The language was eccentric: puns, word plays, neologisms. The words were not significative but sprayed out as energy-emitting bleeps.

The editor cabled enthusiastically that we'd receive a decision on the manuscript in five days. After a week I started going to the post office every evening to put through a collect call. It took two or three hours to make the connection. For eight days the editor was out of the office, in conference, out to lunch, would call back. We had based our hopes of freedom on the advance and

we would lie awake nights sweating out the possibility that we were stranded in Algiers without any way of making a living.

Saturday afternoon the embassy called and said that Eldridge would be by the flat to see us at eight o'clock. I nervously asked if we couldn't see him earlier because we were going out to dinner. This was impossible. We decided that we would drive to Olga's at seven, that I would stay for drinks and return to the flat to see E.C. and then return to the dinner.

Olga joked about the fact that it was exactly four weeks since the first dinner party. We didn't totally appreciate the humor knowing that I'd be explaining to Eldridge that we were dining with the very guests whose presence at our flat prompted the bust. Bella knew about our date and approved but still . . .

At quarter to eight I rose and explained that I had a date with Eldridge. A hush descended as I kissed Her and walked out.

In the lobby of the apartment I met one of the young guards. He was upset that She was not with me; Eldridge wanted us both at the embassy. I went back up to the apartment for Her. We got in his car and drove back along the sea on the same route, in the same car, with the same driver breaking up another Saturday night dinner four weeks later.

It was a long scary ride to the embassy holding hands. The driver reassured us that there was nothing to worry about. He was right. It seemed that a *Life* reporter-photographer team was in town to do a story about the kidnapping. Cleaver

had refused to see them or give them our address. He had spent the afternoon hidden out in a secret Panther pad which the *Life* reporter tracked down. It freaked E.C. when he opened the door and found two journalists confronting him. He had been persuaded that his refusal to produce us would suggest that we were still being held prisoners and give the most sensational and damaging twist to the story. E.C. was both enraged and suppliant as he asked us to have dinner with the journalists.

— These Saturday night dinner parties are getting to be a drag, she said.

Monday morning we borrowed coins from Ariana and took the bus to the embassy in response to a summons. Eldridge told us that it was now time for us to be integrated into the military-communal life. We were to report each morning to the office and spend the day working for the party. A Panther car would come by our apartment to pick us up. I was to start off by doing manual work in the basement; she would help out in the Panther nursery school or do clerical work in the embassy. She nodded and went into the reception office to talk to Kathleen. E.C. said that I might be assigned to write a script for a videotape attacking the Berrigans who were saying such revisionist things as: "A revolution is interesting insofar as it avoids like the plague the plague it promises to heal." The Berrigans were emerging as spokesmen for the American Revolution and must be exposed. *Off the Berrigans* might be the title of the flick.

She returned cheerily and told E.C. that she had worked out a schedule with Kathleen for helping out with the kids. Eldridge replied coldly that Kathleen was the receptionist and had nothing to say about work assignments. We would both report to the embassy each morning and be told what to do.

Back in the apartment we agreed that it was about time for us to make our move. She would feign illness and stay home for the next few days while I would start the escape procedures.

Tuesday morning I waited until 10:30 for the car pool. I phoned the embassy and was told that they forgot to pick us up. I should proceed by bus. I brought the transcriptions of the interviews with Bella. E.C. seemed pleased when I suggested that my first task should be to edit them for publication. There was still the hope that the interviews would bring fame and fortune to us all.

I ate lunch in the communal kitchen and was touched to see the Commander washing dishes. He grinned when I looked at him. In spite of all past cruelties I dug him, and his wily cynical sense of paradox. We were both survivors against the odds.

I was sitting in an easy chair next to the reception room working on the manuscript. Eldridge was expecting a telephone connection to San Francisco for a conversation with Huey Newton which was to be carried live on radio-TV. Everyone gathered around to listen. It was an awesome confrontation between two angry men.

Eldridge hung up and said that Huey had expelled us from the Black Panther party and was

going to write the Algerian, Chinese, and North Korean Governments to withdraw support. Cleaver seemed pleased.

There was a lot to talk about when I returned to the apartment.

I spent the next day in the easy chair in the conference room watching videotapes being filmed to be sent to America explaining Cleaver's side of the quarrel between the two top Panthers. Huey's faction controlled the party newspaper. Eldridge was escalating the media war with McLuhan weaponry. The video programs were called Voodoo Tapes. Three young French radicals were making the film. In the first, Kathleen explained why Huey was a revisionist seeking accommodation with the capitalist enemy and betraying the principles of violent revolution. Eldridge sat next to her looking stern. When she finished her polished recitation she gave a militant fist. The camera panned to Cleaver who said in a quiet voice, — Death to All Revisionists.

Eldridge made a tape defining Huey as the right wing of the Panther party. Eldridge identified the Algeria Panthers as Maoist and Newton's faction as relating to Russian revisionism.

Eldridge and the Commander were discussing the Newton situation in front of me. The Commander laughed and put his arm around my shoulders.

— At least we have a captive audience of one, he said.

— Don't forget that I'm an escape artist I said. This delighted the Commander.

Back in the flat I described the 'strange and

exciting doings of the folks in the big houses on the hill. Ariana was no longer working at the embassy. She was unhappy and cried a lot.

Leaving for the office on Thursday morning I was handed some books which Ariana was returning to Eldridge. Sitting on the bus I read Bakunin's essay on anarchism, a ruthless directive for all-out violent revolution, spelling out how the revolutionist classifies and uses every person, every situation, with cold destructive exploitation. The revolutionist is frankly warned that he or she is also to be used as an instrument and discarded. The document was consistent in its scientific, icy, disciplined logic. I thought of Ariana weeping at our house, still loyal to the process that promised to crush her.

She had been cleaning her nails that morning with the switchblade that Eldridge had given her. We asked if she wanted to kill. She told several horror stories of her mother's rape and beatings by French soldiers. Yes, she would enjoy killing.

The videotaping continued at the embassy. It was a front-row seat at the great heavyweight match—a tragic, sorrowful spectacle. Our political allegiance was to Huey who was attempting, however inefficiently, to build an organization and to win power for the people. Our emotional allegiance was to Eldridge. But overriding such preferences was sadness at seeing the bravest, strongest men in Afro-American history attacking each other instead of the mutual enemy. Some New York Panthers had jumped bail during the Trial of the Twenty-one and fled to Algiers. They sat in front of the camera detailing the misdeeds

of Huey Newton, who himself was sitting in a penthouse overlooking Oakland, surrounded by bodyguards and hurling threats across the sea at Eldridge who was sitting in his villa in El Biar.

Friday morning Eldridge talked to me standing in the sunshine of the embassy balcony. He showed me a letter he had written to our friend Jakov Kohn, then editor of the *East Village Other*, an underground paper in New York. Eldridge denounced the noble, wise Jakov for his support of us. The last line was ominous. Don't worry, Papa will take care of them.

That did it. I told Eldridge that we needed our passports in case the advance money arrived at the bank. He was pleased that bread was coming. He wanted to know why we needed both passports. I said that we had a joint account and that we might split for India over the weekend. He was in an expansive mood and gave me the passports.

At home, She and I locked ourselves in the bedroom and started packing. The jangle of the doorbell startled us. It was Jolly Hamid who had come by to ask us out for dinner. She stayed.

We went to the only hip-young café in Algiers. It was a prevision of a happy future for socialism. It was the only happy public place in the country. The only place where Algerian women could laugh and flirt. The only place where young music could be heard, where the clients were proud revolutionary Algerians who wanted to make it a happy pure country. The café was a seed of one possible flowering. Bella had warned me that it was the most wicked place in Algeria.

During dinner Hamid said that he had received

favorable reports from his friends in the government about our status. He shyly asked what would happen to our apartment if we moved to the country. The housing shortage crippled courting activities. Algerian young men lived at home with their families where the seclusion of women made it impossible to entertain guests. The height of luxury and erotic achievement was to score an apartment. I said that if it could be arranged we would like to have him take over our apartment.

We planned to return to our flat after dinner. En route Hamid drove to the house of his friend, an Algerian television announcer. He rolled down the car window and called softly up to the windows. Muktar. Ah yeh. Muktar. It was a tender moment. Perhaps Muktar is at the studio. We drove to the modern television building. Hamid reappeared smiling with Muktar and another television announcer. It was a moment of honor and initiatory sharing for him to bring his two friends to our house.

When we walked in the apartment I saw that the door to the living room was closed. She ran from the bedroom with an alarmed look. Eldridge is here she whispered. We tiptoed through the hallway to our study. The Algerians had brought piles of patisserie dripping with sugar and chocolate.

They too felt the presence of Eldridge six feet away in the next room. She made tea and we were listening to rock music when the door opened. Eldridge Cleaver stood towering above us tall as a giant, his shirt undone, his muscled arms gleaming.

He swept the room with contempt and motioned me out. We stood in the hallway.

– Is something bothering you I asked.

– Who are those cats he hissed.

He was angry.

I said they were prominent Algerians and friends.

– Get their names. We'll deal with this in the morning.

As he stalked back into the living room, it occurred to me that he was too enraged to remember to ask for the passports.

The little group sat timidly in the study.

Hamid asked if it was all right to smoke hashish. I said no.

We heard Eldridge leave. Soon after the door opened Ariana walked in the room. She was wearing a mini nightgown which manifested the beauty of her body and the silky sheen of her dimpled legs. She examined the room and said something about looking for a book. She was checking for hashish smoke.

The Algerian guests talked quietly about Cleaver's behavior. They were offended. They said that a guest in their country should not behave rudely to his hosts. We sensed something strong and ancient in their solidarity and that they included us within their circle.

They shook our hands warmly and looked deeply into our eyes as they left.

19

Dawn brought the cries of roosters and a gentle knock on our bedroom window. Khali was standing on the balcony with another man. We passed the suitcases out the window and they were lifted over the wall to the neighboring balcony. Khali returned and told us to leave the apartment at nine o'clock and take a taxi to the Beach Hotel where we would be expected. He told us that the apartment would be watched and there was nothing to fear. At 9:00 A.M. we kissed each other and She left. I stayed behind to send a final line to Eldridge. I knocked at the door of the living room. Ariana was dressed ready to go out. I said She had gone to get breakfast. After she left I phoned Eldridge. His voice was gruff.

— We are going to split the city for a few days at the Beach Hotel.

His response was a roar.

— No!

— We have to have a few days of rest. You can dig that.

— You are going to stay right there.

— We are going.

He paused for an instant.

— I want you to come up here right now.

– I'll be right up I said. I had lost all fear of terror.

– And bring the passports.

– I'll come to talk but I won't bring the passports.

I heard him calling to the Commander and a brief side discussion.

– You come here now and bring those passports!

– No passports. It's a new chapter now. We'll be at the Beach Hotel if you want to contact us.

There was a silence in which I could feel his anger, and then the phone clicked off.

I walked down to the avenue and took a cab to the beach. The hotel glowed with the feeling of home. The young clerks and the chambermaids gathered around smiling and patting my arms. They were pointing up the stairs. Dix-neuf comme toujours they were saying. I took the stairs three at a time. She had already arranged the room with our rugs and furs and cushions.

It was another one of those high home again scenes. She wrapped her arms around us.

Later the maids came with tea and performed welcome rituals, murmuring incantations. When we entered the restaurant that night the staff surrounded us with love. We were ushered to a table looking out the large windows to the village square. During the next joyous hours everyone in the village passed by to wave. Khali just happened to drop by the bar with the police chief and the mayor. They stood around our table smiling. We felt the same new-birth rush of free joy that we had experienced with the Weathermen. Every

one of the men and many of the women had themselves been underground guerrillas in the recent past. They knew what independence day meant.

That evening we called Olga and Jolly Hamid. Both mentioned that they had friends in the government who were eager to talk with us and find out what they could do to help us start a new life as Algerian residents. I called Bella and told her about our conversation. We arranged that we would meet on Wednesday night as usual for the interviews with Ahmed.

The next days were dreamy and real. We walked along the sea, saw the fishing boats come in, and sat on the huge rocks of the breakwater and watched the sun set. Then we would sink into the sweet privacy of room 19.

Wednesday, the fourth day of liberation, I phoned the embassy and asked for Bella. We confirmed our rendezvous. I could hear a Panther voice in the background saying that's Leary on the phone. Bella said that Eldridge wanted to know where the key to the bedroom was.

— Tell him that we still have things stored there. I'll get them in the next few days and leave the key.

Bella said that Eldridge wanted to talk to me.

— Hey, man, just what do you think you are doing? You're not supposed to act this way. You have got to come back and live under party supervision.

— It doesn't feel good I said.

— If you don't come back we gonna move on you.

— Yeah bo. I'se scared.

Eldridge waited a moment, caught it, and laughed.

— I'm serious, man. We gonna move on you.

— We're not outnumbered anymore.

— I mean this time we gonna move on you with the government. They know you're living out of that hippie commune at Moretti.

— The Algerian Government knows exactly what we're doing.

— And so do we. You're being watched you know. I'm going to warn you one more time and then we'll move.

That evening at Bella's apartment we did no work on the interview. We had dinner early. While Bella cooked, Ahmed talked seriously. He said that he was our friend and that we were on the verge of disaster. The conversation was in melodramatic French. He spoke about Arab prudishness and the hard line against drugs. He spoke about the Algerian prisons which were not like the American ones. Bella added that there was no feeling of Western chivalry and they did some pretty unbelievable things to women. I remembered E.C.'s interest in brainwashing techniques. I thanked them for the advice and left after dinner.

Saturday night we had dinner at Olga's to talk to sleek Muktar, the Algerian official whom we missed the night of the *Life* magazine affair.

He said that he had been assigned by the government to act as liaison. He knew I would understand the necessity for doing business this way. He repeated the message that the government was

insulted by Cleaver's actions with us. He didn't like Eldridge.

I said that we wanted residence cards, and would like to find a house.

We discussed the possibility that I might teach at the university. The government was severing its dependence on French teachers and wanted to recruit American professors. We discussed the courses I might teach. He and his French wife were charming, and we left looking forward to this academic future. — I always wanted to be a professor's wife She said.

Next day the hotel manager Khali joined us for dinner. He smiled and asked if we were meeting more Algerians. Many people wanted to talk to us. He said that everyone I would meet in Algiers worked for at least one government. That as far as we were concerned there were three factions interested in us. The left-wing militant revolutionists would be unsympathetic, but would surely try to contact us, involve us in promises of help to find out what we knew. The right-wing forces were CIA, low-profiled but everywhere. They would want information about the Panthers. The country was run by the army through the president's office. What happened to us in Algeria would depend now upon what was decided by this faction which had all the power.

Brian Barritt and Liz and Davie showed up at the hotel. We were now free to be happy to see them. They had taken trips with the Tuaregs and wandered around in the desert on rainbow camels and had a thousand and one miraculous tales to tell. They had found the house at Mòretti, a fash-

ionable beach across the bay and were being protected by the owner a young French teacher whose life was about to be changed radically.

Brian and I had long discussions about the craft of writing. The alchemy of words. For Brian the word was the atom, the sentence the molecule, the paragraph the substance. He wrote only in paragraphs which he kept on small papers which could be shuffled and dealt out like Tarot cards. We agreed that in the neurological-electronic future plagiarism would be recognized as the basic principle of live writing. It's Mother Nature's literary lesson. The DNA code is a chromosome script passed on through generations with no copyrights to the individual. Creativity is deliberate or unconscious distortion in transmission. Rights of reproduction cannot be reserved. Mutations are imprinting errors. Each new edition bears the flaws of the reissuer. Originality, evolutionary suicide, a monstrous conceit.

The perfect new book would be totally plagiarized. Each word, each sentence, each paragraph would be exactly transmitted unchanged.

The next time Brian showed up leaping with merry joy, we were sitting in the back of the restaurant smoking with Khali. He had something to show me: a book in Arabic. It described the history of slave trading along the North African coast. It was customary for Barbary pirates to overpower trading ships, and capture Christians for the slave markets in Tangier, Algiers, Tunis. White slaves were classified according to nationality and profession. Ransom lists were carefully tailored to what the traffic would bear. Each category of

white slave had a ransom price. Spanish and Italian seamen were valueless and sold to the labor market. An English sailor could be ransomed for five hundred dollars. The highest price tags were pinned on American captives. It was some sort of national honor thing that Americans would pay any price. The ransom price for an American sailor was five thousand dollars. The value of an American captain or a doctor was ten thousand dollars. It seems to me I've heard that figure mentioned recently, She said.

The problem of American slaves in North Africa was so great that Benjamin Franklin arranged a national lottery to raise money for ransom.

Monday morning we received a significant bleep from the important Algerian diplomat who had visited us in America. He said that he had wanted to see us for some time, to welcome us to his country but that his duties had kept him abroad. Could we come to his home for dinner? If there was anything he could do to make our stay in Algeria happy he was at our service. We floated on that message for a few hours.

Letters came from Mario in breathless code. He was working on plans to get us out of Algeria, perhaps to Switzerland.

Tuesday morning a phone call from a man speaking French who said he was from the president's office. I asked, president of what. He laughed. The President of Algeria. He asked if it would be convenient for us to meet with some government officials this morning. We should wait at the hotel and a car would be sent for us.

We sat in the village restaurant and watched

three confident young men leap out of a black car. They were dressed in sport shirts and sweaters. They sat with us as we finished breakfast. They were beaming amusement, and reassurance. — Mangez professeur, they kept saying. They wanted me to accompany them to the government headquarters. She was to remain. We looked at each other with that here-we-go-again look, kissed and I split in the black car.

Six officials were sitting in a conference room. The assistant minister came, in shook my hand with a smile and sat behind the large desk. The first thing he did was hand me two green cards. Her picture was on one. She looked like a seventeen-year-old Italian movie star. My McMillan shaved head was stapled to the other.

It is a pleasure for the Algerian Government to have you join us. We want you to know that you are a free person here. This is a free country. You and your wife are our guests here. We wish to apologize for any inconveniences or misunderstandings that have occurred. When we gave you political asylum we took you under the protection of our government. You are safe and free to live your life here as you wish. The world is observing your presence here. Algeria is not Texas. Everyone present dug that line.

I was asked what the Algerian Government could do for us. Another official, one whom I knew to be liaison with the Panthers and a friend of Bella's, was asked to arrange for a house, a job, and travel visas.

Another official wanted to ask questions about the Panthers' treatment of us. Had they abused us

physically, used force, did they carry guns. I said that no force had been used, that the only Panthers who carried guns were Eldridge and the Commander and that they were authorized to do so. I looked at Bella's friend and said that we had been warned by friends of the Panthers about the rough treatment prisoners could receive in Algerian prisons but that I did not believe such threats to be true. It was a direct message to Bella. I was still grumpy about that last evening of coercion with her. I said that we believed in the cause of the Black Panthers and that we did not wish to harm their struggle, that we held no grudges, after all, our four days in prison were nothing compared to four hundred years of Afro-American slavery. Everybody dug that. It was one of my few good lines.

The minister asked me if we wanted to see the Panthers. Before I could answer he continued that he did not think it a good idea at the moment. There was a nice moment of more handshaking and good wishes. As I turned to leave the minister said, — Bon, now phone Monsieur Cleaver and ask him to come down this afternoon.

The government limousine drove me back to the beach. Just before we hit the coast the highway was lined with policemen. Then police cruisers, turret lights flashing, and motorcycle cops waving all traffic to the side.

The President is coming, the driver told me. We sat for ten minutes, the tension mounting until the approaching buzz turned into a blast of power. The black presidential limousine zapped along the narrow road at eighty miles an hour surrounded

by an oval cluster of helmet-goggled leather-jacketed guards on black death-defying motorcycles. A raw, insolent display of kingly might. And regal insecurity. Assassins had roadblocked the presidential car in a previous abortive coup.

The driver pulled up to the hotel and She ran out. I showed her the green security cards. We had another escape-victory celebration scene in each other's arms. A cluster of villagers and hotel staff buzzed around joyously and we could feel the news spreading in concentric ripples through the village.

Later I called Olga and thanked her. She was a loving friend and happy for us. Then I called Mukdar and thanked him. He seemed surprised. It happened faster than he expected. That makes it all the more impressive and increases our gratitude. He then shifted to an executive gear and asked if we would come by his apartment that evening for a drink. — Now that you have your papers there are many things that we must discuss about your future.

Sleek Mukdar lived in a swank Second Empire duplex overlooking the center of town. He mixed drinks suavely. He loved America. He hoped to go to the United States. He told us that the Algerian government had asked him to be liaison with us. We would understand that our relationships with the government could be handled most smoothly in the context of a friendship rather than speaking to a strange bureaucrat over a desk. It was the Algerian way of doing things. He invited us to dinner that weekend and said that we would start taking weekend drives with his wife and son to

look for villas along the coast. He was already investigating a villa on the west coast which he described in mouth-watering real-estate poetry.

When we asked him what exactly was his job with the government, he became vague. He said that he had played an important part in the Revolution and that the chiefs of the army all knew him and owed him favors. He motioned to the luxurious apartment. He said that after independence he worked as an editor of a government paper. One day, Ben Bella was angered by an article and ordered him to report to the presidential palace at once. He knew this was a death summons, so he drove at once to the Moroccan border and stayed out of the country until the coup toppled Ben Bella. It didn't hurt him with the present regime he said.

I showed him an invitation we had received to attend a conference in Denmark and asked if he could arrange exit visas for us. The conference was to be held on May 7, a month in the future. No problem he said.

We were now free for the first time to tour around Algeria and get to know the country of our adoption. We drove to the hot baths of Hamman Salahin and immersed ourselves to the neck in the hot sulfur springs, which did seem to sooth our nerves, restore our bodies, and enable us to experience what Aleister Crowley would call the Aethyr. We drove to El Oued, fabled city of a thousand domes, sitting in the sand. Coming through the desert at night we missed the detour sign and got lost. Nomads surrounded the car. We had seen their campfires burning and heard the

barking of dogs. They offered tea and quad and guided us gently and without words back to the highway. We visited Biskra and sat in the ancient baths, deciding not to spend the night in a rented stone chamber because of the illness vibes which overrode the healing waters. We touched base at Bou Saada. We did not realize until Brian Barritt told us months later that we were following exactly the route which Aleister Crowley took on his search for desert illumination. The eerie synchronicities between our lives and that of Crowley, which were later to preoccupy us, were still unfolding with such precision as to make us wonder if one can escape the programmed imprinting with which we are born. At times it seemed so oedipally pre-packaged.

We spent more time with Brian and Liz and Davie, walking on the beach, lounging in the sun around their villa, tuning into Brian's magic and alchemy. He often spoke about the similarities between our meetings and the collaboration of Dr. Dee, the Elizabethan magician-professor, and his medium-receiver Edward Kelly. We made elaborate plans for scientific experiments in which B.B. would act as a receiver and I as transmitter. Aleister Crowley claimed to belong to the same line of magical manifestation.

20

We saw quite a bit of sleek Mukdar after we returned from the desert pilgrimage. Family picnics on the beach. One afternoon he called excitedly to say that a rendezvous had been arranged with a high official. He came to get me at the hotel. He was wired up, his tension communicating the importance that the meeting was to have for him and presumably for us. He drove hastily to Algiers. He explained that the contact was so powerful that we could not meet in an office. The official would meet us on a street corner. We drove slowly down a side street near the port, a small, furtive man in hooded robe darted out of a doorway and entered the back seat. His name was Muhammad. We shook hands. He smiled showing bad teeth. He seemed nervous.

We drove several miles beyond the city limits to a small farm town. En route Muhammad spoke rapidly in French. The government was happy to have me in Algeria. They hoped I would teach in the university. I said that it was a good idea. He asked me if I would teach at the University of Oran, a new educational complex in western Algeria. They would find a house for us. They hoped I would not talk about drugs.

Mukdar parked the car behind a garage and

we walked to a café and selected a seat outside away from the car. It was clear that Muhammad did not want to be seen with me. Both Algerians glanced around uneasily.

Muhammad said critical things about the Panthers. He attacked the young university students who were protesting and seemed pleased that the police had crushed the recent demonstrations. He attacked my friend Jolly Hamid, calling him a hippie. He said that Hamid had lived in Greenwich Village in New York when he was assigned to the UN. He said Greenwich Village as though it were a bad word. He wanted to know who killed the Kennedys.

On the way back to the city he asked questions about the Panthers. I told him that I knew nothing more than was published in the paper. He wanted to know if Cleaver received money from the Chinese Government. He seemed disappointed in my replies. I asked about exit visas so that we could attend the conference in Denmark. Muhammad told Mukdar to give him our passports the following day.

After we dropped Muhammad off in the center of town I asked Mukdar who he was and why he appeared so furtive. Mukdar explained that power in Algeria did not always reside with the public figures. That the real rulers of the country avoided publicity. There was no doubt that Mukdar respected and feared Muhammad. I asked Mukdar if I should not contact the President's office about our plans. He impatiently said that we should not confuse the lines of communication.

Back in the hotel I gave Mukdar our passports.

He said he'd call me when the visas were ready. We spent the next three days packing for our trip. We expected to return to Algeria but we weren't sure. I hoped to contact publishers in Denmark, perhaps visit Sweden, and with Mario's help perhaps find a new land of refuge. The day before we were to leave Mukdar returned our passports. There were no exit visas. He smiled confidently and told us to report to the airport two hours before the flight. That we would be expected. With Muhammad's protection you need no papers in Algeria.

Jolly Hamid called and asked if he could take us to the airport. He had a list of rock records he hoped we could obtain in Copenhagen. The manager of the hotel stored our rugs and furniture in the hotel basement and treated us to a farewell brunch.

When we arrived at the airport the first glance revealed two Panthers standing by the exit gate. We stood in the check-in line. The flight called for us to change planes with an hour layover in Zurich. We did not want to enter Switzerland, an Interpol country. We checked the bags through to Copenhagen where Mario and Christina were to meet us.

Half hour before departure we walked to the exit gate. The Panthers had disappeared. The official checked our passports and asked about exit visas. We explained that they were not necessary; that the chief of the airport knew about our departure. We were told to sit in chairs near the immigration office. Officials huddled together in the office. They made phone calls. Ten minutes

before departure the chief of the airport came over to ask who had authorized our exit. I said Muhammad. He looked puzzled and returned to make more phone calls. We were watching the clock move closer to zero. Two minutes to go. The airport chief called to an assistant to delay the flight. Five minutes after departure time the chief told us that we would not be allowed to leave. He apologized and said that he was sure that the misunderstanding could be cleared up and we could catch a later flight to Paris. The flight took off with our bags. I phoned Mukdar who was astonished by the news. He said we should come to his house at once and that he would contact Muhammad.

Hamid, no longer Jolly, drove to Algiers. He asked who had arranged our exit visas. He seemed upset when we mentioned the name of Mukdar. He said that Mukdar would do anything to get to the United States and that he should not be trusted. It was his advice that we contact the President's office.

Mukdar was in a state of agitation when we arrived at his luxurious flat. He was waiting for a call from Muhammad. After two hours the phone rang. A long conversation in Arabic. Mukdar told us that Muhammad had canceled our exit visas for this flight because of the danger. We should not have gone to the airport with that hippie Hamid. Also the Panthers had a twenty-four-hour watch on the airport. We knew that they were afraid that Huey Newton's men might make a surprise raid on Algiers. In the preceding week a Newtonite had killed a Cleaverite and a Cleaverite

had killed an Oakland Panther. Muhammad was also trying to protect us against Interpol, who knew of our departure. He warned us not to take the Air France flight to Paris. Mukdar gave the impression that we were surrounded by enemies and that Muhammad was our only protection. He assured us that we could leave on the next Swissair flight, in two days.

Back at the beach hotel we reviewed the damage. All our clothes and papers were en route to Copenhagen. Fortunately the Tuesday flight would get us to Denmark just in time for the first lecture. We felt enmeshed in a web of intrigue and deception.

The next day was spent in Algiers with Mukdar who labored to rearrange our tickets. He sent messages to Copenhagen to hold our baggage. Mukdar and I spent four hours walking around the center of town; he flirted with the Swissair agent. Our reservations were confirmed for the next day.

Toward sunset, I headed for the Café de la Faculté which was opposite the university. I selected a very visible table on the sidewalk and waited, watching the dudes preening and strutting. After twenty minutes the man I was looking for appeared—the young official from the President's office. I waved him over to the table.

With him was a young dentist who had given me a ride one night when I was hitchhiking to the beach. I asked the young official why we had not been allowed to leave the country. He seemed surprised and asked why I had not contacted his office. He said that there was no chance that we

could leave on the following day without authorization from his chief. He suggested that I come by his office at nine in the morning. He seemed amused.

In the morning we checked out of the hotel again and taxied to the government building. My young friend began questioning me about who had made the unauthorized arrangements. I told him that I was not an informer, that the government knew very well what we had been doing and whom we had seen. He nodded in agreement. Again he asked why I had not made arrangements with his office. With some impatience I said that we had been in Algeria for seven months waiting for the help that had been promised, that they knew very well that we had lived quietly and had never initiated contacts with any Algerians. Politics here is complicated, I said, and perhaps I have been too naïve. He smiled and said that naïve is precisely the word that he had in mind. Then he added, sometimes, if you have nothing to hide naïveté is the best policy.

He made a phone call and told me to proceed to the airport. I asked him to stamp our passports with exit visas. He said there was not enough time. He smiled warmly and wished me bon voyage and safe return.

The scene at the airport was a duplicate of the first attempt. The Commander and an assistant stood at the exit gate. As we approached the Commander came up to us, smiled, and shook my hand. I felt love and sorrow. A Panther woman looked at us with tenderness and kissed Her. When we got to the gate again the search for the

missing visas, again the wait in the chair. Fifteen minutes to go. Ten minutes to go. Again the huddle in the chief's office. Telephone calls. He came out to apologize. I am a very small man here he said. Five minutes to go. Pressure building. Exactly one minutes before departure the chief rushed up and waved us through to the departing lounge. Whew.

We were given a nervous body search before entering the plane. After takeoff the ship headed north across the Mediterranean, toward Switzerland where we faced the next deal of the cards.

The flight plan called for us to switch planes in Geneva for Zurich. It was a tense moment when the plane hit Swiss turf. We were in Interpol territory. We knew about that big book in every international airport containing the names of wanted persons. We were traveling on our own passports this time. And our arrival in Copenhagen couldn't have been more advertised. Mario had warned us that press and police were waiting for the Sunday plane we had missed. We planned to stay in the international transit zone of the Geneva and Zurich airports until the flight to Denmark.

As we entered the terminal in Geneva we heard the PA system calling Mr. McMillan, the code name we had given to Mario. The information desk gave us a number to call in Madrid. We went to the sleek, marble, neon, stainless steel Swiss telephone office. The clerk took the number and directed me to booth seven. He and Christina had left Copenhagen. The place was 'too hot. The airport was swarming with pigs and photographers.

The university was steaming in controversy over our arrival. Cleaver sympathizers would attack us. Newton supporters would defend us. Right-wing groups were outraged. Freaks had prepared welcoming posters. American narcs were waiting. He advised us to stay in Geneva with his friends. He said that we might be contacted at the airport by a colleague who could help us. I agreed to follow his advice. He was to wire Copenhagen to advise that we would not be arriving for the lecture.

I left the phone booth. She was waiting. A man emerged from booth eight and approached us. He was tall as a giant, silver-white hair swept into a leonine mane, face radiant with regal benevolence. He spoke to us in rapid Parisian French. It was Goldfinger welcoming us to new life in Switzerland, land of freedom.

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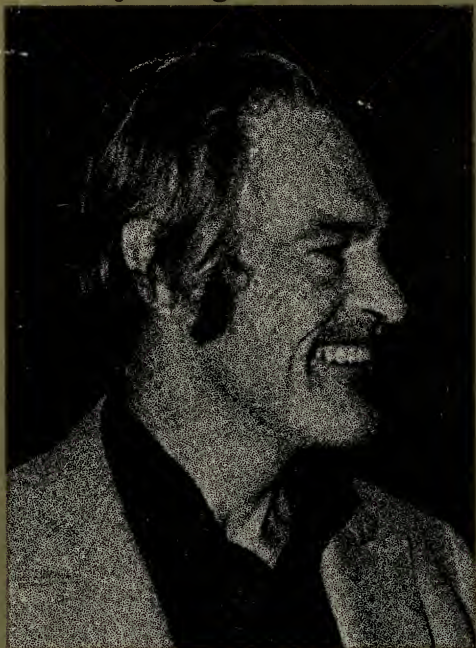
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