



A TEMPERING OF DREAMS

Manuel García, Jr.

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CHAPTER 1

“Oh man!, I’d give up every kind of drug if I could get a motorcycle.” Balmy spring sunshine fell through Bernie’s long brown wavy curls and onto his Italian Renaissance painting of a face, which gave its smooth light skin a soft glow while casting his slightly sunken cheeks into muted shadows. Joe had just told him of a classmate whose father was gifting his son with a new Honda 350, and Bernie just shook his head slowly and gave his reaction to the news in the typically soft calm laconic way in which he spoke, moved, and did everything.

The three of them were shambling across the ragged green lawn inside the Men’s Dormitory Quadrangle in the Spring of 1969, each thinking about something completely different from sitting inside stuffy college lecture halls taking notes on the droning instruction they would need to pass exams on to prove to their Draft Boards that they deserved to keep their student deferments from military service.

Joe was the guru of marijuana rituals in the freshman dorm where Sergio had met him in the Fall Semester of 1968, and been initiated into the smoking arts in Joe’s dorm room bubble of nighttime darkness suffused with Bob Dylan’s “Blonde on Blonde” issuing from the little record player. Joe, Sergio and a few others on that third floor smoked grass at night as if ancient Hopi men enwombed below ground in a darkened kiva immersed in their merged meditations. As freshmen not from rich families, and shy, these guys had no chance of gaining any of the coeds’s attention at the mixers put on by the Resident Advisors of the men’s and women’s dorms, because there were always plenty of upperclass men with cars, money, grass and experience in attendance, to offer the freshman girls much better opportunities for fun, and better prospects for their husband hunting.

So Joe’s nightly hazy blue bubble of Dylan-infused darkness, with sporadic little orange flashes of flame pulsing out of matchheads and into joints being

sucked on, was a refuge from a dangerous and unfriendly world for these boys fresh out of high school and precariously shielded from the Vietnam War by the uncertain promises of their 2-S student deferments.

Joe had a hooked nose set above thin lips always cast into a slight smile for a pleasant face rimmed by dark bushy hair that made him look like a bemused lanky overgrown cherubim. Joe was from Colorado and wanted to be a poet, but his rancher and coal business father insisted he major in economics and plan on joining his company. That is why Joe had made sure to get himself into the University in Philadelphia instead of going to college at Colorado State, and he was hoping to figure out a way of escaping from his preprogrammed fate before graduation in four years, or perhaps sooner if the draft came after him since his grades, except in English, kept sinking. Joe smoked dope all the time, both for his poetic art, and just to make the best use of time during the uncertain duration of his term of freedom.

As usual, Joe was dressed in his blue pajamas, red bathrobe and tawny corduroy bedroom slippers, whose soles were worn ragged by always being scrapped along the asperous surfaces of the sidewalks and streets of the campus and the city, by Joe's shuffling gait. He was accompanying Bernie on his way to meet Bernie's friend on the far side of the Quadrangle from whom Bernie got his psilocybin mushrooms and LSD. Bernie, who was Joe's supplier of grass, had fallen under the spell of mushrooms and acid, and had introduced Joe to psilocybin who also fell in love with it. So Joe was going along with Bernie to buy some for himself. Sergio got his weed from Joe, who was sweet and hardly ever took any money for it, in this he was a missionary: "Everybody must get stoned."

Sergio liked these two easygoing guys. Bernie was the stereotypical image of a tall lanky hippy. He was bare chested except for a loose and open rawhide vest with dangling strands of fringing that swayed as he walked, he had a rainbow of colors beaded necklace threaded by a rawhide shoelace that hung down to his breastbone, and a similar bracelet that hung loosely around his slender wrist. His unbelted bell-bottom blue jeans were faded, with the frayed stringy bottom edges of the overlong legs dragging along the ground and drooping over his big dusty bare feet. He was beautiful, Jesus never looked better. Bernie was a biology major, maybe. He wanted to walk through verdant landscapes under sunny skies catching glimpses of wildlife,

and collecting mushrooms in the woods. Bernie Petrocelli's people were Italian, his father ran a small produce market in a rural town.

Sergio had joined Bernie and Joe Willis on this languid trek because he wanted to see what the single occupancy dorm rooms for upperclass men looked like in the only corner of the Men's Quad where they had them, because he'd applied for one for the following Fall Semester of his sophomore year. Sergio was an engineering major because he liked airplanes and submarines and motorcycles and sports cars, and dreamed about someday having his very own sports car manufacturing company like Enzo Ferrari. Sergio wanted to build his own sleek fast-moving motorized chariots. Like Joe, Sergio Romero was of average height unlike willowy Bernie who was noticeably taller, and Sergio dressed like the typical suburban New York kid that he was: with a soft-patterned button-down long-sleeve cotton shirt open at the collar, golden-colored brushed cotton bell bottom jeans cinched with a thin wide brown leather belt that was closed by being looped around through a big brass ring, and squarish suede shoes. Sergio was a Puerto Rican from New York. He had dark wavy hair that he'd let grow out over his ears and down his neck, a wide nose, brown eyes, and a moustache like that of the 1940s movie stars he liked, and that trailed off the upper corners of his thick-lipped mouth, and he had a coffee-and-cream colored skin tone.

The idea of that Honda 350 motorcycle made them all think, especially after hearing Bernie, the most committed pharmacologist of altered consciousness that both Joe and Sergio knew, admit so frankly at how fulfilling possession of such a transport mechanism could be in comparison to all his chemical forms of daring personal exploration. While Joe thought the idea very appealing, as Arlo Guthrie had expressed in song, he still believed some caution was warranted because his hero, Bob Dylan, had been laid up for quite some time the previous year after he'd fallen off his Triumph motorcycle on one of the byways of Woodstock, and Richard Fariña — "Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me" — had fatally fallen off of his own motorcycle in Carmel, California three years earlier. And nobody believed Joe would ever give up grass for anything, because it formed his protective cloud of sanity.

Sergio had read the road test report on the Honda 350, "It's got a twin cylinder overhead valve four-stroke engine," he told them. He routinely read car and motorcycle magazines, and he hoped to save up his summer job

earnings to be able to buy one in maybe two years. He figured that remote as the prospect of getting that bike was for him, it was still more likely than being able to get a girlfriend, and probably safer. Bernie and Joe would have wanted girlfriends too, but that seemed impossible for all of them under their present circumstances. So thank God for weed, and mushrooms, and car magazines, and Joe's record player, and Draft Cards with 2-S printed on them. Maybe next year they'd each meet and win over some lovely freshman coeds.

They reached the far side of the Quad, with an archway shaped entrance to that 19th century pseudo Oxford-Cambridge architectural style brick-red masonry complex of sleeping quarters that was everywhere edged and trimmed with sandstone ornamentation that featured so prominently in the promotional photographs used by the University. Bernie and Joe entered and went off to the left to find their supplier, while Sergio went right to seek out the first floor room he's been told he could inspect. It was narrow, the size of a small storage room, which is probably what it had been until the 1940s, and just big enough for a single bed and a desk, and a tight little closet. It had a small window high up at the far end above the desk. What else could he possibly need?, since he expected to just sleep there, and be studying math and physics and chemistry most of his time awake, and go out for meals and doing his laundry.

Sergio arrived at the main archway shaped entrance to the Quad from 38th Street, halfway back from his room inspection at the far side of the Quad, and went to the checkerboard of mailboxes under the archway. He unlocked the one for his room and took out a long envelope. It was a letter from his mother, and that was always nice. He walked happily past the line of stinking Ginkgo trees along the side of the building at the close end of the Quad, and into his Residence Hall, upstairs to his room, and sat on his bed opening his letter. A check made of light blue paper fell out, \$100, he loved his mother. He pulled out a sealed letter from the envelope, it was from the Draft Board. That could not be good, his heart sank, his stomach tightened, and his asshole puckered.

A cover letter stated: "You have been reclassified as 1-A because of your academic failure to maintain the grades necessary to merit a Student Deferment." A new Draft Card was enclosed, with "1-A, immediately available for military service" printed on it. A second letter began: "You have

been selected for military service....” and went on to require Sergio to report to a Draft Reporting center in New York City by the end of the month.

Panicked, Sergio rushed to Kenn Lancaster’s suite on the first floor of his Residence Hall. Kenn was a graduate student writing a thesis in political science, and had the job of being the local Resident Advisor in this freshman residence hall. Kenn was a cleancut man from Shaker Heights, Ohio, with light straight thinning hair, a narrow face, and who dressed in the casual collegiate men’s style of the time of button-down shirts, slacks and penny loafers. Kenn’s suite was supplied with a telephone, and Sergio quickly explained his need for using it. Kenn nodded seriously, and walked off to let Sergio make his call.

“How can you say I failed academically? I made the Dean’s List, and I have the letter to prove it. How can you take away my student deferment, you’ve made a terrible mistake!”

The witch at the Draft Board answered in her nasally voice, “You have to come in and report, follow the instructions in the letter.”

“But you’re completely wrong!, you’ve made a mistake!”

“Your name is Sergio Romero, right?”

“Yes!”

“Well our records show that you flunked out of college, so you no longer deserve a student deferment.”

“You’ve got to be kidding. You’ve obviously confused me with someone else.”

“It doesn’t matter, once we start the process we just keep going.”

Sergio was thunderstruck. He put the phone down, standing still, his mind paralyzed. Kenn came out of his bedroom and up to him, and Sergio told him what had happened. Kenn took the Draft Notice out of Sergio’s hand and read it through. “You know,” he said, “at the bottom here in small print it says if you have any objections to this notice, you can write a letter to the Draft Board asking for a review hearing of your case and your reasons for wishing an excusal.”

“By when?”

“The end of the month. I’ll bet it would buy you some time.”

Sergio rushed back to his room and immediately typed out a letter to the Draft Board, requesting a review hearing, on the mechanical Olympia typewriter his father had given him as a High School graduation present. He

threw on a corduroy jacket, left, took his letter straight to the Men's Quad Post Office, behind where the mailbox array was, bought an envelope and stamp, sealed the letter and addressed it, and put it in the US Mail postbox.

Then he went out across 38th Street and down to College Hall, bypassing it since he had no appetite for eating a bland mushy Meal Plan dinner in the Dining Room, and across the Campus Green under the oaks and maples to 40th Street, and into Smokey Joe's. He asked for a beer at the bar, which he knew he'd get since he dressed conservatively enough, and sported a moustache, which both made him appear like an over twenty-one-year-old man legally allowed to buy beer, instead of an underage 19-year-old college kid. He went over to the cigarette machine, popped in two quarters, and pulled the lever for a pack of Winston's. He lit one up and sucked in that first sweet tobacco flavored hit of little death, sulking over his beer.

Three people walked into the darkly wood paneled cavern that was Smokey Joe's, from the dusky light out on 40th Street, two men and a woman. The men were the usual sort of shaggy-haired loosely dressed college men, obviously not freshmen, maybe frat boys. The woman was stunning. She was tall, statuesque, with a full bosom like Sophia Loren, nicely rounded not overlarge butt discernible under her dark brown miniskirt sashed with a braided belt, and long lovely white legs extending below that brief enticing veil over velvety dreams. She wore a large brimmed dark brown floppy hat from which cascaded long glistening waves of lush dark wavy hair that framed her smooth almond shaped face with its bright dark eyes under unplucked brushy brows, a rounded nose and full lips beneath which white teeth flashed out through her animated smiles as she spoke with her male companions. She wore a short fake fur jacket opened in front, giving a fine view of the rolling hills carpeted in a stretched maroon turtleneck blouse.

"What'll you have, Elena?" her trailing wolves inquired.

"Oh, just a Pepsi." Which the men ordered along with their beers and three slices of pizza. Sergio watched that fluttering vision of feminine loveliness eating her pizza and sipping her Pepsi, obviously amused and delighted by the eagerly hopeful attentions from the two guys whose simulations of knowledgeable maturity and cool were being projected with anticipation. Sergio took slow drags on his cigarette between sips of his beer, watching from across the room.

"A Pepsi," so Elena was a freshman. That meant she lived just down 40th Street from Smokey Joe's, at Hill House, the very modern Women's Dormitory, which would definitely have a reliable heating system, and also housed its own fine quality Dining Hall. Hill House was a square smooth-face red brick colored three story building centered in its own green adjacent to grassy playing fields, and surrounded by an empty moat fenced on the outside with a tall black iron fence whose sturdy vertical railings were topped with deeply hooked outward and downward facing spikes. It was a fortress, and the only way in or out was across a causeway, gated at both ends, over the moat to the barred pair of heavy doors of the guarded entryway. The outer gate was opened at 8 am and closed at 10 pm, and the entrance was always guarded to prevent any but the resident girls from entry during visiting hours without permission from one of the girls, who could appear in person to escort her guest in from the reception lobby, but usually just called over to the entry desk from her room suite, which all had telephones. The Hill House girls lived in the modern 20th century of the 1960s, the Men's Quad boys lived in the tattered remnants of the 19th.

Sergio felt a tap on his left shoulder. It was Joe, he'd not seen him come in. "I see you are observing the circling of Ruffed Grouse about an alluring hen," he said with his usual smile.

"Yeah."

"And I notice you are indulging in traditional libations and aromatics. You must be cogitating on deep matters."

"Yeah Joe, they took away my 2-S"

"Oh, that is indeed deeply disturbing. Why?" and Sergio told him the story.

"Well, then we must await the correspondence in a week or two. Did you eat?"

"No."

"Agreed. Why don't I buy a pizza here, and we repair ourselves to my room, to nourish our bodies there, and our spirits with some grass? Tomorrow you can begin thinking of what might have to be done, tonight we can just be."

"Yeah, you're right. Let's do it." And Sergio finished his smoke and beer while Joe ordered the pizza and they waited for it. He then noticed that Elena and her suitors had left while he had been talking with Joe. Maybe she went to their frat house to smoke some joints and play pool, he could imagine her leaning over in her miniskirt to take a long shot across the pool table, or

maybe she just went back to Hill House to study, but she looked too popular for that. Anyway, now he had a mission: "Get laid before I get killed in Vietnam."

"Bernie gave me some hash," said Joe, dropping a green pellet into a short squat onyx pipe. "Take a hit" he said solicitously, flicking his lighter onto the hash as Sergio sucked in the burning haze hard. His mind unglued and he expanded out into viscous sensation. He and Joe traded hits from the pipe consuming the hashish till they were each far gone deep into their own vast private inky stoned nothingness. Outside Joe's window the night was black and still.

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Chapter 2

A nearly imperceptible breeze of freshness carried the muted cacophony of city sounds past the Ginkgo foliage in the courtyard below, through his open window to caress him awake. Sergio found himself in his own bed. "So I guess I made it out of Joe's sometime before dawn," he thought to himself. Then he remembered, "Holy shit! I've got Chemistry!" So he briskly rolled himself out of bed, looked at his watch, quickened his pace and dressed, grabbed his books for the day and huffed down to the Burness Building's big ancient steeply banked auditorium with the Chemistry lecture already underway, and found himself an empty wooden seat in the back row. He took out his notepad and ballpoint pen, and began trying to listen, and figure out where they were in the subject.

"Organic chemistry" said a velvety mezzo soprano voice next to him, "Chapter 8. We started it last time, remember?" Sergio turned, surprised, "Thanks, yeah," he said nodding. She had a lovely oval face framed by long thick straight black hair that tumbled over her shoulders and down her back, dark eyes set in clear glistening whites and rimmed by long mascara-enhanced lashes, a delicately shaped nose, dark well-defined brows and a lush rosy button of a mouth. "Thanks again," he said as class was breaking up, and she smiled back. Everyone left Burness and scattered to other classes. He saw her walking up Campus Green ahead of him, her black hair fallen over her purple long-sleeve pullover and down to her waist with the wispy

ends waving across the top of the flare to the lower half of her fulsome hourglass figure, which was covered by loose-fitting dark blue jeans.

He climbed the stairs to his Spanish class in College Hall, settled in with notepad and pen ready, and then noticed that she was in this class too. They smiled their amusement at this coincidence, across the room to each other. After class they walked to meet and introduce themselves. She was Angela Celli, a psychology major. Since neither of them had a class for an hour, Sergio suggested they get coffee in The Underground, the snack bar in the basement of College Hall. That would be his lunchtime breakfast, with cream and sugar for added substance.

Angie was from Pittsburgh. As she told him about herself he looked into her beautiful face and down her long-chain brass necklace with its big round gleaming pendant resting on the deep purple stretch knit top covering the swell of her ample bosom, right over where its hidden deep valley would be. Angie offered Sergio a cigarette, and they both lit up, smoked and talked over their coffees.

"What's that?" Angie noticed that Sergio had a separate journal book, obviously not for school.

"Oh, it my poetry book. I write poems."

"Really!"

"Yes. I learned to do it watching my father. He wrote many romantic poems to my mother, and he loves to sing arias from zarzuelas."

"Zarzuelas?"

"Spanish operettas. Gay '90s stuff."

"And you're studying engineering?" They both laughed at that one.

"Where have you been!" They were startled to see Roger Solely right there booming his greeting. "Sergio! We have missed you, man, since last semester. What happened? You disappeared!"

Sergio introduced Angie to Roger, an upperclass man, telling her that he and Roger's buddies had often gone to concerts downtown early last fall, before school had gotten too intense for him.

"Oh, we saw D'Oyly Carte's 'Penzance,' '2001' in Cinerama, 'Madame Butterfly' with the glorious Beverly..." Roger rattled off happily to answer Angie.

"Sills, for Beverly" Sergio interjected for Angie, then to Roger, "Look, Roger, engineering is hard, man, and I've really got to study all — the — time!" "You're such a good boy. Look, call me, we get together all the time, and I'm putting up some sketches at an Architecture show that's coming up and I want everybody to come. And don't be a stranger!" With that, Roger flipped his dangling silk Paisley scarf back over his shoulder and trotted off.

Angie looked into Sergio's face with an inquisitive yet amused look. Sergio wondered if an anthropological observation of his psychological profile was now underway.

"You know, last semester when I got here, I met Roger and his pals, and would go out with them to the opera and movies, since I love classical music and they do too, and they knew the town, and always got tickets. Also, they had all kinds of booze in their apartments, and that was good for me.

Anyway, just before Thanksgiving vacation, we were all in the room and kind of a fight broke out, and I saw that I was being seen as the prize in a 'Boys in the Band' kind of setup. Roger got kind of heated, and claimed I'd be spending Thanksgiving with him, not any of them. I'd already figured out that he wanted my thick lips around... well, you know. He was dreaming. They all have some quick wits, and they know a lot about artsy stuff, but they're not my scene. I can go see the symphony by myself if I want to. So that's where Roger's coming from. I... ah... like people... like... you."

"Girls?"

"Yeah, most definitely."

"Are you seeing anyone?"

"Ah... no. You?"

"Not really."

"Well, maybe WE can go out sometime."

"I think that'd be fun." She gave him the phone number to her shared suite in Hill Hall, and then they each took off to their late classes.

"Have you ever wondered what makes for a beautiful woman?" Joe asked Sergio walking back from College Hall after their Meal Plan dinners.

"Being between eighteen and twenty-one."

"Nothing more?"

"Miniskirts and tight sweaters help a lot."

"A lustily physical perspective, but perhaps too limited."

"Well, they have to have some spirit, know stuff and not be ditzes, and just

be nice to talk to. Why do you ask?"

"You seem in a much better mood than yesterday, and I don't think it is only from hash afterglow."

"I met a girl in class today, and she's... interesting."

"Indeed!"

"I got a phone number, maybe she'll answer it someday." So Sergio told Joe the outlines of that day's story before they settled into rolling and smoking joints, and listening to 'The Doors' and 'Strange Days' to kick the ya-yas of the Draft and Colorado out of their minds. Next day Sergio bought Huxley's 'The Doors of Perception' at the Book Store. He decided to keep his grades up just in case he could evade the Draft and pursue his engineering dreams. A new image had now been added to that dream complex: Angie.

Angie did answer his phone call. They went out to see a screening of 'Casablanca' by the University Film Society in the College Hall theater, and then walked around on Campus Green smoking cigarettes and talking, before Sergio took her down to The Underground to buy them both Philly Cheesesteak sandwiches and coffee milkshakes. It all felt good for both. Angie had to get back to Hill Hall by 11 pm, because she knew the entry monitors didn't get too upset about having to unlock the gates for latecomers till then. There was a call box on the outside of the fence.

They walked outside from College Hall through Campus Green into the shadows near the big trees far from the pathways, and embraced into a deep kiss. Wordlessly, they lay down on the grass and pressed their bodies into each other within their embrace, kissing deeply, gently, slowly. Her lush black hair brushed against his face as he looked down into her eyes and submerged himself into her gaze.

Time came to go, and he walked her back to Hill Hall. She asked him to call again soon so they could have a Spanish study night in her suite with the girls, who were all in less advanced Spanish classes and some struggling. Then, whistling in his mind, he walked back to his room through a sequence of shadows and street lamps alternately disappearing and then illuminating the granularity of the pathways to sharp relief. The air was cool, he was warm.

Days later he went to the Computer Center in the Electrical Engineering

building to work on a Fortran IV programming project. He spent hours typing out his program onto a deck of IBM cards each punched by the typewriter with a hole array encoding one line of his program's instructions, then feeding the deck into the card reader and waiting for his turn when the printer would clack out his calculated results on big sheets of folding paper connected by perforations. This occurred several times as he corrected errors after each run. Eventually he got it right and was able to carry out a printout with columns of numbers that would satisfy the needs of his assignment. It was getting near dinnertime. He walked across 40th Street to Hill Hall and had Angie called from the reception desk. She appeared, smiling, and led him through carpeted white hallways hung with framed pastel-colored prints of abstracts and landscapes, down to her suite. Five other girls were there. When Angie had invited him, she said he'd get dinner in exchange for his Spanish help. And indeed he did, Veal Parmesan, in Hill Hall's large cafeteria with all seven of them. The apple pie and ice cream were good, too, and the coffee.

Now that they all knew each other a little bit better, it was back to the suite for study time. After about thirty minutes of pronunciation and grammar corrections, and translations, the talk really started, and the music. And these girls were into the music, they had a huge stack of discs. First it was Janis Joplin's 'Cheap Thrills,' which was without a doubt the gospel music of Hill Hall in 1969. A hash pipe had been produced for that, and gaily passed around to mutual satisfaction. A thick towel had been rolled up and pushed against the bottom of the door, and a vent was blocked with a piece of cardboard, as precautions. After Janis it was Creedence Clearwater for a rollicking stone, and someone mentioned that a Woodstock Music Festival had been announced for August, where Creedence would appear and all kinds of top bands were now signing up for it, and maybe even Dylan and the Beatles would appear. Then Crosby, Stills and Nash was put on the player for the choral part of the service, and after that Judy Collins for the heartfelt poetry of later evening.

It was nearly time for lockdown and the other girls went off to their own rooms. "Do you want to stay?" Angie asked leadingly.

"Sure, but how?"

"Oh, it's easy, Janet does it all the time. You just stay in here till after the gates open in the morning, we get breakfast, and I'll take you to the door from

there. They'll never notice."

"Who's Janet?"

"My room mate. You don't know Janet?"

"Won't she come back? No, I don't know who she is."

"She's the most popular girl in the Pig Book, a cheerleader. I get calls for her ALL the time. All the guys want to date her. Her boyfriend's a football player and she's out all the time, his place or cheerleading practice, and class. She probably won't come back. But if she does, don't worry, she does the same plenty of times."

The suite had a small half-bath with toilet and sink, so that was convenient. Shower rooms were elsewhere down the hall. They kicked off their shoes, Angie turned out the lights, and they embraced on the bed into long kisses. He pressed his warm palms into her back and pushed her close as she melted herself into him. Rays of lamplight from 40th Street shone through the window to give the room a film noir atmosphere. Sergio pulled his head back so he could look into Angie's shining eyes, and caressed the side of her face for a long moment, then slid his hand slowly down her neck to the rise of her breast. She accepted willingly because she loved the feel of his hands: all warmth and gentle pressure with no hurry, no grab.

"Can we get rid of the belt buckle?" she asked. So they each ditched the belts. When they embraced again, he slipped his hand under her blouse in back, and felt her skin. When next they surfaced for air, she unbuttoned his shirt front enough to slide her palm over his chest, she wanted to feel his skin, too. Wordlessly, he took off his shirt and undershirt, and she pulled off her blouse. Then it was so much better, warmth to warmth. As he moved his hand pressure over the contours of her back, he would pass his fingers over the backstrap of her bra, it had four hook-clamps. Heavy duty. He tested lightly to see if he could unhook it one-handed. "You'll never do it. Here, let me," and sitting up she undid it letting it fall away. In the half light he saw that her breasts were luxuriantly rounded masterpieces of femininity with large dark nipple moons. Skin to skin was a plush dual ecstasy. Sergio's pants were getting much too tight, and both their legs were yearning for each other. So the jeans fell away, he had his cotton boxer shorts, she had her nylon panties, all else was skin.

Sergio slowly stroked her fulsome body along the length of it he could reach

from within their tight embrace. He pulled back a bit to cup his hand around her breasts, and across them to then run his palm down the deep valley between, and down over her stomach. She put her hand against her waist in front and said "Not below here."

"Yes," the boundary was made clear, and he acknowledged that. Eventually his hand began edging past her waist in back and she made no resistance to that move, so soon he was gliding over the nylon caressing her large firm well rounded butt with his warm pressured touch. And she was pulling in on his with outstretched palms, with only a thin layer of cotton and a thin layer of nylon separating the pulsating urges of their creative forces to merge. Time no longer existed, only an eternity of passionate immersion.

The door opened, light from the hallway flashed into the room and was then cut off as the door quickly closed. Sergio froze, Angie whispered "Janet" into his ear, and he was glad that at least they were under the covers. Janet scurried into the half-bath for a few minutes before emerging to drop herself into her bed on the opposite side of the room. Soon enough she was breathing slow, asleep. Angie whispered "Don't worry, Janet is cool, it will be okay in the morning." And they, too, soon fell asleep, warmed entwined in their embrace.

Sergio opened his eyes to see Angie sitting on Janet's bed with both of them in full length bathrobes. The two girls looked at him as the new day dawned in his eyes.

"Um ah... good morning" he said.

"I'm sorry I came in so late. Hope I didn't scare you." Boy, she was bubbly.

"No, no, it was all part of a nice time."

"Okay, look," Janet said, "I'll go up and bring back some coffees and bagels while you two get ready. Brad's coming over soon for the two of us to go to the practice field," and off she went. So they took turns for the water closet while the other got dressed. Janet returned with a cupholder tray for three paper-cupped coffees, and a bag of bagels with packets of sugar, creamer and cream cheese. Hill House treated its girls good. She went into the half-bath to dress and prepare herself for her day, while Angie and Sergio relaxed into their breakfast. Janet emerged in surprisingly short time, dressed in a short skirt cheerleader uniform, with her long blond hair swinging in a ponytail, and her delicate faintly freckled face shining with enthusiasm. She was a

spectacularly vivacious petite, with a perfect lithe and lean gymnast's body, and a completely disarming and engaging personality. And what a smile! But she was also an imp.

"Who's Brad?"

"Quarterback of the JV team. Brad Jackson. He's on a football scholarship."

"Are you on a cheerleading scholarship?"

"Well, yeah, but I'm majoring in medical technology. Brad wants to be a pro."

The phone rang, Brad was ready to be escorted in.

"Oh Angie!, can you go get him, please! I've gotta finish and pack my bag!"

Angie laughed as this was obviously routine and left to retrieve the Hulk.

Janet hurriedly stuffed her big gym bag with extra clothes, schoolbooks, towel, makeup items, extra socks, a sweatshirt, pens, pads, sunglasses and a brimmed cloth hat. Then she got a bright idea.

"Oh my God! That big lunk thinks he's so cool and's got it over everybody. I wanna make him jealous! Let's play a trick!" She tossed her bag by the door, jumped across the room, and threw herself over backwards to plop onto her bed, whose bedsprings bounced up and down a few times from the impact. She held out her arms and said "Jump on me!" This terrified Sergio.

"What's he gonna think if he comes in and sees that!"

"EXACTLY! Come on! come on! come on! Before he gets here! It'll be such a gag, he deserves it!"

Sergio did not move.

"Come ON! Jump on me!" with her arms outstretched wiggling her luscious little body, with a devilishly gleeful grin, just as the doorknob was being turned. Sergio thought to make a break for the half-bath, when Angie opened the door and walked in with Brad, who looked, unsmiling, at each of them, and Janet bubbled "Oh Brad! Aren't you glad to see me?"

Brad was not happy, but the twelve feet between Sergio and Janet was somewhat reassuring, so he didn't let himself lose his cool about it.

"Come on Jan, we're gonna be late. Lets go!"

"Brad, this is Sergio, Angie's boyfriend."

The two men nodded at each other, then Janet grabbed her bag (Sergio noticed that Brad had not done so) and the football people left.

"You like Janet?" Angie asked with a very serious face.

"Well yes, she's fun-loving. But hey, look, I'm not interested in Janet, I'm interested in you."

"Everybody's interested in Janet" she pouted, and Sergio then first detected the deep ocean of melancholy that Angie carried within her.

"I — am not interested — in Janet. I — am interested in you. In — you."

"Guys have dated me because they knew I roomed with Janet, and wanted in"

"I did not know about Janet, I am not chasing after cheerleaders, I — like — you. Really."

"What were you doing?"

"She wanted to make the Hulk jealous, and I wasn't doing anything. Look, let me have a kiss, and I'll write you a poem"

"You won't get out of it that easily."

"Well, how about two kisses and a poem?"

"Okay," and she melted into his embrace to absorb his love.

Sergio walked into his Residence Hall thinking "Thank God I don't have an early class today." As he walked down the wing of the third floor hallways with his group of rooms, he saw all the doors open and the guys looking at him as he walked by. Joe, smiling broadly, was standing in the doorway of his room adjacent to Sergio's. "The prodigal son returns" he said.

"What's up, Joe?"

"Admiration, I believe"

"What?"

"I must confess that you were observed penetrating Hill Hall last night, and emerging this morning. So we are... curious."

"Nothing happened, it was a just a Spanish study night."

"Commendable modesty."

"There's nothing to be jealous about."

"Yes, admiration is a more pleasant word."

"Oh, you guys," Sergio said, shaking his head as he closed the door of his room behind him. "Jealousy" he thought, "amazing!" Then he sat down at his desk to work out some calculus problems. Leaning back, he looked out his window at the beautiful bright day, and suddenly felt very very satisfied.

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Chapter 3

“To understand the workings of Nature requires a disciplined mind, and acquiring that discipline is called gaining an education. But ‘understanding’ is much more than just simple classification and calculation, it also requires an ability to evaluate, which means a way of being able to integrate a cohesive pattern of meaning out of the jumble of observations, measurements and experiences a person accumulates as they go on living. And that ‘ability to evaluate’ must necessarily include not just the analytical elements of that jumble but the emotional ones as well. Emotions are very compelling and immediate kinds of encoded messages conveying some, always difficult to decode and ascertain, meaning about the stimuli, or traumas, or forces, or situations that cause them. So to really understand the workings of Nature a person must be capable of perceiving and integrating the complete jumble of analytical and emotional reality that form the entire complex of a person’s experience with the external world AND the entire complex of their own organic totality. But this is like saying that to understand Nature completely a person would have to abstract and encase all of external and internal reality, both analytical and emotional, into concepts that would fit into the forms and protocols used by their brains ‘to think’ consciously. But this is a contradiction because it would mean being able to contain all of reality within a small portion or subset of that reality, like trying to fit all of the Universe into a fishbowl to be able to imagine looking into that fishbowl and thus ‘understand everything completely.’ But then how is one able to have a perspective from outside the fishbowl after all of reality — which includes this inquiring mind — has been crammed into the fishbowl? So it seems impossible for ‘mind’ to ever be able to encompass ‘everything,’ and so we can never reach a complete understanding of Nature however intricate, refined and vast the expansion of human knowledge becomes because of the commendable exercise of mental discipline. We are each small elements within the total reality, and the total reality can never be totally contained within any of its small elements.”

Sergio looked up from his carrel out a window on the fifth floor of the University Library, at the vertical color gradient of the sunset sky, from honey-orange close to the ground fading into a pastel blue that deepened with elevation into darker blues that became a black of deep dimensionality overhead sprinkled with pinpoints of starlight. With every moment that

gradient to darkness descended ever so gradually as if a watercolor wash of extreme viscosity slowly being pulled down by gravity, on a living picture hung before him that was framed by the wood trim around the window.

He had come to the Library to study in the deep peace and quiet of its top floor in the evening, and thus escape from the ubiquitous agitations and distractions and annoyances of student life in the dorms. Later, once deep night had set in, he would go to the top of the Physical Sciences building to join his Astronomy class in observing planets through the large refractor telescope installed there since the early 1900s. He had planned to spend his time in the Library working on calculus, but his mind was too unsettled for that, and it drifted to other complexes of thought. And that led him to write out a reflection on the question: can a human mind ever completely understand the workings of Nature?

Maybe he could eventually extract some poem ideas out of that ramble, and then again maybe not. But really, why was his mind so skittish? He certainly wasn't able to focus on the Fundamental Theorem of Differential and Integral Calculus right now. So it seemed clear that the "analytical" in his mind was temporarily displaced by a darker and more powerful amorphous force: emotions. Clearly, for him at this time "emotions" could only have one meaning: Angie. So how indeed does a boy engineer solve an undefinable emotional problem?

"Analysis is defeated if definition is impossible, so an emotional technique has to be used to solve an undefined emotional problem, and the only such technique I can think of is: intuition. The only chance you have of solving any problem is to face it directly, and not try to deny it or escape from it. And so to solve an undefined or undefinable emotional problem you have to face into all its amorphous ambiguity and uncertainty, and approach it with intuition; and whereas in the application of analysis 'what is right' is determined by logic and intellectual rigor, in the application of intuition 'what is right' is determined by honesty and universally compassionate morality. In both cases, the logical and the moral person accepts that 'the right answer' may not at all be the most convenient, or preferred, or happy, or profitable answer to oneself. But the logical and the moral person always accepts 'the right answer' because they are committed to doing their best, as a personal expression of their self-worth, and they are committed to

accepting 'the right answer' because that is the greatest positive contribution they can make to the rest of humanity, so that is a personal expression of human solidarity."

Sergio closed his math book, and focused his mind on Angie. After a little time reflecting on her, he took up his pen and wrote out a poem about her. Actually, it wrote itself once he opened his doors of perception to allow its release. He penned a clean copy on a sheet of paper, which he carefully placed within a pocket of his vinyl folder, and then gazed back at the deepening night.

"Are you still mad at me?" Janet's question startled him out of his reverie.

"Janet! No. What are you doing here?"

"Same as you, getting away from it all so I can do some useful work."

"And what's that?"

"Stuff for my medical technology major, but also stuff for the Woman's Association."

Janet went on to explain that while cheerleading and football were fun, what really motivated her was helping to solve the medical issues tangling up so many women's lives: being caretakers of children, the infirmed, the old, and being straddled with the biological stresses of their own womanhood: their hormonal cycle and birth control, pregnancy and giving birth, and worst of all: their enslavement and oppression by men who used legalisms that usurped a woman's control of her own body even to the point of killing her, by denying them access to abortions.

"No woman wants to have an abortion. That is always a measure of last resort to solve a difficult problem in the medical care and the life of a woman. We need better medical technology to give women better healthcare so they are less likely to develop conditions that could lead to them needing an abortion, and we need really really good legal guarantees that allow women to get safe medical abortions when they need them, so they are not driven by desperation to get scraped out with a coat hanger and then bleed to death in a back alley." Janet stopped, and realized that she may have let her passion on this propel her too intrusively into Sergio's perception. "I just came out of a Woman's Association meeting, so I guess I'm a bit fired up right now."

"No need to apologize. You're right. I never realized you had such passion."

But I guess it makes sense, it's like a different form of cheerleading, more serious, more important. And you are definitely a person committed to doing things with energy."

"So, how's it going with Angie?"

"Angie is an intense yet delicate creature. I can't say I understand her, but I am really attracted to her. Maybe she understands me better than I know her. And what about you with Brad?"

"Ha! I like good looking guys, who are strong. But I also like them to be aware, especially about what women have to go through."

"I don't know, Janet. It may be hard to find one guy who combines all that."

"I know. I think that's why it's hard for so many couples to stay together. Everybody needs too much, and people change as they grow older."

"Sounds like we would need a sequence of lovers over our lives because its impossible to stay happy with any one person forever."

"I think so, for lots of people."

"You?"

"We'll see. And you?"

"I hadn't really thought about it until you bounced on my brain." At this from Sergio, Janet squealed with delight.

"I want to give you something. I hope you don't take it wrong."

"Forewarned is forearmed, Janet."

"These are some samples we talked about in the Women's meeting," and she pulled out three packets of condoms from her bag and put them on the carrel. "A man who uses these can help prevent a terrible tragedy from happening in a woman's life. Not all women can use birth control pills, and sometimes they slip up, or the pills don't work perfectly. And, you know, we aren't legally protected enough when it comes to abortion."

"I think you are very sweet to think about protecting Angie in this way. No, I don't take you wrong, thanks for the education."

"Okay! This one over here," she pointed to one of the packets, "is latex, pretty strong. This one," pointing to a second one, "is lubricated latex, which is good if chafing is a problem. And that one," pointing to the third packet, "is lamb skin. It's the sheerest material, made from lamb intestines, and lubricated, for getting the most feel, but they can break if used with a lot of roughness, which you shouldn't do anyway because you're supposed to be LOVING someone!"

"You are a very interesting person. I don't know if Brad will be able to

survive.”

“HA!”

“In exchange for all the instruction you’ve given me tonight, and these presents, I want to ask you two questions.”

“Okay.”

“What is your last name?”

“WHAT! You haven’t looked in the Pig Book?”

“I didn’t bother to buy one.”

“Hoffman.”

“And since you are the number one ‘date target’ in the Pig Book according to all the guys, and since you almost got me pounded by the Hulk who actually is dating that number one girl, it would be nice for me if you gave me the following date: come with me to the roof of the Physics building and join my Astronomy class, where we will each look through the telescope at one of the planets, then I’ll walk you back to Hill Hall.”

“Is this your version of ‘jump on me’?”

“Touché”

“Ha! Yeah, let’s do it!”

And that is how Janet Hoffman and Sergio Romero each got to see a bright image of the planet Saturn and its rings, after solving a tangle of emotional problems that were as yet undefined in the analytical realm. Quite a date.

Next day after morning classes, Sergio went three blocks further west from the Quad, on 38th, to Rocky’s Market. He bought an 18 inch hoagie with capicola, soppressata, provolone, shredded lettuce and pepperoncinis laid into a garlic olive oil and wine vinegar seasoned Italian torpedo roll, and he bought six individually wrapped marble-sized spherical milk chocolates. It was all a dear \$5, but worth it at Rocky’s. “Thanks for the Italian Kisses, Roger,” he thought on his walk back, past the Quad, past Campus Green, and down Locust Walk to a stone bench in front of the Mechanical Engineering building. Along this stretch, Locust Walk was a shady treelined flagstone footpath between the Mechanical Engineering, and the Chemistry and Geology buildings, both archeological relics.

Sergio ate his hoagie on the bench, then quaffed it with a can of root beer from the vending machine in the basement of the ME building, and went up

to his afternoon lab session of Engineering Drawing in the Drafting Room on the third floor. The Drafting Room had a tall ceiling and big windows, which were opened. They gave views out to the bright speckling of sunny daylight mixed with quivering greens from the upper foliage of the trees, and allowed refreshing breezes laden with birdsong to wash into the room. As he worked with his T-square, various drawing triangles and rulers, to sketch out scaled plan and perspective views of the mechanical vice which had been assigned, by a listing of its dimensions, as the object of the exercise, he thought "Boy, if I had to do an engineering drawing of Angie, I'd have to use nothing but French Curves."

As Sergio turned the corner onto the short dead-end hallway of his dorm floor late that afternoon, he was startled by "JANET HOFFMAN!" yelled out by Seth Green, who occupied the big dorm room at the end. This brought all the guys out to their doorways.

"You are dating Janet Hoffman!" Seth bellowed with an undisguised abundance of envy. Seth Green, shortened from Greenblatt by his father Mo Green, a big New York City real estate lawyer, had two all-encompassing attitudes: a sense of privilege that entitled him to have more and sooner advantages than his male rivals, and deep envy and resentment of those male rivals who he imagined were getting, and taking away from him, what he felt he deserved preferentially. For over a semester now, Seth had bragged how he was set to get laid before any of them because he was allowed to party in his older brother's fraternity, Iota Phi Theta, before even the Rush Season had started. He had an "in."

"Come on, what ever gave you that idea?" Sergio had been fed up with Seth since the third day of Freshman year, but he didn't voice it.

"A guy in my brother's fraternity is in that Astronomy class, and he saw you there with Janet Hoffman, and she's not in that class! Then you walked down to Hill Hall with her. So how did you get to date her?"

"I'm not dating Janet Hoffman."

"Yeah, and what'd you do that night in Hill Hall then?"

"Spanish study night."

Joe, entirely amused and delighted, asked "The conquering hero. What is she like?"

"Fierce."

This just twisted the knife in Seth's gut. Sergio was "getting" the top shiksa of

the year, and Seth loathed him for it. He went back into his room and slammed the door. The other guys just looked wistfully at Sergio and then drifted back into theirs.

Sergio went into Joe's room and asked to borrow the Pig Book, which was a directory of the 1968-1969 Freshman class, with black-and-white passport type photos arrayed alphabetically, and tagged with the closest University hallway or suite phone number for each student. The Pig Books in the men's dorms had mostly been permanently creased to open at "H" where Janet Hoffman's picture was. Sergio carefully flipped through it until he arrived at "F" and found Elena Feldon, from Asbury Park, "a Jersey girl" he thought. She had a big happy toothy smile in her photo, wearing a light colored V-neck pullover sweater, and tumbles of long wavy curls over her shoulders in front on either side of the expansive swell of her bosom. He gave the Pig Book back to Joe, who observed, "Seth is being most ungracious about your success."

"He's an idiot. He's dreaming about scoring a hot babe over at big brother's I-Felt-a-Thigh frat, and the girls here are all too smart to fall for that. Wanna go eat?"

"Yes, capital idea. And then?"

"Yes."

So they ambled down to College Hall for Meal Plan dinners.

After, in the big second floor lounge of College Hall, looking out onto 38th, a sizable crowd was watching a televised news report about the big reveal of the day by the New York Times. President Nixon had ordered secret aerial bombings of Cambodia, along its border with Vietnam, since March of that year, two months earlier. Sergio became very pensive at the news.

"Have you heard from the Draft Board?" Joe asked.

"I got a letter telling me to report by the end of May, and another telling me my appeal hearing is also scheduled for the end of May."

"I believe then it is time."

"Yes, most definitely."

And they went back to cleanse their minds.

The next morning walking into Campus Green on the way to class, Sergio came upon a huge protest. All the classrooms had been emptied, and the student body was one massive agitated swarm that had engulfed Campus

Green and occupied College Hall. He even saw many of the professors hovering around the edges of the crowd. He drifted through the mass, looking at the people, reading the protest signs, and listening to the numerous chants and rants. It was a gloriously beautiful warm day, and perfect for lounging on the Green, but only a cynic — or a Republican — would think that the students were using an unjustifiable protest excuse to get out of classes just to play outside. College Hall was completely jammed with occupiers, and had become stiflingly hot. He spotted Elena Feldon, threading her way through the crowd, climbing the stairs into College Hall.

He came upon Bernie sitting calming cross-legged on the grass.

"Hey, Bernie, what do you think?"

"I don't know, man, it's getting bad."

"This fucking war..."

"Can't end soon enough."

So Sergio sat down next to him and they both absorbed the scene.

"So what have you been doing, Bernie?"

"Biology," and he showed Sergio his books: 'The Study of Instinct' and 'Social Behaviour in Animals' by Nikko Tinbergen. "I'm getting into ecology. The Santa Barbara Oil Spill over the last four months has really keyed me into that. And you?"

"Engineering stuff, and this," Sergio held out a paperback copy of 'Catch-22.'

Joe came upon the two of them, and sat down making it a threesome. He was toting his obligatory anvil of an economics textbook, along with Gary Snyder's poetry book, 'Regarding Wave.' And then Angie appeared. Sergio was very happy to see her, and introduced her to the guys. She could tell that she'd like them, and on meeting her the guys had kind thoughts about her with Sergio. She sat down making it a foursome. She was carrying her doorstep of a psychology book, and Sylvia Plath's novel 'The Bell Jar,' in a printing from England. The social gravity of the massed protest gathering finally brought Janet into their orbit, and she joined them, too. Sergio was getting looks from both Angie and Janet at this point, and wondered if he had entered a crossfire at the DMZ. But the girls seemed relaxed, and all seemed cool. Besides her textbooks, Janet had a copy of 'The Feminine Mystique' by Betty Friedan. So all their dreams and interests mingled, bonded by antiwar sentiment.

The crowd on the Green gradually dissipated as the late afternoon ripened, though the rebels occupying College Hall held out well into the night. When finally only Angie and Sergio were left from their group, he said, "I have something for you," and handed her a little paper bag of chocolates, and a clear vinyl sleeve enclosing a sheet of paper, the poem. "I promised you kisses and a poem, and there they are."

She looked in the bag, "Baci!" she chirped, delighted. She took two out, handed him one, they unwrapped, popped them in their mouths, and she settled into reading the poem.

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Love at Dawn

I still can feel your dawn-window eyes
as I walk through this night,
and I still can smell your long, dark hair
softly catching the light.

The sweet taste of your tender lips
I still can savor with care,
and the warming voice of your soft, soft skin
still glides upon my face.

I still can feel your dawn-window eyes
as I walk through this night,
this night though but a wisp of the past
is an eternal delight.

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She looked at him with shining eyes, opened her arms, and drew him into a lingering kiss.

"Janet's going to be away tonight. Do you want to visit?"

"To study Spanish?"

"We can do a little bit of that first."

"I'll go get a few things, and meet you for dinner."

"I'll be waiting."

And they had a lovely quiet lyrical evening, with the boundaries pushed back even further so that the cotton and nylon layers could be dispensed with and

the hands of love touch deeply. But there was still a boundary, and Janet's presents were not yet needed.

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CHAPTER 4

Milky white soapy water filled the spiral groove of the fine drill bit which whirled into a slender gray blur at the push of a button, then slowly penetrated into the tiny guide hole, cutting through the sleeve of a clamped brass gear and down into the slender steel axle rod of a mechanical rheostat controller for a component in a US Navy radar set for its destroyers, as Sergio gently pulled down on the lever of the drill press, and the milky lubricating coolant surged up into a rolling foam ring filled with fine metal chips that circled the bit around the entrance of the bore as the drill cored into the workpiece. Once through, the drill was raised and stopped, the workpiece wiped off and blown clean with pressurized canned air shot through a thin plastic extension tube, and an oiled tapping screw was cranked in by hand to cut threads for the subsequent connecting screw that would hold the gear to the shaft, having first been dipped in varnish that would dry within the microscopic gaps between the threads, forming an adhesive bond. Once practiced at it, the whole operation would take about ten minutes, and if there were no problems like drill bits snapping or gouging into the holes twisting themselves into hot jammed plugs, he could make fifty assemblies a day, six to seven an hour, for an eight hour workday.

He punched the clock in at 8 am and out at 5 pm, and had an hour for lunch — homemade ham and cheese, or tuna salad, or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches — between noon and 1 pm, five days a week. He produced about 250 finished assemblies a week, at a minimum wage of \$1.65 per hour. So, \$13.20 a day, \$66 a week, about \$290 a month. Without taking any time off, except weekends and national holidays when the plant was closed and he wasn't paid for them anyway, he might be able to fit in up to 70 work days all summer to gross \$924.

But deductions for Social Security Tax, US federal income tax, New York State income tax, and IBEW union dues, could in total take between 25% to 30% of his gross pay to leave him with between \$646.80 to \$693 that he could

bank on, for his three-and-a-half months of summer work. And, he might want to spend some of that money to help enjoy the fourteen to fifteen weekends of his summer, perhaps going to the movies, buying records, slices of pizza, hamburgers, ice cream milkshakes and sodas, while on his bicycle excursions out to the towns and beaches along the North Shore of Long Island within a day's ride (round trip) of his parents's house, and maybe even buy some gas for his parents's 1959 Ford that he drove to work on rainy days and on longer excursions out to Fire Island, East Hampton and Montauk Point. So, "fun" might cost him, maybe, an average of \$10 per weekend for fifteen weekends, for \$150, leaving him with a total savings of between \$496.80 to \$543 for the summer.

If the plant had a rush order and authorized work through a holiday weekend, as with the Memorial Day or Labor Day weekends, he could work those days for double pay, \$3.30 an hour for a \$26.40 eight hour day!, and if the plant was so desperate that it allowed for overtime work on such national holiday weekends, he could make three times his normal pay rate after 5 pm, for \$4.95 per hour! In the summer of 1969, Sergio was able to get four days of holiday work and four nights of overtime holiday work to net \$195.36 beyond his total net pay during normal hours on regular work days, so by the end of that summer he banked \$718.55 after expenses. It was all pretty boring, but he needed the money for school, to relieve financial pressures on his parents, and to exert his own independence. He yearned to make it on his own as a creative engineer.

In the last days of May, Sergio received a letter from the Draft Board informing him that due to the large number of appeals that had been filed before him, that his hearing had been postponed till June. In the first days of June he received a notice from the Draft Board ordering him to report to the Manhattan induction center by the end of the month. Once again, he typed out a request for an appeal hearing, and mailed it off. The same rigamarole occurred at the June-July cusp, the July-August cusp, the August-September cusp, and at following monthly intervals through 1969. There were a lot of guys doing the same thing as he was, and that bureaucratic mass very fortuitously clogged the Selective Service system for addressing — and finally rejecting — appeals. But with each succeeding month his case came closer and closer to the head of the queue, and he had no idea when his time of trial would finally arrive.

On June 28, a riot broke out in Greenwich Village at the Stonewall bar when the gay men whose scene this was erupted into mass belligerent opposition to a violent raid against them by the New York City Police Department, which had long been harassing them. Lesbians and gay men from across the city came to the scene, joining in the combat and protests that occupied the next six days. News about the riots was largely blacked out from television broadcasts, but the facts could not be suppressed from word-of-mouth, and Sergio knew about them by July 4, "I wonder how many of Roger's gang got their heads bashed by the cops, and how many of them got to bash a cop?"

He'd penned a letter to Angie in Pittsburgh, to tell her about his boring life, and to ask what she was doing. The most interesting thing he could write about was his discovery of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s books 'Slaughterhouse-Five' and 'Cat's Cradle.' A month or so later he got a handwritten letter from Angie telling him she worked as a cashier in a shop owned by a relative, and spent most of her free time seeing old high school friends, and also being involved in home-life with her parents and siblings, and in the many gatherings of her large extended Italian family and with all of their family friends. She didn't seem sad, but she didn't seem particularly happy either, and she didn't really give many details. He could tell that she wanted an independent life away from Pittsburgh, but he didn't know what it was specifically that she wanted to get away from. She did make it very clear, though, that him visiting her was a very bad idea because of the protective and clannish attitudes of her people. It made more sense for Angie and Sergio to just stay put, save money, and do what they would be willing to do together once back in Philadelphia. Aside from this brief and colorless veiling sketch of her personal situation in Pittsburgh, she did write in an animated way about Timothy Leary joining John Lennon and Yoko Ono at their Montreal bed-in, on June 1, and Lennon subsequently writing a song called "Come Together" for Leary's independent electoral campaign to unseat Ronald Reagan as governor of California.

Sergio spent long hours watching television news broadcasts on 20 July, covering the very first Moon Landing. The actual live black-and-white video transmitted from the Lunar Lander was so fuzzy that he only saw clear images of the scene months later, after the astronauts had returned to Earth and the rolls of film they had exposed on the Moon with the Hasselblad cameras they'd been issued by NASA were processed and the pictures publicized; and

the live voice transmission of Neil Armstrong's words on stepping onto the lunar surface were so garbled that Sergio only found out what they were when Walter Cronkite later recited them to his CBS News television audience. Historic certainly, but so remote from the conscious flow of his personal experiences and present state of mind.

The colossal gathering at the Woodstock Music Festival occurred during the 15th to the 18th of August, and the television news images of that sea of people, and the miles of completely congested highways resulting from their mass migration to upstate New York, were stunning, satisfying and amusing. He had dismissed his first brief impulse to try to go to Woodstock, with the realization that so many of his generation would swarm the Festival in hopes of hearing the wide array of popular rock-and-roll, folk, and blues bands and musicians scheduled to play there, that roads would become clogged far in advance of the festival area, and the crowd would be so big that it would be impossible to get close enough to the stage to see and hear well, and that there would be no normal places to stay overnight to sleep. And that is exactly what happened for most of the Woodstock Pilgrims. But to the great credit of the vast majority of them, they spontaneously created an anarchy of peace, love and harmony despite the mud wallow that the whole area turned into. It was all a beautiful counterbalance to the enormous and outrageously expensive campaigns of mass murder being carried out in Vietnam at the same time by the rigidly hierarchical authoritarian structure of American military might. "God, why can't we take all that money being dumped into destroying Vietnam, and use it to 'Woodstock' our whole damn country instead?"

Sergio had made no effort to seek out any of the town boys from his Catholic high school. He had an implacable determination never to look back to high school or to any of its people ever again. High school had been too filled with annoyances and stupidities to ever merit fond retention in memory. He had blasted off out of that scene and toward college as soon as he could, like an astronaut rocketing out on a one way trip to another galaxy.

He would bicycle to the public library in town, where he would read books on race cars and racing drivers, like Juan Manuel Fangio and Stirling Moss, and books by Henry Ricardo on water cooled piston aero engines, like the 24 cylinder sleeve valve Napier engine with four 6-cylinder banks arranged in an

H, and the supercharged overhead poppet valve Rolls-Royce Merlin V12, which powered the Spitfire fighters and Mosquito fighter-bombers of the Royal Air Force during World War II.

On one such visit to the library, he chanced to see a notice in the North Shore Reporter for the coming funeral of Matt Kelly, one of his high school classmates, who had been shot dead in an ambush while on patrol with his Marine platoon in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Matt had joined the Marines right after graduation, which had been his stated ambition all throughout high school. The newspaper notice showed Matt's official Marine Corps picture, with his square little head that had always sported a crew cut, smiling broadly under his big new stiff Marine Corps cap and in his crisp new dress uniform, posed next to the Stars and Stripes. Matt had always been a cheery guy, so short he barely made the military's height requirement, just as he had barely made his high school's graduation requirements. He had always known what he wanted to do and he didn't need more education than what being a Marine required. It was from Matt that Sergio had learned the joke: "God made whiskey to keep the Irish from conquering the world." Matt had always regaled his classmates with jokes and proud boasts of his Irish family's deep roots in the military, all the way back to the IRA. Now he had been ingloriously laid to waste in the pointless Vietnam War, and all that the US military returned to Matt's family for the use of their boy was a filled casket, a folded flag, a small monetary death benefit, and Matt's posthumously awarded Purple Heart decoration.

Sergio wondered if poor Matt had ever been able to get laid before getting laid out. Maybe he had achieved that universal boy's dream before leaving town, from a compassionately obliging town girl, but he had never known Matt to have had a girlfriend for he certainly would have told everybody if he had, or maybe he was initiated into binary orgasmic bliss by one of the American hookers who patrolled the boundaries of Boot Camps in the States, or much more likely by one of the desperate Vietnamese hookers who swarmed around Uncle Sam's military installations in their country, or maybe poor Matt never got laid at all and had been tragically robbed by the patriotism con from ever experiencing one of life's truly great joys. Sergio detested this war.

Among Sergio's deep pleasures during his free time was listening to classical

music from his large and ever growing collection of long-playing records. He had been captivated by classical music since becoming transfixed on hearing Stravinsky's Firebird Suite for the first time, as a 5 year old. In his private refuge of solitary reverie, on weekday evenings and weekend afternoons, he would sit in the den-room of his family home listening to the music that had always nurtured him: zarzuelas with their Puccini-like Art Nouveau tunefulness and arias conveying Spanish verve in love stories mixing playful comedy and lovelorn anguish, and which always ended with uplifting happiness; or piano concertos and symphonies and tone poems by Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Brahms, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Debussy and De Falla, among others. He spent \$30 of his summer earnings to buy a portable turntable, like Joe's, for taking back to college.

He didn't buy pop music records because pop music was ubiquitous and so easy to get to hear. It was everywhere: cascading from radios out of car windows, dorm windows, fraternity windows, in pizza parlors and hamburger joints, and from turntables as in Angie's Hill House suite, and throughout the Quad. From Angie and her Hill House circle, Sergio had gained an in-depth education on the "bright promise" branch of 1960s pop music: the Beatles, Lovin' Spoonful, Buffalo Springfield, Janis Joplin branch of the genre; and from Joe he had gained an in-depth education on the root of Jack Kerouac 'On The Road' 1950s Beat style poetry that had branched into the 1960s folk-blues-rock style of talking music that had flowered with Bob Dylan; and from Bernie he'd gained an appreciation of the psychedelic mind-blowing Jimi Hendrix offshoot of that root. But it was all on his own that he had found The Doors, because they spoke most clearly to his feeling of a poetic soul yearning for liberation being relentlessly squeezed by dark forces seeking to crush and consume it. They were the musical voice of his personal 1960s, in his estimation the best American rock-and-roll band ever.

Later in August, Sergio saw 'Easy Rider' and 'Alice's Restaurant' and 'The Wild Bunch' at the movies. The first movie spoke to his wanderlust, and the second, which was both more amusing and more poignant, showed him how the Manhattan induction center he had been ordered to report to would most likely look. 'The Wild Bunch' was a cowboy's slow motion shoot-em-up splatterfest vision of Hell, which was obviously actually raging in Vietnam. It all made him want to get back to college in Philly, to make the most of his time — both intellectually and romantically — however long or short that

time was going to be.

In early September he was able to move into his small upperclass men's single occupancy dorm room in the Quad. It was time to reconnect with his dreams of fulfillment in technical creativity, and in sexual love.

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CHAPTER 5

"Laundry costs \$2 a bag," said the PO Manager, they were standing in a narrow windowless rough-walled cement cave behind the University Post Office, with four washing machines lined up along the right, and four dryers lined up opposite on the left side of the narrow cement passageway. "Cloth bags, one load size only, they can use their own or buy 'em at the Bookstore. They pay me up front, just cash, put their names and date on a ticket for each bag. They pin the tickets to the bags, and put 'em in the 'to wash' bin." Two sets of bins lined opposite walls at the front of the passageway. "You do 'em oldest to newest, one bag to a washer. Scoop out one cup of soap per load, dump it in, close the lid, and turn the knob to 'wash.' Be sure to keep its bag on top of the washer. Wash should be done in twenty minutes. Put the wet clothes into the dryer behind you when it's empty, and hang its bag on the door handle, close the door, push the button. Always keep its bag with the clothes! No mixups! Drying takes twenty minutes. Dump the dry clothes in its bag, cinch it up, put it in the 'dry clothes' bin. That's where they can pick 'em up."

"What about whites and colors, and hot and cold water?"

"Whatever they put in a bag gets washed all together. And don't touch the dirty clothes!, you aren't getting paid enough to hafta do that! So don't drop any. Water's all the same, cold. You don't gotta' fold, wrinkles are their problem. That's the job, an hour each time, do at least eight bags, twelve if you can. You get \$10 an hour, paid in cash each time you work. If we're caught up, you hafta hang around for your hour 'case some loads come in you can do 'fore you go. Okay, you're scheduled twice a week. Stop by other times if you're looking for more work 'cause sometimes people go missing, and it piles up here." This was called a "partial work-study scholarship."

Sergio emerged from the laundry cave into the dazzling sunshine of a balmy Sunday that skittered in from both sides laterally under the large entrance archway of the Mens Dormitory Quadrangle at 38th Street, to dilute the usual shadiness of its walkway plaza with added luminosity. Everyone had moved into their dorms during the previous four days, and classes began tomorrow. He called Angie from the pay-phone next to the array of letterboxes for incoming mail to the Quad rooms. He hadn't heard from her yet. The Hill House desk told him she had the same suite as last year, when he first called a few days ago. No answer this time either. It was dawning on him that "Man must wait" might be a Law of Nature regarding the Feminine Arena. He walked out into the wide treeless sunny Quad Green within the western half of the Quad, and found a spot to lie back in and look up into the clear blue with a few wispy feathery clouds drifting by as their white filaments slowly curled and braided themselves in a ballet of entanglement gradually changing the entire shape of their cloud.

"Hey," it was Bernie! He looked his usual good self, in an oversized T-shirt hanging over faded blue bell-bottom jeans, with open-toe leather sandals soled with old tire treads, and with his beaded necklace talisman, and a wide dark brown leather wristband with a watch attached. He settled himself next to Sergio, and they both sat up cross-legged, watching guys further off playing frisbee.

"So, what are you doing?"

"Just hanging out before my job." By this, Bernie meant his "partial work-study scholarship."

"What's that?"

"Cleaning out cages in the Bio Lab, rats and mice mostly."

"Yeah, I'm doing laundry. You living in the Quad?"

"Yep, right back up there at the west end of South Quad, in Willoughby-319. I'm rooming with another bio guy, so that's cool. But I kind of want to get into an apartment for next semester if I can."

"To pick better room mates?"

"Yeah, well that, but also I've been saving my seeds for flowerpots, and I can't do that in the Quad."

"Bernie, what's going on with Joe?"

"Oh, he's bummed out. He almost flunked out last semester and his father almost didn't let him return. So he's got to get B's, especially in economics, or its back to Colorado for good."

"Is he in the Quad?"

"Yeah, at the east end of South Quad, in Smith-283. He's rooming with a real straight guy, an econ major."

"Poor Joe," said Sergio with genuine sympathy.

A red frisbee winged upward into a long slanted arc toward them and then curved downward until the disc impacted the ground and rolled nearly up to their feet, where it flopped over. "Well look who's here!" It was Seth Green who had come loping over to retrieve it. He was with a bunch of his frat brothers who had taken over half of the Quad Green to play their frisbee game, since there was no room for that on the postage-sized lot of Iota Phi Theta, and the general purpose playing fields were a further walk away near the stadium.

"How are you guys doing?," was the beginning of Seth's announcement. "It's great being out of the freshman dorms, isn't it? I got a first floor room looking right out onto Locust Walk. I can get to class in five minutes."

"That's great, Seth! Did you ever get a car?" Sergio asked pleasantly.

"No, but I can drive my brother's Cougar when he's not using it. Hey, you know what? We're having an awesome kegger on Friday night, only five bucks a head, girls free. We got a great sound system, too, so it'll be a real live scene. You oughta come."

"Can I bring a date?" Sergio asked innocently.

"Yeah!" and then Seth's frat brothers, tired of waiting for the frisbee and now thinking more about beer, called him to rejoin them for the walk back to their fraternity.

"An awesome kegger," Bernie said as they watched Seth's group recede toward the 38th Street Archway.

"Seth's an asshole," was Sergio's rejoinder.

"Ah, do I see the repugnant one receding in the distance?" It was Joe, who had walked up behind them.

"Joe! Good seeing you, man!" Sergio said, genuinely delighted.

"Indeed, it is always a pleasure to join your company, gentlemen."

Sergio told Joe about Seth's upcoming frat party, and Bernie then repeated solemnly "an awesome kegger," which quip uncorked all their laughter.

"Yes, indeed," said Joe, "Seth is smug, conceited, insolent, arrogant and insufferable."

"Yeah, aside from that he's okay," and Bernie, glancing at his watch, said it

was time for him to go visit the cages, and off he went in his natural easy way.

"Joe, can I buy some grass?"

"Follow me, and we will see if the coast is clear." The room mate was gone when they arrived at Joe's, so he was able to extract a sandwich-sized clear plastic bag stuffed with marijuana. "Here, take it, \$15, you can pay me later." That was the usual rate for a "bag," which was always understood to be a half-filled sandwich baggie.

"Joe, this is at least a \$30 bag. This would last me a year."

"It is necessary that I remove temptations, distractions — and evidence — because I must monk-like seek my salvation."

"Yes, Bernie told me."

"Take it, fifteen is good enough, I can always get more if I become irredeemably desperate."

"Hey!" On Sergio noticing, "You have a private phone!"

"Yes, a great convenience," Joe said writing the number on a scrap of paper he handed to Sergio, adding "and it allows inquiries from Denver to come through with the least delay."

"Well, at least I know how to get hold of you, we can go to dinner sometimes. But I have to study a lot, too. I'm living in Paine-103 if you ever want to stop by and visit, it's way up at the northwest corner, where both North and West Quad meet. Hey, can I make a call? I want to see if Angie's back and we can go to the movie thing at College Hall tonight. We can go as a threesome."

"Of course, most important, use the phone. But I will remain here. I have to do some catching up."

"Angie! You're back!" Sergio lit up when she answered the phone. "Let's go to the Movie Party tonight in the College Hall Lounge, free popcorn. Starts at 7, we can eat first."

"Wow! It's good to hear your voice. I got your messages, and I'm rooming in the same suite with Janet again. But I'm not sure when I can get out yet. We're been having lots of mixers with food all day between sophomores and freshman in Hill, to help the new girls out, answer their questions, warn them about all you guys! I've got a big group of girls here interested in psych, and I don't think we'll be finished soon."

"So, what's Janet doing, same thing?"

"She's out at the field running cheerleader tryouts. The Athletic Department has it own big thing planned for all those girls."

"Well, I can call you back later to see. The College Hall thing will go on for a while. It's two movies and then music."

"Okay, that sounds good, I'll talk to you soon. It's just crazy here now!"

And then it was "byes" and hang up the phone.

"I guess I'll go get a bite, check out that scene, see what happens later.

Thanks again, Joe."

"I'm glad we're back, we will see each other again. Now, on to the barricades!"

"Indeed!," and Sergio left happy to see his last quip prompting a chuckle from Joe, as each entered separate solitary paths into the evening, and their uncertainties.

The evening air had turned cool as he walked down 38th toward College Hall, with the night deepening ahead of him and the dusk extinguishing behind him. He went down into The Underground to get a twelve inch cheesesteak with pepperoncinis and a punchy cola, then called Angie again from the pay-phone by the vending machines. No answer. Well, she knew where he would be. So he went upstairs the two flights to the big Student Lounge. It had been set up for the Movie Party, with a big white screen against the wide back wall, and a long folding table to the right with stacks of paper bowls and big metal pots filled with popcorn. He could see light from the window of a projection room above the entrance to the lounge, as a movie reel was being mounted onto the projector. The lounge was already quite filled with students, seated in the close-packed rows of folding chairs, and sprawled on the floor against the walls in back and by the popcorn. So he went over to the big door-like windows on the left, opened entirely for fresh air from 38th, which was below, to diffuse into the lounge and dilute the hot stuffiness of the massed body heat being given off by the audience, and found a spot on a broad flat window sill to sit on. The lights were turned off and the movie begin. Its was 'Yellow Submarine,' with The Beatles.

Sergio was positioned at the boundary of the event where the sounds of the movie, mixed into the hot fetid stuffiness of the room air, laced with cigarette — and did he detect marijuana? — smoke oozed out of the darkened room toward an escape into the vast fresh outside world, clashed at the window with the incoming drift of ever cooler crisp night air infused with noises of

traffic along 38th and the unceasing hum of the cityscape beyond. He could lean out the window and have his feet planted within the close-feeling miasma of the lounge while his head and shoulders were gently washed over by currents of expansiveness as if atop a peak in the White Mountains. He took his poetry journal out of a side pocket on his corduroy jacket, opened it on the window sill, and waited for his mind to drift into an idea he could capture with his pen. This was his way of waiting.

"You got a cigarette I can bum?" It was Elena Feldon, standing right next to him. She was wearing a dark maroon long-sleeve stretch turtleneck sweater that was well filled out in front, a short opened blue-jean jacket with snaps, bell-bottom blue-jeans, dark zip-up boots with squat inch-or-so heels; her masses of hair were bunched into a haphazardly twisted swirl that was held together against the back of her head to one side with a big shiny spring-clip, and she wore a brimless baggy pullover red and brown patterned knitted wool cap on top and slanted to the other side. She was giving him a smiling quizzical look to accompany her question.

"No, but I could use one. I'll go buy a pack if you want to wait here."

"Okay," she said smiling, and then just followed him downstairs to the vending machines.

"I'll put the coins in," Sergio said in front of the cigarette machine, "and you pull for the kind you want." She pulled for Marlboro. "Let's go see if we still got our spot."

"Back to the window! Good place to sit!" she chimed in agreement. It was free. He opened the pack, each took a cigarette, and she pulled out a book of matches to light them up with.

They took the first most satisfying drags from their cigarettes and leaned out the window to blow out their smoke. Then they introduced themselves to each other.

"Yeah, I remember seeing you at Smokey Joe's," she said, explaining herself, "so I thought you'd have one." She was majoring in journalism, and was writing stories for the Campus News.

"I wrote one about the College Hall Sit-in last semester."

"Ah, so maybe it was you I saw go into College Hall that afternoon."

"Yep. I had to get the story! There were tons of people there, how'd you know it was me? Were you inside?"

"No. I was out on the Green, but I thought I recognized you from seeing you

that time at Smokey Joe's."

"Wow, good memory. Yeah, I go everywhere looking for stories."

"So what do you have to take for a journalism major?"

"Socsh (sociology), econ (economics), am-hist (American History), anthro (anthropology) and maybe psyche. What's your major?"

"Engineering."

"Oh, hard!"

"Yeah, yeah, but it's what I want to do."

"You gotta' do what's right for you."

"I agree."

By then they were well into the second movie, the Disney animated version of 'Alice In Wonderland.'

"I love the Cheshire Cat. He disappears into his own smile. And the caterpillar sitting on a mushroom smoking the water pipe." Elena loved this story, and many other children's fantasies, like 'Peter Pan.'

"I'll bet all the people on the floor here are seeing psilocybin in that mushroom and marijuana in that water pipe," Sergio guessed.

"They're probably feeling it!," Elena knew.

And in this way Elena and Sergio chatted by the window, smoking a few cigarettes while backlit by the low artificial stars twinkling out of the distant urban expanse to shine their rays into this Student Lounge cocoon with its huddled budding chrysalises of youths privately saying their final farewells to the caterpillar childhood they were now racing far away from while both enthused yet timorous about spreading their wings and thrusting themselves headlong into the tumult and turbulence of independent adulthood of unknown outcome and from which there could be no return, no escape.

The movies were over, music was turned on to modest loudness and room lighting raised to a moderate dimness, with the half-filled room now clearing out at a steady rate, and showing the many kernels of popcorn strewn everywhere across the darkly carpeted floor, like a mass of halestones dotting a forest ground carpeted with fallen dried brown autumn leaves. Elena and Sergio walked out onto 38th Street, said their goodbyes, and turned their steps into opposite directions, she to her suite in Hill House and he to his little warren at Paine-103.

As Sergio walked through the clear night up 38th Street, he thought about

Elena, this funny animated fluidly-contoured tall girl who seemed to suddenly hop in and out of scenes like the White Rabbit in 'Alice in Wonderland,' and would disappear into her own smile. He got back to his room and wasted no time in putting himself to bed. The hustle and bustle of classes would begin the next day.

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CHAPTER 6

"Don't you think we should do something besides just neck?," Angie asked while lying on top of the bed next to him in Paine-103, with her back against the wall, her head propped up resting on her left hand with her elbow next to Sergio's head looking up into her face, while her right hand fingers toyed with his shirt buttons.

"Why don't we trade dates. I'll take you to a concert, and you take me to whatever event you like. Give ourselves different perspectives. I have a concert in mind."

"Well then, I know just the right thing for you," she replied with a conspiratorial smirk.

So Sergio took Angie to a performance of Henry Purcell's English Baroque opera 'Dido and Aeneas' put on by the Music Department in Francis Hopkinson Concert Hall, sung and played by students, especially so Angie could hear Dido's Lament, that plaintive soprano aria "When I am lain in earth." He knew that Angie would soak in the deeply sad emotion being expressed by that forlorn woman and mythical queen. The story of the opera, taken from Virgil's epic Latin poem, tells of Aeneas, a Trojan warrior who escaped the Fall of Troy and leads a band of survivors sailing west toward Sicily. His ship is blown off course and lands in Carthage, where Aeneas and his band rest, recover and reprovision, and where Aeneas falls in love with the city's queen, Dido, whose court was hosting the Trojans. Overwhelmed by her love for him, Dido takes Aeneas onto herself as both husband and the city's lord. But for Aeneas the duty of political succession demanded that he continue on to Italy to secure a Trojan colony, to have for his own domain and for his son's lineage. Dido was so distraught at her abandonment and his betrayal that she ordered a funeral pyre built for herself and set ablaze so that Aeneas could see the smoke from his ship and know that she had killed

herself. She sings her lament before stabbing herself, as Aeneas sails away. Angie held Sergio close next to her with her arm wrapped under his to pull him in tight as he walked her back to Hill House that evening.

Days later, Angie took Sergio to a packed College Hall Theater to hear a lecture by Dr. Timothy Leary, on LSD and expanded consciousness. Leary was a most amusing speaker, who radiated an infectious sense of happiness with just being alive, and a joy with being fully aware of that conscious experiential happiness. This was “the most dangerous man in America,” as President Nixon called him, an unarmed itinerant preacher of the gospel of happiness liberated through expanded consciousness, and of the wonderful gifts of mental lubricants given to us by Nature and Albert Hofmann, for unbinding the hinges of the doors of perception allowing them to swing wide open for that expansion to unfurl. But, Leary did offer some cautions. He described LSD as a substance to be used only by advanced explorers of the psyche who had been trained in its use in convivial circles supervised by older members of the tribe, and not to be taken indiscriminately by amateurs. “But grass is for everybody,” he said, because it didn’t kill anybody like the millions who had died from booze and cigarettes. Nobody in that auditorium was disagreeing with that: Leary got a standing ovation. Leary’s lecture put Angie and Sergio in the mood to do everything they could possibly do together, right away.

The radio in Paine-103 was turned on to WXPB for late night music, a pipe pulled out, and hits of marijuana traded back and forth in the darkened room. They were in the zone. Embracing on the bed, they kissed deeply and pressed their bodies into each other. This become more and more satisfying as one item of clothing after another dropped away. Angie was drawing in the warm pressure of his whole body touch, and of his knowing sensitive hands. Sergio was immersing himself in Angie’s firm luxuriant flesh, and her deeply enfolding breasts. He was engorged, he wanted it. She was not on her period, she wanted it. Sergio picked up a square foil packet, Angie nodded. He sat up on the side of he bed, ripped the foil open, and rolled on a latex condom. Then he positioned himself above Angie as she spread her legs and drew him down into her. They merged, and the animating creative forces of the universe flooded up through their quivering bodies to explode white lights in their brains propelling them into thoughtless infinities of timeless ecstasy. Then that cosmic bubble deflated into the warm dark stillness of the room, with their

racing hearts thumping into each other through their breastbones and dewy pressed-together skin, while the moist puffs of his slow panting blew down onto her neck and breast, and her upwelling pulses of moist breath brushed against the side of his head and his ear. They lay that way, meshed, entwined, warm, relaxing into stillness, for a long time. Then with a short kiss to signal the end of their journey, they disengaged, Sergio getting up to dispose of the prophylactic, tearing off sheets from a roll of paper towels and handing a few to Angie, and they got dressed. He walked Angie back to Hill House, and they were both very happy.

More nights of such beautiful shared experience occurred in the following weeks of September, and on the 26th, Angie was excited to buy the Beatles's new record, 'Abbey Road,' the day it was released. She brought it with her for her following weekend with Sergio. He was always excited by the anticipation of her next visit, and surprised to discover that excitement sparking his analytical mind and spurring him to get his student assignments done expeditiously, both to satisfy his academic aims and to ensure that his time with Angie would remain unclouded by concerns over unfulfilled academic tasks, or grades.

A day spent at Paine-103 meant that they would each have to go to the bathroom down the hallway sometime. Most guys in the Quad were out during weekend days, so it was easy to find times for going down to the bathroom unobserved. Sergio had a big wine-red velour bathrobe his mother had sown, and Angie could wrap herself in that instead of having to get dressed. Sergio would throw on some pants and a T-shirt, go scout out the bathroom to ensure it was unoccupied, and then quickly accompany Angie the short way down the antique warped dull polished wood floored hallway to the group wash-up, toilet and shower room on the first floor of Paine Residence Hall, and stand guard outside its white swinging wooden door to ward off would-be intruders while she occupied it. So far these excursions had all been brief and unobserved, but not today. A tall lanky long-muscled guy with shaggy straight sandy hair walked in from Quad Green through a nearby doorway, aiming for the bathroom. Sergio stopped him.

"Listen, I'm sorry, somebody's in there, and you can't go in for a few minutes. There's another bathroom just down the hallway, by the next doorway." The guy looked at him quizzically, and asked "Well, who's in there?"

Sergio grimaced, and understanding the imperatives of piss pressure said, "It's, ah, a lady. You know, it could take a little bit. I'm really sorry."

"Yeah, okay, I get it. I'll go to the other one."

Just then the bathroom door swung open and Angie went wide-eyed seeing this guy right in front of her, and he was also taken aback but kept his cool with a flat expression. Angie turned onto the hallway and scooted herself back to Sergio's room.

"Thanks again, and sorry"

"No sweat," and the two men went their separate ways. The guy had noticed that Angie and Sergio had bare feet, and that then slowly clued him into what was going on.

A week later Sergio got his reporting notice for October from the Draft Board, delivered in his Quad mailbox. As he walked into the side doorway of Paine from Quad Green to type up his usual monthly appeal hearing request, he bumped into the guy of the bathroom encounter, making his way out. They stopped to greet each other.

"Hey, I'm Fred. I live around the corner in Morris. I take this way for a shortcut."

"Hi, Fred, I'm Sergio, Sergio Romero."

"Yeah, I'm Fred Glowicki." Fred was a freshman on a football scholarship from a small town deep in rural mid-state Pennsylvania. The University felt a social imperative to bring in less economically privileged students from within the state's rural areas, to offer them better educational opportunities than they might otherwise receive in community colleges deprived of ivy-encrusted hoariness, and for that they had a special admissions program. An added incentive for bringing Fred in through this program was that he had been an awesome high school football athlete. "They gave me a scholarship, I'm a running back and wide receiver." Fred was a coal miner's son, and had done physical work from an early age, his muscles were not just from football training. His earnings had enabled him to buy a Kawasaki 500 motorcycle, which he had locked up in the motorcycle area outside around from the Quad. Fred was a very good-natured guy, Sergio liked Fred right away.

Angie was too busy to spend time with Sergio during early October. She was all atwitter planning with a bunch of girls for a large contingent from Hill House to go as a group to the big protest in downtown Philadelphia set for October 15, one of many such protest gatherings across the nation planned

for that day by a consortium of antiwar groups known collectively as The Mobilization, or “the Mobe.” Then her Hill House group planned to go by bus to Washington, D.C. to join in the expected enormous mass protest demonstration against the Vietnam War, set for November 15 in front of the White House. Sergio planned to stay on campus keeping up his studies and mulling over his possible draft-dodging game plans, since he felt his time outside the war might be drawing to a close, and he really didn’t have any extra psychological reserves to expend on days of chanting and marching in the streets.

Finally, on Friday the 17th, Angie and Sergio were able to get together to go eat dinner and then cozy up in Paine-103. Angie had been withdrawn all evening, and was not in the mood for romance, because she was stewing about something she was not at all happy about. After sitting for a while in silence listening to soft jazz on the radio and smoking cigarettes, she let it out.

“Donnie wants to marry me.”

“Who’s Donnie?”

“He’s a guy back in Pittsburgh.”

“Well... what do you think about that?”

“I don’t want to marry Donnie, but my mother wants me to.”

“Why?”

“He’s friend of the family. She says: ‘Oh it be so good if you married Donnie, he’s a good man, handsome, and makes good money at the mill. He could give you a good house, where you could have a family, right here near us. Why do you want to be so far away, when you could go to school here, close to us?’”

“What does your father say?”

“He doesn’t say much, but he thinks the same.”

“So... who is Donnie?”

“Donnie Battaglia, he’s twenty-six and a foreman at a steel mill. So he’s making good money, has a big new Chevy Impala, and wants a young wife to keep house for him, serve him big pasta dinners every night, and give him babies — me! — and I don’t want to do any of that.”

“You don’t have to.”

“My whole family wants me to, like that’s the role I’m supposed to play for them. It’s not about what I want to do. Anyway, that’s why I told you not to come visit last summer. It would not have been good for you with Donnie

there. He thinks he owns me. My mother's always inviting him for dinner and saying across the table 'look at him, you should get married, it'd be so good' and Donnie acts so proud of himself and says 'I'm your man, Ange' and I can't stand it. Like what part of 'you don't own me' don't you get, Donnie?" She was too worked up for Sergio to try pawing her, so after she got tired of listening to the radio and smoking, they put on their coats and he quietly walked her back to Hill House, saying goodbye outside the causeway with a simple hug and gentle kiss.

Both Angie and Sergio still had classes to attend, homework to do, jobs to clock into, and exams to study for and take, so they didn't see each other again until the following Friday. It was immediately obvious to Sergio that Angie's mood had only darkened. She just went over and over the same things she's complained about the last time, again and again. Both Donnie and her mother had telephoned her during the week. Sergio could understand why Angie so desperately wanted to escape from Pittsburgh, but he could not understand why she twisted herself up in obsessive melancholy and resentment, instead of just saying "no" she wasn't going to marry Donnie and play the subservient role that her Pittsburgh people wanted her to play. She was going to have the independent kind of life and career that she wanted to have, and for which she was clearly intelligent and talented enough to successfully attain. And that's what she was at the University for.

"If people really loved you that's what they'd want for you," he told her. "They don't want to hear that. They just want me to do like mama did, and like all the other girls there are doing." And she looped back into the same complaints again and again, about "thinks he owns me" Donnie, about "you should live near us" mama, about "he's a good man, makes good money" papa, aunts and uncles and all of Donnie's friends. "Why don't you write them a letter and spell out how you feel and what you intend doing?"

And with that Angie uncorked her frustration at him:

"I don't want you to solve my problem! I want to emote!"

That shut him up. Now he got it. He was not supposed to be the analytical Mister Fixit badgering her with options, he was supposed to be the silent all-absorbing emoto-kotex. After a stretch of strained silence, she stubbed out her cigarette, and said: "I want to go."

Wordlessly, he stood up, got her navy blue wool coat from the closet and held it out for her to slip her arms into, threw on his own golden beige cloth coat, and escorted her back to Hill House in silence. After a simple “good night,” she just walked in.

The following Friday was Halloween, and Angie was unavailable because she would be involved in a big party for the girls in Hill House. So Sergio went on a slow walk to soak in the refreshing air and the cold clear lights of the night sky and of the city. He stopped for dinner at The Underground, then came out to amble about on Campus Green. Here, he came upon groups of people in costumes, as ghouls, ghosts, witches, vampires, Frankensteins, pirates and princesses, and they were goofing around on the Green between transits coming from or going to parties, the fraternities were having their usual Basement Bashes and keggers. He wasn't in the mood for their kind of levity. He felt a bump against his shoulder, and turning to see who the annoying drunk was, instead found

“Elena! What are you doing?”

“Halloween Night, looking for stories.”

“And did you find any?”

“Let's follow 'em and see!”

So they walked all around Campus Green, and up and down Locust Walk, watching the costumed and uncostumed partygoers going about their antics, some climbing on statues, some climbing into or out of the wide open ground floor windows of the unbearably noisy totally packed fraternity houses; and throughout Elena could not resist walking along the tops of low walls and curbs and on benches, instead of the middle of the pathway. She was shamelessly acting like a child, public opinion was of no concern.

“I need to go to the bathroom,” Elena said.

“We can head back to College Hall”

“Na, we'll just go in this frat.” It was Iota Phi Theta. So Elena burrowed into the crowd with Sergio trailing her. Sure enough, Seth was “managing” the first floor, and he was bug-eyed leaning toward her trying to induce her to stay. She finally got directions to the bathroom — upstairs naturally — and waved back to Sergio as she climbed up the stairs, signaling with a bobbing downward-pointed index finger for him to wait. Seth came over to him.

“You know that girl?”

“Yeah, a bit, you?”

"She's been here a few times, but she's not a regular yet."

"Think that will happen?"

"I'm working on it."

"Tonight might not be right for that, it's too crowded and noisy"

"A lot can happen with a crowd in the frat!"

"I guess."

"She's not your girlfriend is she? I thought you already had a girlfriend."

"Well, yeah, but some things are more temporary than others."

"Are you two-timing!"

"No, no, everybody just gets what they want."

"Oh yeah!, well maybe I'm gonna' get some of that, too!"

Elena came down the stairs, joined them for a moment and said to Seth

"Thanks. I gotta keep going, I have to write about Halloween for the Campus News," and to Sergio "Let's go!" as she drilled through the crowd for the door. Seth asked Sergio: "What's she like?"

"Hot, tight, sharp, wicked and fast," and Sergio walked out leaving Seth with his dick in a knot.

Outside on Locust Walk, Sergio asked Elena "Would you ever go out with that guy?"

"No way! Total zero!"

"I'm glad you said that, because I can't stand him. He wanted to know if we were hooked up, and I let him believe we were, to pull his chain. And... I hope you don't get mad... I kind of let him believe you were..."

"A whore!"

"NO! But, kind of a party girl."

"What you say?! what you say?! tell me! tell me!"

"Well... I said... you were... hot, tight, sharp, wicked and fast."

"EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!" Elena squealed hysterically with delight and it bounced off the flagstones of Locust Walk and ricocheted off the sides of the adjacent buildings. "But I AM hot, tight, sharp, wicked and fast!, and don't you forget it!"

"Well, I'm glad you're not mad about it, I kind of used you."

"Only fair, I use you."

"How?"

"You're my guy shield, when you walk with me I don't get hit up."

"You expect to get hit up walking out here at night?"

"Yep"

"Why," and she just stood erect, threw her shoulders back and flashed him a big grin.

"Okay, yeah, I have noticed. So I'm your guy prophylactic?"

"Yip!," and then "Hey!, you got a cigarette I can bum?"

"Oh, you. Let's go back to College Hall and I'll buy a pack."

"This time I'll put the coins in!," and she threaded her left arm under his right, and tugged him forward, "Come on!"

When Sergio got back to Paine-103, he threw the pack on the desk, thinking "Wow, what a crazy chick," and then he thought about his planned visit with Angie tomorrow, the Day of the Dead.

Angie was in a better mood on Saturday. They met at Hill House for lunch in its cafeteria, and then went to the Library for a few hours of research for her, while he worked on his electricity and magnetism physics problems. Then Sergio took her for a burger dinner in The Underground before they went to Paine-103. He wondered what would happen there. They lay in bed for snuggles with their clothes on, but mainly she wanted to talk about her upcoming trip to Washington, D.C. in two weeks, for "the Mobe." He knew she didn't want to hear about thermodynamics, or electromagnetism, and for sure that he was not going to ask about Donnie and momma in Pittsburgh, and that he was forbidden to make any practical suggestions for solving her emotional problems, and that he didn't want to talk about the Draft.

So, what was left? "Let's have sex" didn't seem like a winning gambit, and trying to grab for sex in that way, with scant regard for your lover's state-of-mind, would be a cheapening of what should be the beauty of shared love and shared joy. So Sergio decided to chat about the humorous little things he'd observed since they were last together, and that meant the mildly goofy antics of Halloween. They alternated telling about their Halloween, but it was quickly apparent that Angie's all-girl Halloween Party in Hill House wasn't even interesting to her. She could just as easily have done the same things with the girls in Pittsburgh. So Angie said less and less and let Sergio ramble on about his wanderings among the Halloween partygoers on Campus Green and along Frat Row. And then she had had enough: "I don't want you telling me about other women when you're with me."

"Okay" Sergio thought, "another door closed."

Ten days later Sergio got a letter from the Draft Board, and this one was

different. It informed him that his hearing to appeal the revocation of his 2-S student deferment and appeal his 1-A summons to report for induction into the military, was scheduled for Monday, 8 December 1969, at 10 am at 39 Whitehall Street, Manhattan, New York City. Now he could use a million dollar lawyer. He only had about \$500. The next day was Veteran's Day, and the many TV news segments seen in the Student Lounge, showed the President or state officials or local officials giving speeches about patriotism at military cemeteries with fluttering American flags and grids of tombstones in the background. These broadcasts were not inspiring, nor consoling. Angie would be leaving on Friday with the Hill House contingent joining "the Mobe" so they got together Thursday afternoon. Sergio wanted sympathy about his Draft Board problem, and wanted to explain the whole bureaucratic mess as well as his many fears about having his desired career derailed by the military, and very likely his life violently sacrificed in a useless war. But Angie was equally distraught: she had kept getting calls from her mother, mainly, and Donnie, sometimes, arguing that she was really making a big mistake with her life, to be fleeing the familiar familial patterns her Pittsburgh people had long established. Angie was pissed off that this annoyance was interfering with her organizational involvement with the Hill House Mobe, so she was somewhat tone-deaf to Sergio's efforts to talk about his emotions. And then he snapped: "I don't always want to be an emotokotex for you!"

He wasn't happy, she wasn't happy, and realizing that he suggested "Let's just go back. We can call each other after all this is over, and we can figure out how to do things together without all this other stress."

She could tell that he was much angrier than he was expressing — emotions! — so she wanted to get away from that till he felt safer for her to be with — to use? Hadn't they both been using each other? It seemed that each of them had slipped from their earlier Cloud Nine sense of happily being "all giving," into a flintier attitude "making sure I'm getting my share," which was calculated by very subjective processes of "love accounting." Maybe they were asking for too much from each other and becoming resentful at not getting what the other couldn't possibly deliver. To Sergio it seem obvious, they needed time to clear their minds and reorganize themselves, before they could rejoin their unencumbered hearts.

On Saturday, 15 November 1969, the largest anti-war protest in the history of

the United States occurred in Washington, D.C. Sergio was in the Student Lounge watching the TV new broadcasts, and found Joe there. They then spent the weekend together, following the news, going to eat, Joe learning about the latest ominous developments in Sergio's Draft situation, and he learning about the latest ominous developments in Joe's Denver situation. They talked about Thanksgiving coming up in twelve days, and how uncertain life seemed for each of them beyond that point. Joe's father might just decide to prevent his son from returning to Philadelphia from his Thanksgiving vacation, and Sergio might find this to be his last Thanksgiving with his parents for a while, or worse, ever. They talked about fleeing to Canada to escape getting inducted into the Army, but neither of them really had any practical idea about how to go about doing that. The best that Sergio could think of was to make the Canada trip after Thanksgiving, buying a train ticket at Penn Station for Montreal, and then once there just hoping that the Canadians would take care of him. But that seemed ridiculous, why should they? why wouldn't they just put him on a train going back? So, ultimately Joe and Sergio just escaped into marijuana since everything else seemed hopeless.

Despite it all Sergio kept studying his engineering because without it he would just rattle himself to pieces thinking only about his impending doom. And that's what Angie was doing with all her psyche papers and Mobe organizing and protesting, to keep her mind as free as she could manage, of the prospect of being sucked into a stifling eternity of homemaking for Donnie. And that is also what Joe was doing working on his economics, because being stoned could never completely remove all consciousness of deeply troubling concerns, and never be a permanent solution to solving the problems an individual has interacting with the rest of society, and surviving all the hazards and hostility that this cruel world can throw at you. Being stoned does nothing to help you in situations where survival requires that you move your ass!

On Thursday the 20th, the Cleveland Plain Dealer broke the story of the My Lai massacre, with a front page spread featuring the grisly tragic photograph of the piled bloodied and contorted bodies of unarmed Vietnamese villagers — old men, women and children — shot dead by rampaging American soldiers. The massacre of up to 504 Vietnamese rural people over the course of a few hours, with numerous rapes committed before murdering the

victims, had occurred twenty months earlier, on 16 March 1968, and kept secret by the US Army. The anti-war protests that had lingered since the big Mobe of November 15, were now enflamed by the outrage over My Lai.

The next day, Friday 21 November, was the last day for many students to connect before most left for the Thanksgiving vacations "back home." Sergio called Angie to ask that they meet before "going home." Angie agreed, "Yes, I want to talk to you."

As he entered Campus Green, he saw her there. He joined her and they walked slowly over the grass.

"I've been thinking for a long time," she began, "about us. You have this logical way of doing everything and don't see that people's feeling are often more important. Because of that you can hurt people with the way you talk and act, and you don't even realize it. But you should! It's part of growing up. You spend so much of your energy with numbers and things that you haven't grown up emotionally. And you should be smart enough to see that and know better. So I don't think we should be together until you have made that growth. If you really care for me, you will, and if you can't make that effort then you really don't care for me. So you have to change. Don't call me and don't try to see me until you have."

"What are you talking about! What kind of change?"

"You have to think about it and realize it, instead of arguing with me all the time. I haven't anything else to say. When you have really changed yourself then you can call me, but not till then. Goodbye."

And with that she turned away and left him flabbergasted in the middle of Campus Green. The only part of this that he understood was that she'd left him.

Sergio couldn't even concentrate on thermodynamics, his favorite subject, so he trooped over to Joe's room. Joe was in, the room mate was out, good. He told Joe all about Angie's ultimatum: "Don't come back or call me until you've changed." It was way worse than just no sex, it was no girlfriend companionship, it was no love. "It's a bitch being in love," Sergio thought to himself, "it's a fucking disease." Joe was always glad to see his friends visit him these days, it broke up the tedium of his enforced monasticism. So he lent his ears sympathetically to poor pissed-off Sergio.

"What's up?" Bernie asked, walking in.

"Woman downer," Joe replied, "Sergio has been dismissed rather abruptly. He must 'change' to regain acceptability."

"Now I'm the bad guy. A bunch of Angie's friends from Hill, that I gave them the answers to their Spanish homework, now don't even know me. They walked right by me at Campus Green as if I was invisible. What the hell did I do?"

Bernie leaned back lying on Joe's bed with his knees up, elbows out, and hands behind his head, and explained: "You know, some people are still in high school. Some people never get out of high school. Some people are way ahead of high school even before they get there. They usually hate it all the way through, and flee to college, like us. Some can't stand high school because they'll never grow up, they stay kids. They drop out, get jobs, and make more money than we'll ever see. One guy in my school was driving a Corvette in sophomore year from the money he was making in landscaping. He just started with shovels and a truck. No diploma for him. Still in high school, that's your girls on the Green."

"Yeah, but what about Angie?"

"She's way past high school, probably always was, now she's looking past college, husband maybe, career maybe, and maybe just all mixed up. Lotta' people are all mixed up."

"I really don't understand women. And they for sure don't understand me."

"Well, they know you want to get laid, but that's par for the course with all coeds. Some of them want everything safe, you won't get anywhere with them, some are dead set on nailing down their man with good job prospects, and some want to get their kicks before getting serious in junior year. I've seen a bunch of them, they find you if you can give them what they want."

"Weed?"

"Mostly, acid for some. Some are real talkers, emotional types."

"So you get the pick of the litter?"

"No, man, you can't let yourself get hung up on women. Can't get messed up, these chicks come and go. I came here because I got things I want to do with the rest of my life. Gotta' keep your focus. Psych majors are all screwed up, that's why they're in psych, they're trying to figure themselves out, which they don't, and they then want to get paid to screw up other people to be just like them. People are weird, man, the rats in the Bio Lab are all better adjusted, they know exactly what they want and they go for it, they're totally clear minded, don't lie and aren't confused." Bernie sat up on the bed, to go.

"Heading out?"

"Yeah, gotta' get to my shift," Bernie was now working as an Undergraduate Assistant on a microbiology research project by one of his professors, "got to keep the agar coming." And off he went.

"How the hell does Purple Haze Stonemaster Bernie know more about people than psych major Angie, who actually works in the psych department office typing up the professor's notes?"

"Because Bernie just takes drugs while Angie is getting a professional education in the subject."

"So he sees clearly just by sitting back and looking, while she's fogged in with the cult."

"Essentially."

"What do you think I should do?"

"Don't tempt me. Let's go get something to eat." And that was a very useful idea.

The TV news at the Student Lounge was all about My Lai, antiwar protests, American war casualties, and the sixth anniversary of the Kennedy Assassination. Joe and Sergio went back to Paine-103 and succumbed to temptation, massively, and Joe repeated the Fariña Incantation: "Immunity has been granted to me because I do not lose my cool."

The next day Sergio took a cold day's ride on three trains, from the underground SEPTA electric trolley station near the Quad on 38th Street, to the 30th Street Station in downtown Philadelphia, Amtrak up to Penn Station in New York, then the Long Island Railroad out to the north shore of Suffolk County, to get home for Thanksgiving. It was so good to smell mother's home cooking again, and she'd even made blueberry pies with her own garden blueberries and with her own homemade crust. That was the kind of love he wanted, and needed.

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CHAPTER 7

"What are you making, mommy?"

"We don't really like turkey, so since it's just the four of us tomorrow, I'm making Beef Wellington en Croûte."

A long thick chunk of beef tenderloin was marinating in a big pot, she was rolling a large thick rectangle of dough encasing cold butter to prepare the puff pastry dough for baking tomorrow, open gourmet cookbooks lay on the kitchen counter, and a dusting of white flour covered the area.

"Are we going to have any dessert?"

"Of course. We have to have dessert when you're here. I'm going to make English Trifle."

He couldn't wait.

The best way of ensuring a great Thanksgiving meal was for him to get out of the kitchen. He wrapped a wool scarf around his neck, put on his heavy clothe coat, a knit wool cap, and went for an afternoon walk to see the bare tree limbs reaching up into the sky, and the brown flakey remnants of fall foliage tumbling with a rustle along the ground with each breezy gust, sounding like sea-foam sweeping up a beach. After his return home, he went into the den to watch the television news.

"Congress, today, abolished a provision in the Military Selective Service Act of 1967 which prevented the president from modifying the selection procedure, and President Richard Nixon has issued an executive order prescribing a process of random selection. A lottery, based on the birth dates of the registrants, is to be held on December 1st. The number of men required for military service will be inducted in the numerical order that their birth dates are drawn in the lottery. Selection will also proceed by age group, from younger to older." Sergio was stunned by this announcement on the 7 o'clock television news. So his fate now rested on the outcome of a game of chance in which his birthday was his predetermined bet.

Thanksgiving at home with his family, the next day, was wonderful. Two days later, Sergio took the trains back to Philadelphia. He spent most of Saturday and Sunday reading 'The Sirens of Titan' and 'Siddhartha,' to keep his mind occupied and away from anxious anticipation over the Draft Lottery. On Monday evening Sergio was in the College Hall Student Lounge in an overflowing crowd, watching the CBS News television broadcast of the Draft Lottery. Loud mournful groans were sometimes heard from stricken losers reacting to the drawing of their numbers. But mostly the crowd watched in a sullen silence of dread. As the drawing proceeded, the crowd segregated into a tight packing of people up front close to the television, waiting to hear their

numbers called, and a back fringe of small groups chattering about what they or their friends would do now. Both sections of this congregation slowly shrank by people filtering away as the evening wore on.

It became very late and with only a few people remaining in the lounge. Sergio was nearly distraught thinking he must have missed hearing his number called. Then his birth date was drawn and announced as number 362. Did he hear that right? He thought to ask someone if they had heard that too, but by then the room was practically empty and no one was left who had been paying any attention.

He went downstairs to The Underground, but it was too late in the evening and it was closed. He walked out to Smokey Joe's but it was packed and filled with the din of yelled efforts at conversation clashing into each other. They were all about the lottery. He was a mass of unceasing internalized tremors of electrified uncertainty.

He decided to buy a newspaper to see a printed listing of the lottery results, but he would have to wait for the December 2 edition to be delivered to the vending machines. So he went out into the deepening chill of the foggy night to patrol the newspaper vending racks for blocks around, hoping to find a newly restocked machine, or to intercept a delivery. Finally, he stationed himself next to a lamp post by a newspaper vending dispenser with November news still in it, and waited. At 3:52 am, a newspaper delivery van pulled up, and the driver switched out the old papers with the December 2 edition. He handed Sergio one in exchange for coins. Sergio sat on the curb, quickly paged through the paper to the lottery listing, and read the small print in the imperfect light for what he thought was "362" for his birthday. He was so stone cold stiff, bleary-eyed and buzzy-brain heavy-headed from fatigue and lack of sleep that he decided to check again later in the warmth of Paine-103. He trudged back to his room through the cold predawn darkness, threw himself into bed, and fell instantly asleep.

The clear light of midday sun shone straight down through his window onto his face, and on opening his eyes into that dazzle he realized he was awake. He got up and spread the newspaper out on his desk, scanning the little numbers of the list: 362. My God! Could it be true? Maybe as with elections, the first printed numerical results were usually inaccurate. He needed

somebody else to check. He went over to Joe's. He wasn't in. He went over to Bernie's. No one knew who he was, so he must have gotten an apartment. The Quad was nearly vacant, everybody was out. He put on his clock-radio to find a news broadcast that was reading out the lottery results. There were none. What to do?

He wrote his birthday on a scrap of paper, then went out, around the corner of the Quad from Paine to Morris Residence Hall and knocked on a door. Fred opened it, surprised, so Sergio had guessed right.

"Fred, what number did you get in the lottery?"

"I'm not registered for the Draft, I'm still seventeen."

"Fred, I want to ask you to do me a big favor. Would you please go buy a newspaper and see what number my birthday is in the Draft Lottery. I really need somebody to check. And can you do it right away?"

Saying that, Sergio extended the scrap of paper with his birthday written on it, and a five dollar bill, for Fred to take.

"Sure. But whoa, a paper doesn't cost that much."

"I know. I'm hoping to make it worth your while to do it right away."

"I know what you need. I'll be back soon as I can."

"Thanks, man."

Fred put on his jacket and left. Sergio went back to his room and sat on the bed, watching, trancelike, the slowly shifting coruscations on the painted texture of the wall, with the drifting of sunlight over time.

Fred returned. He'd bought an afternoon paper. The number was 362. There was no doubt. A news article stated that the Draft estimated taking men with numbers up to at least 180, and possibly up to 200. Sergio deflated into relief.

"Thank God. Thanks a lot, Fred. Thanks a lot."

"Here's your change."

"Oh, keep it."

"Na, you take it back. You can buy a good lunch with that."

Fred handed the money back to Sergio, who shoved it into his pants pocket.

"I'm so tired, but I should go get some food. I haven't eaten since before yesterday."

"Come on, let's go get some pizza and beer. I know a place."

Fred led Sergio around the outside of the Quad and over to the motorcycle lot

to his Kawasaki 500. The thing was a beast, a screamer. It had a three cylinder two-stroke air-cooled motor, which kind have no moving valves and burn up their oil along with the gas, and was really like having three large finned lawnmower engines merged into a single bank. Two chromed exhaust pipes splayed out from the front of the motor and curved around into slightly upswept partly muted swollen organ pipes along the right side, a single pipe was the same on the left. Fred keyed open the steering lock, swung his left leg over the long banana seat, tilted the bike upright and heeled the kickstand up, keyed the ignition on, and kick-started the motor. It burst into an insistent high-pitched growling buzz. Fred twisted the hand grip throttle with a few pulses, and the engine revs rocketed up and down, with faint blue plumes of burnt oil billowing out the back of the pipes.

"Hop on."

Sergio swung his left leg over the back of the seat, gripped the sturdy chromed handgrip bar that curved around from side to side behind the butt-stop of the seat, lifted his feet onto the rear footpegs, and felt the tingling vibrations of the bike hinting at caged fury. He nodded to Fred that he was ready.

"Hang on."

Fred twisted the throttle, released the clutch, and the bike shot forward hunkering down on its rear springs to send a jolt from the back bar up Sergio's straight tensed arms, and lifting the front wheel nearly off the pavement. Fred took them west past the campus along old tree-lined 38th Street, his sandy hair streaming behind him like flames in the cold whistling wind, with Sergio looking ahead through his hair whipping against his face, over Fred's shoulder into the buffeting airstreamed panorama kaleidoscoping into them. Fred rode them past Rocky's Market then turned right for two blocks, and pulled up to the curb in front of Napoli Ristorante.

The dining room looked quaint, with its wood paneled walls festooned with straw weave meshed empty chianti bottles and hung with pictures of Capri and the Bay of Naples, and with red checkerboard cloths on the tables. Fred and Sergio went into the small pizzeria along the other side of the long wall of the main dining room, since it was open all day. The pizzeria was largely empty, probably because of the hubbub after the lottery, and they took a varnished wood-topped table, sitting facing each other.

"What kind do you want to get?"

"Pepperoni sounds good to me," Sergio replied.

Fred started to get up to order the pizza when the woman in back called out to him, "Relax, I'll come over." She was a middle aged middle sized American Italian in a pastel red blue yellow green swirl patterned loose fitting blouse and a simple black draping calf-length skirt, and with black flats for footwear. She seemed to know Fred.

"What'll you have?"

"My pal here hasn't eaten for over a day, so we'll take a large pepperoni, and a pitcher of Rolling Rock."

The lady nodded assent, and turned to Sergio, saying "Hi, I'm Claudia, beer's coming right up." She went back, yelled into the kitchen, "Gino! large pepperoni!", and after setting the beer to pour out of the tap into a plastic pitcher, she brought them two tall slim curved flat-bottomed glasses. Then she went and came back with the filled pitcher. "Pizza'll be out in a while, so relax."

"What time does the dining room open?," asked Sergio.

"Five o'clock."

Fred was wiggling his hand off to the side, signaling to Sergio "Yeah, well maybe sometimes."

"We serve till 10, or 11. I'll bring your pie over when it's done," and with that Claudia walked back.

Rolling Rock was a mid-state beer, unpretentious and inexpensive, perfect for consumption in quantity, which is how it was enjoyed by the salt of the earth in the mining towns and rural hamlets of the farming country that Fred was very familiar with. Pitchers of Rolling Rock could wash away your sins of bad luck, and mellow out your temporary little victories of life. Fred and Sergio eased into their beers, telling each other their personal stories. Claudia brought over two paper plates and a dull stainless steel knife. A paper napkin dispenser and shakers of flaked red pepper and powdered garlic were already on the table. In time, Claudia brought over the big steaming pizza, and its warm aroma was glorious. The guys pulled out slices for themselves, using the knife to cut through the gooey connecting strands of mozzarella that had flowed between the slices that Gino had cut, by the oven. They shook pepper and garlic on their slices then chomped down greedily, huffing out opened-lips breaths to cool down the burning roofs of their mouths. This was heaven.

"So, Fred, what are you majoring in?"

"Football now, I guess. But I don't know later." Fred wasn't interested in

football as a career, it was just his ticket into the University, where he hoped to get enough education so no matter where he ended up, he'd have a good job and a better life. He didn't seem concerned to flee from his hometown, and could happily live and work there "as long as it isn't down a mine."

"What kind of work would you want to do?"

"Something that uses my brain instead of my back."

"How about engineering, that's what I do."

"My math's only good enough for me to become a machinist, and I can work as a mechanic easy enough. But I kinda want to do something else, words instead of numbers. I like reading."

"Oh, yeah, what's your favorite book?"

"The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers!"

"Well, you won't get to write any English papers on that here. They want Shakespeare."

"Hey, Fat Freddy is Falstaff, or Porthos."

Sergio reflected on this for a moment, then said to Fred, "You are a very interesting fellow."

"Oh! oh!, more beer!" Fred replied humorously, pouring out beer to refill their glasses.

"So who's your girlfriend?"

"Angie, but she dumped me. That's why I asked you to check my number."

"Oh, man, bummer," and Fred called for another pitcher. They spent the whole afternoon talking, eating the whole pizza and quaffing down two pitchers of beer. Fred insisted on paying for this session of Sergio's recovery therapy, which he'd orchestrated, and Sergio thanked him with heartfelt appreciation.

"If we'd walked we could have had three or four," said Fred as they got back on the bike.

"Or maybe five," Sergio suggested, adding "my treat for next time."

Fred fired up the beast and they screamed their way back to the Quad. For Sergio the war was over.

Back in the dark of Paine-103, Sergio looked out his window up at the Moon in the night sky, his record of Los Guaracheros De Oriente playing on his turntable. As the Guaracheros played through 'Sola y Triste - Vieja Luna' he finally accepted that his love for Angie had been left behind for good, so he released it too, letting it go into the moonlight to disappear forever. Even though his heart was now empty he realized, as the Guaracheros played

through 'Alma Libre,' that that emptiness was really his heart being liberated to love again, who knows when, with as much fullness and passion as he had experienced during the previous seven months.

Cuando te encuentres muy sola y muy triste
sin nadie en el mundo que sienta por ti,

Cuando te encuentres muy sola y muy triste
sin nadie en el mundo que sienta por ti,

Recuerda siempre que yo fui en tu vida
que con mis caricias tus penas calmaba
con migo viviste,
con migo aprendiste
los horas mas dulce que nadie vivió

Ahora quel al fin ya te marchitaste de mi lado
creyendo así que marchitaba mi existencia
si yo perdí ha una mujer que no me amaba
tú perdiste quién te quiso con pasión.

Quiero escaparme con la vieja luna
en el momento en que la noche muere
cuando se asoma la sonrisa blanca
en la mañana de mi adversidad

Quiero de nuevo revivir la noche
porque la vieja luna volverá
ella quien sabe donde está mi amor
ella sabe si aquella perdí

Vieja luna que en la noche va.

Igual que un mago de Oriente
con poder y ciencia rara
logré romper la cadena
que sin piedad me ataba

Igual que un mago de Oriente
con poder y ciencia rara
logré romper la cadena
que sin piedad me ataba

Saltó en mil pedazos como fina copa
lo triste de mi vida se volvió feliz

Logré que este amor de mí se el acaba
también tanto poder yo me acordaba

Perfume de alegría y de alma libre
sin penas ni rencores yo sabré vivir
Si me quieren sé querer, si olvidan sé olvidar
porque tengo el alma libre para amar

Logré que este amor de mí se el acaba
también tanto poder yo me acordaba

Perfume de alegría y de alma libre
sin penas ni rencores yo sabré vivir
Si me quieren sé querer, si olvidan sé olvidar
porque tengo el alma libre para amar.

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CHAPTER 8

It is wonderful feeling free. You can walk through whatever weather, at whatever time, and just exalt in the freshness of the experience. Sergio had that feeling as he walked into Campus Green on the way to class. The Green was usually an idyllic scene of Ivy League college life, as if torn from the pages of 'This Side of Paradise.' But today it was a scene of seething ferment, people were criss-crossing its expanse like a chaotic swarm of startled bees. Many were scurrying toward College Hall, which was once again occupied to overflowing, its many wide front stone steps jammed with people funneling their way toward the entryway. A trickling counterstream of people was tortuously weaving its way out of College Hall through the incoming

crowd, and on emerging from its density below the steps exploded into fragments shooting off in every directions, like the shards of a thin glass crashing onto the pavement.

Small clusters of men were scattered about the Green, sitting on its grassy cold dry hard ground, and murmuring amongst themselves in their subdued huddles. Any energy that Sergio saw being displayed was all in a convergence of Brownian Motion into and out of College Hall, and a divergence of frenzied uncoordinated rectilinear motions beyond it. He skirted the Green, walking around it on the far side from College Hall, by the Library, and went on down Locust Walk to the Engineering Building. Class was nearly empty, and after only a few minutes Professor Abel said, "Let's call it off for today. We'll pick it up on Friday, when everybody can be here." It was soon apparent that this was going to be case with every class that day, at least those with men in them. So Sergio wandered back up to Campus Green. He spotted Joe and Bernie sitting off by the Library, and joined them.

Bernie: "How'd you do?"

Joe just nodded at Sergio without smiling. "It must be bad," thought Sergio, "with no smile on Joe."

Sergio: "I got 362."

Bernie: "Wow! that's great! Really glad, man!"

"I really like this guy," thought Sergio, who replied, "Just dumb fucking luck. How 'bout you?"

Joe, ruefully: "196."

Bernie: "31."

Sergio: "Ughhh...fuck!, man."

Joe: "Student deferments have vanished overnight, and now we have the stampede you see before you, charging into the Registrar's Office to change majors into something the Army will pay for besides carrying a rifle,"

Bernie: "and heading down to recruiting offices to sign up for 6 year hitches, getting the Army to pay their tuition and keep them out of the fighting."

Sergio: "Yeah, but who the hell wants to work at what the fucking Army wants you to do?"

Joe: "Options are limited."

Bernie: "Over half the men in our class are now going to be doctors or lawyers,"

Joe, ruefully: "or dentists,"

Sergio: "or Canadians,"

Bernie: "if they can't afford F. Lee Bailey to find them bone spurs, to get out,"

Joe: "or prefer the hospitality of American prisons,"

Sergio: "or the war ends and we pull out."

The other two looked at Sergio in silence, for voicing the one wish everybody had.

Bernie: "Nixon won't pull out, he's got a hard-on for fucking commies."

Joe: "I would so much rather that he fucked Henry Kissinger."

Sergio: "Pat Nixon might prefer that, too."

"Sergio!"

Sergio: "Elena! What are you doing?"

Elena: "It's just crazy! Everybody's running around, nuts! The Art and Architecture Department effectively shut down because so many of its guys have fled to other majors. The University has an emergency ramp up of pre-med and pre-law programs, up to doubling them or more, 'cause so many guys are looking for deferments. There's so much happening right now! I'm trying to write about it for the Gazette."

Sergio: "Elena, these are my friends, Bernie," pointing to Bernie, "and Joe," then pointing to Joe.

Elena: "Oh, guys, I hope you did alright."

Bernie: "31."

Joe: "196."

Sergio: "362."

Elena: "Oooh! I'm so happy for you Serge!, but it's all so unfair! What are you guys gonna do?"

Sergio: "That's what we're discussing."

Elena: (to Bernie and Joe): "I'm so sorry," (to Sergio): "let me know what you're all gonna' do, call me to tell me" (to all): "I gotta' go, I'm running everywhere after the story!"

Bernie: "Nice meeting you."

Joe: "Likewise."

Sergio: "Thanks. I'll call you."

Elena scooted off, and Bernie and Joe looked at Sergio with "what about her?" looks on their faces.

Sergio: "Yeah, she's just someone I met. She's always bopping around, being a news reporter, bumps into a lot of people. — Hey, you guys want to do something tonight?"

Bernie: "I'm gonna be taking a little trip with the rats tonight."

Joe: "I think a solitary evening of quiet reflection is what I need."

Sergio: "Okay, guys, I'll see you around." And they each then drifted away separately to mull over their new futures.

By Friday, the seismic shift to college life, jolted into motion by Monday night's lottery, had settled into a new complex of routines. Sergio found himself the only guy left in his Spanish Literature class, since all the other men had jammed themselves into different classes needed for their new pre-med and pre-law majors, and a bunch of his fellow engineering students had signed up with the National Guard, in the hopes of only having to defend the United States from within the United States, and not right away. He felt lucky and he didn't feel guilty, so he didn't say anything about it nor criticize anyone for their coping mechanism or escape plan. Elena had been right: it was all so unfair, and the only truly good way to fix the whole damn mess would be to end the fucking war. How long would it take for that to happen? No matter how soon, it could never be soon enough.

Sergio spent his time outside class immersed in his studies, and making much headway in them. His friends were off, embedded within the urgency of their personal concerns, and not in the mood for casual goofing off, so he didn't disturb them. Even Fred was preoccupied, working away at his reading and freshman English papers. He wanted to get a degree in English, and wanted the profs to recognize that. So one early evening, walking back from the Computer Center by Hill House, Sergio thought to see if Elena was in, and he called from the phone by the reception desk.

"Sergio!"

"Hey, Elena, I just thought I'd call like you asked, and tell you about the guys."

"Ooooh! I'll be right up!"

He'd thought he would just be chatting with her over the phone, like most of the girls did with casual callers, but this would certainly be nicer. When she arrived he suggested they walk to the nearby Underground, and catch up.

"I read your article in the Gazette, you covered a lot of ground, and some good quotes."

"What are your friends going to do?"

"Well, Joe is now aiming to become a dentist. He says the crowd waiting to register into pre-med was so huge, and medical school is so hard, that going

over to the Dental School and registering there for the pre-dentistry program was easier, there's less competition. Still, it's a tough row to hoe. He's kind of on the edge of how far up they're likely to draft. Bernie, on the other hand, doesn't want to change his major because he's doing just what he likes. So as far as I can tell, his plan seems to be to hope at flunking the physical — or try to — and then go to Canada if he doesn't."

"Oh, wow, bummer. And what are you doing?"

"I'm just doing my science thing, reading, writing a little poetry."

"Show me some."

"Well, all I got with me now is a translation I worked up for Spanish Lit class. We're studying poetry now, and write interpretations. I picked a poem by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, and did this with it," opening his poetry journal and placing it in front of her on the table, she saw the following.

Rima LXIX — Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870)

Al brillar un relámpago nacemos,
Y aun dura su fulgor cuando morimos:
¡Tan corto es el vivir!

La gloria y el amor tras que corremos,
Sombras de un sueño son que perseguimos:
¡Despertar es morir!

Rima LXIX — Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (a translation)

In a stroke of lightning flash life births anew,
Yet before its aura fades death will ensue:
Life as brief as breath!

That glory and those loves we grasp onto
Are shadows within dreams that we pursue:
Waking is our death!

Elena concentrated on the poem reading it over a few times, then looked up him. "It's beautiful. Your wording even made the Spanish verses clear for me. I pretended they were in Sicilian and my mother was reading them to me." This opened them up to exchanging their personal stories, and they decided

to eat dinner together at The Underground, ordering cheeseburgers, so they could take their time to talk. Elena's family lived on the coast, at Asbury Park, where her father managed a marina. His grandparents had come from England. Her mother was Sicilian, so Elena had learned some bits of morphed Italian from listening to her mama.

She put her hand in his as they walked back slowly and wordlessly in the dark on Campus Green, and as they neared one of the big trees, Sergio stopped, turned into her, and gently drew her in by slipping his right arm around her waist in back. She fell into his embrace, bringing her arms around his neck as he slid his left palm down across her shoulder blade. They pressed each other into themselves for a slow kiss. Her body was relaxed and receptive in his embrace. After a few minutes they disengaged a bit to look into each other's tranquil faces.

"Can I call you tomorrow. Maybe we can do some things together."

"Yes. I would like that."

So they walked arm-in-arm back to Hill House, where they parted after a sweet goodbye kiss.

After that night, Sergio and Elena spent almost every evening together after dinner, studying at the Library when the academic pressures were high because of papers and problem sets due and impending tests, or listening to music and making out in Paine-103 when the academic pressures were lower. Elena really liked Ella Fitzgerald. Christmas Vacation — officially, "Winter Break" — was coming up at the end of December, and they would each go home for the two weeks, returning soon after New Year's to then charge into the week of final exams for the Winter Semester. After a short respite from the academic rigors, the Spring Semester of 1970 would begin near the end of January. Knowing what was coming up for them separately made their present time together all the more precious. Elena began spending her nights in Paine-103.

"There's a movie I'd like you to see with me. The Film Society is screening it at the College Hall Theater on Friday night. Would you come?"

"Sure. What's it?"

"It's called 'On Dangerous Ground.' It's a black-and-white from '51, in the film noir style."

"Cops and robbers?"

"Not really. It's about a bitter city cop whose gotten too rough with suspects, and is sent up state to cool off by working on a manhunt in the back woods. But it's really about deep loneliness being overcome by the opening of the heart. I think it's very poetic."

"Yes, I want to see that."

So they did. After, they stopped to kiss by their favorite tree on Campus Green, before wending their way back to Paine-103.

"I want to make love to you."

"I know."

"I've got what's needed, for whenever you're ready."

"I know. Let's go."

The room was nice and toasty. Sergio hung up their coats, he shucked his shoes and she her tall zip brown leather heeled boots. She set her knit hat on the desk and unclasped her bunched spiral of twirled hair, shaking her head to loosen it into a glossy black-brown cascade falling down her shoulders and back. He put a record on the turntable and turned off the room light. She melted into his tight embrace wrapping her arms around his neck, and they kissed deeply. The first strains of Rachmaninoff's 2nd Symphony swelled faintly into hearing. His hands pressing against her back slid around under her arms to caress the sides of her generous breasts, as she dropped her arms to glide her hands down around his neck and chest and undo his shirt buttons one by one. Sergio slid his hands in to cup the fullness of her firm breasts until Elena began undoing this belt, and he moved his hands down to undo hers. He slid his hands under her maroon sweater and then up to slide it over her head and off her outstretched arms. She pulled his shirt off his shoulders and he pulled his sleeves off to have it fall away, too. He let his pants fall and stepped out of them, but hers were too snug against the sensuous contours of her lovely rounded butt and elegantly thighed long legs, that she had to sit back in bed and let him pull them off her. She swung her legs into bed and he lay next to her. As they kissed he rolled her up on top of him and worked his fingers over her bra hooks, three of them, trying to undo them one-handed. She looked in his face with a smile that said: "You'll never do it, use two hands." And so he did. She sat up to discard her bra, revealing all the generous fullness and large nipple browns of her breasts. He was rapt by the sight of her in the half-light: a tall lithe woman of fresh full firm natural beauty.

Sergio transmitted his sexual desire and physical love by firm full-bodied and open-handed touch that was all one unhurried continuous caress. Elena transmitted her sexual desire and physical love by absorbing the physicality of his affection and the warmth of his emotion with her whole body stretching cat-like strongly into his embrace, as one single fluid mass of feminine sinew.

He took off his boxer shorts, and she slipped off her panties. They embraced again on the bed into slow passionate kissing, and then a caressing of deeper urgency. He was ready and pulled out a foil-wrapped packet from under him on the bed, and held it up for her to see. She nodded. He rolled over, sat up, tore open the packet, and rolled on the lamb-skin. He'd warmed it up by lying on it, to ward off any chills. He turned around and lay above her, and she put her hands on the sides of his face and drew him toward her as she arched her legs to enfold him into her acceptance. Their lovemaking was a crescendo of primordial energy bursting through into a diminuendo of transcendent peace. They were in love.

The light of Saturday morning woke them early, still aglow in their love, but hungry and needing to take the first pisses of the day. Sergio threw on some pants and a tee shirt for a quick whiz and a scouting out of the bathroom scene. The dorm guys should mostly be away for the weekend or sleeping one off, and the coast was clear. With Elena in his red velour bathrobe, they scooted down the hallway, and he stood guard outside the bathroom door while she was occupied. Just as Elena came out of the bathroom and turned toward the room, Fred trooped onto the hallway walking toward them. He momentarily stopped in surprise with raised eye brows, then thought to continue briskly out to minimize embarrassment. Elena was pursing her lips to keep from laughing, and Sergio finally surrendered to the ridiculousness of the situation, and dropped the pretenses.

"Fred, this is my girlfriend, Elena. Elena, this is Fred, a really good guy who helped me out when I needed it."

"Hi, Fred!"

"Ah, hi Elena."

"So, Fred, it's cool. Elena and I are trying to spend a lot of time together, so we'll all probably see each other coming and going more often."

"Okay. Yeah, it's all good."

"It was nice meeting you, Fred!"

Elena and Sergio went back to their room, and Fred continued out, wondering, “another one, how’s he do it?”

It is a fact that guys never believe that another man’s apparent girlfriend successes, especially if in rapid succession, could ever be outcomes purely of dumb luck. But for Sergio they had been. For him, falling in love had been the acceptance of serendipity offered to him by an unfathomable universe. A consistency of kindness is the essence of lasting love. After more than a week of honeymooning in Paine-103, Elena and Sergio parted to return to their parents’s homes for the Winter Break.

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CHAPTER 9

Sunday after New Year’s 1970, Elena and Sergio rushed into each other’s lovemaking as soon as they could find one another, after having arrived back at school that weekend. Then they rushed into a week of studying, scribbling, typing, calculating and cramming for the impending week of final exams, only taking a break during the next weekend to refresh themselves by the restorative powers of enthusiastic physical love. After running the gauntlet of Finals Week they emerged into the delightful ease of a week without classes, between the end of Fall Semester and the beginning of Spring Semester. Sergio took Elena to the Philadelphia Opera on the 21st, to see Giacomo Puccini’s opera, ‘La bohème.’ It was nice to drop the jeans and pullovers, and dress up for a change, in a suit and tie for him and a floral print dress for her, and enjoy an unhurried evening of casual elegance with lush live romantic classical music. They even added grace to the usual close jolting squealing zappy space inside the SEPTA underground trolley they rode downtown in, merely by the tastefulness of their attire and serenity of their happiness. Earlier that day, Timothy Leary received a 10-year sentence for his conviction on a 1968 offense, with a another 10 years added soon after for a 1965 insult to American Social Orthodoxy that the Guardians of Hegemony by the Capitalist Ancien Régime remained resentfully offended by. Thus, Leary was scheduled to serve a total of 20 years consecutively. Many murderers and swindlers served less, but then their crimes were not violations threatening the foundations of the American Social Orthodoxy, just instances of inconvenience within it. On the following Sunday, before the beginning of

Spring Semester classes the next day, Elena took Sergio to the premier of the movie, 'MASH,' and his reaction after was: "Glad I'm missing the war."

Walking casually down the main pathway through Campus Green on the way to his afternoon class in Nuclear Physics, Sergio was surprised to suddenly come face-to-face with Angie, who had walked in front of him from somewhere off to the side.

"Angie. Hello. How are you?"

She looked at him for a moment with a serious though neutral facial expression.

"Why haven't you called me?"

"Well... you told me not to."

"I didn't tell you not to call me ever again."

"You told me not to call you until after I had changed."

"Yes, and that was quite a while ago, so..."

"Well, I haven't changed, and I'm not gonna' change. I like me just as I am. And... I'm happy with what I'm doing now."

She looked him in the eye with her same calmly serious expression, perfectly masking he knew not what within the caldron of her emotions. Well, maybe not perfectly, there may have been the faintest possibility of a hint of sadness around the outer corners of her lovely lushly lashed dark eyes. Then she turned away and walked down the pathway, to Hill House he imagined. He watched her recede into the shadows under the trees, and disappear in the distance around the corner of the Library. Then he resumed his own walk to class. He never mentioned this encounter to anyone afterwards, but he never forgot it.

"Look at this!," said Sergio proudly to Elena over a week later in Paine-103 on a Friday night, showing off his latest invention.

"What is it?"

"A hookah! Now we're set like Caterpillar! I made it from plastic straws and a big soda cup from The Underground, the bowl part of my pipe, and a bit of plastic tubing I got at the hardware store."

The contraption was quite ungainly. He had the front part of his walnut burl pipe, which he had brought with him to college in anticipation of sitting like Sherlock Holmes in an armchair unlocking great mysteries while perfumed by the rich aroma of sweet tobacco, propped up between books, with its stem connected via a short length of soft plastic tubing to a straw plunging into a

pool of water in the lower half of the large waxed paper container, closed at the top with a plastic disc lid, and a second straw extending from the air space above the water, through the lid and out above.

"See? We just put the stuff in the bowl, light it up and suck it up bubbling through the water, cooled and smoothed."

It didn't work very well, smoke escaping directly up from the bowl and out the taped gaps where the straws poked through the lid, and the mouthpiece being too narrow to allow for sufficient suction to be imposed to create the desired smoke flow. But, they did get a little, and it was all good for a laugh.

The day before Lincoln's Birthday, Sergio arrived at the Physical Sciences and Mathematics Building a bit later than the start of Professor Koppelman's lecture on Calculus and Differential Equations, to find an ambulance parked out by the sidewalk in front of the building, and an agitated crowd of students standing off to the side. As he entered the broad airy naturally well-lit by a wall of windows, low ceilinged breezeway that formed the lobby, two or three men in uniforms, one being a police officer, came rushing out of the auditorium Sergio was headed for, and raced past him toward the entrance, wheeling a gurney carrying a body wrapped entirely with a beige covering. The auditorium was empty when he looked in, and the blackboard in front had some equations written in white chalk on it. A sheet of paper with a hastily written "Class is cancelled for today" was taped to the auditorium door. On walking back outside, Sergio noticed drip trails of dried blood on the shiny polished stone floor of the breezeway. Outside, the ambulance drove away, and he got the whole story from the jumble of nervously disjointed fearful chatter among the students.

Koppelman, a full professor, had been shot in the chest and killed by a former graduate student, a man called Cantor, whose proposal for a mathematics thesis Koppelman had rejected, after which Cantor dropped out. Cantor had appeared today at the start of Koppelman's lecture, with a gun, shooting the professor dead and wounding another member of the Mathematics Department, Oscar Goldman, who had been rushed away to the hospital, and would survive. After shooting the two mathematicians, Cantor shot himself dead.

Koppelman's lectures had been very dry and exacting, being expositions of proofs for theorems, and of existence, uniqueness and limiting conditions,

and all delivered in an uninterrupted monotone of refined German-accepted perfect English of measured pacing. He clearly was a very knowledgeable man in his subject and tried delivering it with all the clarity he thought himself capable of. But he was not an entertainer, and was entirely unaware of the soporific effect of his delivery on much of his sophomore audience. Sergio could easily imagine that such an opacity of awareness of others may have driven an undoubtedly inherently unstable Cantor over the edge with frustration over his failures of interaction with Koppelman. Within a week, the School of Engineering had moved all its students, who had been in Koppelman's Mathematics Department class, into a substitute course on the same material, now taught by an Electrical Engineering professor, a Texan with a short flattop crewcut, a real drawl, and who wore string ties. He wasn't an entertainer either, but he was dynamic, clear, uncompromising, and would later provide Sergio with the greatest insight about studying and taking tests that Sergio would receive during his college education, and which technique led to all his subsequent academic successes.

Saturday was Valentine's day, and Sergio planned an evening in Paine-103 with Elena, listening to the new Doors album, 'Morrison Hotel,' that he'd bought on its release just five days earlier. He was all excited and just about to load his kludgy hookah, when Elena, with barely suppressed impish mirth said,

"Wait, I have a present for you."

She pulled a compact construction of a type Sergio had never seen before, out of a brown paper bag and plunked it on the desk. It was a short length of wide thick-walled hard-plastic purple-tinted transparent tubing bonded at a slant angle to a wider disc base. A shorter length of narrow metal piping emerged at an angle from the lower part of the long side of the wide plastic tube, and was capped by a round wooden pipe bowl with a shiny round wire mesh jammed down into its hollow.

"It's a bong," she said, and poured some water into the plastic tube to cover the length of metal pipe within it.

The bong worked much better than Sergio's hookah contraption, and they very much enjoyed their athletic sex accompanied by Doors music that night.

In early March, Elena was busy writing papers for her classes, and news articles for the Campus News, while Sergio was spending his evenings at the Computer Center, running and rerunning programs to solve problems of

calculation. He had discovered that one could get decent hot meals with good fresh salad at all hours, and cheaply, at the University Hospital Cafeteria. The hospital was on the opposite side of 38th Street from College Hall. One such evening, eating late in the nearly empty room, Janet Hoffman came in to buy some take-out food. She was dressed in a woman's white pants suit medical uniform, and her hair was clasped in a blonde twisted twirl at the back of her head. She spotted him and came over, sitting across the table from him.

"Hi, Sergio."

"Janet!, what a surprise. What are you doing here?"

"I'm working in a doctor's research project in medical technology for sports medicine."

"Wow, that sounds involved."

"So... How come you haven't called Angie? Did you really leave her?"

"Janet, I didn't leave Angie, she dumped me. She wanted me to change, and I'm not going to. I like me as I am."

"Well don't hate her for that."

"I don't want to hate anybody. I don't have any rancor toward Angie, I wish her happiness, I really do. But I also wish me happiness."

"Are you seeing somebody else?"

"... Yes."

"What is she like?"

"Well... she's a kook, she's happy, she's wonderful, and I'm happy."

"Seems like things go fast with you. How long do you think this going to last? Do you think you're going to stay with her longer?"

"I'm not looking for anything else. I'll give it what I've got in me to give, and stick with it until I can't, for who knows why, and who knows when. You're the one who told me that people have a tough time staying together because they expect too much from each other, and they change — or grow — with time. Anyway, how's Brad?"

"He's probably okay."

Sergio let this pass without comment, and then changed the subject.

"I want to give you something I wrote out for myself, from my journal. I guess I'm done trying to polish it up, so take this clean copy," handing Janet a neatly penned sheet of paper. "Really, it's you who put the idea in my head."

"Okay, thanks. I gotta' go." Janet took the sheet, folded it in thirds, and put it in a side pocket of her uniform jacket, then got up to leave

"Good seeing you," he said, and then she turned and left. Sergio left shortly

after, walking under lamplight up 38th Street through the cool night.

Janet took the elevator up to the Adaptive Medical Technology and Sports Medicine Laboratory, and went to her corner of it to continue logging measurement data from lab notebooks of the medical research doctor for the project, while munching on her tuna sandwich and apple. She was alone in the lab, and when finally done with her chore for the night, pulled out the paper Sergio had given her, unfolded it, and read the following.

True Perfection
S.R., 2/25/70

True perfection is unique. You cannot duplicate a true perfection by trying to flatter it into existence with repeated imitations. The only true perfection you can ever feel is the uniqueness of a perfect moment. You may have many moments of apparent perfection in your life, but each must necessarily be unique to be truly perfect. The only way to preserve moments of true perfection is to remember them in all their uniqueness, without regrets for their brevity and rarity, and without concern for trying to reproduce them.

You cannot solve your problems by asking the world to change around you to preserve them. You can only solve your problems by facing into them and changing what you are willing to change in yourself to eliminate them, and accepting what you must be willing to accept from a hostile world in order to maintain what you are unwilling to change about yourself. In this way you live your life with confidence, liberated from the self-deceptions of false hopes.

An artist who is committed to his art knows that he may have to sacrifice a love to stay true to his art. Thus is the steel of your commitment to your art tempered by the quenching of your incandescent ardor in the deep chill of sacrificed loves. So be very clear that the art you commit to is worthy of the sacrifices it will entail, because the art and loves you hold true to are the heart and soul of your very life, and the sparkle of that living will be those moments of true perfection that arise spontaneously out of the depths of your commitments.

You and I have shared a perfect moment, like two birds who chanced to

perch briefly on the same branch while on their separate wanderings and long migrations. Even if you never remember that moment with me, its good will carry through the course of your life for having set you on the heading you chose to take for being who you wanted to be.

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“Joe!”

Sergio and Joe had crossed paths on Campus Green.

“You wanna’ room with me for next year? Housing’s just called for applications for apartments in the Superblock Tower they’re building out on 38th.”

“That would be pleasant, but I don’t know if I will be here next year.”

“Yeah, I know. But, hey, look, let’s apply now to be sure we get one, and plan for the best. If it doesn’t work out for us, the University will throw somebody in there to make sure it gets its rent.”

“Yes, excellent thinking. Let’s go apply right now.”

And so they did.

On a Sunday later in March, Elena took Sergio with her on a visit to the University Museum. She was doing research on American Indians for two papers she was writing, one for Anthropology, and one for American History. Elena had chosen American Indians as the subject of her papers to benefit from an economy of effort. Beyond that, American Indians were an interesting, compelling, and too often tragic subject. She was keen to write the story. They walked through the galleries of the Museum, peering into glass cases filled with artifacts, from ancient “natives” all over the world, that University archeologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, historians, missionaries and explorers had collected over the last two centuries.

“How’d they get all this stuff?,” Sergio asked.

“Stole it! Like everything else they got from the Indians.”

“Well, they’re taking some of it back now, they captured Alcatraz.”

A band of American Indians, activists in AIM — the American Indian Movement — had ferried themselves across San Francisco Bay to occupy the abandoned federal prison island of Alcatraz, “The Rock,” just before last Thanksgiving. Since then, many others had come to join them and help broadcast their protests at how Native Americans had been mistreated in the past, and were continuing to be mistreated and neglected in the present day,

by the Great White Father's American Society.

The week of midterm exams followed, with Elena scribbling and typing furiously, surrounded by opened books: Helen Hunt Jackson's 'A Century of Dishonor,' Dee Brown's 'Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee,' and Webster's Dictionary among others; and Sergio slipping the middle stick of his log-log-decitrig slide rule and gliding its lined viewing window furiously back and forth for his calculating. Then, after a tender night together, they each went to their family homes for the nine days of Spring Break. Sergio celebrated his twentieth, on "362," jumping butterfly handlebar banana seat 24-inch wheel bicycles with his younger brother off ramps propped up on a dirt hill, hearing his father's arias reverberating from the shower, and with his mother's cooking of tostones al mojo de ajo, arroz con azafrán y frijoles negros y picadillo, and a dessert of hot homemade blueberry pie topped with whipped cream. That was his Easter Sunday. It was so good to be alive.

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CHAPTER 10

Classes resumed the first week of April. The weather was balmy, wet or dry, and it was a joy to walk across campus, from the Men's Quad, down Locust Walk, across Campus Green, and then down lower Locust Walk to the Engineering Building, and across the street to the Physics Building, for Sergio's classes. And it was nice to go with Elena to all their favorite eating places, from Rocky's Market way out west, to the food trucks along 38th near the Quad and 40th near Smokey Joe's, The Underground, and sometimes downtown for fried shrimp when they took SEPTA in to visit the Philadelphia Museum, or taking picnic lunches to eat while sitting on the grass in the parkland along the Schuylkill River.

The harrowing flight Apollo 13, originally intended as the third Moon landing, captured world attention because of its seven days of intense suspense, everyone wondering if the three NASA astronauts would manage to survive in their spacecraft, heavily damaged by a fiery explosive equipment malfunction, and return to Earth, making a successful reentry through the atmosphere without being incinerated to death. It was a squeaker, and Sergio was glued to the news about it.

The following Wednesday, 22 April 1970, was Earth Day. The first seed of Earth Day had been planted by Rachel Carson with the publication of her book, 'Silent Spring,' in 1962, which caused a vast expansion of public awareness about the natural environment. Carson wrote about how the massive use of the chemical insecticide DDT in agriculture had led to its leaching into the environment and tainting the food ingested by birds, which caused them to lay eggs with severely thinned and fragile shells, thus leading many species, like the magnificent Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles, rapidly toward extinction. Public outcry caused DDT to be banned in the United States.

The 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill was a massive ten-day outpouring of crude petroleum from the blow-out of a submerged drill rig suspended from an above-surface platform. It was the largest oil spill ever to be seen in United States waters up to that time, and fouled the beaches and coastline all along Santa Barbara County, and on the Channel Islands on the opposite side of the Santa Barbara Channel. The thick oil and gummy tar washed up along the shoreline killed thousands of sea birds, as well as dolphins, elephant seals, sea lions, otters and many other forms of marine life, and despite the spontaneous and desperate efforts by hundreds of volunteers from the public to clean off heavily tarred birds, and to block the oil's movement and then absorb it with masses of straw. This catastrophe would have very long-term deleterious effects to the naturally gorgeous environment of coastal Southern California. Public consciousness had been awakened to a new concept: ecology, the interconnectedness of all natural environments, and the great harm to their integrity that could be caused by toxic chemical pollution.

That new public awareness of ecology sparked the rapid growth of the intensely felt Environmental Movement in the United States. Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, who was an ardent conservationist, sought to capitalize on the new public sentiment to preserve and protect the environment. He gathered like-minded activist-organizers and political operatives to help craft a nation-wide campaign of teach-ins to be held on hundreds of college campuses, to agitate for a national environmental initiative, and to debate the Vietnam War, on a single day: Wednesday, 22 April 1970.

The Earth Day event scheduled for Campus Green was certain to be big and popular, everyone on campus was enthused at the prospect. Classes would still be held that day, and Finals would only be a month away, so Sergio and Elena planned to meet at Campus Green on the afternoon of Earth Day after their academics were done for the day.

Sergio attended a long review of his Nuclear Physics course, conducted by Professor Whales himself and not just a graduate student. Whales brought all the disparate elements of the material: transuranic elements and isotopes, alpha decay, beta decay, nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, gamma emission, neutron emission, radioactivity, half-life, neutron activation, transmutation, critical mass and radioactive shielding, into three cohesive practical applications of that science, which he set about to describe.

The first was about boiling water fission reactors: masses of uranium in a pile submerged in water, and whose quantity of mutually fission-causing radioactive emission and bombardment — by thermal neutrons — and degree of bulk heating of the nuclear pile, were controlled by the withdrawal or insertion of thermal neutron absorbing control rods made of boron, through an array of bore holes passing through the body of uranium pile, and this whole assembly contained within a thick-wall steel vessel through which water was pumped, cooling the core by heating itself, and that hot water then exited to drive conventional steam turbines that turned electric generators. And all of that had to be contained within a thick-walled concrete silo to shield the outside world from any radioactivity that would leak out of the primary steel container and its metal piping in the event of an equipment malfunction or explosive failure that breached the steel containment. It did seem rather prosaic to use a complicated technological system for safely containing a highly toxic, expensively refined dangerously radioactive pile of metal whose rate of nuclear fissioning was to be precisely controlled remotely by the accurate positioning of absorptive control rods and the pumping rate of cooling water, just to generate steam for driving electric generators in the same way as had been done since the days of Nikola Tesla.

The most potent application of nuclear power by fission, made so far, has been for the construction of atomic bombs. The object here is to compress a mass of uranium that was highly enriched with its most radioactive isotope, uranium-235 — from 0.7% for natural ore to over 85% for bomb-grade

uranium — so rapidly that the uranium mass was driven from being a subcritical mass to becoming a supercritical mass before the rapidly accelerated rate of fission reactions and neutron emission, due to the rapidly diminished proximity of uranium nuclei from each other, would heat the metal to melting and falling apart. As a supercritical mass, each fission reaction by a uranium nuclei was certain to have its emitted thermal neutrons initiate fission reactions in more than one other uranium nuclei they bombarded. This process was a runaway chain reaction, and would in less than a microsecond lead to a nuclear explosion. The city of Hiroshima was devastated by a uranium fission bomb based on these principles, and the city of Nagasaki was devastated by a fission plutonium bomb — plutonium being an artificially created transuranic element — in the very last days of America's war with Japan in 1945.

So how would you make a fission bomb? Professor Whales drew a chalk circle on the blackboard to represent a sphere of uranium or plutonium. Then he drew a larger circle around that, and labeled the intervening space between the circles "high explosives." Then he drew a series of short lines outside close to the outer circle and parallel with its surface, spaced around the circumference, and labeled those "initiators." Off to the side of this assembly, he drew a little box, and labeled it "neutron generator," and around the entire assembly he drew another enclosing contour and labeled it "case." Atomic bomb engineering was all about getting the masses and dimensions of all these elements into the right proportions, and wired to act in the proper sequence, to create an exploding supercritical mass. Prior to use, an atomic bomb has to remain as a subcritical assembly, with a minimum of spontaneous fissioning so it can be stored and transported as safely as such a thing can be handled. The neutron generator would be triggered electrically to emit a short burst of neutrons to initiate fissioning within the bomb's core. The initiators would be triggered electrically to cause local explosions at points on the periphery of the mass of high explosive material. By the appropriate shaping of that mass, the expanding shock waves of those local explosions would merge into one implosive wave, which would compress the radioactive core and rapidly drive it to supercriticality, and ultimately produce the atomic explosion that would burst its containment vessel and then send out its energy and radioactive emissions in all directions in the external world.

Sergio and the other physics students were all fascinated. Whales paused for a moment to look at the now elaborate chalk sketch, then turned to the class, saying, “What a thing to talk about on Earth Day.”

The last process for extracting energy from nuclear reactions is the most common one used in the Universe: nuclear fusion, which powers the stars. The only successful terrestrial application of nuclear fusion so far had been to boost the explosive power of fission bombs. A small golfball-sized sphere filled with a gas made of radioactive isotopes of hydrogen — deuterium and tritium — would be embedded at the very center of the radioactive metal core of an atomic bomb. This gas sphere was called the “spark plug.” The implosion of the metal core would compress the gas of the spark plug to the point of driving deuterium and tritium nuclei to fuse into each other creating helium nuclei, and each such reaction emitting an extremely energetic neutron. Such fusion neutrons could penetrate deeply through the incoming compressed mass of metal, knocking into many uranium or plutonium nuclei and vastly enhancing the rate of fissioning and the emission of fission energy, thus exponentially increasing the explosive power of the bomb.

Controlled thermonuclear fusion was the idea — and so far only a dream — of building chambers wrapped with many types of high current coils for generating magnetic fields within those chambers, which would contain hydrogen gas that had been so infused with electrical energy that its neutral atoms had been ionized — broken apart — into a swarm of free electrons, negatively charged particles, and positive ions, the bare nuclei of hydrogen atoms stripped of their orbiting electrons. This was a plasma. The charged particles would be confined by the magnetic fields, by electromagnetic forces and interactions very well understood since the 19th century. It was hoped that by pulsing the coils in the right sequence with huge currents to squeeze down the magnetic fields that the plasma could be compressed to the point of fusing the nuclei, and that the resulting emission of fusion neutrons could be captured in a blanket of neutron absorbing material that would then heat up and in turn boil water for steam. Experimental facilities to develop such a technology had been in operation since at least 1955, and by 1970 very large and elaborate ones existed in the United States, Russia, England and other sites around the world.

The fundamental problem with controlled thermonuclear fusion by magnetic

confinement was that no matter how the “magnetic bottle” was squeezed, the plasma always found a way to quickly ooze out before any fusion reactions could be initiated. It was like having toothpaste always squirt out between your fingers no matter how you went about trying to squeeze the tube in hopes of propelling a controlled stream onto your toothbrush. The belief of controlled thermonuclear fusion research scientists was that “fusion is fifteen years in the future.”

It was all so fascinating. Class was over for this course, and all its physics students had left to do was study for the final exam. Sergio picked up his books and wandered out onto the street, where poor Koppelman’s body had been loaded into an ambulance ten weeks earlier, and Sergio crossed the street to enter lower Locust Walk. He could hear amplified outdoor speeches being given in the distance, punctuated by bursts of applause, as he walked toward Campus Green. If scientists and engineers could only make controlled fusion possible then we would be able to get away from the use of coal and oil, whose extraction had been so destructive of the environment of both coal mining and oil drilling regions, like West Virginia and the sea and shores of the Santa Barbara Channel, and whose use so hideously fouled the air, as smog and acid rain. Then the United States might be able to provide its citizens with abundant and inexpensive electrical energy to power their homes, businesses and creative endeavors. This would also mean freeing the country from the threat of political manipulation by foreign suppliers of energy resources the United States might become dependent on in a future without fusion technology. However vast the domestic natural deposits of coal, petroleum, natural gas and uranium might appear today, in 1970, they were nevertheless finite and steadily being depleted with their consumption to generate electrical power and combustion-driven torque for transport vehicle motors, like Sergio’s beloved Ferrari cars. The prospect of having the United States becoming dependent on Saudi Arabian oil in the near future, for example, was not appealing at all. With an abundant domestic production of electricity from fusion reactors, so much of American transportation could be electrified, and even possibly peppy long-range electric cars could be developed.

If it really was only 15 to 20 years in the future that fusion energy would be widely available, Sergio thought, then he was in a perfect position to train for becoming one of the first generation of fusion power plant engineers, a

technical person helping to bring about a technological revolution that could help lift billions of people out of poverty while ensuring a clean environment. Could such a dream be possible? Could he make that a career? It was impossible to know in advance, but he could plan for the best and train for that possibility, to be ready to catch that revolution if it actually materialized, and ride that wave for all it was worth as a fulfilling life. And if that energy revolution did not materialize, then at least he'd be well-educated enough to get some kind of decent engineering job. So that was the dream, the North Pole now pulling the needle of his career compass into the direction he was going to follow.

The Campus Green that Sergio walked onto that afternoon had been transformed into a little Woodstock Festival. The earlier speeches had given way to balladic folk music being performed and sung from the stage in front of the College Hall steps. The Green itself was covered with people immersing themselves in the collective sense of wider awareness and peacefulness that pervaded the whole event. The broad wide low-stepped plaza that extended down from the Library doors was dazzling hot with the direct fall of sunlight on it, and with the reflection of light and heat from the sheer glassy vertical sun-facing wall of the Library behind it. The Green extended away from that stepped plaza as if a placid sea topped with an intricate patchwork of rippling colors each animated by human breath, extending from the foot of a solidified white beach out to a far horizon at College Hall. People were sitting in small groups and talking, some were lying on their sides reading while letting the weight of their heads fall through a hand against the ear and down along a forearm to an elbow and upper arm pressing into the ground, others were lying on their backs and just looking up at the sky, and some people were blowing large soap bubbles that floated slowly off with the glinting and shimmering of their transparent rainbow-colored iridescence shifting as the bubble skins oscillated and wobbled in their hovering flights.

And there she was, at the opposite end of the Library plaza walking through the lounging crowd toward him with a big smile, and the sun backlighting her lilting form rimming it in radiance. They walked toward each other in a merged experience of recognition that was a perfection of wordless purity. When they met they just put their books down by their feet and embraced into a deep kiss that was the totality of their lives for those moments, a true

perfection.

A speckled fall of burnished silvery full moon light splashed through broadleaf foliage into the limpid half-dark of evening below arching tree limbs enclosing a fresh hush of dappled shade along the smoothly surfaced flagstone walkway, and dashed along the slightly swaying undulating contours and waving folds of a field of flowers sunny meadow clothe print coursing down that corridor of enchantment. Elena was a moving vision of loveliness, an elegance of the play of light across the features of her face, the scintillating shimmers of her cascading black hair, and the wafting of her many-colored floret-besprinkled softly draping spring dress. She and Sergio were walking, unhurried, along the new continuation of Locust Walk, west, beyond the Superblock construction site, for a dinner at Napoli Ristorante. This was their Earth Night, a celebration of realizing one's purpose, of being in love together, of luxuriating in being alive, and of being grateful they were immersed in such existential beauty.

This evening's dinner had been planned days before along with the rest of their Earth Day schedule. After their afternoon at Campus Green, they had each gone to their respective college dorms to dress in some of their more refined casual attire, before Sergio returned to Hill House to escort Elena on their walk to Napoli Ristorante. This was her first visit to it. The dining room had parties of people sitting at many of the tables, but not all, and wide crenulated glass bowls filled with lit candles casting their mellow glow onto their tables and the faces leaning over them.

Claudia was their hostess, and she recognized Sergio.

"You've come to visit us again."

"Yes, Elena and I have planned for this evening."

Claudia took in Elena's tasteful presentation, from her brushed wavy clasped and layered fall of dark hair and pearl earrings, and the light gracefulness of her knee-length dress, to the delicate leather cross-lacing of her open-weave sandals, which spiraled up to her ankles. Sergio wore a open collar beige faintly patterned button-down shirt and crisply creased charcoal gray slacks falling over burgundy brown zip leather boots; and he wore a lightweight men's herringbone sport coat.

"Let me give you this nice little table in the corner," and Claudia having decided they merited it, led Elena followed by Sergio to the seating. There,

Sergio walked around them both to pull out the chair for Elena, and she settled herself onto it, then he seated himself. Claudia noticed. She turned her head slightly over her shoulder and briefly whisked up her hand, with the index finger slightly extended, then turned back to her young guests and put menus down on the table. A man in a starched white shirt and black baggy pants rushed up and poured ice water from a pitcher in the empty flat-bottomed glasses on the table and lay down a basket of crusty Italian baguette. Cruets of olive oil and wine vinegar were already on the table. "Would you like something else to drink while you look over the menu?" "What do you think, Elena, Asti?" She gave a happy vibratory nod in the affirmative. "Asti Spumante." Claudia seemed to approve and she went to get that.

As Elena and Sergio were debating what to get and how to share, they were started to hear "ZUPPA DI CLAMS!" called for from a boisterous well-dressed obviously Italian older man sitting with an animated party of four well-dressed likely Italian older men and four not old evening-gowned, bouffant coiffed and jeweled ladies, seated around a rectangular table. The waterboy rushed over and the jovial man, clearly the leader of his party, gesticulated as he declared that they just had to have zuppa di clams for the table, it was unthinkable not to have zuppa di clams to embark on their feast. Claudia appeared, carrying a round tray with glass flutes and a chilled bottle of Asti Spumante, stopping by that big table and confirming with just the word "zuppa" with Mister Jovial, then flicked her head sideways to signal the waterboy to hop back to the kitchen with her message "dillo a Gino, Zuppa Di Clams, presto!"

Claudia brought Sergio and Elena their wine, uncorking the bottle and pouring out two glasses. She waited for Sergio's reaction to the first taste, which was "very good!," and then as Claudia was about to withdraw Sergio exclaimed "AH!" shooting his finger up pointing to where he heard the music coming from, saying "Di Stefano!" Elena, Claudia and Mister Jovial had been startled by this and now looked at Sergio, Elena with amused surprise, Claudia and Mister Jovial with interest. As if to excuse himself to Claudia, Sergio explained what he had heard playing, "Torna a Surriento, with Di Stefano." "You know Di Stefano?"

“My father sings this, he always wanted to be a tenore lirico, on stage. Di Stefano is one of the best, always reminds me of papa.”

They settled on an order: Zuppa Di Clams to share, and Veal Scallopini each. Sergio was sure they would want tiramisù for dessert, so he asked for two to be saved. Zuppa di clams arrived at Mister Jovial's table and that octet turned to their bubblingly happy feasting but without undue explosiveness of expression, and soon after Sergio and Elena's zuppa di clams arrived. It was so good, and they soaked pieces of bread in the broth once the clams were gone, to enjoy it fully.

The zuppa bowl was removed and veal scallopini platters placed before them. Then Claudia came over, putting down two wine glasses and a bottle of Chianti, which she set about opening.

“Wait! I didn't order that.”

“It's a gift from him,” Claudia said flicking her head slightly in the direction of Mister Jovial, who said as Sergio looked over to him, “Chianti Classico! It goes with everything!”

“Thank you!”

It did indeed go well. As they ate their meal and drank their smooth wine — Mister Jovial knew which one to pick — Sergio told Elena of his realization of purpose, discovered that day. And she was so sweet to be such a good listener, and for understanding how Sergio's technical vision connected to an Earth Day consciousness. She, too, was coming to a focused vision of her purpose, which was to apply the writing of stories of real life, news but much more than news, a sense of life, to try opening people's minds to better attitudes, greater justice, more connectedness, more compassion. Sergio understood that this was how her literary vision was connected to an Earth Day consciousness.

As they were thus engaged Sergio noticed Giuseppe Di Stefano was singing ‘Dicitencello Vuie,’ and that the music must have been changed since the zuppa, because instead of the earlier mix of popular Italian tunes it was now a continuing sequence of Neapolitan songs and lyric arias all sung by Giuseppe Di Stefano.

In time, they finished their meals and sat back, saying little but smiling their satisfaction to each other across the table. The waterboy cleared their table

and Claudia came over.

"Are you ready for tiramisù?"

"Yes."

Two of those soon arrived on Claudia's round tray, along with two little glasses of limoncello.

"These are my gift," Claudia said as she put the glasses of limoncello down.

"Ah! Thank you!, and we still have chianti."

"These go much better with tiramisù. Gino can cook with chianti you leave." And it did, and he did.

The bill came and it wasn't as brutal as Sergio expected, no doubt because of the gifts, but it also seemed the zuppa was discounted. Sergio put down cash and a decent tip, because he thought of the waterboy and knew what it was like to work at minimum wage, and figured the tips were shared out. Claudia picked up the cash, and Sergio waved palm down "no change." Claudia looked at them smiling and said, "You come back and visit us."

"We will."

The moonlight still splashed through the leaves, splotching them with islands of lights spilling across them as they went hand in hand along the flagstone walkway. In Paine-103, tired from the day and drowsy from the wine, they undressed and got into bed cuddled like nested spoons, Elena nuzzling her back into the press of his chest, with his right arm under her pillowed head and his left arm wrapped around that side of her body and she pressing his hand into her full breasts with her arms crossed over it. And so they fell into the contented sleep of the just.

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CHAPTER 11

Concussions of angry yelling punctuated the descending night sky over the Men's Quad, and people rushed into the streets and onto Campus Green where a great tumult of protest was underway. The television evening news had been President Nixon himself addressing the nation to announce that he had ordered American ground troops to invade Cambodia from Vietnam, and that invasion was already underway. Nixon had expanded the war. The impact of this news was incendiary, campuses across the nation exploded

into outraged protesting. May Day was the following day.

On 4 May 1970, Ohio National Guard troops, called out by the governor to quell an unarmed peaceful mass protest against the expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia, shot and killed four students and wounded nine others on the campus of Kent State University. The outrage sparked by news of the Kent State Massacre amplified antiwar protests across the nation, which had already been underway since the 30 April announcement of the ground war in Cambodia.

On 8 May 1970, the Beatles released their album 'Let It Be,' and Nixon went on television to justify his invasion of Cambodia.

In the first few minutes of Friday morning, 15 May 1970, police in Jackson, Mississippi opened fire on a group of students from Jackson State College who were protesting, killing two and injuring twelve.

That Friday evening Sergio was having a panoramic view of Philadelphia through the big windows of an airy apartment that belonged to Elena's aunt, and situated near the top of a highrise building downtown. Sergio and Elena only had ten days left before they would have to move out of their dorm rooms, and have to part for the summer. Elena had gained the use of her aunt's apartment for several days that week including the weekend, to feed the cat while her aunt was away. Sergio and Elena wanted time together away from the madness of the outside world, and before the rush of Finals Week starting the following Monday. In theory, they would be studying.

"What makes people stay together," she asked.

He thought about this for some moments and then opined

"Sex, money, habit, fear, children, memory, help."

Elena wrote these down.

"That's quite a list. The first one, I know, is your favorite. The second one is easy to see. The third one is kinda' sad, but pretty common, I guess. Fear? What do you mean by fear?"

"Well, you can be afraid of getting in too deep, and then when you are you're afraid you may lose it. So you kinda' hang on, cling."

"Children, I can see. Lots of couples stick it out for the benefit of the children."

"Yeah, I guess if you're just sticking around for the kids you'd have to be real careful about how you went about your affairs, to keep everything cool with the family."

"Hmmm... What's memory?"

"If you've been together for a long time, and you're old, then you've probably got good memories to share, and you can watch the reruns to keep from getting bored."

"Okay, so what's help?"

"When you're really old and your body starts falling apart, you're going to need help for things you used to do for yourself."

"Like?"

"Like wiping your ass. And it would be really hard to find anyone else to help you out with that. Anyway, why are you asking all of this?"

"I'm going to try writing a last article for the Campus News if I can, or one I can get into the Asbury Beach Boardwalk News this summer."

"Well, I guess you can call it 'The Seven Ages of Marriage'."

"Ooohhh!," she exclaimed and scribbled that down, then continued, "But don't you think that 'love' is the right answer? Don't you think that love is what really keeps couples happy and together? And don't you think that doing things together is really what it's all about instead of just trying to get those seven things from the other person, or getting comfortable using them?"

"I see your point. It's only love if you do those things 'for' the other person, and not just to 'get' something for yourself. So you show love by doing those seven ages 'for them,' and if they show their love for you by doing those seven ages 'for you,' then that has to be how you stay together by doing things together."

"Kindness," she said, realizing the fundamental truth of the matter, "Kindness is everything. Kindness is how love speaks."

He looked at her with eyes of longing, his mind an electric scramble of sex and fear. He went over to the table she was writing at, held her hand to guide her to stand, and they embraced and kissed. He motioned his head toward the bedroom, she smiled and followed, holding his hand. She undid his shirt buttons while he cupped the sides of her breasts, and when she'd finished he slipped his hands down her sides and under her yellow tank top, and slid it up over her head and upstretched arms. He dropped off his shirt and pulled his undershirt off quickly before Elena could undo her bra. He pulled her in tight into his embrace, wrapping his left arm around her waist and bringing

his right hand over the vexatious three hooks clasping her bra together. By deft finger technique he was able to undo them all one-handed while kissing her. He had a very satisfied look on his face and she looked at him with amusement over his delight in this boyish fantasy triumph. They broke to shuck their pants and underpants and then hopped into bed, rolling into each other's kissing embrace. Sergio extended Elena's arms over her head to arch her chest upward and then slowly slid his palms down from her wrists, along her arms to her chest, in across her glorious breasts and over their large hard milk chocolate nipple rounds, and down around the bottom swells to glide down her stomach and waist and converge at the Garden of Eden. She reached up with her hands on his sides by his waist and drew him down toward her and turning to the side so he fell next to her. She brought her face into his for an urgent kiss with her hands on the sides of his face, then sliding her hand down his neck and across his breast down his torso as she kissed down his neck and chest while reaching further down to awaken the Serpent into its tightest coil. Sergio was nearly delirious and sat up to get a condom. "Wait."

"WHAT!"

"You don't need them. I've been on the pill for a month. It should work now." He stared at her in wide-eyed surprise.

"Come, now," she said in the velvety voice of impending ecstasy, with her arms held out to draw him in.

And they made love to exhaustion, with all that they had in them to give.

"Are you hungry?"

"After that, yes. Why don't we make something to eat, or go out?"

"I want to take a shower first."

"I'll join you."

Feeling the warm water of the steaming shower glide over the skin of their bodies, carrying away the sweat of the day and the cares of the year was so refreshingly comforting, and they delighted in soaping each other up, gliding their massaging hands on the warm soapy lubrication over every contour, swell and fold of each other's body. They spent the following two days of the weekend studying for exams, making love, taking showers together, and of course: feeding the cat. On Monday morning the gauntlet of Final Exams Week began, and they were focused on their work.

The man from Texas, Marshall, was allowing each student in his class on

Calculus and Differential Equations to take the closed-book timed exam with the aid of three standard size sheets of paper written on with any helpful notes the student desired. Because they were training to be engineers, Marshal said there would be no partial credit for “effort” alone in identifying or deriving the appropriate formulas for a problem. Engineers are supposed to get numerically accurate “right answers” to problems, because those answers have real consequences in the design success or failure of an engineered construction or procedure, and failure could be fatal. You don’t walk on bridges or fly in airplanes put together on “effort” and “partial credit” alone, the numbers have to be right, or people could die. Sergio had spent many hours reading over his collected class notes and homework sets, and from them and the textbook, made a detailed outline of the entire course, with every significant formula, rule, definition, and illustrative example explicitly listed in that outline. Then he very carefully transcribed this thorough abstraction of the course onto his three sheets, with miniature but legible writing using blue, black and red pens and pencil, and including diagrams. He let no part of his three sheets go to waste, so had literally everything from the course organized and available on his three papers. The concentration of preparing his notes had been so intense that when he actually took the exam he found that he had a complete mental picture of his notes, and visualized the appropriate section in them as soon as he read each test problem’s question. So he was able to very briskly and neatly write out his solution procedure and calculate the numerical answer for each problem with his slide rule, and then have unhurried time to review all of his test answers for correctness of procedure and to recalculate all the numerical results to be certain of their accuracy. He was exhilarated before even turning in his test booklet when time was called. This was the class that had terrorized the sophomore engineers and had been the most difficult class of the year for him and of college so far. Sergio would ever after make midterm and year-end summary abstracts in a similar fashion of his course notes in preparation for exams, regardless of whether those exams would be closed-book or open-book, because he realized that the value of the exercise was in gaining the mental photograph of those notes for use in the exams. It was a revelation of intellectual power.

Finals over, there was one last weekend to enjoy before having to move out of the dorms and go home for the summer. People were ambling about, lounging sunning themselves on the Greens, with music pouring out of open

windows everywhere, kites being flown, frisbees being thrown, bubbles being blown, and everyone unwinding and enjoying themselves in every way they could imagine before having to disperse from the college scene for the summer, some finally declaring their love for another, some finally declaring they were breaking up with another, laughter, tears, joints and beers, heartbreaks and exhilaration, and just relief, it was the annual Great Goodbye.

Sergio and Elena were sitting in a circle of five, relaxing on Campus Green enjoying the sunny warm spring weather. Joe was there, and Joe had a girlfriend! Her name was Gail and she was an economics major. She seemed a bit mousey, timid and reticent, but one could sense she was protective of her wifty poet, and very likely bossy enough to keep him on the straight and narrow for performing the practicalities needed to ensure his success in dealing with Denver. It would be interesting to see, Sergio thought, how the four of them would get along in junior year in the double Joe and he had gotten on the twenty-second floor of Superblock, if all went well with the Draft for Joe. Elena knew about Sergio and Joe's Superblock apartment, but did Gail? She'd probably make it work for her poet. And the fifth member of their circle was Bernie.

"So, what are you going to do, Elena?"

"I'm going home to Asbury Park for the summer, and try working for the 'Beach Boardwalk News'. I wrote a story I hope will interest them, 'The Seven Ages of Marriage'," — Sergio and Joe looked at each other with eyeroll, on that one, — "I think people at the beach would read something like that. And, I'll just have fun at home, cook with mama."

"How about you, Sergio?"

"I'm going home for a week or more, till after Memorial day, and then this person," pointing to Elena, "has got me a job working in her dad's marina in Asbury Park. I think it will be a lot more fun hanging out around the shore and boats, swabbing decks and sanding hulls for repainting, than breathing fumes from soldering irons in the electronics plant back in Deer Park. And the pay's better. But it'll also be kind of scary situation since I know eyes will be on me."

"Don't worry," Elena laughed, and then impishly, "we'll get away sometimes." Sergio thought: "yeah, jump on me."

"So, Joe, what are your plans?"

"I am going to dental school. It's better than economics," and then turning quickly to Gail, "for me," then back to the group, "and it will be okay with or without the Army. They haven't called past 195 yet, but I'm only one away. Gail and I are going to Denver for the summer. Father seems happy." At this, Gail smiled.

"Still writing poems?"

"Yes! I sent in a poetry book manuscript to City Lights Bookstore, in San Francisco, and submitted poems for the anthology they are publishing to memorialize Jack Kerouac on the one year anniversary of his passing, on October 21. So I hope something gets published."

"What are you going to do, Bernie?"

"I'm going on a research expedition to Costa Rica with Professor Windark and some graduate students. He does evolutionary biology."

"What about, you know, the Draft?"

"Oh, they called me, and I flunked the physical."

"WOW! That's great! Fantastic, man! How'd you do it?"

"I figured I just go in when they called me, and skip to Canada if I passed the physical. But it's cool now. They found I had a bradycardia arrhythmia."

"What's that?"

"My natural heart rate is always below 60 beats per minute. The record for that is guy with 26 beats per minute, but I'm higher than that. You're supposed to get a pacemaker to keep a slow beating heart regular, so it doesn't go too low and you pass out for good."

"And you knew you'd flunk because of this?"

"No, actually I didn't. I didn't know I had it and it never bothered me as a kid. Then because of smoking grass and taking acid, my heart rate was elevated into a more normal rate, they're vasoconstrictors and heart stimulants, and I smoked grass and dropped acid a lot. But I wasn't stoned or on acid when I went to the physical, because I didn't want to get busted, so my heart rate was down below 60, however long they made me wait to keep checking it, and they wrote me off. The Army isn't going to pay to put a pacemaker in me so's I can carry a rifle."

"Amazing! So what you're saying is that you're healthier on drugs, your drugs, and being 'clean' for the Army is unhealthy!"

"That's pretty much it."

"You were born for acid!"

"Immunity has been granted to us because we did not lose our cool."

And so they passed a pleasant afternoon, feeling the warmth of the sun and the glow of their friendships, telling their stories and saying their goodbyes till next September, and then they went off into their various scenes for the night and for their continuing adventures thereafter. The Draft never did call beyond 195.

Monday was moving out day for Elena. Sergio was helping her pack her stuff in Hill House, and carrying it out to her parents's car parked on 40th Street. That's where he had his first face-to-face with them. Elena's father, Stewart Feldon, was a tall, well-built wavy sandy-haired English-type man who looked like Sterling Hayden. Elena's mother, Victoria, was a dark-eyed raven-haired darker complexion curvaceous Sicilian woman who looked like Anna Magnani. It was obvious where Elena got her height and her contouring from. "So, Sergio," Stewart, the sea captain, began, "we'll expect you around the 2nd?"

"Yes, I'll come in on the train, and call from the station."

"Good. There's plenty of work at the docks and yard to keep you busy. We have a room at the house, that'll save you on rent, and I'm sure you'll enjoy Victoria's cooking."

"Zuppa di clams!" Elena piped up.

"Elena tells me you like Italian cooking," Victoria addressed him.

"Very much," and Victoria had her eyes on him, and Sergio felt like Marcello Mastroianni.

"Any questions?," Stewart asked.

"How will I get to work? Walk?, bike?, ride in with you?"

"He can drive Danny's dune buggy!" Elena piped up.

"He might do that," then Stewart explained to Sergio, "Danny's only 14 and hasn't got a license, so he can't drive his dune buggy yet, but he likes to ride in it."

"He's got a dune buggy!?"

"A Meyer's Manx, he put it together from a kit, and he'd like an engineer's help in pepping it up, getting it set up right. I work on boat motors all the time, and that got Danny interested, so we got the kit."

"Sounds like there'll be a lot to do."

"Yep, you'll be busy."

"Any chance I'll get to go sailing?"

"You sail?"

"Yeah, in high school I crewed on 37-foot sloop for a neighbor who ran in the winter series races on Long Island Sound. I did the jib, tacking, winching, luffing, jibing, putting the spinnaker up. Got cold in November, my gloves froze solid."

"That's good. We could use a hand who knows sailboats. We'll start you off at \$150 a week, and \$25 for extra days. Weekends can be busy."

"Okay, I'm looking forward to it."

The car was loaded up and time for Elena to go. She came up to him and hugged him goodbye, and he was a bit stiff and nervous with the eyes upon him.

"Oh, just kiss me!," she whispered in his ear, and he did, tenderly, with a full heart.

Elena and her parents got in the car, and she rolled down her back seat window to lean out and wave her smiling goodbye as Stewart pulled the car away, and Sergio could see dark eyes smiling at him from the front seat.

Sergio was a bit down with Elena having left, but maybe it would all be good in June in Asbury Park. His parents were driving down the next day to move him out. He packed his stuff — much less than Elena had — easily enough in Paine-103, and then had the whole afternoon and evening to pass by himself. So he went to the Bookstore, filled with seniors graduating in two days, with their relatives, shopping for University sweatshirts and other souvenir mementos, and bought four books. Back at the Quad, he found that Fred was still there.

"Fred!, you're still here."

"Yeah, I'm gonna' pull out tomorrow. No rush."

"Here," handing Fred the brown paper bag with the books, "I think you'll like these. Hope you haven't read them all."

Fred pulled out the books: 'The Razor's Edge', 'On the Road', 'Earth Abides', and 'Slaughterhouse-Five'.

"Gee!, thanks! No, I haven't gotten to any of these yet."

"Let's go get pizza and beer. I owe you. We can walk."

Twenty minutes later they pulled up in front of Napoli Ristorante on Fred's motorcycle.

"What will you have, boys?" Claudia asked, with a mild smile of approval.

"You go, Fred."

"Large, sausage and onions, and pitcher of Rolling Rock."

"You know Janet Hoffman? She's going out with Brad Jackson, the quarterback."

"I know who she is, She's the leader of the Cheerleading Squad."

"Yeah, she's quite a pip. I know her because she was Angie's room-mate, and we got to talking. So next fall when you're out there practicing for the games, say hi to her for me."

"She is something else. But she's not going with Brad anymore, she's going with a doctor in sports medicine. Brad's a second stringer, practices with the team but just sits on bench for the games."

"Yes, she's a girl headed for success."

"Hey, whatever happened to Angie?"

"I don't know. I have no idea. I haven't seen her around. My guess is that she's working in psychology, and in the movement. She's intense. Everybody's chasing their own dream, makes us split apart."

"Not with Elena, right?"

"No, not with Elena. That's going strong. I'm working at her father's marina this summer. You? What'll you be doing?"

"Probably motorcycle mechanic for some of it. There's other jobs I can get. And read your books!"

It was all good.

The next day Sergio's parents and brother arrived to move him out. It was so nice to be with them. There is nothing like the love of your family to give you comfort and confidence in life. "I'm lucky," he told himself, and he never forgot it. As they were hauling Sergio's suitcases out of Paine-103 they crossed paths with Fred, hauling a duffle bag out. Fred lived lean, he had less stuff.

"It's all in there," he said, "strap it on the back of the cycle and ride on out."

"Let's find each other next year, Fred."

"Deal."

And they each headed out.

A week later, Sergio was looking at the countryside of Monmouth County rolling by, from the window of his New Jersey Transit railcar headed south. Asbury Park station was coming up soon.

“Well, what’s going to happen to me next?”

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EPILOGUE:

Everybody went on to their eventful lives. The long year of spring-to-spring across 1969 and 1970 had set them each on unique trajectories, on decades-long courses of dreaming and awakenings, of lives that when reflected upon now seem like glints of sun and shimmers of moonlight on the waters.

On Earth Day, 1970, Sergio became his own man: he then knew what his purpose was, how to confidently love a woman, and he was free to pursue both without any constraint beyond those imposed by whatever personal limitations he was unable or unwilling to overcome. That long year of 1969 into 1970 set him into becoming the man who managed to survive the adventures and misadventures of the succeeding five and more decades, while maintaining his integrity, nurturing his family through to his children’s independence as adults, and loving them all for the duration of his time among the living.

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The End

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Sergio Romero is a young engineering student at an Ivy League university where he is trying to find a girlfriend, for love and sex, in the Spring of 1969 before he is drafted into the US Army to fight in the Vietnam War. Can he evade the military draft at the height of the war to pursue his career goals and to find a woman he can share love with, without missing out on both and having his young life cut short? This is a story of young people bursting into adulthood at a pivotal time of great uncertainty and creativity, filled with beauty, tragedy and promise, and it is a story of friendship.

