

# ***THE MANY FACES OF GOLIATH***

***Childhood Sketches***

***"I have lived in the monster, and I know its  
entrails, and mine is the sling of David."***

***— José Martí***

by  
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## Foreword

These sketches set the stage. They are unevenly written, yet there is a haunting quality about some of them. They record episodes in a young boy's life, in this case my own. I have written many things in my life, including a great deal of poetry. I have helped many people put books together, but I have published very little of what I've written.

Now the time has come to tell the stories I have to tell, in fact, the time is way overdue. There are a few things to say that may be helpful to you as you read this early work.

First, while these attempt to record the journey of my self and to a limited extent my family, they cannot claim and do not wish to claim that they represent exact events or real people. While most are not fictionalized in any major way, the names have been changed, and on occasion events and people are blended and blurred in time and circumstance.

I want you to think for a moment, to put yourself in my place. Both of my parents were members of the Communist Party for all of my early life. I was seven, eight, nine years old during the early 1950s, the lynchings, the jailings and repression, the Korean War, the execution of the Rosenbergs.

I'll always remember the time one of my best friends, a Chinese guy in San Francisco, let's call him Bob, discovered my parents' involvement. My father was subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee during the big protests in 1960 that helped to bring that particular committee down. Bob read my father's name in the paper and asked me whether or not my father was a Communist. By that time I had dealt with this question often, and I told him yes. He was astonished. His main question was—"does he carry a card?"

Yes, we were a generation razed amidst the horrors of the Holocaust, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a generation whose nightmares of menacing mushroom clouds and missiles were but pale reflections of the actual reality of war and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. With my classmates, I had to endure the TV program "I Led Three Lives," about Herbert Philbrick, an FBI agent who infiltrated the Communist Party.

To my mother's eternal credit, when the so-called civil defense plans sent letters home about possible Soviet attacks, she sent us back to school with notes saying we would not participate. It was a little hard for me, but I was old enough by then to understand why she did so, and the times had begun to change enough that the teacher and some classmates viewed the act of resistance to hysteria with respect.

There was a definite schizophrenia in growing up this way, and some of that may be reflected in the following pages. On the one hand there was shame and embarrassment that my parents were so different from many other people's parents were—but, on the other hand, there was great love for both of them, pride in their courage and dignity, and respect for all they did to help others.

There are some outdated words in this book. The word “Negro” is often used, instead of what was just then becoming a more acceptable term “Black.” Of course, now there is “African-American.” I have left it as “Negro” to indicate the historical period, and to maintain the sense of when these sketches were first written.

Sexual knowledge and sexual openness have progressed a great deal since these were written as well. I am ashamed of the incident where David and two other boys briefly *macho* themselves into half-heartedly pursuing a gay man with a knife—it was not only part of those times, but, despite many gains of women’s and gay liberation, is part of the present. I was fortunate in having a mother who was a clear feminist, who often criticized male chauvinism and some of that shows through in these sketches. (And my brother Chris was gay, coming out after these sketches were written. Chris was a wonderful man who died far too young at 57, of pancreatic cancer. In his last incarnation he was head of animal-assisted therapy at the San Francisco SPCA and I hope to have some of his brilliant writings on this site in the not-too-distant.

I consider my childhood a happy one, although some of the less happy traumas are also alluded to in these pages. I was very intellectual, read a lot of books, wrote poetry, played some baseball and ping-pong, did some boxing as you will read about here, got in trouble, helped some with my younger sister and brother. Though I was active and must have talked a lot, there was and is a quiet side, and I have never been so honored as when the great writer Meridel LeSueur, told me that I was a “Tecumseh” at the age of three.

In sum, these sketches are very quick brush strokes of my growing up to pass on to next generations should they be of any interest. A few of them may have some literary merit, despite their many lacks in descriptive detail, grammar, and much else. They depict in extremely quick ways a variety of disparate experiences, but there are hints of an underlying theme, as “David’s” life experiences begin to blend together to lend a sense of purpose—leading to a greater maturity amidst the freedom movements of the 1960s.

No unfairness to any individual is meant. These really are just sketches. Some of my youthful perceptions were no doubt very limited. This is not a psychological novel. Each of us is a complex mixture of emotion and reason, background and genetics, and brief splashes of moments such as these can’t come close to the depth of a novel, and nowhere near the complex motivations and personalities of real life.

I am David—when I wrote almost all of these in 1961–2 I was 17 years old, in a little college in the desert, during a creative writing course taught by a fine novelist and very engaging English professor named Edward Loomis. I edited and added a bit in the mid-1960s. The assignment as I recall asked us to put ourselves in the third person, so I became David, and a famous quote by the great Cuban patriot and writer, José Martí, was to serve as a thought to keep in mind throughout. My father and his close comrade and friend Barney Baley, a courageous veteran of the Spanish Civil War, has translated some poems of Martí, and had shared some of his verses with me in my early teenage years. As the title page also has it, as Martí, who spent some time in New York City, wrote: “I have lived in the monster and I know its entrails, and mine is the sling of David.” Here then are the childhood sketches:

**H**is mother told him the world was round and that it was always moving. No one could tell it was moving because it was going so fast. For another reason that David couldn't remember, no one fell off.

One day David was looking out the window at the sky, watching the white clouds drift past. Only to David it seemed as though the earth was moving, while the clouds were standing still.

There was only one thing to conclude -- he was the only one in the whole world who could see the earth move!

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**H**e ran up the stairs. Then he forced himself to be calm as he went into his parent's room where his mother was painting a self-portrait that with the birth of his younger brother would become a madonna with child. His sister, a sturdy two-year-old, was playing with crayons nearby.

David was afraid that what he was about to divulge would worry his mother, but if he didn't say something he might die.

"Momma, I noticed that every couple of minutes I have to swallow in my throat, and it makes a noise, whether I'm eating or not, all the time. What's the matter with me?"

"Nothing's the matter David, everybody does that, all human beings, it's natural."

"But it's so loud, other people don't make a noise like that."

"It just seems loud to you, because it's in you, it seems that way to everyone. There's no need to worry about it."

David observed people, noticing Adam's apples, and found out this was so.

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**H**e looked up at the peeling white sides of his house from the vacant lot next door where he made his way among the weeds in order to pick wildflowers for his mother. She would thank him and put them in a jar of water on the windowsill. If they were of many colors they would arrange them in various bouquets; he would try to balance one color and kind with another, always careful not to hurt any of the flowers.

And so it was that David spent the first years of his life, on 14th Street, in the Indian/Chicano barrio of a mid-Western city. From the window he would look out in the morning to see older children going to school, or he would sit down in the red armchair and pretend that he was reading a book. He spent part of the day sitting on the floor in front of the radio, moving his body back and forth in time to the music.

David slept in a small room that adjoined the one where his mother and father slept. Sometimes when he woke up early in the morning he would hear a deep and slowly-speaking voice commanding ominously: “Go back to sleep, go back to sleep.” It was the voice of some nameless, faceless, scary and powerful spirit. The voice frightened him and he would huddle back under the covers, closing his eyes to silence it. In braver moments he would clench his teeth, jump out of bed, and run to lie with his parents.

14th Street was the first street that David ever crossed by himself. He was thinking about an aunt he liked who lived in New York. He walked down the stairs, down the street, and started crossing at the corner. His mother saw him from the window and ran after him, not catching him till after he had crossed. She asked him where he thought he was going. David answered confidently, “I’m going to New York.” (His aunt and uncle had recently moved there—he simply felt like seeing them.)

Later David made his first friend, an older boy named Sonny who was half Native-American and half Latino. Sonny’s mother and David’s were good friends. Sonny took personal care of David, because David was the youngest of the children on the block who played together, and David in turn admired Sonny, who was the natural leader of the group. They raced from one side of the street to a fence on the other side, then back to where they had started. Sonny always made the rules so that David could turn back toward the beginning side as soon as whoever was ahead touched the fence, no matter how far David had gotten. The thing to do would have been for David to run slowly one way and as fast as he could going back. But he tottered along, running as fast as he could both ways, and consequently never won.

Not long before David moved away from 14th Street he was walking down the sidewalk in front of the vacant lot. He noticed an older boy on the other side of the street but didn’t see the rock until it was too late. David’s father, just then coming home from work, picked him up and carried him into the house.

David never found out who had thrown the rock or why. A small white scar was left on his forehead.

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**D**avid could tell that something was going on. He had seen his mother and father

looking anxiously through the newspaper, and a great many people had come over to the house in the last few days. There was talk of meetings and leaflets. David was playing in the living room when a heavy knock sounded on the front door.

“I’m from the F.B.I.—all we want to do is talk with you.” David’s father had not let the man in. Later he heard his father answer the door and keep another man out by asking, “where’s your search warrant?”

David was in the second grade at school and had achieved a moderate degree of fame by reading more books than anyone and winning the summer reading contest. So people knew who he was, and he had seen his name in the mimeographed school newspaper. Every day after school he and his best friend Jackie, whose father was a policeman, would walk home. There was always a big crowd around the ice cream man.

Two sixth grade girls, who appeared as very large and mature persons to David, pointed at him. He heard one of them whisper to the other, “his father’s a Communist.” David was embarrassed and he didn’t know what to think.

Later he was talking to Jackie on the steps of Jackie’s apartment house. There, David encountered another accusation:

“My father says your father is on the side of the North Koreans.”

David had no idea of what Jackie meant, but he caught the tone. With an instinctive resentment of the fact that something they didn’t understand should come between them, coupled with loyalty to his father, David got angry and they separated.

The next day Jackie apologized to David. He said he didn’t see what David had gotten so mad. David, whose father was no longer at home, said he couldn’t explain the reason for his anger.

Later David learned that his family thought differently about some things than other people. They called it “progressive.” His mother said that his aunt and uncle in New York thought this way too. For a long time David thought that they were the only two families in the world who were progressive.

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**D**avid heard the news on the radio and ran to tell his father when he came home from work, but his father already knew. All David knew about the man was that he was the leader of Russia, a country far away and mysterious. The teachers talked against it; his parents and their friends spoke in favor. Still, everyone knew of this man and his death seemed to David very strange and important.

Stalin was dead. What did that mean? How did it happen? Driving past graveyards David would always lower his head and be silent, even if others in the car were talking. Silent in the face of something that was so unknown yet somehow so important.

The radio said that Stalin died of a cerebral hemorrhage. He asked his mother what that meant and she told him how a vein in the brain had burst so there was much bleeding and finally death.

David didn't know much about Stalin. But he knew he had written a lot of books, and thought a lot, and read a lot, and had many responsibilities. It seemed natural to suppose that a cerebral hemorrhage came from too much thinking, so the brain would burst.

In that case thought David, I'd better be careful not to think too much, or the same thing might happen to me.

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**H**e remembered every detail of their big new house: its many rooms and the thick vines on the outside; the huge leaning tree on the front lawn that fell one day; the backyard with the butternut tree that he finally learned to climb, long after his younger sister was waving from the branches. As one of his aunts told him later, it was as if he had to think his way up the tree before he could climb it.

Then there was the garage that he and another boy accidentally set on fire when they were playing with matches; the alley behind it full of trash cans, one of which his father hit a baseball into that they never found. There was the boy down the block who was the son of the Mayor, a year older than David when he suddenly caught polio and was paralyzed.

He remembered the big barn-like garage of the house on the corner where the neighborhood kids exposed themselves now and then; the boy next door who kissed David's sister at the nearby movie theatre; the room he decorated with crayon all over the walls. It was the first and only house his family ever owned, and not for long.

Because of the big yard the children of the neighborhood often gathered at David's house. Once they were chanting in unison -- "eeny, meeny, miney, moe, catch a..." but David's father, who came running outside, interrupted them.

"Don't ever say that, it's against Negro people, it's a bad word, don't ever say it!"

One of the boys, who was more advanced than the others, said, “but we were just going to say monkey.”

“I don’t care, I don’t ever want to hear you singing that!”

Their game interrupted, the children scattered, and David saw some of them look at him strangely; their fathers would never do that. David was embarrassed, but he understood what his father meant. He wished that word had never been invented. It was just a word, his friends didn’t know any better.

They didn’t know the old couple his father visited sometimes. Once he took David along to their small apartment and the warm and kindly woman said, “have you ever had strawberry shortcake?” He hadn’t, and from then on it was his favorite food.

They hadn’t heard the stories his mother and father told them about slavery and the Underground Railway and people like Harriet Tubman and Paul Robeson. At a big concert David’s father took him up to the stage afterward so he could shake Paul Robeson’s hand.

They didn’t know the man who sometimes babysat, the man who’d run away from home at the age of 13 to wrestle lions in the circus. They didn’t know how one night when his younger cousin huddled with him under the covers in fear that a burglar might come David reassured her, “it’s all right, Tyrone’s downstairs, he used to wrestle lions, he’s strong, you don’t have to worry ‘cause he’s there.”

They didn’t know, some of them, the way that word was used in the world, that word and others. But it wouldn’t be long before they learned. Then, though they unfortunately might come to use it, they would understand why their friend’s father had run out on the front steps and stopped their singing.

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The family was moving. For days they packed and put things in large wooden boxes to send to San Francisco. David's father was there already, having gone to seek work one year earlier. They had to leave many books and records behind, piled in corners of his grandparents' attic. Then one morning David, his mother, sister, and brother got up early and were picked up a station wagon. A man and his two sons were driving to San Francisco from Minnesota and there was enough room for David's family.

It was a long trip. Since there was only one driver, they drove all day and slept each night. David watched the country pass, the green fields, saw the mountains approach yet seem to draw away as they neared, finally found himself winding through them. Then the long deserts and finally the climb through the Sierras and into the San Joaquin Valley, stretching golden-green for miles. Before he left he had looked up California and San Francisco in the encyclopedia, had seen pictures of the mountains and the bridges, read stories of the Spanish explorers, the Gold Rush, and the early pioneers. Now he was here. Most of all he wanted to see the ocean, so big you couldn't see across it.

They thanked the people who had driven them. David would see the two boys now and then. On the trip they climbed trees together, slept outside, and talked a great deal. Once when driving along the older boy said, "aah, women, they're always nagging -- nag, nag, nag!" David's mother said gently, "Jim, you know that's not right, that's male supremacy." Jim blushed and remained quiet.

They stayed temporarily at the apartment of David's aunt Diana and cousin Rachel. It was a small apartment in the Negro ghetto, near Fillmore Street. A butterfly flew in the window of the kids' room and David took care of it for several hours -- he imagined it was a pet and that it could understand what he said. It seemed to want to stay, but David made it fly out the window again. Somehow it seemed like a lucky omen.

Now the long trip was over, the four strangers were welcomed to San Francisco, and the Golden Gate opened to David.

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The boy sitting across from David had dark, shiny skin and his eyes gave his face a magnetic quality. They were sitting in the fourth grade classroom at McKinley Elementary School. David had come from far away and on the first day at his new school the strange workings of 4th grade democracy made him the unanimous choice of the class for their President. David noticed that after the election the Negro boy, whose name was William, watched him closely. When the teacher, Miss Birch, scolded William for talking, David noticed a startling transformation -- his mouth made his face a completely indrawn and sullen, though defiant, mask.

At recess William approached David, who was standing alone, and said in a straightforward manner, "I'm William Jackson, will you be my friend?" David, timid, and not used to forming friendships in this way, looked up at William and said, "yes." They discovered that they didn't live very far from each other so they could walk home

together. David and William spent most of recess and lunchtime together for several days. William noticed how soft David's hands were and teased him, "whattaya use on 'em, hand lotion?" As David became more at ease at school and with other students, William became increasingly uneasy. He was wildly possessive of David. If William thought someone was becoming David's friend, he would hit, and sometimes beat up, David after school. He would threaten David all day long. William even invented games such as making David guess the names of popular songs he hummed before he would let David go home.

David was afraid. He felt that sinking, bottomless sensation deep down in the pit of his stomach, behind and just below his belly button. He was scared of William; he didn't know how to fight back; he didn't have the guts to try, knowing how tough William was.

Even though his father liked to watch the fights sometimes, and his grandfather had some wrestling matches in his youth, David was, at heart, a very tender soul. Once he'd gone on a deer-hunting trip with a friend's father. On the first day, a gopher popped its head out of the ground and the friend's father bashed its head in with a shovel. David vowed from that day on he would never hunt animals in his life.

He had been raised in a very peaceful environment, with the highest goods being cooperation and kindness. Playing with guns, "cowboys and Indians," and other forms of brutality were strongly discouraged.

David didn't know how to confront William or how to overcome his fear. It stayed with him always. He began to stay home from school, usually with a stomach ache. When he did attend his day was spent in anxiety only occasionally not justified. Whenever Miss Birch kept William after school, David, not knowing how long he would be kept, ran all seven blocks home.

David's mother could see something was bothering him, but he was afraid to tell about William, fearing reprisals.

Finally, he had to talk about it. David's mother was very understanding and went to talk to Miss Birch about it, who explained that William faced a very difficult family situation and this was far from the first time he had gotten in trouble. There were stories about his cruelty and brutality to younger children in a nearby park.

But David did not have to face William again. San Francisco changed school districts after the first semester and David was assigned to another school while William stayed at McKinley. Later David heard that William had been sent to a place for children who were maladjusted. Several years later, David thought he saw Miss Birch coming down the street and he walked around the block to avoid meeting her.

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There were many stores on the way to David's new school. He only patronized two of them, the one on the corner across from his house, and Frank's. The one across the street was called Brotherhood Grocery and was owned by a big man with a black mustache who had a reputation for being mean and for shortchanging little children. Frank's was several blocks away and up a hill, also on a corner. The older brother of one of David's friends worked there after school.

One day when David had only a few pennies more than milk money he stopped at Frank's to buy some bubble gum. On one of the display racks he noticed a pink rubber eraser that he could use. It cost a nickel and David didn't have that much, so he took it. He used the eraser for several days, and even bragged a little about stealing it to some of his friends. He knew many boys who stole all the time and nothing happened to them; they were respected.

When he had a nickel he walked up to Frank's and, looking around very carefully to make sure no one would see him, he threw the coin inside and ran away.

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Somehow he would always think of them together, although they were very different. Albert Bates and Rudy Doyle. They lived next door to each other, a few blocks away from David, and they were his two best friends during the last two years of elementary school. The three of them were in the same Cub Scout den and spent most of their free time together in one adventure or another.

Rudy Doyle. Rudy's parents were not with him; he lived with his grandmother who was a religious woman and strict with him when she was at home. She worked as a maid. As compared to Albert and David, Rudy was the boldest and quickest on the uptake. He was also the most sophisticated, a man of the world at ten. With adults he knew, such as David's mother, he was always extremely polite, but on his own he was constantly getting into trouble. His eyes, words, and actions flashed out with a kind of rebellious defiance and spontaneous genius.

Albert Bates. Albert was more quiet and serious than Rudy and did better in school. His father worked as a clerk at the post office. He was the strongest of the three, but not given to talking big or getting into fights unless necessary. When he and David went to the 10th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, Albert slipped through the crowd and managed to shake Eisenhower's hand. Albert was David's closest friend; on Saturdays they rode their bikes all day through Golden Gate Park. Every Wednesday David, who didn't have a television, would come over to watch Disneyland at Albert's house. His tall, kind mother always served them cookies.

There they are now, after school, racing up the block to Buena Vista Park, Rudy in the lead, Albert, David, and the others close behind. Buena Vista: a wild area of land in the middle of the city that the owner donated to San Francisco with the stipulation that it be left in its natural state. Thickly-wooded and dark it was the scene of countless

kidnappings and rapes. Mothers warned their children not to go there. David was always aware that some man might offer him candy to go somewhere with him; his mother told him about it often enough, and he remembered where she told him to kick if some man tried to grab him.

Racing up to the park, pounding on a car rounding the corner, then falling down in the street to laugh at the startled motorists. Sitting up in the park telling all the latest dirty jokes, getting full communal participation in the fast-talking incredibly vulgar rhymes that all of them knew: put your foot on a rock, sss-aah, sss-aah, let the boys feel your cock, sss-aah, sss-aah, and if that don't do, sss-aah, sss-aah, let 'em fuck you too, ss-aah, ss-aah, won't your mama be surprised, ss-aah,ss-aah, when she sees the stomach rise, ss-aah, ss-aah, won't your daddy be disgusted, ss-aah, ss-aah, when he sees the pussy busted..."

Or having a contest to see who could jump the farthest. Running up to a certain high bush at the top of the park, then everyone jumping over it one by one and measuring the distance on the other side. A tall girl named Lenora usually won. Once Rudy Doyle tripped her as she was running before the jump, thus earning the sexually ambiguous curse -- "why you mother fuckin' blue-balled bitch!" That was Buena Vista Park.

And after that, slowly walking home, David, Albert, and Rudy. Helping Rudy with his paper route on the days he worked. Or Rudy and David, verbally quicker than Albert, standing outside Albert's house as he prepared to go inside. "Hey, Albert, I hear your mama's just like a police station -- dick's runnin' in and out all the time." "Yeh," David might say, "heard how the other day your old lady fell down on the street -- made 50 cents before she stood up." Capping him down, cutting him low. "Cap you low, cap you high, get on your knees and suck me dry." Playing the dozens. That went on at all times. Like the time they were walking to school and were watching some garbagemen. Rudy was laughing about something and one of the men heard him. The garbageman called out, "shut up you lousy little nigger!" Rudy just laughed louder and called back -- "look who's callin' me that, why you're nothin' but a lousy garbageman!"

In school, Albert quiet but capable, Rudy excelling at recess and the occasional remark that broke up the class, David serious and self-conscious, always holding one office or another. David was surprised when Thelma, a girl in the class, said to him, "there are two kinds of pimps, your kind and Rudy's kind." David wondered if maybe he underestimated himself, maybe he was attractive, he might make use of that. His pride was only slightly dampened when he remembered his mother telling him that a pimp was the lowest kind of man there was.

Or just anytime, listening to the radio or singing the songs -- Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers singing, "why do birds sing so gay, and lovers await the break of day, why do they fall in love...why does the rain fall from up above, why do fools fall in love..."

Singing *a capella* in the hallways or beating out rhythms on their legs and shoulders with their arms—called the hambone. One of the boys in their class, Monroe Washington,

was unbeatable at the hambone; he could play the William Tell Overture (better known to them as the theme from the Lone Ranger) perfectly.

Rudy in a fight, two fists and one leg raised in front of him, saying, “c’mon, what’s the matter, big talk and no action!” Or discussing Vinnie, the girl down the block who said she would fuck anybody—and would. She’d seen her mother and father doing “it” on the kitchen table. Or Albert and David in a passionate argument about the world situation or their own idiosyncrasies, responding to each other’s pleas with a stolid, “man, you don’t move me.” Or playfully hitting each other, running out on the grass of Golden Gate Park, playing baseball or football. Albert Bates and Rudy Doyle.

Perhaps of the three, Rudy, the most streetwise, was the one with the clearest idea of what would happen. It couldn’t last, not with things the way they were. It would end. From Cub Scouts, they would go to Webelos, the training period for Boy Scouts, together, but then be sent to separate, segregated troops. So they’d quit Boy Scouts; it was a drag anyway. They would go on to junior high, and even if it was the same one, new friends and social pressures would force them away from David and David away from them.

Rudy would see this separation coming, but Albert and David tried hard to stay together. Sometimes they went to a movie downtown. But it came to the time, gradually, when David would see Albert, in high school, walking with a quiet attractive young woman, and all they could do was exchange a few words about the good times in the past.

In his mind, David walked past Buena Vista Park, past the school, the two houses from which Albert and Rudy had long since moved, past the gas station that marked his old house that was torn down by Standard Oil, thinking all the time how much he would like to see the two of them again. He knew he never would.

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Eddie was a thirty-five year old machinist. He was Hawaiian, had been a professional boxer, a good friend and trainer of once-middleweight champion Bobo Olsen. Eddie had a blonde wife and four children, who he sent to Catholic school. He lived on Haight Street in a rented flat. In the basement he built a small gym, with sandbag, ring area, and punching bag. He used the gym to keep himself in condition and to train several neighborhood teenagers. He worked Bob, Kenny, and David hard. Every morning at six he met them in Golden Gate Park for roadwork before school. On Saturdays he drove them out to Ocean Beach to run in the sand. Every day after school they exercised and sparred in the gym.

Eddie gave the boys advice and told them stories from boxing history. He was pleased to learn of David’s achievements in school, believing the smarter a fighter, the better, and he was pleasantly surprised at the almost encyclopedic knowledge David gained from reading Eddie’s back copies of *Ring* magazine.

When Eddie discovered David was Jewish, he told him about the great Jewish fighters, about Barney Ross, and Benny Leonard, and about Eddie's own trainer who was "the best combination of all -- a Chinese Jew." Once when Eddie, Bob, and David went to an Easter Sunday mass at St. Agnes Church, where David clumsily crossed himself with holy water, Eddie commented further on Jewish people. He told Bob, who was kidding David about attending a Catholic church, that, "there are two kinds of Jews, the good kind and the bad kind." Then turning to David, in a tone that was far more statement than question, "you're gonna be the good kind, aren't you?"

Eddie told the three boys never to fight dirty unless the opponent did so first. In that case, Eddie said, they had to know what to do. So he showed them how to turn their gloves to cut deeply above the eyes, and how to "hit 'em in the kidneys, make 'em piss blood."

The three boys were also told never to have sexual intercourse with a girl while in training, that if they did he could tell just by the way they walked. His wife asked if they weren't a little young for that advice and Eddie didn't think so; this pleased the three boys immensely. Bob and David knew something about Eddie's sexual behavior. Eddie's wife was a good friend of Bob's mother and, once when they were talking Bob overheard her say, "God I wish Eddie would quit bouncin' on me every night; I just had another kid." Bob and David observed Eddie's walk, but they couldn't detect anything.

Once a boy neighborhood boy who often picked on friends of David's sister stood around outside the gym and bragged about how much tougher he was than any of the boys training there. Eddie brought him inside and asked if he would fight David, who was a year older than the boy, but a lot smaller.

"Yeh, and I'll pound the shit outta him," was the reply.

David had fought at the Boy's Club and at the Catholic Youth Organization several times, but he was scared. The bully was confident and big. He had to fight him though, and Eddie laced up the gloves on both of them.

At the whistle the boy immediately started swinging roundhouse and David, feeling himself in the by now familiar ring situation, did what he'd been taught. Some jabs, then some hard right hand punches started the boy's nose bleeding. A few more and the boy dropped his hands, crying, and gave up. Eddie took off the boy's gloves and he left. David felt good.

Not long after this David felt the training was taking time away after school when he wanted to do other things. After much hesitation and agonizing he went to Eddie one Sunday to tell him he was quitting. He would not go on to be a professional boxer -- Eddie's often-repeated dream for all three of the boys he trained. David felt he was letting Eddie down, that he lacked courage. They sat on the double bed in Eddie's room and Eddie told David "if you quit now you'll never succeed in anything all your life."

David, almost crying, in a breaking voice, said he had to quit but he'd still like to watch and keep time now and then. Eddie nodded but of course David never came again.

When he told his mother Eddie's final words, she was angry, saying that was a terrible thing for a man to say to a young boy, and only expressed his own disappointment. Still, Eddie's words of warning haunted David. Sometimes they spurred him to think—goddamnit, I'll show him -- but sometimes he wasn't so sure.

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In junior high school Leroi Larue appeared as a fat boy who wore glasses. His hair was evenly cut—the shadow of the bowl that must have adorned his head during the home-cutting. He couldn't use his left hand at all; it remained as a fallen soldier on a battlefield, the result of a childhood bout with polio. The hand hung, hinged at the wrist. More out of habit than necessity he limped slightly, lending a unique feature to the slow shuffle they were all trying to perfect.

His eyes were piggishly elusive; behind them his mind also darted back and forth in a quick and original manner. Teachers and counselors often told the class, when Leroi happened to be absent, that because the group was a special, advanced one, they should try to help Leroy see the light and strive for good grades. The counselors, adopting their peculiar psychological techniques to Leroi, told him he had the highest IQ in the school, and explained how he was wasting this great intelligence. Leroi boasted about the IQ, but, of course, thought it was up to him to decide what course of action was a waste of his intelligence.

Occasionally, when backed into an academic corner, he astounded the class with a wild revelation. Once, when forced to present news in social studies class, he confidently disclosed that there was “no difference between Jesus and Hitler,” that they were both after the same thing. “Think about the statement -- I am thy shepherd you are my flock,” he said, “and you'll see what I mean.” That was news of a kind social studies class rarely afforded.

He was like all of them then, a strange character feeling his way through the first encounter with a social system separate from that of his parents. Leroi often took the position of leader, initiator. The reasons were not hard to find. They all knew about his older brother, who had a citywide reputation for delinquency and been in prison several times, usually for robbery, but once for statutory rape. (Which they all thought was rape standing up). In addition, Leroi had a vigorous knowledge of sexual matters, described in either scientific or vulgar terminology. His knowing language and certain tone when speaking of numerous amatory and criminal escapades he claimed to have taken part in made them never quite sure whether to believe him or not. David had earned Leroi's respect when, after a particularly lurid story about three girls in a car, *coitus interruptus* due to a policeman, and a jump in Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park to get less drunk, David told Leroi, “Bullshit!” Still, he could be awfully convincing. They all carried contraceptives in their wallets. Leroi was the only one with the effrontery to claim he notched his.

He made up for his lack of physical impressiveness with a startling cruelty and audacity. In his childhood, he claimed, he liked to strangle cats. His cruelty graduated to people as he grew older. Once he and David went to play pool at the Boy's Club and found all the tables being used. Leroi walked up and seized a cue stick from a small boy practicing alone. The boy protested, Leroi seemed amenable to discussion, speaking in a conciliatory tone for several sentences. The boy relaxed and then in the middle of a sentence Leroi's right hand sped past the immotile left in a backhand slap to the face, startling and hurting the boy so he cried, thus leaving Leroi and David with the pool table.

But Leroi didn't always have it that easy:

Leroi and David walked into the yard before school after having ditched their cigarettes. A rubber ball bounced toward them. Leroi managed to trap it with his right arm. A small Negro boy came after it.

"Toss it here man."

Leroi did not respond.

"C'mon toss it here."

When the boy got close to him Leroi leisurely drop-kicked the ball over the school fence.

"What'cha do that for?"

"Felt like it."

"Ya wanta fight?"

"Not particularly."

"Well, motha fucka, I'm callin' you down."

"Now wait a minute, don't get upset, let's talk about...then came the trademarked slap, and it worked; the boy backed away, half-crying, "you just wait, you bastard."

"Anytime," said Leroi, once more victorious.

Leroi thought it possible that the boy would get a gang together as early as lunch. Leroi, David, and several others ate together, and then, as was their custom, walked around the yard to see what was going on.

"You scared?" David asked Leroi.

"I don't think they'll get me unless I go into the can. They don't want to get caught and be suspended."

"You scared?"

Hell, no, I ain't scared, but I sure gotta take a piss."

A boy in our class named Ronald Farber walked up to us.

His father owned a string of Buick dealerships and he wore braces. David talked to him; Leroi never did.

“There gonna be a gangfight, a race riot?”

“I don’t know, might be, saw one out in the Mission the other day.”

“Ya ever been in one?”

–”Not yet,” then to worry him, “maybe today.”

“Do ya really think so?”

““We’ll see.” Ronald walked away.

“That chicken Farber,” David said to Leroi.

“Yeh.”

A group of about ten Negro boys approached. Expecting nothing because it was so close to the end of lunch, their other friends had left, so only David and Leroi remained.

“You the guy pushed Jimmy around this mornin?”

Leroi did not answer.

“We gonna beat it outta ya.”

David said, “c’mon, lay off.”

“Who are you, ya little punk, get outta here unless you want your ass kicked too.”

Then one of them stepped out of the crowd.

“Don’t you touch that boy,” he commanded.

He was Rudy Doyle, one of David’s best friends in elementary school, intelligent and tough, and already the fastest sprinter in the city. There was still, in junior high, the happy remembrance of closeness between Rudy and David. So David was protected but did not want to appear to be deserting Leroi. Then, surprisingly, Leroi motioned for him to leave. He did. David watched and saw that the group left Leroi after some loud talk, and feeling relieved that it was all over, David went over and watched some basketball. At the bell he walked to social studies class. On the way in Mike O’Leary, a friend of his, asked him, “hey man, you ever struck oil?” David thought for a while, wondering what was meant, and then it came to him, “oh, yes, sure.”

Leroi Larue was not in social studies class. Next to David sat Vivian, a Chinese girl who had come to the United States from Taiwan just three years before. It was agreed, she was absolutely beautiful, both delicate and well-developed. David remembered glimpses of her in her gym suit with sheer lust. Leroi’s brother had gone steady with her, and they all thought they knew what that meant. In David’s inimitable high school fashion, he loved her. He was awed and made timid by her beauty, even by her voice and accent. He

was talking to her when Leroi came in, watched in silence by the class and the teacher, still a little bloody. He wasn't talking.

"What happened?" Vivian asked David.

He briefly told her the story.

"I'm sorry, he is a nice boy."

Then to show her that he knew what was going on the realm of high delinquency David said, "his brother's in the joint again."

"I know."

"Got caught in a sporting goods store."

"It's too bad, he was a nice boy."

After school some of them went down to the bathroom and saw the bloody tiles before the janitor had a chance to clean them. Leroi went home right away.

Soon after this incident, Leroi had an operation to give him greater use of his hand. When they went to high school he moved away, back East. David remembered the fascination that he fostered in all of them, even for his name, and it came to David that Leroi Larue means the king of the street in French. David wondered if he would ever hear of him again.

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When Gerald asked him if he was going to be Barmitzvahed, David, who knew that all the other Jewish boys in his grade were preparing for theirs, said yes. He was afraid to admit to them that he was almost completely ignorant of the organized religion into which he had been born. Then Gerald asked him where the ceremony was to take place, which synagogue, and David said, "oh, down at the place I go to; it's somewhere near the Fillmore district." Gerald, who knew every synagogue in the city said, "oh you must mean Beth Sholom." No, said David, "it's a private sort of thing," and he managed to slip away.

That private sort of thing was named Kindershule; it was organized by a group of mostly Jewish parents who wanted their children to be aware of some of the values and traditions of Jewish history without authoritarian training or literal belief. David was later to realize he learned at least as much about Black history as Jewish there, perhaps this was to be expected. They learned and sang all sorts of folk songs, celebrated Negro history week, observed not only the boys coming to manhood but the girls reaching womanhood. Kindershule met on Sunday.

David was in the second highest class at Kindershule. Once his class put on a play and he took the role of a righteous Frederick Douglass. One year at Chanukah he wrote a poem and read it to everyone; people were surprised at the power and attraction of his voice. The poem ended: "*Every year since then/Chanukah has been faithfully and joyously celebrated/This goes to show that nothing/Can crush the free spirit of the people!*"

After this poetry performance, Henry Moses, one of the teachers, talked David into making the collection speech at a Kindershule folksinging, speechgiving party. David had stage fright; he didn't know what to say. So when the time came all he could do was be honest. He got a big laugh when he said they really needed the money. The speech turned out all right; he'd heard enough collection speeches to know that. Later he heard one of the older girls praise him to a friend of hers, "if it hadn't of been for David's speech..." This pleased him immensely; he had a crush on her.

David made many friends at Kindershule, some who he continued to see in years to come. One of his best friends was Brian Cohen, who was about a year younger than David. Brian's father, Al, was one of the teachers at Kindershule. He was a great teacher, good with children. With twinkling eyes and a quick smile, he seemed very wise and kind.

Al wrote the mimeographed booklet that Kindershule used for Passover dinner every year. In it, not only the traditional story was told. Of course, the celebration of freedom from slavery in Egypt was covered ("why is this day different from all other days? On other days we, but on this day we...") but the service also spoke of the pogroms in Russia, the resistance to fascism at the Warsaw Ghetto, the struggle of oppressed people around the world, and the looking forward to a better day of peace and liberation. They all took turns reading, and each year David read a longer passage. He got to read one of his favorite parts the last year Kindershule existed, which spoke of the birthright of all people, a birthright of dignity and hope.

David liked Passover best of all the holidays. He liked the Jewish defiance of Pharaoh and the story about the angel of death passing over the marked Jewish homes. In their family celebrations he was always hoping that the Prophet Elijah would appear, or later that an interesting vagrant would wander in as the prophet's reincarnation.

Late one night David's mother and father woke him up because he was the oldest, telling him that Al Cohen had just been killed in an auto accident. They said he died instantly. David was very sad; Al had taught him many things. David didn't know what to say to Brian; he wondered how he would feel if something like this happened to him.

In the big footlocker where he saved everything: report cards, drawings, the scrapbook eulogizing the Brooklyn Dodgers and their working-class hero pitcher, Johnny Podres, all the news clippings from the 10th anniversary of the UN in San Francisco, his stamp collection, his collection of agates, especially those beautiful carnelians, the photographs of old friends and classmates; in the footlocker David, looking back, sometimes came upon his last Passover book. On the cover was written -- "good luck and happy Pesach, Al Cohen."

David saw Brian occasionally later. Brian became a fine saxophone player. He was slim and slightly built and would lean back as he played, always with his eyes closed.

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Across the street from Benedetti's, the big liquor store on Haight Street, there was a smaller liquor store. The proprietor was a white-haired man who stooped. Inside Benedetti's most of the bottles were along the wall, so it was difficult to steal any without being seen by the young Filipino man behind the counter. The small store, on the other hand, had its liquor on shelves in rows, like a tiny supermarket. The important factor was that one of the shelves was close to and directly opposite the front door.

They decided to steal a bottle of whiskey, bourbon if possible. The door was open, and the store was on the corner, so the plan, given the participation of all three, was obvious. One of them walked into the store, while the other two assumed their positions, one right outside the door and the other on the corner.

The one in the store picked up the bottle of bourbon and tossed it to the one at the door who threw it to the one on the corner who calmly started walking down the block. But the store owner saw the theft and ran out from behind the counter yelling at them, so all three ran down the block, and the next one too, until they got to Golden Gate Park. There, in a leafy refuge, they sat down in the shade of one of the big eucalyptus trees their city had imported from Australia, and swallow by swallow found out things about each other they had never known before.

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Flashing neon, crowded streets, noise. David and Steve walked along the exciting streets of nightclub San Francisco, Saturday night. They came down because they had nothing better to do and thought maybe they could stand outside one of the stripjoints to watch.

A young drunk stopped them, "you boys better get out of here, you'll get picked up, it's getting late." They went on. They followed a side stairway of one of the places with their eyes to see if they could sneak backstage but didn't try it. At one club they were looked through the curtain on the doorway at a woman dancing with glitter on her nipples and a G-string when a man came out and told them to get away.

They walked up to Geary Street where there was a place called The Black Sheep and watched, from the sidewalk, a woman sing a song and strip. After a while they tired of this and walked up Geary, past the big theatres which played Broadway shows. People were leaving the theatres. A block further on there was a big magazine and liquor store.

David and Steve had been conducting, in the past year, a small business at school. They would steal pornographic books and magazines, then sell them. So far, they'd made about a hundred dollars with the 100% profit, which they'd split 50/50. They went into the store to see what the chances were of stealing some whiskey, but discovered that the store was well-mirrored. So they bought some candy bars, then stood for a while at the magazine stand in front of the store, finally taking about ten magazines.

They caught a 38 Geary bus, which would take them to a transfer point from where they could take a bus to Steve's house, where David was staying overnight. At the transfer point, they sat on a bench, waiting for the 43 Masonic and looking at the magazines by streetlight. They joked, as they sometimes did, about turning each other in, but then concluded, as they always did, that they had too much on each other to do that. Both were smoking cigarettes.

Suddenly a police car pulled up. They hid the magazines, stuffing them into their jackets, and tossed the cigarettes away. "Aren't you boys a little young to be puffing on weeds?" the policeman asked. "What are your names, it's way after curfew, you guys ever been picked up before?"

He wanted identification and David showed him his Top Ten card, certifying that he had obtained straight A's at school, Roosevelt Junior High, and the policeman gave him that second look he was hoping for. Then a motorcycle policeman arrived and called out, "what's goin' on here Joe?"

"Got a couple of curfew violators."

"You gonna take them home?"

"I don't know. Does this bus take you guys home?"

"Yeh."

"Aw, c'mon Joe, let 'em go." The motorcycle sped away.

The policeman was about to go back to his car when a few magazines slipped out from Steve's jacket to the ground.

"Maybe I'd better take you guys home after all."

In the car he asked them, "where'd you buy these, penny arcades down on Market?"

Since he said "buy" and because they knew it was possible for kids to buy magazines there, even though such sale was forbidden by law, David said, "yeh." On the way to Steve's house they slipped the magazines they'd managed to conceal from the policeman under the back seat.

At Steve's house the policeman came in and talked to Steve's parents for what seemed like a long time, while Steve and David went to bed. They couldn't hear what was being said. In the morning Steve's mother made David phone his parents. He talked to his mother, told her they'd been trying out smoking and were curious about the magazines. He wasn't sure how much she could tell from his voice. She told him his father would come to give him a ride home.

Later in the day David's father came to pick him up. David wasn't sure what to expect, what his father's reaction to the escapade would be. When he opened the car door and got inside his father said, "how ya doin' old man, like a smoke?"

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The seven of them gathered in Steve's living room after school, and their attempt at the attainment of a higher level of existence began, the ceremony they called Nirvana.

Steve instructed Bob Wong, who they were initiating, “get down on your hands and knees and breathe deeply ten times, then stand up quick.” Bob did and when he stood up Steve put his arms around Bob’s chest from the back and lifted Bob high off the floor, then let him crumple onto the rug. After lying on the floor without moving for several seconds, Bob stirred then got up. The others gathered around him.

“What did you see?”

“Did you have a dream?”

“I saw a little pink bug with hundreds of legs, I can’t remember too well, but I think he was named Oscar.”

They all laughed.

Then Leroi wanted to try. He breathed more than ten times and the biggest boy there lifted him up. He was groggy when he stood up, and after the lift he immediately collapsed on the floor. But this time it was no matter of seconds.

At first Leroi just lay there without moving. Then he began to mumble and groan. He started rolling around on the carpet and beating his fists against the floor in fury. Rolling all over, he hit his fists against the leg of the coffee table and the bottom of the television set, screaming in pain after hitting them. Then he seemed to subside again, but he was still unconscious and they noticed that he was sweating heavily and shivering. He began to yell, “I’m cold! I’m cold!” with other scattered words and phrases, something about his mother, about help, but the meaning was hard to fully figure out. They were very worried about him now. David ran to the kitchen for a glass of cold water while Steve got a blanket.

David threw the water in Leroi’s face and slowly, shaking himself like a laboratory rat gradually recovering from a shot of phenobarbital, he came out of it with the usual, “what happened?”

“You feel okay, you want us to call a doctor?” All the time thinking how lucky it was he’d come to, and of how hard it would be to tell a doctor how it happened. ”Na, leave me alone, I’ll be okay, just leave me alone.”

Leroi didn’t want to talk about what had happened. They concluded that he’d really reached Nirvana, being out for that long. They tried it once in a while after that, though Leroi would never do it again. One of their fathers found out about it and mentioned that he’d heard of a boy dying because of the practice, and this knowledge, combined with the memory all of them had of Leroi on the floor served to destroy their zeal.

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They spent a good deal of their time in the Haight-Ashbury district because it was the closest place to their three homes where anything happened. Sometimes they’d shoot a couple of lines at Park Bowl, if they had the money. Often they loitered outside a large liquor and magazine store. The magazines were kept in racks in front of the store and were of all kinds, from lurid expose to *Reader’s Digest*, from *Ebony* to *Life*.

Steve was looking through a magazine of questionable art value while David and Leroi, standing some distance away, were hotly disputing the morals of one of the girls in their class. When a girl or young woman walked by they would carefully scrutinize her and say loudly, in judgment, yes or no. Meanwhile a man with black hair and a short, tight-fitting leather jacket struck up a conversation with Steve. David and Leroi heard Steve say, “hell, no!” and walk away from the man.

“What’s the matter?”

“Damn queer just offered me five dollars.”

The three of them took another look at the man, who was now leafing through a magazine. Then Leroi had an idea.

“Let’s go up to my house and get butcher knives and come back down here. He’s got at least five bucks and nobody’s going to sweat about some little faggot. We’ve got everything on our side.”

Of course, no one of them would have done it alone, but now that Leroi had proposed it, none of them could back down. They went up to the flat where Leroi lived, which was nearby, discussing various plans as they went. At Leroi’s each of them chose a butcher knife which they sharpened. They concealed the large knives under their jackets. According to the plan, one of them, probably Steve, would accept the man’s offer and the other two would follow.

What might happen next David didn’t want to imagine. He was not a violent sort. He was more intrigued than upset by homosexuality. He wondered whether Leroi or Steve really wanted to go through with it. Heading down the hill with a butcher knife, peer-pressure macho fear held just a slim edge over his humanity and common sense. He was afraid of what might happen.

When they got back to Haight Street they looked all over for the man but couldn’t find him. Although he tried hard not to show it, David felt a sense of immense relief.

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The first time David met Steve’s father he seemed like the father of any of his friends. David, who was sometimes reticent about talking to adults, could get by with “hello, Mr. Miller.” Steve told him his father was an accountant, and had been trying to get his CPA. He came from the Midwest, but they’d lived in San Francisco for many years. His wife was a slim, tanned woman who also had an accounting job. David remembered her walking through the living room in a housecoat, had placed that seductive glimpse of her smooth inner thigh into his growing collection of special erotic moments and memories. The two boys had also devoured some of the reading material in the parent’s bedroom: descriptions of various orgies and unorthodox sexual practices. But, on the whole, in their actions, conversation, and parental discipline Steve’s parents seemed ordinary enough.

David often stayed overnight at Steve's house, especially on weekends when Steve's parents drove up to Reno to gamble. This gave David and Steve a chance to organize their own poker games, fixed in favor of themselves, via a complicated series of under-the-table signals.

David knew that Steve's father drank a lot. Once David had gone with Steve's family to a Harlem Globetrotters basketball game. Steve's father followed sports closely, and never missed a 49ers football game. All through the basketball game David noticed Steve's father taking drinks from a pocket flask. When they walked out to the car after the game Steve's mother led his father out behind some bushes and they heard him vomiting.

Steve's mother thought she'd better drive, but while they were on the freeway, Steve's father suddenly decided they weren't going fast enough. He kept pressing his foot on the accelerator and several times the car almost went out of control. Steve and David sat in the back seat, scared, listening to the yelling from the front.

Then there was the time Steve's father, drunk again, put a cherry bomb in an empty beer can and tried to throw it out the window of their third floor apartment. He missed the window and the can fell on the rug. He went over slowly to pick it up again and have another try, but it blew up in his hand.

Suddenly one day Steve told David that he was moving away. He said he couldn't say why, but it had something to do with his father. David and Steve were good friends, and this seemed a mysterious thing for Steve to say. But David didn't ask further about it, though he pondered several possible reasons. They moved back to the Midwest and David soon lost contact with Steve.

In wondering about Steve's father David remembered one strange thing. He couldn't decide what importance it had, or figure out exactly why it happened. It was the occasion of their junior high school graduation. David delivered Patrick Henry's famous speech as the class presented *Ballad for Americans*. Steve's parents attended. David's mother took off a day of work, proofreading at a law book publishing company, to attend. David's father, working at a metal parts factory, could not be there.

David proclaimed: "The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms. Our brethren are already in the field, why stand we here idle? What is it that the "gentlemen" wish, what would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

There was much applause and after the ceremony many people complimented David on his performance. A few days after graduation Steve told David something his mother had told him. Right after David's speech Steve's father started sobbing, and then began to cry.

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Between Geary and O'Farrell on Mason Street is a building housing the San Francisco Musician's Union, Local 6. There are offices upstairs and the whole bottom floor is a large rehearsal hall. Every Saturday morning the union symphony rehearsed there, though performances were rare. Some of the city's music teachers had their best young players take part in the orchestra for the experience. David first came by that route, and stayed after showing himself capable enough and regular in attendance. The other French horn players were two married women with little children they brought along, and one infamous musician who played first chair, Van Sendt. Sometimes a friend of his came to play third.

When David met Van Sendt they shook hands, then he told David to sit down next to him and play either second horn or assistant-first depending on the distribution of the parts. At the first break Van Sendt went down to the corner store, coming back with five cans of beer and the same number of Hershey bars with almonds. He sat down, took a couple of bites out of a Hershey then drank some beer, sloshing the chocolate around with the beer and, if necessary, playing his horn with his mouth full of the mixture.

Later in the morning Van Sendt and his friend began to play around, completely ignoring the fact that the orchestra was in the midst of a composition. First Van Sendt squeezed out a squeaky high note, then his friend tried to imitate him. They continued their game, laughing at each strange noise they produced, with Van Sendt's horn gurgling with the potent ingredients.

David was more serious about music than this, and the actions of Van Sendt didn't impress him. When Van Sendt played a solo, however, there was no denying he was one of the finest horn players David had ever heard. Nowhere near as good, of course, as Dennis Brain, the young soloist from England who'd been tragically killed in a car crash, but good nonetheless. If he wanted to, it seemed as if Van Sendt could completely eliminate the orchestra and the only thing the listener would hear, even if the whole orchestra was playing, was the rising tone of the French horn. Van Sendt reminded David of another horn player David's teacher once mentioned. His teacher played in the Boston Pops with a horn player, who he said was the stupidest, strangest person he'd ever met, but the best horn player.

"He didn't worry at all about the high notes, he just played them. That's a problem smart people have, they seem to have some kind of block about going right up there and hitting the high notes. That block's the thing they have to overcome."

Some of the other members of the union symphony attributed Van Sendt's eccentricity to a sadness earlier in life, but David never heard anything more definite than that. He remembered something else his teacher said. The teacher had an exercise requiring the student to play a single tone, starting very softly at *ppp*, going to triple forte, then back down and up again.

"You know Dave, life is like that. For every triple forte there's a triple piano. Where there's great suffering there is also great happiness. Things are balanced like that."

That was the trouble with Van Sendt— Van Sendt played triple forte all the time.

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Sometimes it seemed as if the city were divided in half. For example, on 22nd and Mission there's a small soda shoppe. It's "bart." But one block up the street there's another one. It's "ivy league." The one that belongs to the ivy leaguers is in a small pocket in the middle of a big district that's mostly bart.

Sometimes various bart gangs could be seen sitting on stairways, their jackets proclaiming their Los Chicanos, or Los Banditos. In general, the barts were a loose coalition of Latin, Negro, and a few poor whites. And of course everyone knew that the toughest gang in town was The Bloods, a mostly Negro group. It was said when you saw a Blood walking down the street you knew it; he was the king. It was like that popular song from Los Angeles, the Duke of Earl, "as I walk through this world, nothing can stop me, 'cause I'm the Duke of Earl..."

The heart of the Mission District is 22nd and Mission; it's where they hold the big street dance every Halloween. And every block on Mission has at least three bars. David's family had recently moved to a house in the outer Mission, about a mile further out, across from a city housing project. On his corner stood the El Amigo Cafe.

This new neighborhood posed some problems for David.

He had few friends here because he went to school on the other side of the city. In addition, his school was in an ivy-league area, a white middle-class residential section, while his home was in the heavily bart one, a predominantly Latin neighborhood.

The differences between the barts and the ivy leaguers stemmed mainly from economic position and geographical location. But, of course, these differences filtered down to way of fighting, way of talking, style of dress. So it sometimes seemed to David as if he were walking a tightrope between the two. A person in his position had to be careful, especially in regard to dress. Ivy leaguers wore tapered or "pegged" pants and white socks, barts wore black or darker colors, and theirs were flared at the bottom, "bell bottoms."

Once, coming up the last block to his house after school David saw two motorcycles parked in front of one of the houses in the projects. The older boys had long hair combed out several inches in the front and bell bottom pants. They were talking to two girls who lived in the projects, one a tall thin blonde and the other a light-skinned Negro, who was, in the vernacular of the time, nothing less than a "fox and a half." The girls were about fifteen and the boys about eighteen. The boys wore the jackets of some club.

When David, who was walking on the other side of the quite street, was directly across from them, the two boys walked slowly over to him, with a threatening demeanor. David knew from previous experience that it wasn't a good idea to run. The biggest one looked at David for a while and then said, "say you little punk, you an Ivy Leaguer?" "No man."

"Those pants look like they might be pegged, how come you're wearing them?"

“They’re cheaper.”  
“Those wouldn’t be white socks you got on, would they?”  
“Hell, no, they’re grey”  
“Where do ya live?”  
“Right up there next go the school.”  
“Well, okay, but we better not see you around here again wearing those pegged pants.  
Next time it’ll be different, ya hear?”  
No reply.  
“Ya hear me punk?”  
“Yeh, okay,” said David.

He was always ashamed of himself after encounters like these, ashamed of the knot of fear that stayed in his stomach. If some of his friends or even his younger brother had seen that they would laugh just as much as the two who were now back talking to the girls. His brother, who recently helped found a new gang with a motto which they took to heart as much as possible — “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may fall.”

But usually no one else witnessed these episodes. After a short time David would recover from the humiliation, and would not be reminded until the next morning when he again had to choose which clothes to wear to school.

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**D**avid and Mark had been in several political youth groups together. On that now famous Friday they cut school to come down and demonstrate. Saturday they went down to the Civic Center again to protest and listen to the loudspeaker that the officials of the House Un-American Activities Committee had to place in the park so the many people outside who could not get into the crowded hearing room could hear the proceedings.

On Friday there was no loudspeaker and there had been a dispute between some students and the police about entry to the hearing. Inside the hearing room sat David's father and younger brother. His father had been called by the committee, and along with many other people was taking a defiant non-cooperative stance. Later when a record was made of non-commercial radio coverage of the event, David's father could be heard briefly saying to the committee, “but there is an additional reason why I refuse to answer and that is the Constitutional amendment, I believe it's the fourth, giving a person the right to confront his accusers. Since I have not had that opportunity, and apparently from the past experience of this Committee am not about to get such opportunity, I must decline to answer your questions...” The newspaper printed the names and addresses of all the witnesses—resulting in some highly obscene hate calls. When his father answered, he actually tried to talk to these people.

Once David answered and a man said, “well, you tell your father to get over to Russia where he belongs, so they can shoot him up in a Sputnik.”

In Friday's demonstration many of David's and Mark's friends were beaten, pushed down the stairs with fire hoses, and taken to jail. Today there was a large crowd outside the building, chanting: "Abolish the committee, abolish the committee!" During lunch one of the committee members, a Southern Congressman, appeared on the balcony and the crowd responded with arms raised, "Sieg Heil, Seig Heil!"

At one o'clock a Peace March was to start, from a cathedral to Union Square, followed by a rally with speeches and folksinging. Mark was going to sing so he and David marched. A new more militant spirit moved among the crowd of several thousand—people sensed a thaw, a warmth, a new springtime of resistance after the long winter of fear and intimidation.

There were speeches about the demonstrations against the Un-American Committee, about the lunch-counter sit-ins and freedom ride movement spreading across the South, about the threat of nuclear war and the need for disarmament. Mark and his group played guitars and sang out with full throat and heartfelt feeling words like, "last night I had the strangest dream, I never dreamed before, I dreamed the world had all agreed, to put an end to war," and "gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside, gonna study war no more." When the rally was over they went back to City Hall where the hearings had ended. The sidewalk in front was now clear except for an old man talking to a tall Negro youth.

The old man was saying, "I been to every country in the world, except Australia and New Zealand, and I can tell you that the system we're living under right here in the United States is the best one there is."

David and Mark knew the Negro youth. His name was Ray and he was a star football player at Poly High School, and one of a group of about 30 or 40 in a loose circle of "progressive" teenagers. David remembered a scene in a car when Ray provided him with some sexual information, adding, "ya know it's wrong man, but once ya get it in ya just wanta do it again and again." David, younger than Ray, listened respectfully.

But Ray had other things on his mind today. He listened to the old man's praise of the United States, then asked, "yeh, but what do you think about this committee, isn't it a violation of the Constitution?" Before the old man could answer Ray's question a policeman walked up to them, commanding, "c'mon you guys, get moving!"

They stayed where they were. Then the old man walked away. The policeman touched his billy-club, "get goin, you damned nigger!"

David saw the thought of action flash across Floyd's face but it had to be contained and the three of them started to walk slowly, stopping a few yards away. The policeman, seeing he would have to be satisfied with their token obedience, nevertheless yelled at them, "you dirty commies, I'd like to bash your fuckin' heads in."

After a while, in solidarity with the sit-inners down South, and because their rebelling spirits had been stimulated, they went downtown to picket Woolworth's.

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Sometimes when they went to the Haight Theatre they met girls, but more often they went to ridicule the film, whatever it happened to be. Through use of raucous laughter and vulgar comment they would see how close they could come to getting kicked out of the movie. But this particular Friday night four of them decided to see "The Diary of Anne Frank." None of them had read the book.

They were unusually well-behaved, probably because it was overwhelmingly obvious that the intention of the movie was serious. More than that, it centered around the events of World War II which they had heard about so often from their parents, from the entire older generation, and which they knew to be one of the most terrible and meaningful events in their parent's lives.

They had to try to understand what it meant, if only because the people they looked up to and learned from, for all their weaknesses, found it so important. In addition, both David and Mike were Jewish, raised by politically-active, left-wing parents; fascism was a word they heard often, without fully knowing what it meant.

Perhaps too something in the story of a young girl's growing up aroused their just beginning appreciation of the fact that girls were also people.

So they watched the movie, annoyed once by a chorus of sobs from the row of girls behind them. After the film, the four boys walked up to Statue Hill, about five blocks from the theatre. Statue Hill was still only sparsely settled. It got its name from a large pedestal for a statue at the very top, though there had never been a statue on it.

They talked and smoked. First they discussed the movie. Although David concurred in part with the objections of some of the others to sentimentality, for the most part he did not, and he thought it was a good movie. He resolved to read the book. Then the discussion drifted from the past to the present, to a question they found themselves forced to think about by many forces. The President always talked about it; their parents discussed it; they heard lectures in school about it; they curled up under their desks or in the hall for air raid drills.

In fact, they sensed that their individual resolutions of this question might well, when they were older, determine where they stood in their society. They were young enough so that many of their ideas were distillations of what they heard their parents say. They were also young enough to allow discussion of basic issues -- they were not yet able to slip into personal rationalizations or semantic dead-ends in their discussion of communism and capitalism.

"There's no individual freedom there man. I mean my father was a Communist until he got fed up with taking orders from Moscow. The state controls everything. Anyway, it's just a dream, just a theory -- Russia shows it can't work."

"What do ya mean, no individual freedom? You know as well as I do that salt mines stuff they still tell us is a lot of bullshit these days. Besides, isn't free health care and education

necessary for there to be a chance at real freedom? No reason I can see why people can't work together, that was individuals can benefit even more."

"People aren't like that, human nature doesn't work that way. Work together, sure, sounds pretty, but you're up in the clouds, not down on the ground."

"Well, nothing happens overnight. The movie we just saw shows that; she didn't grow up quickly, that whole war went back a long way. Talkin' about freedom, take a look at where we are. What do think all those sit-ins and Freedom Rides are about? There's a lot of injustice here and ya can't do nothin' without bein' called a Red. What do ya make of that?"

"Aw, c'mon, that's an excuse. That doesn't prove anything. We're not talking about the United States. I know there's problems, but things are pretty good."

"Maybe, but it ain't like that all over the world. There's one hell of a lot of people lookin' for a way out, and a lot of them are not choosin' our way. Hell, man, I don't know myself, haven't made up my mind, never met anybody who had all the answers, but it ain't as simple as you say."

Their discussion went on for a long time, with David and Mike doing most of the talking. Sometimes the others talked. Then the four of them split up in different directions and went home, never again to meet like this, on top of a hill, where only a few years before they saw this movie they sneaked up to smoke big cigars that made them sick and dizzy.

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Tonight there would be music, for tonight was Thursday and a group of young musicians, grown together through common love of classical music, would give a free concert in the assembly room on the third floor of the main public library.

David looked out at the audience. He blew through his horn to keep it warm, made sure he'd emptied the spit from it. Sitting in folding chairs were a few of their friends, some music teachers, and a group of the old men who always hung out around the library until San Francisco passed a law against it. There were about thirty people. Right before the conductor raised his hands David noticed an old man come in the back door and take a seat at the very back of the hall. For a second their eyes met.

Then the sad and mellow chords of Tchaikovsky's *Pathetique* symphony began. David, his lips to a winding horn, looked out at the audience, enjoying that inner feeling of full group participation, the making of an individual note and tone color that combined with all the others to build a melancholy chord, as the chords in turn blended into a symphonic melody that for David sang the harshness and pathos of life itself. Now the tone of the horn rose free in a lyrical solo that was yet in unity with the entire symphonic meaning. As usual, David picked one person to look at while he played, and tonight he played to the old man at the back of the hall.

He always played Tchaikovsky with a certain measure of anger, anger at those experts on classical music who considered the great composer's work overly sentimental and not very good. As far as David was concerned, there were real feelings in this music and those who negated or belittled them seemed somehow afraid of showing those feelings themselves.

But not the old man. David could see he liked the music. David wondered about the man's life. Perhaps he'd worked in a factory for many years, like David's father did. Maybe he lived in a little room on Third Street or near the waterfront.

He'd seen such men often, sometimes they asked for some change, sometimes he gave. Maybe this old man was here because of his love for music, maybe because he'd seen the mimeographed notice for the concert and taken it as a free way to pass the time. The time—what kind of life did he lead now? It must be terribly lonely. Lonely at night, lying in a little room, listening to the begging voices from the street, different voices, changing in pitch and timbre, young and old, asking, "could you spare a quarter, I've tried to be a good Christian all my life." Now and then crutches scratched on the pavement, bottles broke, foghorns sounded out in the bay. And always, endlessly, the cars flashed by, circling his little room with their lights. It must feel good for him to listen to something like this for a change. This concert was for him.

The group played several more pieces, including a spirited adaptation of one of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, and then the concert was over. David and his friend, the bassoon player, passed the old man on their way out after the concert. The old man said to David, "I don't know much about music, but tonight I listened to you and all the players and I guess that's what music is." David said politely, "I'm glad you liked it."

The bassoon player said, "let's go."

But the old man called David back. "Wait a minute please...ah...I...just wanted to tell you somethin' more, to wish you success in all that you do. Keep blowin' that horn, nobody else is ever gonna blow it for you."

"I will, thank you."

"What did that old bum have to say?" the bassoon player asked.

"Nothin'."

Later that night David thought over the old man's words, and wondered where the man was now. Keep blowin' that horn...it reminded David of something else. Once his father gave him a book called *The Art of Scientific Investigation*. In the front his father wrote: "read it, but don't take it too seriously. There's no substitute for good clear thinking. You've got to make it on your own."

You've got to make it on your own, nobody else can it for you. But make what on your own? Success in all that you do, but what should he do? Everything you did seemed to suck you into things that you opposed or found morally questionable; everything had so many complications.

Maybe it would be better to be a French horn player; it was a good life. Most musicians he knew were really fine people. If he set his lips and mind to it he could become a very capable hornist, and it would be good to do at least one thing well, instead of many things poorly and half-heartedly. Look at that old man, what kind of life was that, kicked aside by the society after being forced to pour out the sweat and tears of a lifetime in hard labor for low wages. Yes, maybe being a musician would be a way out of the mess.

David knew two things: that it had been good to play for the old man and that, without a doubt, somehow or other, he would have to make it on his own. Then, to the still echoing strains of *Pathétique*, he closed his eyes and dreamed of heroic pursuits for himself, and about an old man at the back of the hall.

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**H**igh school students were given a chance to be ushers at the big Pete Seeger concert coming up at the Longshoreman's Auditorium near Fisherman's Wharf. John and David arranged to do this by phone, but arrived at the auditorium after all the ushers had been assigned.

The woman making the assignments looked at John, who was tall and heavy, and said that Pete had asked for two "bodyguards" for right after the show when many people would rush up to talk with him. So David and John got the job, which entitled them to front row seats.

David had seen Pete Seeger before at smaller concerts, usually for children. Tonight the large auditorium was filled. Even before the show started everyone seemed excited and expectant. The show was to help raise money for Pete's legal defense before the Supreme Court regarding his refusal to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee. He took the first amendment, not the fifth, in defying their questions, on the grounds that the committee itself violated the Constitution by seeking to deny freedom of speech and association.

Although his voice did not have the deep resonance of, for example, the great Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger's sixth sense when it came to audience reaction and timing made his concerts moving and memorable. He was also quite an incredible musician, truly making that banjo ring.

Often the audience sang along. Pete sang of Joe Hill, the organizer-songwriter from the International Workers of the World, framed on a murder charge while organizing miners in the early days of the century: "I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night, alive as you and me, says I but Joe you're ten years dead, I never died says he..."

Pete sang the beautiful poem of the great 19th century Cuban independence leader, writer, and scholar, Jose Marti, set to music as Guantanamera, with many beautiful lines, among them David's favorite, "my poems are soft green, my poems are also flaming crimson, my poems are like a wounded deer seeking refuge in the forest."

That night Pete also sang some songs David had never heard before, although he considered himself somewhat of an expert in the general area of folk and protest song. One song was about an airplane crash involving Mexican workers brought in to work in the fruit and vegetable harvest in California, then deported. It was written by Woody Guthrie and called "Deportee." The sharp comment on injustice and exploitation, the sad melody, and the reverent stillness of the audience sent a chill through David which he recognized as the feeling that happens whenever some fortunate combination of creativity and circumstances seemed to form a unified and moving expression of the human condition. The song told of a plane crash in which many Mexican workers were killed, and the reports did not even give their names, "you won't have a name when you ride the big airplane, and all they will call you will be deportee."

Pete also sang a long singing story of his case and defense. The last song before the encores was introduced with, "you all know this song, and this is one time I want to hear it sung right -- stand up -- the Star Spangled Banner!" The spontaneity of the singing made this the first time David had ever heard the national anthem sung right. It was different from all the school assemblies, boxing matches, Presidential inaugurations, and baseball games. There was no operatic tenor leading them. There was no constrained feeling of duty. Instead, there was a spirit of resistance and joy; they were together and they lived in the United States.

The United States of America...David pondered during the thunderous applause...maybe there was something to it after all, even if so many of his contemporaries poked fun at the unrealized, and in some cases, tragically betrayed, dream. Reality brutally contradicted the ideals, school-taught words seemed lies, but there was something in their singing of the song...

His thoughts were interrupted by another song, this time one of David's favorites. It was a great children's song with a grown-up lesson, the saga of a clumsy giant named Abi-yo-yo, and Pete acted the part, clumping around the stage like a lanky backwoodsman.

During a pause David found himself thinking of Walt Whitman, who David's class had just studied, and who David took a very special interest in. Whitman, with the optimism that most of the class found so unrealistic. True, much had happened since Walt last sang, new developments had to be reckoned with. Would David be able to find an honest way to live, would the entire society ever approach integrity, ever achieve its potential, what of the whole world?

After numerous encores, when the performance ended, as was expected, Pete was rushed upon, deluged by the audience. Some were old friends, some wanted to meet him, some to wish him luck or tell him how much the concert meant to them.

Pete told David and John, both quite thrilled to be where they were, to encircle him with their arms and try to make slow progress toward the door. This they did, but the huge crowd was insistent and soon all David and John could do was drop their hands helplessly as Pete was surrounded by people with whom he laughed and talked for a long time.

David and John worked their way through the crowd, talked to people they knew, then walked out of the auditorium. There they saw people who had been standing outside listening because there was no room left inside.

To get to the bus stop they walked past the parking lot, looked up at the flagpole, and saw the large Bufano statue of St. Francis of Assisi spread his arms over the ramshackle buildings of the waterfront.

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**D**avid was always making lists and resolutions. He fancied himself a modern-day Benjamin Franklin, believed he could even become famous if he disciplined himself. Discipline was important, and his lack of it he saw as his major shortcoming. Always procrastinating, always lazy, and just think of how much there was to be done. Other prominent men worked hard during their youth before rising to the top, it was often said, Horatio Alger and all that. David's grandfather, on his mother's side, had gone on from a Jewish orphanage in Chicago to become a leading corporate attorney. Even the hero of that book he'd just finished reading, Gatsby, had set up an ambitious schedule for himself in his youth and followed it. He had ended badly, it was true, but at least in his youth he tempered himself.

David felt the only way to overcome his feelings of inadequacy was to strengthen himself both physically and mentally. In his thoughts, he often proposed projects suited to this purpose. Why, hadn't his fourth grade teacher said she thought he could be President in, say, 1994 -- he felt somehow chosen for something. He wouldn't get mixed up with big shots who fixed the World Series, and he wouldn't be a shoeless Joe Jackson either.

Surely, somehow, he would succeed.

It amused him to look back on the growing number of resolutions having to do with school, private projects, home affairs and personal relationships. It amused him because the resolves made two or three years ago now seemed quite unimportant, so it made a somewhat humorous record of his progress, or lack thereof. Still, some of them remained the same, like regular physical exercise and good grades, and they served as reminders each time that he had rarely fulfilled his own intentions and expectations.

Then there were the old family budgets. His father had more or less ignored them, at any rate had paid what seemed to David little attention to a big monthly item: "cigarettes for Pa." David several times went out to buy a beautiful budget book, added up various

salaries, estimated food consumption, rent, and so on. He thought if only his father didn't smoke they might break even.

But then there was always something coming up unexpectedly, it seemed every month, and the budget would have to be laid aside. His mother always actively encouraged these efforts, but they came to naught. His father came in for many reprimands all the time, especially at the family meetings they held. Early on David took his father's smoking as an object lesson -- he would never smoke. Then he too somehow drifted into the habit.

With high school came a wider awareness of the United States and the world. Often the family meetings dealt in part with international questions. Many activities at school pointed in rich and diverse directions. David saw the opportunities spread themselves before him like a field of beautiful wildflowers. Given this, it was simply criminal to be so lazy and to coast along without using his initiative. There was so much to do. He'd better get busy and make a list!

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Graduation night he wore his new suit with a tiny gold French horn in the lapel and she wore a tight silvery-grey satin dress with lace over it. They weren't graduating; they had to play in the orchestra. He played first horn, she was third trumpet, as luck would have it that sat them next to each other.

The graduation that year was being held at the Masonic Temple. The large auditorium was on the main floor, with underground parking and offices on the floors above. The orchestra was already set up and tuned with a half hour yet to go before the program was to start.

"Let's explore," she said. David, caught up in her adventurous spirit, agreed. How lucky could he get!?

Sandra, who had moved to San Francisco several months before, really liked him. She was sort of a honey blonde, with an ample, strong body and as the song went, a wiggle in her walk. More than a wiggle, actually. An undulation. Like that other song, "poetry in motion, see her gentle sway, a wave down on the ocean, could never move that way..." She was different from the others, more sophisticated and direct. He was one of the few people who knew that she had a little baby, which her mother took care of while she was at school.

David and Sandra spent the whole band and orchestra picnic lying next to each other in the sun, despite the kidding of the band teacher who was trying to get them to play volleyball. They had other serves and volleys in mind. He would always remember how just a light touch from her on his stomach aroused a full erection as he lay there in his bathing suit.

As always, there were consequences. In this case, since he lay there all day turned toward her and her alone he had a flaming sunburn on one side of his face and was pale on the other. It made him look very strange; he was embarrassed and stayed home from school for a day or so.

They walked backstage and down a hall where there was an elevator. They got inside and she picked a floor. David was thinking, as usual, about love. There was some way in which love was like an elevator, but he couldn't quite put his finger on the metaphor.

They got off on the seventh floor. She carried her trumpet, he his horn. Holding their other hands they walked down the dimly-lit hall, reading names and titles on the doors. At the end of the corridor they tried a door that wasn't to an office, found it open and went through. There was a cement area with stairs on one side and a window with no glass. They looked out the window, feeling the coolness of the night wind from the ocean, french kissing against the backdrop of the lights of San Francisco.

But soon they decided they'd better get back to the orchestra. They went back to the door they'd come through and discovered it had locked automatically. This Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher hadn't run out a string behind them!

They laughed and took the only course open to them, down the stairs. They finally came out in the basement parking lot, and walked up some other stairs to the doors of the auditorium. They walked embarrassed down the aisle of the now-full auditorium and took their seats in the orchestra. Nearby orchestra members watched them with various forms of knowing looks.

In a few minutes the conductor raised his hands and the orchestra started to accompany the pairs that marched toward the stage, repeating the familiar, ritualistic strains of *Pomp and Circumstance* over and over and over.

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**I**f you held weights in your hand while shadow-boxing, when you put them down you really had a punch. The gloves felt light as a feather. When David was told to get some weights, his father asked a friend who was a machinist to make them. As a result, soon afterward David received a finely-polished pair of tiny barbells, perfectly suited to his fists. They were made by Jim Davis.

Jim, ruddy-faced and strong, lived with his large family a few blocks away from them. David's sister and brother often played with the many children at the Davis house and David sometimes babysat. Jim was a vital, active man, with a warm, husky voice. He joked with the children, sometimes picked them up and whirled them around. He was loved and respected by lots of people, and David knew that he and Carolyn, his wife, shared the social and political ideals of his parents. Jim was a very active union organizer, and David's father told him how much his fellow workers liked him.

David remembered Jim coming over to their house when they had been forced to move. Shell Oil company bought their building from the landlady, Mrs. Hoots. She lived downstairs and had six cats. She was a kindly older woman who didn't mind the noise the three kids made. After Shell Oil bought the building she moved out, but David's father and mother put up a fight, refusing to move until Shell Oil paid money to help them relocate to a place with enough room and a low enough rent. Eventually a place was found and a small lump sum paid.

At this point Jim came over to help with the move. David watched in awe as he and David's father disconnected a large heater and then lowered it through the floor on to Jim's truck. At one point Jim had to hold most of the weight himself, and David admired his strength and physical confidence.

So it came as quite a shock when David learned that Jim Davis had cancer. It was skin cancer, perhaps caused by pipe smoking, but it arrived on the rampage. Jim fought a valiant battle against it. Several years of hard struggle against the disease ensued, years when he was sometimes better and sometimes worse, and days of tortuous pain and psychological agony. In the end it reached his brain. His courage and tenacity held on throughout the ordeal—David always remembered Jim ruddy-faced and smiling.

David's whole family dressed up to go to the funeral, a special memorial meeting. First they drove to pick up Maxine, who was going to sing, and then they went to the home of a well-known Communist novelist and newspaperman, Mike Gold. Mike's son, a musician, talked to David about the French horn, how it was often used for pastoral effects, and about how much it sounded like the human voice. Maxine rehearsed her songs at the piano.

As they drove to the memorial ceremony, David watched Mike Gold closely, having just read *Jews Without Money*, with its stories of a boy growing up amidst the slums of New York City. David studied Mike's rugged face, and thought of how many funerals and events like this one Mike had attended, while this was David's first.

There were many people at the gathering—the large hall was full. David spotted Jim's wife in the front, wearing a black dress, sitting with two of their daughters. The little girls were wide-eyed and solemn, sitting quietly at their mother's side. And then the program began.

Speeches were made about his life and his lessons. It was clear that Jim was a vibrant and decent man, dedicated to struggling for a better life. The speeches were filled with memories and anecdotes, and with the resolve to go on. David's father made one of the speeches, talking about Jim and at the same time about the world and the efforts of working people to win dignity and freedom, about how Jim fit in, his leadership qualities. It was clear David's father felt a deep sense of comradeship. He closed the speech with one of his poems.

Maxine sang several songs, and they filled the gathering with emotion, songs of courage

and resistance. Many people cried but David didn't. He thought maybe the tears that didn't find release were the most sorrowful of all. He did not cry, rather he was swept up in a strong spirit of bravery and renewed dedication, a sense of group unity. There really was something there, something more than tangible, only an image of what the world could be perhaps, but nevertheless there for everyone to grasp. The funeral ended.

Afterward David thought about Jim's wife. She had to work and go on with all the children. Most of all he remembered the songs; he used to play them on his horn with his family. His mother loved the horn, even when he was out of practice. His sister played the violin and his brother played the piano and sang. His father stood by nodding appreciatively.

There was the song, *Zog Nit Kenymol*, that came from the Jewish resistance to Nazism at the Warsaw Ghetto. They had a record of Paul Robeson singing it, and Maxine sang it beautifully at the memorial for Jim -- "never say that you have reached the very end, though leaden skies a bitter future may portend, because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive, and our marching steps will thunder, we survive."

And another song, the one that ended the memorial. David had been surprised to read that this song was a favorite of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, sung to him by Josh White -- *Beloved Comrade*:

"To you beloved comrade, we make this solemn vow, the fight will go on, the fight will still go on...rest here in the earth, your work is done, you'll find new birth, when we have won...sleep well, beloved comrade, our work has just begun, the fight will go on, the fight will still go on, till we have won, till we have won..."

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**I**t was a mass of thick oil paint of many colors, but it was also a baby nursing at a mother's breast, or a group of men. Modern art. Perhaps it was because he knew the artist that the paintings had some meaning for him, while not exactly a fully comprehensible one, nevertheless Harry's paintings affected David both intellectually and emotionally. Most modern art left him cold, but Harry Berger's didn't. David liked the paintings and pottery that covered the apartment in the housing project across from David's house, where Harry lived with Sarah, his younger wife, who was an actress, and their two small children.

David's father knew Harry from the past. He told David, "once he wanted to lead the working class." Harry had been a sweatshop worker in New York's garment district. He was one of those courageous Americans who fought in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade on the side of the Republic, against Franco, in Spain. He also fought in World War II.

Once he showed David a series of incredibly powerful sketches he'd made of Iwo Jima in the midst of the fighting.

Harry had been married several times. In his current incarnation he was above all an artist. It was said that his wife thought him as great, if not greater, than Picasso, a true giant among men, and therefore called him "Titan." Her adulation was matched only by his egocentricity.

Babysitting for the Bergers was not a difficult task, if not always rewarding financially. They had many interesting books, and David enjoyed a sense of privacy.

The children were allowed to run quite a bit wilder than average. They were curious, very animated, sometimes dancing naked in the sun in the small backyard. At night they stayed in their room. They were not allowed to open the door and come out. Occasionally the older one would call David to open the door so he could go to the bathroom, where he sat on the toilet backwards.

David had the distinction of hearing the younger boy say his first sentence. Once, when the older had, in a lapse of memory or failure of control, moved his bowels on the floor, David rushed in when he heard the younger one screaming. The little boy was standing up in his crib, outraged, yelling -- "he shif, he shif on the floor!"

David liked Sara a lot. She was clear and direct. She often came over to talk to David's mother, to discuss Harry's latest temperamental shift of mood. For a time David rehearsed and performed in a play with Sara, *Britannicus* by Racine -- "speak secretly my dear, because the walls have ears, and Nero's never absent from his palace." Sara was an excellent actress, with a very powerful presence and voice. They went to the director's house on the bus. There David got to know the director and his lover. They were homosexuals, which David stereotypically took as logical given the theatrical world. But more than that, the experience provided David with real-life exposure to one lifestyle of that particular sexual preference. He liked both of them, enjoyed their openness and sense of humor. He would always remember the director saying, in a discussion they were having about archaic laws still on the books that it was still against the law in California for a man and a woman to take a bath together "because warm water is so conducive to sexual intercourse."

Sometimes Harry, Sara, the two kids and David would go to rehearsals together. Coming home on the bus with this irreverent, unorthodox couple and their two ragamuffin children, David took some pride in the stares from other passengers.

Harry was a complicated guy, completely unpredictable.

David had no way to assess the impact of all his experiences -- the Spanish Civil War, the U.S. Marines, and his more recent work in a mattress factory where he has experienced anti-Semitism on the part of the union leadership. Sometimes he held part-time jobs at North Beach coffeehouses. But often Sara supported the family with secretarial jobs while Harry went to school or painted. It was a surprise for David to learn that he was 50 years old; he seemed much younger.

David looked forward to the long talks he had with Harry when he came home late at night. Harry would talk about almost anything. He explained the Chinese ideograms he was studying at school, and down on the corner with the man who ran the grocery store. He talked about his recent work in clay, grotesque, bizarre structures that nevertheless had a certain grace and always managed to be functional. Clay came from the earth, people molded and worked it with their hands -- that was good.

As David got older Harry talked to him about the failures and frustrations of his life, his former unsuccessful marriages. Harry thought David might help him learn how to talk to his two teenage sons by a previous marriage who he was going to visit.

He gave David advice on sex and marriage, such as to avoid marrying a woman who liked fancy clothes. Once, in the intensity and earnestness that always characterized his conversation, even when he was bullshitting, he accompanied David up the street, telling him to make sure of one thing before he married. He was yelling, as a blonde girl who lived in the projects walked past, as he warned, "make sure your penis fits her vagina!" David concluded that this was probably a fairly important consideration, as he exchanged smiles with the girl.

Harry and his wife moved away suddenly. Later David heard he left her while she was pregnant. When they moved, Harry became very offended when David's father suggested he return the books he'd borrowed, although Harry came over and removed a nice picture he'd painted of David's sister that Sara had given the family.

David wondered what the next occupants of their apartment would think of the muralled walls, especially the terrifying one of monsters he'd painted in the children's room, and of the cross Harry erected in the backyard in celebration of Easter -- huge, made out of wood, and gilded with underpants and all kinds of junk.

Then it occurred to David that the city would no doubt clean up and paint over everything.

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So this was New York City -- the Big Apple. The two boys drove around in Jack's Corvair, trying to decide what to do. It was a good thing Jack was an alert driver -- the traffic was incredible, the taxi drivers unbelievable. David, heavily romanticizing all the stories he'd heard about New York, thought they should stay at a cheap hotel. Jack preferred a larger, more expensive one. Finally they decided to compromise and went to the LIDO, a little hotel near a busy corner of Broadway. The location was excellent. They registered and went up to the little room. That looked about right to David -- old and funky, with a dirty brick wall outside the window. He was reminded of the New York hotel room adventures described in *Catcher in the Rye*. Jack and David went out to have dinner and buy a newspaper, so they could decide how to spend the evening.

They headed toward fabled Greenwich Village. It reminded David of the old days of North Beach in his city. First, they went to an improvisational theatre troupe. The actors were good, their spur-of-the-moment skits quick-witted and topical. David got a special kick out of their humorous improvisations of book titles suggested by the audience. It seemed at first as if they were stuck when someone called out, "The Iliad." Then one of the performers jumped up in a flash of inspiration, then started singing his arms and twisting his hips, singing, "The Iliad, everybody's doin' the Iliad!"

Jack and David meandered down the street to a jazz club, The Five Spot Cafe. There was a double bill there -- Theolonius Monk and Mose Allison. Theolonius played with great abandon and beauty. He wore a brightly-colored long woolen hat, and his face carried a look of utmost concentration, of serious and soulful meditation. Mose sang in his quiet, drawling, yet emotional way: "well, a young man ain't nothin' in the world these days, I said a young man ain't nothin' in the world these days...In the old days, when a young man was a strong man, all the people stand back when a young man walks by. But nowadays, the old men got all the money...and a young man ain't nothin' in the world these days."

So, with five Scotches under their belts, Jack and David decided to walk all the way back to the hotel. When they got up to the street with the right number on it, they discovered they were on the wrong side of Central Park, so they walked across.

In the middle of the park, weaving back and forth, involved in a complicated discussion, David suddenly stepped out in front of a car. Luckily Jack pulled him back in time. There were no more incidents. They arrived at the hotel at three in the morning and fell asleep. In the morning David went to see his aunt who convinced him to stay with her family, and Jack decided to move into a better hotel; he couldn't stand that wall right outside the window. So they parted for a few days.

The next day David began a more systematic exploration of New York, since there was only two days before he and Jack would meet again and then be on their way. He went to a park where he could sit on a bench and look out at the Statue of Liberty, thinking of the stories he'd heard about Ellis Island and reciting lines of the famous poem by the socialist Emma Lazarus -- "your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Then he went and listened to a multilingual discussion of Africa at the United Nations, sized up the different kinds of people standing around in Times Square, gave Wall Street the once over, and took a long walk through Harlem.

In Wall Street he stood for a half hour watching the stock market and trying to figure out what all those men were doing running around like that, rats trapped in a maze. In Harlem, he was walking along and saw the man in front of him reach out and just miss a pigeon that spread its wings to fly—to David it was a metaphor, with the bird representing freedom and the reach representing the revived civil rights movement. He felt a bit strange being the only white person in sight, but on the other hand it brought back parts of his childhood. He tossed a rubber ball back to a group of kids and watched a small demonstration with some fiery street orators.

It was New York City, but nothing that exciting seemed to be happening. There was surely much here, millions of stories in the Naked City and all that, but those tales of young men being swallowed up by corruption and vice didn't happen. Anyway, sometimes they took longer than three days. He would have to spend more time in New York in the future.

Eating in an automat on the last day he and Jack were amused by all the inscriptions on the bathroom wall. They were also amused by the sign at the bathroom door: PLEASE ADJUST CLOTHES BEFORE LEAVING. They adjusted their clothes and then they left.

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For a time, after she went off with someone else, he sat in an arm chair smoking a cigarette, watching the couples dancing, clinging to each other as if nothing else mattered and, for them, in that moment at least, nothing else did. Then he walked over and danced with two girls he knew, wandered around, went upstairs where he was asked to take care of his little cousin who was bothering some guitar players, then he walked out the door, out of the party that his sister had planned, partly in honor of his homecoming. His brother ran after him, asking if he were leaving, to which he replied he would come back.

He walked up the hill behind his aunt's and uncle's house, where the party was being held, saw some trees, and decided to lie down under them. He was alone.

It was different from the times he'd been alone in the country or on the desert, where he'd been attending a small junior college. Different from the initial fear, then full enjoyment of total solitude he experienced in a three-day hike he'd taken over several desert mountain passes near Death Valley. Tonight he could still hear the sounds of the large party, the music, the laughing and the singing. From another nearby house came the sound of an accordion and a party of somewhat older folks, with people singing "hinky, dinky, parlez vous."

This time it wasn't that he felt, as he sometimes had before, that the happiness he heard, the happiness of other people, was phony or false, a way to forget or escape from something that ought to be faced. It wasn't that. In fact, in many ways he envied them their happiness. He just felt he could never be like them, that he was out of it. He sang a song out loud that came into his head, he'd originated the melody on the horn, and the words, albeit incomplete, seemed to flow with it -- "latch on to that dream, little boy, little girl, hold it tight, hold it close..."

For the first time in what he considered his adult life he contemplated suicide. He thought about how she, she who had left, had revealed to him the time she'd taken aspirin to try and kill herself, but changed her mind, couldn't bring herself to tell her mother, but was saved when discovered by her brother.

He tried to think of a time when he'd been truly happy, and couldn't.

Then he smiled at his melodrama. There had been trauma, sadness and death, but here he was sitting alone doing nothing more than feeling sorry for himself. He smiled, knowing he wanted a longer, fuller life. He felt too much warmth coming from all the lights of the city that spread below him to shut them off forever.

But what to do? It was as if he'd just run into an even steeper hill than the one he'd just climbed, a hill of other people and society confronting him. For a short time he fell asleep.

When he woke up, looked at the streetlight he'd earlier mistaken for the moon, he knew he wouldn't be going back to the party, that he would walk home. Like he said to his sister, he was a "strange fellow," they would know he might do something like this.

He resolved to think more about other people, to try to understand and help when and if he could. His job, he decided, as so many others have, lay with himself. Solitude was all right sometimes, but the work would never go forward if a person stood in a corner all the time. There was so much to see, so much to do.

He walked down the hill. From a garage a dog barked at him; he considered this appropriate. When he was a block from his house he felt hungry, not having really eaten for several days, so he walked down Mission Street to a greasy spoon donut shop and ordered a steak. A man was talking rapidly in the next booth about his children and his life, he boasted and philosophized and kept asking his companion if he understood what he meant. His friend mumbled and chewed, nodding and grunting, but not listening. Then he walked home, told his father he could only take that social stuff for so long, but that it seemed like a good party. He and his father went for a ride, talked about future plans, past the lover's cars lined up on Bernal Heights. When they got home, he got into bed, closed his eyes, and kept thinking. Later on his brother came into the dark room to see if he was there, pulled back the covers to make sure.

Then David, once more alone, but almost thinking that he had worked some things out, fell asleep.

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"Your mother's got a red light in her window!" -- and sure enough, driving across the Nevada desert one saw the red lights from quite a distance, shining out from the group of buildings that made up a Nevada whorehouse.

They parked the car and went up to the gate of the barbed wire fence to ring the bell. A lady looked out the window, then pressed a buzzer to let them in. Their ring also aroused a group unoccupied young women who lined up when they entered, saying, "I'm Suzie, I'm Moxie, I'm Teddi," and so on. They were dressed in scant bathing suits and the four young men looked them over, made their choices, and were accompanied down the hall

in various directions. David chose a brunette who seemed quite good looking at first glance, and second, and third.

She took him to “her place,” a trailer apartment that adjoined the entrance and reception room. “What kinda party do ya want honey?” “Well, er, what do you have?”

She reeled them off, along with their respective prices, like a waitress going through the pies available today, “straight fuck, five dollars, half and half, ten dollars, around the world, twenty dollars”...and, after due explanations, David chose the half and half because it sounded interesting, was not the cheapest, and reminded him of the ice cream bar with pink icing and vanilla ice cream inside. She took his money and dutifully left to deposit it.

This gave David a chance to examine the room. Nice double bed, well furnished in other ways. And all over the walls were various Playmates of the Month clipped from Playboy Magazine. That bothered David a bit, but he had no time to follow his thoughts, no time to make any abstract generalizations, because she was back with:

“Let me see your prick honey.”

That was a surprise but then he recalled they always made an inspection. After all, this was a state-sponsored enterprise. She examined him quickly and expertly, then said, “all right, take off your clothes.”

He did, then followed her into the bathroom where she ran some water into a pan, saying, “hold the pan.” This was another surprise, but instead of asking why he did as he was told. She washed his genitals then said, “go lie down on the bed and relax -- I’ll see you in a minute.”

He wondered briefly what she was doing in there, then saw her come in, slip off her bathing suit; he turned his head to see the side curve of her lower stomach, the naked skin, and the curly black patch of pubic hair below.

Then she was kneeling between his legs, and there was no question about it -- she was an expert. What was it that guy from Long Beach had said about a reportedly well known girl there? Someone finally asked her what it tasted like and she said, “well you know, sticky, not so good, but one guy I remember, his tasted just like candy.”

Meanwhile, those tingling sensations prompted by the fluttering of her tongue...this was incredible...his muscles arched involuntarily...by then it was too late, but she took it all in stride, went to spit the semen out then scolded, “now ya know, ya weren’t supposed to do that. If that’s what ya wanted ya should said, but there ya go, poppin’ your nuts...” There was something refreshing in her frankness anyway, and when she asked if he wanted to continue

He said “sure,” and she said, “fine, but that’s some more money honey.”

He gave it to her, she put on her bathing suit and went dutifully down the hall again. She was smoking when she came back and would wait until she finished.

“You come from around here?” he asked.

“No, I come from Chicago, as a matter of fact.”

“Been workin’ here a long time?”

“Couple years off and on, sometimes I do, sometimes I don’t.”

He asked what he supposed was a common question, “who gets the money?”

“We gotta pay room and board, but the rest of it is ours.”

“Then I don’t feel so bad about the extra money.” She laughed. Then it was her turn,

“Where do you come from?”

“San Francisco.”

“That’s a nice town, I used to work down there.”

“Best city there is.”

“You been to the others?”

“A few of them, New York, not Chicago though.”

“That’s all right, Chicago’s a shitty town. I like New York though.”

“So do I, but it’s not as friendly as San Francisco, you know what I mean?”

“Yeh. You come up here a lot?”

“Nope. This is the first time. Not a bad place.”

“Well, you should come up more often, a lot of our customers come up from the city. So what do ya want to be?”

“Oh, I don’t know, a lawyer, maybe a writer.”

“What do ya write about? Don’t write about whorehouses, that’s a hard thing to do.”

“About myself I guess, and that’s a pretty hard thing to do too.”

“Yeh, well how about it, ready for another round?”

So they did the “regular thing” though not very passionately, he feeling mechanical, and she encouraging him with well-practiced methods until it was over and she, after a reasonable if brief pause, said, “popped your nuts, so that’s it.” They continued to talk as he dressed.

“A lawyer, huh, well you’ll make a good one, you’re a good talker.”

Yeh, sure, thought David.

“Lawyers have to be really good lovers, keep comin’ up here, I’ll show you things you never heard of. Or you could shack up with an older woman, but that’s no good.”

“Why not?” asked David, thinking of several older women who might fill the bill.

“No good, unless she’s cool.”

You couldn’t argue with that.

“Say, when you write that book, do me a favor. Put in that I said that most men think they’re great lovers, but they’re just animals...I don’t see how their wives can stand it...most men are animals...tell ‘em I said so and believe me I know. Well, your friends are waiting, come up and see me again—remember the name, that’s Teddi, Teddi Bear.”

“That’s hard to forget. I’ll see ya.” Very doubtful.

So they drove away from the red lights. The funny thing was that, for a few days David thought of only one thing whenever he saw a woman, and that was a “hole.” She had talked with him, but why kid yourself, she talked to everybody, that was part of the service. Really a cold business in some ways, commodity exchange, the money was what counted. Still, she had been nice to him. Too bad there was so little pleasure, even a vacant lot and definitely a living room couch were better than this trailer heavily decorated with Playmates, but then again it was definitely an experience to remember.

“Don’t forget to put me in your book.”

David, feeling expansive, said, “why I’ll devote a whole chapter to you.”

And, in a way, that’s what he did.

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“Show me your muscle, please!”

Almost every time Tom came over David wanted him to make a muscle, and Tom would casually flex his thick brown arm, giving rise to what seemed to David an incredibly huge bicep. It wasn’t surprising, considering Tom had done all kinds of hard, heavy work. He came often to talk with David’s father about politics and sometimes to babysit. Once he scolded David’s mother for cutting his meat for him, saying David shouldn’t be babied like that, he was old enough to do it himself. David felt ashamed. Tom was someone to look up to and from then on David tried to be more self reliant.

Tom married Emily, a woman whose family David also knew, and they had a little baby. David remembered Emily very well, for she also babysat sometimes. She was a clear-eyed, no bullshit young woman, with clever repartee, a very warm smile, and big hugs. She came from a large Southern white working class family. One memory of Emily in particular etched its delicate lines in David’s mind with that power only accorded things both highly erotic and quite embarrassing.

David must have been six years old, trying as hard as he could to learn how to swim, but encountering some severe blocks. Some of his frustration expressed itself in fantasy, and some nights he would slip on his smooth red satin bathing suit under his pajamas. Then, before he went to sleep, he would lie there and pretend to be swimming. There was an obvious element of masturbation -- those red satin trunks just felt so good.

One night as he lay there on his stomach, swimming, Emily came into the room to check on the children. David pretended to be asleep. As she approached his bed, she noticed that his blanket was pulled down, so she reached over. As she did he felt her touch the back of his pajamas, and felt her fingers pause for several seconds, feeling the red satin which must somehow have slid up.

He stayed unmoving, wondering what she thought. She patted him gently and pulled up the blanket and left. Of course, she never said a word about it and neither did he. But he never forgot it, just he remembered Emily's many sisters as their family left, lining up for hugs and kisses. He was seven. As he kissed Emily on the lips, one of her sisters shouted, "that's right, lay it on thick, Davie."

A few years after David moved out West, suddenly, out of nowhere, Tom came to visit them. David was really glad to see him; it brought back fond memories of his early childhood.

It was common for David and his contemporaries, using the slang of that time, to sometimes preface their remarks with "man" did you see that, or "boy" let me tell you. David used the latter several times in enthusiastic discussions with Tom. Later his mother told him not to use that word because it was so often used as one of derision. She explained to him how even elderly Black men were called "boy" by racists. She said that even though Tom understood that David didn't mean it that way, David should think about it. David quickly corrected himself.

Tom spent hours in discussions with David's father; they loved to argue, both of them pacing the floor. David was astonished and full of admiration; both of them used such big words, it was fascinating to listen even though he couldn't understand very much. David thought he'd never be able to talk like that. It seemed that something had happened with the marriage but David wasn't sure. He had some beginning understanding that so-called mixed marriages required a lot of courage and understanding, because society was so isolating and oppressive.

Another few years passed. One day David came home from school, greeted his mother and sister, when all of a sudden out from behind the door jumped Tom, startling David, hugging him, shaking his hand and telling him how much he'd grown.

Tom, it turned out, had left his wife, and was working in a nightclub or something like that in Los Angeles. He was in the Bay Area for a while this time, and was a regular visitor. But now the talk wasn't so much about politics.

Most of the time he played scrabble with David's father, and sometimes four played when David and his mother felt like it. They were long games, with lots of seven letter words. Very quick and intelligent, Tom would vehemently challenge the long words that David's father seemed to be making up, although sometimes they appeared in the dictionary. They had long and intricate arguments about the legality of various prefixes and suffixes.

David sensed a difference in the relationship between his parents and Tom, but he couldn't put his finger on it. Then, after overhearing some discussions of his parents, he began to understand the situation a little better. It was clear there was something political in his father's attitude -- Tom had strayed from the fold, and David remembered hearing words like "opportunist." His mother's opinions were more clearly stated -- she resented

and opposed Tom's treatment of his wife and children, his attitude of male superiority and contempt for women that was, unfortunately, all too common among these men professing radical beliefs that of course included lip service to equality. David couldn't judge, all he remembered was Tom looking at him once and laughing, "say, you know, David's gettin' to be good looking. I bet you're gonna be the kind that knocks 'em and leaves 'em, huh?"

Despite his parents' feelings, David still liked and admired Tom. He always listened when Tom was talking, and he liked the way Tom spoke to him as if he were very sophisticated and cool. And he learned a lot from him, just from the tone of his voice when he looked through a magazine on the table and pointed to a picture of some businessman -- "there's a goddamn cracker if I ever saw one."

That visit was the last time David saw Tom. But it wasn't the last he'd heard of him. Mentioning his name in a casual conversation with some friends, David's sister was asked, "you know that jive motherfucker, how?" She said he was an old family friend.

Then she was told that in recent years, Tom, circulating among some young people, had reportedly been getting girls to become prostitutes. And not only that. It was also claimed that he'd been getting people hooked on drugs, then turning them in to narcotics agents. David's sister told him this as they both shook their heads, wondering if it could be true. They doubted it.

They couldn't believe it, but they already had a fairly accurate sense of the dreams deferred and dead end streets, the cool cruel world of poverty, temptation, drugs, prostitution, and vice, with the white crime establishment reaping in astronomical profits, as the strange and bitter harvest of mostly dark-skinned bodies gathered in doorways with heroin-needed arms, like some pile of bodies in the photographs they'd seen of Hitler's concentration camps. The ghetto and those who prey upon it was already part of their own life experience, but they just couldn't, or didn't want to, bring themselves to believe someone they knew and felt real warm childhood feelings for could be doing what was claimed. They never really found out how much truth there was in all of this, but, unfortunately, they had to concede it was possible.

David discussed Tom with his father, who remembered the energy and intellectual power of the young man he knew, but did not seem to react in the same way to the allegations, instead David saw a certain sadness in his face. David learned that Tom's history included some tendencies that might lead to this, unbelievable as it seemed.

David knew this was not a case where one slipped into the old arguments about social determinism, adverse family and environmental conditions. He knew Tom and his previously espoused social ideals, as well as his intellectual gifts, better than that. So how to explain it? David didn't know, but he did know that this was another in a shrinking list of heroes gone.

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The men of the family were watching All-Star Bowling on television when they heard him coming up the stairs. David answered the door and he entered, a small man with tousled blond hair and several days' growth of beard. He often visited David's father, to talk about his union activities or the San Francisco political scene. But David immediately noticed a difference in his manner tonight; it was the first time he'd ever seen Bill drunk.

"Hank, I been drinkin' tonight, those damn doctors, if she woulda died I don't know what I woulda done, Jesus. My wife, ya know, she got sick again, trouble with a lot of bleeding, you know up in the womb, the va...(he glanced at David and his brother who looked at each other) well, you know, woman trouble. So I took her to that goddamn St. Jame's Hospital, they wouldn't let me see her, they gave her too much blood, bastards don't have any pity at all, Jesus, if she woulda died...and my kid."

"Yeh, when I was just a green kid back in Nebraska they said, Bill, if ya really want ta see a movement, if ya really want ta see a Party doin' somethin', go out to the West Coast. They know how to organize out there. But hell Hank, it's the same shit everywhere, we ain't gettin' no place. I shoulda stayed back there maybe, the union, all that, it's nothin' out here."

"And look at my wife, bring her here from Japan to America -- the land of opportunity. When I've got a job, or lookin' for one, she's home alone now that the kid's in school, and she can hardly speak English. Nothin' for her to do. And now there ain't no jobs for me around here...I don't know, maybe someplace else."

"Damn doctors, nurses, don't care about what they're doin', worryin' about whether or not you can cough up the bill, Jesus, she almost died Hank."

"And the kid, how do ya raise a kid so he'll know the score, so he'll know what's what, what should I do with him? It's a hard thing. He's almost eight years old."

"I just had to have some whiskey, these last couple days, they wouldn't even let me see her, just another poor workin' stiff, told me everything would be all right. I brought her here, hospitals. There ain't no future here Hank. I've looked all over for a job, I think maybe we'll go back to Japan, see if there's anything there, live with her family. I don't know."

"Well, I'll seeya, kids, Hank, I better be goin' now, thanks a lot."

"We'll seeya Bill, take it easy, goodbye." And then he was gone.

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“Mr. James, would you give your report on slavery now?”

Perhaps Mr. James hadn't done much research for his talk, certainly facts and historical references were not the main body of his speech. For it was a speech, not just a report, and an eloquent one. It took place in a summer school classroom at Lincoln High School. The class was U.S. History and was taught by an experienced older man and a young woman student teacher. Mr. James, along with seven or eight others, failed the regular session course at his high school, only because that particular teacher had a policy of failing half the class. So they were here among other students from all over the city, many of whom were taking this required course for the first time, to get it out of the way. The teachers addressed all the students as Mister or Miss, and there were fine debates and freewheeling class discussion. But everyone in the class sensed more than an inquiring or argumentative tone in this particular speech -- all were caught by its emotional content, and the class became respectfully silent. For a moment their often devastating, perhaps too well learned critical methods were replaced by a more open outlook.

“Can you imagine, can you think what it would be like to be a slave, not to be free, not to be free, to be beaten and ordered around like you weren't a human being?”

Mr. James was a short and slightly built Negro student. He went on with his speech, which was repetitive, perhaps because one thing seemed more important to him than other aspects of the slavery question, and also because the recurrence of the word freedom helped him to go on, to express more and more what it is to be slave and what it means to be free.

His voice was not a rich one, nor was his pronunciation and expression what is usually called articulate. Yet what was behind his words, and the class felt it, brought out a tone that was at once sad, angry, and hopeful.

His voice grew in intensity when he spoke of freedom, and sometimes his hand was held out, so it seemed that, with the word spoken, it would reach and grasp, search and find.

At the end of the summer session the teachers, who were interested in the reactions and opinions of the class, distributed a questionnaire: Was the teacher a Democrat or a Republican? What three other people in the class would you like to work with? David listed Mr. James as one of his choices; he felt many others did too.

So perhaps it was not strange that the memory of this speech came back to David as he stood in a civil rights picket line on Auto Row in San Francisco, watching a Negro policeman help carry out demonstrators from a sit-in in the Cadillac showroom. They were singing, “Cadillac, freedom's comin', Cadillac, freedom's comin', Cadillac, freedom's comin' and I don't wanna be left behind -- tell the world, freedom's comin!”

There were thousands of people, underneath the columned front of the building, looking something like a large Southern plantation. Many of the demonstrators were young Caucasians; the newspapers emphasized this in the criticisms. They looked for

leadership to a few seasoned civil rights veterans, a number of community and labor leaders, and a dedicated, charismatic group of young Negro activists, including one young woman whose powerful eloquence, fighting style, and natural hairstyle caught the attention of the press.

Many people thought this coalition had made some real progress in their attacks on the subtle and somewhat disguised Northern-style discrimination of San Francisco, progress especially in the key area of employment.

A large crowd gathered on both sides of the passageway police roped off to carry demonstrators to the paddy wagons, and the Negro policeman was being given a particularly brutal greeting each time he emerged from the door of the Cadillac showroom.

"Uncle Tom, Uncle Tom!" -- he was called this and other names to imply betrayal and subservience. He moved slowly, deliberately, doing what was necessary, reaching down to pick someone up, taking a leg or an arm, and helping deposit the person in the blue wagon. He didn't answer their calls, and held his eyes down with no expression discernible on his face.

Perhaps to some there was a simple answer to the excuse they'd heard many policemen give -- "it's my job, just doin' my job." And that smartass answer was -- "then get another one." Of course, getting another job wasn't as simple as that, especially for the Negro policeman; that's what they were demonstrating about.

Then, as the arrests wore on, David noticed the Negro policeman's face reflect the anguish of his position; he saw the tears in his eyes, the sorrowful and torn cast of his features and the lines of his face.

There was much singing, as always. Toward the end of the arrests they were singing, "we shall not, we shall not be moved." The Negro policeman, through the tears still in his eyes, while reaching down to grasp the arm of a frightened young Negro woman, looked up and sang along: "we're fighting for our freedom, we shall not be moved, just like a tree that's standin' by the w-a-a-ter, we shall not be moved."

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The teacher in the economics course looked each of the students in the eye. They knew him by reputation, knew he was a strange man, once radical, once in jail for refusing to be drafted, but now sort of a right wing individualist, bitter and disillusioned, with a propensity for the colorful, colloquial, and vulgar, riding hobby horses of all kinds. He said, "this is the first class, so I'll just give you a brief introduction to the subject, and we'll get down to business next time."

“Economics isn’t just about stocks and bonds and all that. It’s a truly massive field, a pretty big subject, and in this course we’ll only be able to skim the mountain peaks in one semester.”

“But let me put it this way. When it comes to economics, everybody in this country is getting screwed. That’s right, you heard me right. That means that *you* are getting screwed. Not many people know they’re getting screwed, but they are. Now don’t get the idea that once you know it you’ll be able to do anything about it. You won’t....you can’t do anything about it. But at least this course is going to show you how you’re getting screwed. We’ll get into that tomorrow.”

It was a funny way of saying it, but long before the semester was over, as they gradually uncovered what was happening, they saw what he meant. No doubt about it, everybody was getting screwed.

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Getting off the 14 Mission bus, he looked down to make sure his clothes were in order. This was one of the first times he’d worn this suit. He was rather pleased with the incongruity between its highly respectable lines and his trimmed, but still unruly, black beard. The block he walked included pawnshops, cheap hotels, bars, and cut-rate barbershops. It lay between Mission and Market Street, his destination.

He hadn’t ever been inside the building looming before him. It was at least ten stories high, made of grey concrete, looking a lot like the new city prison, except for the immense plate glass windows on the ground floor and the huge letters IBM.

Pushing through the swinging doors he glanced at the clock, noting that he was on time to the minute. That always made a good impression. He got into the crowded elevator with the kind of men he’d expected to encounter: well-dressed, slim, immaculate.

He spoke first to the woman to whom he’d written the letter about obtaining a job. He’d gotten her name from the letter he’d received over a year ago when IBM had seen fit to grant him an award for a science project he’d done about electricity. He’d written in the hope the award would open the doors to those high salaries he heard they paid. She asked him why he wanted the job and he talked about his love for science. She asked him why he’d grown the beard and he dissembled a bit, told her he’d been going to school in the country (which was true) and that he would certainly shave it off if he got the job.

Actually, in addition to disliking shaving every day, the beard was more an identification with the bearded poets who read to jazz in North Beach coffeehouses, but that was the last thing she wanted to hear. IBM and Beatniks did not mix. David looked forward to the times his father took him to “The Bagel Shop” and other places where strangely dressed people with unruly hair and a new sense of freedom might get up and recite long rambling Whitmanesque poetry. He was fortunate to have seen the scene in all its undiscovered glory -- North Beach was already changing, and not for the better.

The woman from IBM told him she actually did have a job in mind for him. She added that of course a few men in the research department did have beards, but no one who was in the public eye, as he would be if he got the job. Then she sent David to talk to a man who would show him around.

The man was pleasant. After asking David what fields he was interested in, he said he had a degree in political science, but had opted for business instead. He said he once had a beard too, that some time in every man's life he should grow one, but that, of course, first impressions were very important.

Then he took David downstairs where the huge computers were on display. All the various models were there, as this was the place where prospective customers tested machines for their specific needs prior to purchase.

David felt a little guilty, hoping his almost complete lack of knowledge wouldn't make itself evident. The man explained a few things and David nodded, now and then asking a question he considered safe. Together they watched the blinking lights and rolling paper tape, as one of the machines took an inventory for a big supermarket. He had to admit, it was amazing. This was where David would work, if he got the job. So the man introduced few of the men working there.

Then there was the beard again. He told David it was obvious why he couldn't have a beard if he worked here, there'd be all sorts of customers and so on. David assured him it would be shaved off. And the man repeated -- "of course, there's nothing wrong with a beard, but you have to remember, in this kind of job, first impressions are very important."

After lunch he would be given the barrage of tests, on both mathematical and general knowledge, and they would let him know by mail whether or not he'd been hired. So David bought a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich at a nearby lunch counter, thought of what he could do with all that money, and hoped the math test wouldn't be too hard. He figured he could learn enough when he got the job to get by.

But the test proved difficult for him. He'd taken a good deal of math, but this test, with all its intricate logic, was quite a struggle. He got through it as best he could and looked forward with more confidence to the tests of general knowledge. These weren't hard for him, but gradually he began to grow more and more angry.

Questions on baseball were easy and enjoyable. The few on bridge he had to skip, because he didn't know the game. But then, there were all sorts of work situation questions. What would you do if a fellow worker didn't know his stuff, or was lax -- should you speak directly to him, or to your boss, or ask another employee, or say nothing? These questions transported David into the actual work situation and he stopped worrying about how they wanted him to answer and started checking off what he would really do. This was probably fatal, but then he probably hadn't done very well on the math test, and he felt more or less disgusted with the whole business.

After he turned in his tests, he took the packed elevator down again, walked down the block, and caught the bus home. In a few weeks he received the letter, which, although expected, was nevertheless ego-shattering.

It said there was no job for him at this time, as the tests showed there was serious question about his ability to do well.

Eventually David got a job at Bloodhound Transit loading and unloading baggage. At least he passed their intelligence tests with flying colors. The boss there looked him over, saying, “most guys your age think the world’s their oyster, you can forget about that...and when I tell you to get a haircut, get one, you’ll be in the public eye.” Yeh, sure, in the public eye, back in the baggage room, swearing, talking, joining in or just listening to complex arguments on religion and politics. Relaxing on graveyard shift, reading novels, until someone called out “hot bus!” and they had to unload.

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They swarmed all over the new Chryslers and Imperials, got inside and locked the doors in order to delay the policemen. They put on a mock employment interview in the dealer’s office -- “you gonna be good boy - oh yes mistah boss -- well I can’t hire ya boy -- please mistah boss -- cuz boy you black!”

There were all sorts of people in the picket line outside the auto showroom, and as was common in San Francisco, there were almost as many spectators as demonstrators. The street was blocked. There was exuberance in the picket line songs, and in the offensive against the auto companies and big hotels. It reminded David of the time a reporter said to David’s brother, “c’mon, admit it, Negroes aren’t so bad off, they couldn’t be, they’re always singing.” David’s brother quickly cut him off with, “then you must not be listening to what they’re singing.”

David was taking a break from the picket line and he heard an old man remark, as he pointed at a dog that was watching the demonstrators, “he’s lucky, he can’t understand and doesn’t have to worry about all this.” David turned to the old man, “no, he’s not lucky, he’s not human.”

That brought the old man and David into a conversation touching on many things. The man told of his time in the concentration camps of Germany—how there had been demonstrations in Germany too, and look what happened. He spoke of negative effects of demonstrations and violence. He believed this kind of activity never accomplished anything, and that the human race had made no real advance, no progress in anything basic since its genesis.

The old man told David to read history to discover the futility of human endeavor and the unchanging character of human nature. He also talked about the United States and some of the discrimination he’d faced as a Jew in this country.

David tried to argue the other side, but his inexperience and the fact that he was uncertain as to whether or not he was really correct made it difficult. It was hard to argue with someone who survived the Holocaust.

He told the old man that he was also Jewish and knew people, some of whom had also been in Germany, who didn't read history in that way and had a more positive outlook on human nature and society. As he said this he thought of Greta, a friend of his parents who had also survived the camps and had to be the most cheerful, energetic, and optimistic soul David had ever met.

David told the old man what he thought these particular demonstrations were accomplishing; he explained their goals and the strategy involved. But the old man was forceful and eloquent, had an answer for everything, and finally, in an authoritative but kind voice, perhaps prophetic, said, "you just haven't been a Jew long enough."

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**“What would life be like without Billie, David?”**

That was David's brother Aaron speaking, as the three teenagers sat listening to a Billie Holiday record. Often they listened, for blues and jazz were a steady diet during their childhood, to which they'd each added a pinch of their own favorites, with classical being David's contribution. They all loved Ma Rainey and Leadbelly, Art Tatum and Kid Ory.

They knew the story of the great blues singer, Bessie Smith, how she died in the segregated South after an auto accident -- the nearest hospital would not take her in because of the color of her skin. They knew many stories about Billie Holiday, their father saw her in person several times. They also knew of her death -- in a hotel room with guards standing outside the door to make sure she got no narcotics. They knew she'd learned to sing from the trumpet of Louis Armstrong, using her voice like an instrument. How poor her life was previous to fame, how tenuous that fame had been. How she thought she could not really sing well at all. And how once, when she was in a Minnesota prison and the other inmates asked to sing she replied, "you can't sing in a cage."

Still, that was a large part of what her life had been, singing in a cage. And it seemed to them that all the stories, all the hopes and tragedies, the loves and disappointments, were there in her voice on the record. They remembered how she'd said, at one point when it seemed as if a romance were going to last, "just about that time I thought I might be happy. As usual, that was fatal."

They felt that all of their own stories were somehow reflected in her voice as well. The voice rose and fell, the pronunciation pulled out all the meaning that was in the words, and a lot more besides. Most of the songs were just ordinary popular songs, but in her style, they were profound. It wasn't just the songs that conveyed the emotion, it was a

magical, mystical something in her that carried it on to greatness. They mutually felt that special chill run through them which they associated with the highest levels of artistic performance.

“My old flame, I can’t even remember his name, but I’ll never be the same, till I discover what became of my old flame.” Listening to the way she caressed each word, to the hesitation in rhythm that came out just right.

“I’m pullin’ through and it’s because of you, I’d do the same for you if your turn came. Hope it never will, cause I’ve been through the mill, I won’t forget this debt, I’m pullin’ through....when I thought that hope was really lost, you showed me I was wrong, and you taught me how to carry on, thanks for this liftin’ time, and thanks for this song...” What a great song, I’m Pullin’ Through, listening to Lester Young accompany her, just like the saxophone and voice were making love.

When I thought that hope was really lost...the three of them sat, not finding too much that would pull them through. After several years of pain and agony, their mother, Anne, had died of bone cancer. This tragic cutting off of a truly shining person who had given each of them so much unconditional love, coming at a time when so much was beginning in their lives, had hit them very hard, in three different ways.

For part of the last year of her illness, David was away at school, beginning college. His mother insisted that he go; she wanted him to take advantage of the opportunity; he’d been offered a full scholarship - they were poor. Yet that left his sister and brother without him, and meant that the family had to struggle through the hardest of times while he launched himself out into the world. Still, it was the way of things. He loved his mother with all his heart, had so many memories of her wisdom and ability to listen, her encouragement of all his schemes and dreams and poetry.

Just as his mother passed on so much to his sister Ruth -- the love of art, which Ruth would pursue, and that wonderful sense of sympathetic understanding and connection to others. And to Aaron, the youngest, wild and rebellious, yet so sensitive and caring. Aaron and Anne were very close, he so young when she died. For all his tantrums, she patiently explained and persuaded, helping him grow. She used to accompany him to the places where he performed as a child actor. Anne studied child psychology and loved children, sometimes tutoring those with reading difficulties, and the kind of love she gave her own three was wonderful and rare. They remembered them asking her, “who do you love most?” and her answer, “I love all three of you, and each one of you for who you are, don’t compare.” Don’t compare. Who got the biggest hamburger? Don’t compare.

Anne was gone. Her face, those unforgettable features, engraved on their consciousness as only the face of your mother can be, but so terribly pale in the coffin.

They remembered how she used to joke with them long before the illness struck, saying, “when I’m an old lady in a black dress, will you take care of me,” and of course they all insisted they would. They remembered how at some sad or tense or stormy times for

them she would look out the window and say, “tomorrow is another day.” They remembered how near the end she wanted to once more hold a baby in her arms, and how she wanted to spend a few days by the ocean.

They wondered whether perhaps the atomic testing to which she was so opposed was responsible for the bone-breaking cancer she suffered, and for the increasing incidence of many other kinds of cancer.

In a notebook she wrote some final thoughts, including the quotation, “she whom the gods would destroy they would first make happy,” and they knew she found her happiness in the family, in the strong love between her and Hank, despite its tensions, strains, and separations, and most especially in her three children.

David worked two summers as a lab assistant for a biochemist at the University of California Medical Center. They were doing some rather complex cancer research, using radioactive tracers and rats, and David fantasized that he would play some role in finding the cure for his mother, when she was alive, then afterward for a time he considered dedicating his life to the search for a cancer cure. David’s father talked to many doctors and scientists, read medical bulletins, wrote to many countries, but the verdict was all too clear.

It traumatized all of them so deeply that they blocked out many of the memories associated with her death. Aaron simply could not believe that Anne was really in the grave, felt the man who supervised the burial for the mortuary was deceiving them, and regretted not looking in to make sure it was really her.

David had been allowed to “sit shiva” before the burial, when many friends of his parents came by to express their sorrow. One in particular meant a great deal to him and helped him immensely, a great woman writer named Meridel LeSueur, who was a close friend and relation of his family, and who always encouraged David’s creative writing efforts.

She told him what an exceptional person his mother had been, how she lit up a room with a certain special, gentle light when she entered, how much she’d done for other people. These were words David treasured, from a source whose life experience and wisdom he respected and held sacred. It was also Meridel who several years before David went to school in the desert gave him a book of photographs of the same exact part of California, with her inscription -- “David, go down into our land and find the strengths.” Talk about prophetic -- David resolved to redouble his efforts to “find the strengths.”

One of those strengths was indeed seen in the response of his fellow classmates when his mother died. They knew David’s family was poor, so they took up a collection, helping with the costs. They also sent flowers, and, when David returned to school his expressions of gratitude, while filled with emotion, could never truly express how deep a lesson he had learned -- that the power of love and caring expressed collectively was one of the strongest and most healing forces on earth. He would never forget the kindness of his fellow students.

With David away at school, the family moved next door to the family of their mother's brother, Ben, their aunt Diana, and their two children. Soon, their marriage would end, but through the years to come Diana tried to help them through hard times, with a deep intuition and love.

There was Billie again -- "it's very clear, our love is here to stay, not for a year, forever and a day -- in time, the Rockies may tumble, Gibraltar may crumble, they're only made of clay, but, oh my dear, our love is here to stay."

And yes, the love of their family was here to stay, the three children stayed close, united by many joys of early family life, and now by the tragedy of their mother's death. Ruth sat between David and Aaron. She had a wonderful deep-seated strength and vitality. Still in her early teens, she had to take on many of the household tasks, being brave, covering the deep sadness and strain with energy and determination. She also had to take a part-time job while in still in high school to help make ends meet. Every morning as she drove with their father he would say, "you know what Ruthie?" She would say, "what?" already knowing his reply --- "Life is hard."

"On all of them this death exacted a heavy toll. As Billie sang, "I'll be seeing you, in all the old familiar places that this heart of mine embraces all day through..." Aaron said, "Hey, David, you know what I saw written on the wall of one of the listening booths at the record store -- "Billie isn't gone, she's just on holiday."

"I'll find you in the morning sun and when the day is through, I'll be looking at the moon, but I'll be seeing you..." They nodded, the music behind them. Different people, they would go different ways, but always their lives would intertwine, and sometimes they would get together and talk in memories, as they did today. David remembered his mother's "green thumb," how she prepared the soil and cared for the many plants in their house, how much she loved jade plants and African violets and roses, and he thought of what his father said when they threw handfuls of earth into the grave:

"Because she had so much courage, let's all of us have a little bit."

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Carla had a special way of walking, all her own. When she walked down the streets, men turned around to look. She had a rounded, voluptuous body, and she swung her hips in a wide arc. After David knew her a little better, he realized that, while she knew men found her attractive, her walk was not at all calculated; it was quite natural, just the way she walked.

David worked with her at the office at Bloodhound Bus, where he had been "promoted" when the assistant terminal manager discovered he had some college education. "Take care of the girls up there," he was told. And it was quite a crew. In addition to Carla, there were 5 or 6 others in his unit, including Mary, who used to enjoy telling David about her group sexual escapades.

The job involved using an adding machine to total ticket sales for each of the more than 30 cashiers who worked various shifts at the windows downstairs. It kept them busy all week, but sometimes by noon on Friday they had balanced all the books and then they were allowed turn on the radio and dance!

David learned a lot about office politics and corporate corruption. Carla took a liking to him and they often had lunch together -- though not the "Box lunch at the Y" that Mary kidded them about. David enjoyed walking down the street with this sexy lady at his side. As he and Carla became fast friends, he learned that the big boss liked to hire young good-looking women who were in unfortunate circumstances. After lending them money he would then invite them to his yacht and demand various sexual favors. In her words, this guy was a "pig," one of the most disgusting men she'd ever encountered.

Carla was a few years older than David. She had a young son and her boyfriend worked over in the package division. He was a Negro man in his early thirties, a very sharp dresser, who always greeted David warmly and, as David knew from Carla, ran in a very cool crowd.

Sometimes Carla asked David to babysit her son while she went out alone, dancing. On the one hand she regarded David as a somewhat younger friend and nice guy, not a romantic interest. On the other hand, they occasionally engaged in some rather ardent love-play, and David's desire for Carla seethed volcanically. She seemed to enjoy teasing him, telling him about things she and her boyfriend did, saying she could tell David really liked sex, but expertly stopping just short of intercourse. David wrote several passionate poems. He shared his knowledge of blues and jazz with Carla, and was restlessly content just to be in her presence.

One night at 2AM Carla returned from one of her nights out extremely drunk. She greeted David with a deep kiss, and, despite the fact that he was taking advantage of her given her condition, one thing very soon led to another. There was no way he could resist this -- she was quite beautiful, he held and squeezed her breasts tenderly, she moved beneath him. Just as the head of his penis had halfway entered the warm passage she opened to him -- swear to God, the goddamn doorbell rang. She was suddenly alert, pushing David off, saying, "you'd better get out of here!"

David grabbed on his clothes at record speed as she shouted down, "just a minute." A very rapid kiss, and he knew where the back door was -- out he went, as she answered the front door. There he was, in the back garbage area, under the freeway that curved near Carla's apartment. He climbed over the wooden fence, escaping into the alley, then out to the street and a long walk home.

It was frustrating, to say the least, but somehow he didn't mind so much since the escape was so romantic, so like a movie, so exciting. He had to laugh about it. Standing outside her back door that night was a moment he never forgot, an eternal moment.

He'd read in a book about cats that there was debate as to the nature of their cries during the sexual act, that the male cat's penis was barbed and some experts believed when the penis was withdrawn it pulled against the vaginal wall, so the cries were of pain. David much preferred to believe they were cries of pleasure.

He never forgot that moment of his escape, for just as he emerged, and before he climbed over the fence, he paused to breathe in the cool night air, and as he did, he heard, from the next yard over, two alley cats making wild screaming love, crying out their passion to the moon. .

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Every Saturday morning there was an art class for children at the Graphic Arts Workshop. The teacher was a friend of David's parents, and for a time his son was David's best friend. David's mother had exhibited a few paintings with the group. David, Ruth, and Aaron attended the class for about a year. They enjoyed it, and made some good friends.

Ever since he first read *Black Beauty*, David had been struck by the beauty of horses. His occasional glimpses of farm life added to the attraction. He was always trying to draw horses.

The art teacher, Eugene, and his wife, Florence, had come to San Francisco many years before, from the mining country of Kentucky. She was an elementary school teacher with an optimistic and gentle spirit that children loved. She played the guitar and sang, leading the children in songs.

Sometimes Florence and Eugene sang together, speaking of the struggles in Kentucky and singing the songs, especially the famous Which Side Are You On? "They say in Harlan County, there are no neutrals there, you'll either be a union man, or a thug for J.H. Blair..."

Eugene had a slightly off-key but full and vibrant bass voice. He was middle-aged with grey hair and an etched face, lined with traces of hardship and sadness. He too was very gentle and kind. He was the head of the Workshop, an organization of many artists, and had designed many leaflets and posters, along with many rough-hewn drawings of work and life.

Artists from the Workshop several times worked with David's father and trade union activists in designing huge long posters which they plastered all over the fences of the city. One of them said, "JFK: Stay Out of Cuba" during the missile crisis. An earlier one had attracted a fair amount of attention, including mention by the well-known columnist Herb Caen. It was during the U.S. Marine invasion of Lebanon in 1958. It showed a large drop of oil turning into a drop of blood and it asked, "Why die for Standard Oil?"

At the children's art class, Eugene was always ready with wise and considered suggestions to the students, and he knew how to encourage and nurture. In his own work there was a strength of line, a power of stroke, even in the most simple drawings.

David liked detailed drawing and linoleum-block printing. As in life, so in art, and he tended to be overly self-conscious in his drawing, too exacting at too early a stage, not relaxed enough. Other than horses, he'd drawn a picture of Coit Tower, rising on the hill behind the Workshop offices, and a print of a fist. Eugene liked the fist, and said it showed promise.

But usually it was horses. One Saturday David drew a horse he thought was perfect. He thought it looked exactly like a horse. The teacher came over to look at David's drawing. He said, "well, David, that's not too bad. but let me show you something."

Eugene went over and took a book off the crowded shelves. He came back over to David and opened the book to a drawing of the skeleton of a horse. He asked David if he knew very much about anatomy, and he suggested that David try to draw the skeleton. David did it very carefully, with his fondness for trying to reproduce exact detail. After several false starts, he finally drew the skeleton of a horse.

Then the teacher showed him a picture of the muscular structure of a horse's body, asked David to study it, and then to partly erase the skeleton he'd drawn while putting the muscles on it. David did so.

Then the teacher said, "now draw the horse." David, carefully erasing the usually unseen lines of muscle and bone, put the exterior on. When he compared it with his first picture he had to admit it looked much better—now he had some idea of how to really draw a horse.

Later, David on top of a horse at four in the morning on the California desert, herding cattle, calling out to them, looking out at the spreading land from a hill, would actually feel the power of a horse, the muscles and the bones, would reach down to stroke the alerted neck and talk to the animal, once telling her about his art lesson.

And still later, while sitting at a large meeting in a University auditorium called to discuss demonstrations and long-range strategy, thinking about what to do with his life, trying to understand the war in Vietnam and what it meant for the United States, he thought of the art lesson again. Things had to be gone into deeply. There was an urgency in the situation, people around him felt things had to be done quickly, but what to do that was effective, constructive, and would have lasting value?

It wasn't a question of one tactic, one action, one demonstration -- rather there was an overwhelming need to get to the roots of the problem -- but how to think clearly in the midst of increasing death and war? What was behind it all? Like Paul Potter, President of Students for a Democratic Society, said at one of the first marches against the war in Washington, DC -- "we must name the system, analyze it, change it." David had been there as the words were spoken.

There was a complicated network of people, places, and things, all now informed and influenced by the war. A vast informal underground facing a test. What was everyone thinking, what did they want, how could they get it? Questions. Different lives, different ways of living, different experiences, but now meeting together in common anguish and anger.

Questions and many searchers. There were powerful beginnings of answers here, he felt. Like the first part of a speech where the orator raises questions, to slowly build up to a powerful conclusion.

Horses. It was like the Trojan Horse. Laws, words, forms on the surface, but hidden inside, waiting for the moment that would call forth their attack, were people, packed together, waiting. Waiting. What was it his father had written: “guerrilla-like we hid our giant hate, take refuge in silence, forest dark, we light another cigarette and wait, hold back the arrow though we see the mark, will we know when to answer to alarm, will we remember how to lift an arm?”

Many seekers, learning, trying, failing, trying again, learning. There were many Davids all across the country wondering the same things, women and men, young and old, of all races and backgrounds. Perhaps in the future they would know more, do more, some with their hands, some with a pen, some with a song...with anything and everything.

To draw a horse. David had seen only a little of the surface, others had seen more, but all now were beginning to understand the bones, the skeleton, the muscles of their lives and their hopes, digging down still deeper, it had to be done, it was necessary for the preservation of humanity, and then, just as long ago David learned to pick up the pencil and draw the horse, they too would learn. Then, then, they would at last capture the meaning of the bucking horse -- and, dare he hoped -- to ride!

David's thoughts were interrupted as a young woman he knew raised her voice to outline what she thought the situation called for, what the priorities for action were.

David reproached himself for not paying attention, for letting his poetic imagination get the best of him. Perhaps it was all wishful thinking anyway. Often it seemed that things would get much worse. He had never been an alarmist, but it was clear that massive changes were coming, that everyone would be affected, and that they were coming quickly.

As Bob Dylan prophesied “Come gather ‘round people, wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you have grown, and accept it that soon you’ll be drenched to the bone -- if your time to you is worth savin’, then you’d better start swimmin’ or you’ll sink like a stone, for the times they are a changin’ ...”

David knew it was not only a question of the external social forces surrounding them; it was also a matter of conquering the towering Goliaths in oneself. Everyone must try to be prepared. For the world was moving and everyone could see it move!

And what would he do, what paths would he travel? As usual, in musing about this, he looked into the past. Yes, as a child he wandered down dirt roads in the country, in search of agates, seeing a beautiful flash of red in the sun and digging the carnelians out, wetting them with spit to see the waving lines, the intricate layers of stone recounting the eons of geologic change. He saved all these stones, and he fancied that in them he could sense the blood of the centuries, the back and forth shift of time displayed in the rock of ages.

New roads stretched out in front of David. Roads away from old friends to new ones and then away from them. Roads beckoning enticingly turning out to be dead ends.

New roads: roads of challenge and difficulty, of defeat and failure that, if traveled to the end, would be transformed into roads of victory, or, at least, of wisdom.

Walking with everyone down the dirt roads of a country torn in half -- walking and working and finding love. People afraid and deceived, uncertain. Young Davids being sent away to die. Always trying to understand, to see through the words, to spot the agates, to dig them out and place them in their multi-styled slings, to draw the horse.

Yes, thought David, that was the way things were. He walked along together with sisters and brothers, looking back now and then to see how far he'd come, then turned once more to walk onward.

After listening to the heated discussion for a long time, David raised his hand to speak.

— *The End* —