A PORTRAIT OF THE YOUNG MAN AS A FAILED ARTIST

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Abstract

The novella *A Portrait of the Young Man as a Failed Artist* is an ironic *Kunstlerroman*. It is realistically told, and it is set mainly in central Canada in the present day. The protagonist, Duane Marcuse, is seen at five points in his life; these points are chapters given by age: "29", "17", "24", "28", and "30". The action involves both the protagonist's present, which in each chapter occurs within the space of a few hours, and his past, which is shown in flashbacks to different times. The interior and exterior lives of the protagonist are shown. Within the story are two separate stories, which are presented as the writing of the protagonist. The story shows how a potential artist fails to develop his talent because of factors, both within and outside him, that work against the development. The story is a comment on contemporary morality. It is a tragedy.

A PORTRAIT OF THE YOUNG MAN AS A FAILED ARTIST

David Heinimann

One story. Just one story.

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Duane is going to discover that he is not a writer. He is now trying to write the story he must write to complete the requirements for a degree of Master of Arts in English. The story is, as his school's department describes it, a creative-writing thesis project. Duane has come to Montreal to go to this school and do this project because he wants to be a writer. He has been made to believe that he can become anything he wants if only he goes to school. But he has wanted to be a writer for too short a time to know what it really involves, and, almost thirty, he is too old to believe, when he can think seriously about it, that he will ever learn.

Duane is not really certain why he wants--or maybe wanted is better, now--to be a writer. He has always liked stories. Possibly he has imagined more autonomy and creativity than he has had in previous work. Also, he has been having the urge to tell what growing up as he has has done to him, he wants to tell this because he regrets it and wants to help others avoid growing up, and bringing up their children, the same way. But to do this now, tell this story, he must write as an artist, not as a moral philospher, for, if he does not write as an artist, he will not satisfy the department at his school and will not receive his Master of Arts in English, and, if he does not receive his Master of Arts, he will, as will many of him, think himself a failure. But, he is not really certain of how to write as an artist. Since beginning to learn to be the writer as

artist, Duane has had increasing doubts as to what art is. "Art" has come to irritate and even antagonize him; he has failed to understand his teachers' answers to his questions about it, he always wants to talk to the artist to resolve this significance or that ambiguity, but he is always told that the artist can not be expected to and should not have to answer such questions. Duane has, as a consequence, become suspicious of art.

Once, when Duane was beginning to study writing, he read a poem by Yeats and found that it was not Yeats' poem that interested him so much as the epigram with which Yeats had prefaced his poem. Thomas Mann had written the epigram. It read, "In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms." This epigram, coming from an artist and then used by another artist, Duane thought very profound, but also very distressing, because at that time he believed that art was the only way to be free of politics. Politics for Duane at that time embodied all the contradiction and incomprehensibility that he now finds in art. What he wants is certainty. But what he does not know is how he will get that. He does, though, believe that writing one story, just one story, will free him from the uncertainty that has troubled him for so long. But the only story he knows how to write and believes is worth writing is that about himself, which he could only write from facts and not with his imagination, and therefore not as an artist, but only as a moral philosopher. So, he still will not have written what he would like to call art. He might be content to call it politics.

It is a quarter to two in the morning of the first of August. Duane is sitting in a small, dark bedroom at a lamplit old, oaken desk, the kind with the broad surface and three drawers down each side and one in the middle. Duane would like it to be his desk. It is the kind of desk he imagines a writer should have. But it is not his desk. It belongs to Diane, who, like Duane, is a student. Duane saw her advertisement to

sublet her basement apartment in the student ghetto for the summer. Because no one had wanted it by July, she agreed to rent it to him for the month of August only. Diane has left her apartment and Montreal for the summer to plant trees in the Rocky Mountains. Duane's last landlord, very rich and very distant, terminated as of August and within legal time the lease for Duane's room at the back of an old building downtown because he is going to convert the building into condominiums in August.

August is an important month for Duane. If he is to write his story, he must write it in the month of August. He had hoped earlier in the school year to have the whole of the summer, but after his three graduate courses ended in April, he had to write the essays for them and, because he is not a very good student, rewrite two of the essays. All this took him into mid-July. He must write his story in August because it is the last month he can give entirely to himself to do something so self-indulgent, for, and this is the first of the two things about which Duane is certain, once he has a job, he will not want to return home from it and have to begin work on what he knows would become another. After putting in eight hours at some job, he would like to be able to relax and not have to worry about character, setting, and action. Since his teachers have convinced him that creating art should not be a job, but a way of life, Duane can not see how he could write as an artist if trying to do so becomes a job. Also, he knows that artists earn very little money, and he does not want to work at something that will pay him nothing. Anything Duane does after August, he will view in terms of a job and money, for he is now poor, has none of the money left that his university has lent him, must in September begin to repay that money and also $18,000 in student loans from the government, and he also wants a car again. After August, Duane will leave Montreal for Toronto to get a job, and he will forget about art. He will forget about it every night in anonymous and monotonous bars and bedrooms as he drinks and drugs

and fucks himself into late-twentieth century normalcy. One story. Just one.

Duane moved into Diane's apartment earlier in the evening. One trip in a taxi was enough to bring his three boxes of books, two suitcases, and portable typewriter. They are all stacked where Duane put them when he arrived, in a dark corner of the lamplit bedroom. They are all he owns. Immediately after he arrived, he opened one box and got out his pen and paper and notes for the story he wants to write. He had decided earlier to organize the notes--ideas, memories, and imaginings written over years--between the time he finished his second essay rewrite in mid-July and the time he moved into Diane's and then, once in Diane's, begin to write, write without interruption, write until he had exhausted his notes and, if that is what it took, himself too. But August looked like a long time in mid-July, and he was alone and planned to remain that way, so he did not expect to exhaust himself.

Now, early in the morning of the first of August, he has written eight pages and feels tired but satisfied with his beginning. He has not gone exactly where he planned in the outline he has made from his notes, and after constant thought about what to call his protagonist, he is still undecided; so has for now called him by his own name. Also, he has wasted some time, has often stopped writing entirely for minutes on end to muse over memories that his notes evoke. But he has begun, and even though he cautiously expects that on average maybe two pages out eight will need serious revision, he believes that at the rate he is going he will have written in two weeks to eighteen days the draft of the novella he has planned, will be able to do the revisions in about a week, and then can write in the remaining time the critical introduction that must accompany the story and finally give the project to the chairman of the department; his advisor, the day he leaves for Toronto. Any revisions the chairman suggests, Duane believes he can either argue away or make without too much trouble and mail

back in time for the December deadline for submission of theses.

Duane looks over the last sentence of the eighth page, which he has enclosed in brackets to remind himself where to go when he starts writing again in the morning. He reads aloud, "Duane at dawn in a grove on the edge of a ravine that looks out over a misty creek," and then he lights the little pipe of hash he has and smokes and drifts off to think about that grove. It is a rare place in the tobacco belt--Long Point country, most there call it--on the north shore of Lake Erie, which is where Duane comes from. All of the big trees there--the hickory, walnut, maple, pine, and oak--were cut and taken in the nineteenth century when the area was first exploited. After the big trees were taken, the land suffered wind erosion that blew away the thin topsoil and exposed the deep, sandy subsoil worthless for farming until tobacco made the land profitable. When the land became profitable, the only trees planted to replace the big trees were those that now rise over streets and roadways. But the grove Duane recalls himself in was somehow overlooked or preserved. Its tall trees rise, like the columns of a Greek temple, from ground uncrowded by the scrub of secondary growth which never does well in ruined soil. In some places among the few exposed rocks and little knolls and shallows, the ground is mossy smooth. The dawn Duane is remembering, it is everywhere dappled by the beams of the late spring sunlight that breaks through the leafy canopy overhead and sparkles in the mist that rises from the creek. On the perimeter, the growth is low and scrubby, so that the area of the grove is enclosed by a semi-circle of bush that rises and follows the high growth of the trees down the steep slope to the creek below. Duane can walk across the grove at the crest of the ravine in less than a minute.

The grove is a half hour walk from where Duane lived on the edge of a small town until he left home. He often walked there--and sometimes, as he got closer, ran--when

he wanted or needed to be alone. This April spring morning Duane is remembering is a morning of need. Duane is seventeen, and he is uncertain about his life. But his uncertainty has nothing to do with sex, whether or not he should drink and smoke marijuana, or what kind of job he is going to get. Duane has been fucking, been drinking and toking, and been making money since his first year of high school. Most of his friends have been too.

Duane is uncertain because of what happened to him the afternoon of the day before. His father had phoned home early in the afternoon from his car sales office downtown to tell Duane and Duane's year-younger brother Brendan to be at the coffee shop of the Greek restaurant across the street from his dealership at five o'clock. Duane and Brendan arrived there to find their father seated in a booth staring hard into a near-empty cup of coffee. As they came up to him, he scowled at them in their faded black denim and shaggy hair, then snapped, "Sit down." Brendan slid onto the bench beside his father. Duane sat on the bench across from them.

"Hey, Christos!" Duane's father hollered above the din of the busy coffee shop. "Three more coffees!"

"I don't want coffee," Duane said.

"What?" demanded his father sarcastically, his German accent thickening. "You are going to sleep tonight? For the first time in months. Again he wants his own way." Then bitingly, "New routines are hard."

Duane looked down at the table and thought of how all the nights in his bedroom in the basement below his parents' room seemed like one long night of his father's shouts and his mother's crying. To escape their arguments, Duane would dress and leave the house to walk aimlessly until he was so tired that no amount of shouting or crying could keep him awake. Often when he returned, he would find his father sitting

in the dark in the living-room with a glass of rye in his hand. His father would rise angrily as though to chase him, but would fall back down too tired or too drunk to take a step. He would still be able to curse. Duane did not reply to his father's sarcasm about the coffee.

After Frankie had brought the coffees for his father and brother and had given Duane a glass of ice-water, their father looked hard at the two of them for a minute. His thinning blond hair was too long, and in his gaunt face flashed deep-set eyes blood-shot and ice-blue. As he stared at them, his face reddened as it grew harder. Then, without any warning at all, he said to them in a hard-edged voice, "Your mother and I are thinking of separating. I want to know who will you go with." He then turned to Brendan.

Brendan had been looking at Duane until their father turned to him. Brendan glanced quickly at his father and then looked down into his cup of muddy coffee, his long blond hair hiding his face. "I'd–I'll go with you," he replied.

Their father's slowly forming smile changed to a smirk as he turned to Duane. "And you," his father said spitefully, "I suppose you will go with your mother, wouldn't you?"

Duane had looked down confused when his brother answered. When his father spoke to him, he felt his confusion grow. There were words he could not make sense of, like so many times in the past when his father had spoken. Now, as at those times, he dared not ask his father to repeat what he had said, for fear that his father would lash out at the suggestion that he could not be understood. Like before, Duane could only answer by how he felt. Inside himself, he began to sense an end of time and the coming of a painful brilliance.

"Well? Who?" his father demanded. "Either one. Choose. Now."

With his mind numb and blank, but his gut churning and heart ablaze, Duane lifted his head and looked at his father with a desire to understand yet a sorrow and hatred that he would never again feel so strongly. But as he opened his mouth to speak, he found he could not. He felt a cry ripping through him, but could find no voice for it. His head ached for his want to speak. Staring at his father, he again opened his mouth to speak, and this time he heard himself stutter, almost in a whisper, "I wou–I won't g-go with either of you."

Duane's father's eyes narrowed as Duane saw at the same time his father's right hand begin to form a fist. But clacking cups in the coffee shop made his father remember where he was. Eyes narrowed still, he slowly unclenched his fist and then in a voice just slightly above a whisper hissed, "You S O B." Duane's brother sat staring at Duane, his lips trembling.

Now, this morning, in the grove with the mist rising from the creek, Duane wonders how he said what he did. He for a moment senses again something confusing in what his father said, but he can not comprehend the ambiguity, so he thinks instead that he has always favoured his mother, though more because he fears his father than because of any special love for her, and he believes, yet at the same time wonders how he could believe it, that he should have said that he will go with her when his parents separate. Thinking of his parents separating makes Duane confused again, but he still can not tell why, so he goes on to think that he had always believed that Brendan had favoured their mother too, because until they became old enough to defend themselves against their father's blows, they had always fled to her, and she had often taken the blows herself. Now their father no longer dared strike them, they had grown as large as he, and he seemed to be slowly realizing that, with their increasing strength and ability to defend themselves, they might one day strike back. Maybe it was Duane's

slow realization that he could defend himself that made him say what he did, defend himself against his father and against the world as he knew it, violent and lonely. As Duane is sitting in the grove, a black squirrel descends a tree behind him. It is losing its winter fur and has a new coat growing. On the ground, it begins to dig among the winter-blackened leaves. Duane hears it and turns. He looks at it a moment, then impulsively grabs a stick to throw at it. As he twists and throws, he strains a muscle in his shoulder. The stick falls short, and the squirrel quickly climbs a tree. Duane faces forward again. Rubbing his shoulder, he mutters, "Son-of-a-bitch."

Duane left the coffee shop after his father had questioned him and his brother. He did not, as had been drilled into him, ask for permission to leave. Brendan sat uncertainly beside their father and looked pleadingly at Duane when Duane rose to leave, but Duane only looked coldly at him. Their father began to say something, but when Duane looked from Brendan to him, he fell silent. As Duane walked to the door, Christos said, "See you, Duane." Duane neither looked at Christos nor replied.

Outside, the street was busy with people closing stores for the night and going home. Duane looked across the street at the building that held his father's auto dealership, a modern building of glass and steel, single-storeyed but higher than the old, two-storeyed, brick buildings on either side of it. In its showroom were the new full-sized luxury car, pickup truck, and imported sports car of the company Duane's father had the dealership for. They were the vehicles most in demand in the rich farming community Duane lived in. There was so much wealth from the tobacco farming in the area and so little to spend it on except houses, farm equipment, and cars, that the farmers would buy at least a new truck every second year and often a new car for themselves or their children every year. To these farmers, most of whom were Europeans who had come over from Europe after the wars with nothing but hope, to have such wealth

after such hard work and to not spend it was a sign of parsimony in the extreme.

Duane's father had been one of those Europeans who came over after the second war. He had been born and raised in Switzerland though, and so had been spared the battles and the loss. But because after his parents divorced when he was eight years old he was sent to live with relatives who were Jewish, he was not spared the horror and guilt peculiar to those few European Jews who knew they had only barely escaped the death camps by virtue of a citizenship that during the fall of nations meant little but a play for time. In the years since Duane has left home, he has wondered what it must have been like for his father, whose own bohemian, free-thinking parents were atheists, to suddenly live among people not just of any religion, but of the religion stigmatized and intended for extermination. He knows he can only wonder, for his father would never tell him. But he does know that it led his father to refuse a dealership offer from a German auto manufacturer and to possibly, though it was never proven in court, sabotage the first shipment of cars to the dealer who accepted it. He also knows that his father, who had begun as a mechanic, the profession he had chosen against the wishes of his guardians that he enter the family law practice, chosen and trained for and then and even now proudly displays his diplomas and certificates for, is confirmed in his belief in the sin of parsimony, the virtue of possession, and the quest for more.

Duane was not thinking these things as he stood outside the coffee shop looking at his father's building. He would not even be capable of thinking them until much later in his life. Right then, he was worrying about what would happen to the sports car he had weaseled out of his father when his parents split up. This was not, however, the first time Duane had faced traumatic loss. By this point, he had become used to it.

One fall day, when Duane was eight years old, he was wandering in the ravine

looking at the autumn colours in the trees and the bushes, sometimes stopping to carve his initials with his little scout pocketknife. He picked red and purple berries to take to a shallow in the creek to squish and watch the juice swirl in the flow of the water. While playing at the shallow, a young dog, a golden retriever, appeared on the other bank of the creek. It jumped into the water and swam to Duane. When it got out and shook itself, Duane saw little rainbows sparkle in the flying drops of water. When the dog stopped shaking, Duane was pleased at how the dog's wet hair formed little spikes that coloured from white to deep gold at the tip. The dog was collarless and rib-thin, and since Duane knew of nobody in the neighbourhood who owned such a dog, he let it follow him home. His mother pitied it and gave it some water and hamburger, and then he and Brendan played with it the rest of the afternoon, thinking up different names and wondering what kind of collar to get it. But their father when he came home from work was angered and refused to let Duane keep it. He said it would be taken to the edge of town as soon as Duane's mother called a taxi for it. He would not even take it there in his own car, so concerned was he about dog hair and odours. Nor would he allow Duane to go with the dog when the taxi came. That night at supper, Duane's father talked, as usual, only about business.

When Duane was ten years old, his father decided it was time for him and Brendan to learn a musical instrument each. They had both been glued to the rock stations on their radio for long enough to know that they wanted to play screaming guitars. When the superintendent of the local Ontario Conservatory of Music came over one evening, he brought with him an acoustic guitar and an accordian. As Duane and Brendan stood staring in horror at the accordian, their father asked them which instrument they wanted to play. When they both replied the guitar, Duane's father sternly told Duane he would play the accordian and Brendan the guitar. Duane did not take a

fit, he acquiesced meekly as he had by then been made to do, and for three years he lugged the accordian downtown to the Conservatory once a week for his lesson until one afternoon, frustrated at failing to play Strauss when "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" kept entering his mind; he rose impulsively from his chair knocking over his music stand and as his old, shrivelled teacher looked on horrified tore off the accordian and heaved it crashing through the second-storey window and then ran out of the room and down the stairs into the street to see it lying in a hundred pieces on the sidewalk. He then ran to the pool hall, where his father soon found him and beat him and then dragged him out shouting about irresponsibility and spoiled kids.

When Duane entered high school, he suffered his greatest loss. Until then, the only subject Duane cared about and consistently did well in was art. He would neglect science projects unless they could be somehow worked out with a drawing. Arithmetic he would ignore unless it was geometry. In reading, he would forget the story in the book and make up another as he constructed in his head image after image from one in the story. And in writing, he would get so carried away with flourishing penmanship that he would write words simply for the sake of writing them, line after line of garbled syntax and bizarre imagery, which nonetheless got him the reputation of class poet. But when he entered high school, he discovered that art was not given, that he could no longer draw unless he wanted to be a draughtsman, that he could no longer sculpt unless he wanted to be a mason or a welder, and that he could no longer paint unless he wanted to work for one of the town house painters. The only "art" available was music, of which Duane by then had had enough. So, he chose the other option, agriculture. One day in this class, they were in small groups dissecting chickens. When the teacher left the room for a minute, one of the rowdy farm boys threw a chicken liver at the blackboard. Other boys soon began throwing guts and legs and wings all

over the room. Duane was shocked by this and tried to stay out of the way, but he was struck in the cheek by some organs. After he wiped off his face, he saw that his right hand was smeared with blood. Staring at his hand, he slid slowly down the side of a lab table to the floor as parts of chickens continued to fly amid laughs and screams. Sitting on the floor, still staring at his bloodied hand, Duane put the first finger of his left hand into the blood on his right and then, on the white terrazzo floor strewn with pieces of chicken, he drew a red X. When the teacher returned, he scolded them and then made them clean up the mess. He sent for the principal, who was so appalled that he immediately phoned all their parents. He called Duane's father at his office. That night, despite his tearful claims of innocence, Duane was beaten.

But that was the last time he ever was. He quickly grew taller and stronger in the three years between that last beating and this time now in front of the coffee shop across from his father's building. He also grew so cannily manipulative that, even before he turned sixteen and got his driver's license, he was able to convince his father that it would be good advertising for his business if his father gave him one of the sports cars to drive where and when he wanted. Since having been given that car, Duane had moved out of his parents' house. He may still have eaten and slept there, but as for where he lived, it was in a speeding bucket seat surrounded by heavy metal and the constant smoke of reefers.

The memory of these things so overwhelms Duane as he sits smoking hash and musing at the oaken desk in Diane's bedroom that he wonders how he can continue to write. He looks down again at the last line and reads it to himself, 'Duane at dawn in a grove on the edge of a ravine that looks out over a misty creek.' He remembers that morning, it is fixed in his memory as the moment at which his life either ended or began. Duane puts down the little hash pipe, rises now weary from the oaken desk,

and turns out the lamp to go to bed. It is his inability to decide which of those two ways to view his life that causes Duane to be overwhelmed. He shuffles carefully across the dark, unfamiliar bedroom toward the bed, and he wonders whether if he did not have the memory of that moment could he write anymore easily, write about anything other than what had happened to him before that moment and what has happened since. He finds the bed and undresses, then gets into it and begins to drift off to sleep. But Duane has that memory, he can not forget it, and his obsession with trying to write just one story makes it all he can write about, for, and this is the second of the two things about which Duane is certain, if we were all given just one story to write, we would write our own.

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Duane, standing on the sidewalk, in front of the coffee shop, looking at his father's building across the street. People crowding by as stores close on this late Saturday afternoon. Cars moving slowly in the broad main street, cars angle-parked, cars up the street and cars down. Late afternoon sun glinting on glass and chrome and polished, painted metal hypnotizes Duane. Honking horns mesmerize him Vacant and trancelike, he walks between people, across the sidewalk, and between two parked cars, walks out into the crawling traffic, continuing to walk, his hands tightly fisted, toward the glass and steel building facing him. Then the sun flashes fully in the building's glass surface, and Duane is blinded. He stops among the cars in the street, eyes burning with reflected sunlight. Then the sunlight is suddenly ended, and a black vacancy remains. Duane hears a metal door slide open and feels himself pulled forward and into a blackness that becomes total as he hears the door slide closed.

"Hey! Duane! What the fuck you doin' buzzed out in the middle of Broadway?"

Duane feels something icily wet on his cheek and snaps out of his trance. He jerks back and in the darkness makes out a beer bottle. As his eyes get accustomed to the dark, he realizes he is in a van. He automatically takes the beer still held in front of him. "You drop some acid?" he hears, and then he thinks, 'Pete's voice.'

"He okay?" A voice from beyond the darkness. 'Evan's.' Duane realizes he is in Evan's black, windowless van, that Evan is driving on the other side of the dark green blanket that hangs between the front seats and the back of the van, and that Pete is beside him on the carpeted floor in the back. He takes a drink of the beer and gradually makes out Pete's shaggy head in the darkness.

"No," says Duane, "I'm not on anything."

"Good thing," replies Pete. "You'd be wasted early on a good party night. That good band from London is back at the Royal."

"Yeah," adds Evan from the other side of the blanket, "we've been lookin' for you and Lieber. Gonna be a good night for a crop tour before we hit the hotel."

Duane sways as the van begins to noisily accelerate. "I don't know, I don't feel too much like cruising. I think I'll... I don't know, maybe go to Long Point."

"Long Point?" exclaims Pete. "I ain't heard of no parties down at the lake tonight."

"I don't feel like partying. I thought I'd... walk down the point a ways... or something."

"Alone?" asks Pete surprised.

"Maybe. I don't know."

"What'd he say?" shouts Evan above the engine noise. "Move up here, I can't hear you."

Pete says louder, "He says he don't want to go to the Royal tonight. Gonna go to Long Point instead."

"Long Point? It's dead down there now!"

Pete carefully raises himself to a crouch in the jerking, rattling van. He moves forward, and the darkness lightens as he lifts the blanket on the passenger's side. He steps over the engine cowl and drops into the passenger's seat, still holding the blanket for Duane. When he turns and sees that Duane is still sitting on the floor of the van staring at his beer, he looks at Evan, who has turned to look at him. Pete shrugs his shoulders as he lets the blanket drop.

In the sudden darkness of the shaking, rattling van, Duane sees his father's face flash and hears inside himself, 'Won't go with either of you--either of you--won't

go—go—go.' He closes his eyes to the image and quickly raises the beer to drink. Drinking, he feels the van rise and go up the short, rounded bridge over the abandoned railway that marks the end of the downtown.

The overpass separates the business section from the residential, and Duane always senses the difference as much in his mind as he does in his stomach, like the difference between running on concrete and then walking on grass. The wide street going on from the overpass extends north under large maples on both sides and is flanked by the green lawns of large, old houses. On the other side of the overpass, Duane comes to himself again and decides to go up front with Pete and Evan. He rises unsteadily to a crouch, and balanced, he raises the blanket to a soft, green-tinted light. He sees there are few cars now and fewer people on the sidewalks under the over-arching maple trees. Pete looks back at Duane, and Duane hands his beer to him before he steps over the engine cowl.

"How you doin'?" asks Pete as Duane clears the cowl and then sits down on it.

"I'm okay—hey, there's Lieber ahead on the left."

A lean, denimed body with flowing blond curls is walking with muscular grace up the left-hand sidewalk. As they reach Lieber, Evan sticks his long-haired head out the window and shouts, "Karl!" as he pulls over to the curb.

Lieber turns and sees them and then jogs across the street. He slides open the side door and jumps in as Evan pulls away from the curb. A moment later the blanket rises and Karl's blond head appears beside Duane. "Hey!" he laughs. "What's happening?"

"Not much," replies Pete, "just lookin' for you. Party time."

"You guys," says Karl mock-disgustedly. "Animals."

"Born to piss beer and shit reefers," asserts Pete.

"Foul," says Karl.

"'Hope I die before I get old!'" sings Evan.

"Hey, where's the music?" demands Pete. "Time for The Doors!"

Pete, Evan, and Karl sing together loudly, "'Woke up this mornin' an' I got myself a beer!'" as Pete swings his arm high and plays a wild air guitar. Pete then takes a cassette tape from a small box on the floor and puts it into the tape deck that sits loose among wires on the dashboard. Pete looks carefully at Duane a moment as the music begins, but then he takes a drink of the beer Duane gave him and turns to look out the side window.

Evan makes a right turn onto Concession, the street to the Brewers' Retail. "Five thirty," he says. "Gotta get another case before the beer store closes."

As they are driving past the big pond on their left, Duane notices Karl looking at him. "What?" Duane says.

"You okay?" Karl asks.

"No--yes, I'm fine," Duane replies, uncertain of how to tell Karl, the only one of the three he would tell, about what happened to him a few minutes ago. Duane looks at the pond, but when sunlight reflects on its surface, he turns away quickly and at the same time is startled by the horn of a car passing from the other direction. He begins to tremble as he recalls the coffee shop and his father, but when he sees Pete, Karl, and Evan wave at the passing car, the trembling lessens, and he begins to think of how he and Karl have known each other longer than they have Pete and Evan, have been scouts and played hockey, football, and baseball together. Just three weeks ago this Saturday night, they went together to a house party that was raided. Duane and the girl he later that night broke up with, Lucille, were outside in the back yard arguing in the dark when the police arrived. He saw them coming, but too late to warn those in

the house. From where he and Lucille were in the back yard, he heard the cop known to enjoy raiding parties, Golding, doing his best television impersonation. He heard a few glasses broken and some shouts and screams from the partiers, but then the sirens coming down the street drowned out all sound. He and Lucille escaped. Karl was busted for a pipe that had hash resin in it. That party was the first one in the town that drugs had been found at, though the police had searched hard enough before. When the bust was reported in Monday's paper, people were outraged. Duane's parents knew that he had gone out with Karl Saturday night. They were so upset over Karl's arrest that they forbid Duane to ever see him again. Duane simply looked coldly at them and ignored them, but he warned Karl not to come over to his place anymore. Until Karl was busted, Duane's parents, like the rest of the people in the town, thought highly of him because he is a star athlete on the town and his high school's teams. Since the bust, they have turned on him with all the spite and malice of worshippers betrayed. Karl had come to Duane to talk about his trouble and fear, and now Duane wants to talk to him about his.

Evan stops at the corner of Concession and Tillson Avenue and then drives through the intersection and soon turns left into the busy parking lot of the beer store. A gas station stands on its left side. On its right, a small, stone-walled dairy, now abandoned, and, further on, tobacco fields and bush. Evan pulls into a parking spot facing the low, concrete and glass beer store. He takes his pack of cigarettes from the dashboard, pulls out a cigarette for himself, and gives another Pete. Pete lights his and then Evan's, and they get out of the van and walk toward the building. Duane and Karl remain in the van.

As Duane watches Pete and Evan go to the beer store entrance, he wonders how to tell Karl what has happened to him. Pete and Evan get to the entrance. A car

squeals out of the parking lot, and light reflects in the beer store's glass door as Pete opens it. Duane begins to hear inside himself a voice like his father's repeat loudly over and over, 'Go, go, go,' each repetition a flash of light. Stunned by the sound and the light, he forgets about telling Karl what has happened, but is still able to look away to try to make the loud flashes stop. As he searches for a way to stop thinking about his father, the light of the setting sun is blocked by clouds, and then the voice gradually softens and changes to his own. He sees other last-minute buyers entering the beer store, and to the now lessening noise and light, he watches them.

Some of them will be out on the gravel backroads in an hour or two doing what they usually do on a Saturday night. Most will be in the hotel later. Duane knows many of them, students and guys who have dropped out of high school to work, guys who like himself look, or who really are, old enough to get into the beer store and liquour store and hotels and bars since the legal age was lowered to eighteen two years ago. They all walk with a swagger now that in five hours will become at best a spastic stagger and at worst a stumbling shuffle. How so few of them manage to die in drunken car accidents after they run their cars off the road or into other cars amazes them all. Unlike the rest of them, Karl does not have his driver's licence, though he drinks his share of beer on a booze cruise. Duane thinks Karl strange for this, somehow more mature, yet at the same time incomplete. Karl also prefers to drink somewhere in the open, among trees or beside a creek, rather than in a car. He took his cousin Paul's death in a drunken smashup two years ago harder than the rest of them and now has no interest in driving and very little for being in a car at all.

"What's wrong?" asks Karl while Duane stares out the window.

Duane is drawn back from the memory of the sight of Paul's wreckage. "Huh? Oh, I... my fa—... my car," Duane raises his hands to his face and rubs it. "I... I think

my, my father is going to take away my car."

"Oh yeah?" replies Karl. "How come?"

"I don't know.... He... he's pissed off about something," There is something more Duane wants to tell Karl, but he is unsure of how to say it. He remembers the coffee shop, the words, the fear, but he can not say them. He tries, he tries to order the words he knows, is sure he knows and can say, but all he hears inside himself over and over is, 'Either of you–go–go.'

"Your car, eh?" says Karl lightly sarcastic. "Guess you'll have to walk for a while." He then slips under the blanket into the back of the van. Duane hears the cooler open and ice tinkle, and soon Karl says, "There's some brews back here still. You want one?"

Duane realizes he did not take his beer back from Pete when he had moved to the front. He looks at the floor on the passenger's side and sees the bottle empty on its side. 'Pete must have drank it,' thinks Duane almost indifferently. "No, no thanks."

Karl reappears. "You going home for supper?"

"Home?" replies Duane hollowly. He sees the broad, landscaped yard, the brick and stone and cedar-shingled ranch-style house, the cars parked in the wide, paved driveway. He feels himself enter the garage, and he hears shouting coming from behind the door to the house. As he reaches out to open the door, he feels his head begin to swell and his temples beat. His left hand grips increasingly tighter the edge of the engine cowl he sits on. As he opens the door, his hand slips off the cowl, and he loses his balance. Karl grabs and steadies him in time to stop his head from hitting the windshield.

"Looks like another beer is the last thing you need," says Karl. "You drop some chemical today?"

"No," says Duane vacantly, "no drugs either, thanks." He feels far away as he looks out the window and across the parking lot and the fields and into the bush beyond. "Go," he mutters, "either of you."

"What?" asks Karl. He stretches over and looks out the window following Duane's gaze. After a moment, he turns to look at Duane closely. "No drugs, eh?"

Karl's face in Duane's line of sight brings Duane back to himself. He looks at the face carefully, at the blond curls that frame the ruddy complexion, at the wide-set, sea-blue eyes, the nose high, straight, and long, the blond-red mustache curling over smooth, narrow lips, the chin cleft and square. He imagines his own black curls, his deep-set brown eyes in a dark face, his small nose, and his sparse, black beard hiding lips lined and round and a chin narrow and pointed.

'Tell him,' Duane thinks, 'tell him the--the what--what both of us--both of us have--have what--have either--either--go--won't go--him--me--you--I! I! I!' Duane turns away from Karl, mind screaming, but lips pursed shut.

The door at the side of the van slides open. Duane turns toward the sound and hears a case of beer drop onto the floor. The driver's door opens, and Evan gets in as Pete fills the cooler.

"Party time!" cries Evan. The side door slams shut, and soon Pete enters the passenger's door, flicking his cigarette away before he closes it. Evan starts the van and pulls out of his parking spot for the street. "Duane," he says, "You going home or what?" He stops at the exit from the parking lot to wait for Duane's answer. "Which way do I turn?"

'Which way?' thinks Duane. 'Which way? Go--either--go.' "No, not home. I have to eat though. You guys hungry?"

"Pizza!" cries Pete. "Alright! Duane! Brilliant!"

Evan turns right pulling out of the beer store parking lot. "You want to get your car, Duane? Where is it?" he asks.

"It's at ho—no, I don't want it." 'Car,' thinks Duane, 'no—home—either—go—neither.... Neither.' And the tension he had been feeling begins to subside, he reassumes his wary calm, the insistent voice fading into the echoes of threats already known and no longer feared.

Evan comes to a stop at the corner of Concession and Tillson Avenue and then turns left onto Tillson. Evan, Pete, and Karl do not know this street as Duane does; Evan and Pete are from the country and Karl the other side of town. But this is Duane's neighbourhood, on the left side, the small, derelict factory, the three schools, the elementary, the senior elementary back behind it, and the high school down the street, and on the right, the maples along the street and the high, old houses.

The factory, crumbling and overgrown with vines and tall grass, where tough, young kids fight behind. 'Four o'clock—Metal Fabs,' they challenge. Duane remembers how strange it was when in grade eight he discovered the factory's label on the metal tubing on one of his school desks. METAL FABRICATORS, it read, the same factory. He never fought, but he saw some of his friends fight, beat up others and get beaten themselves. After the fights, if they were beaten, they were strangely less friends than before. But he never became any more friendly with the winners, either.

On the right, across from the elementary school, Steven's old house and the second floor balcony they used to throw water balloons from. They tried white paint once to see what the design would look like on the street. They were pleased, but they were caught and punished. Duane had seen the faint grey of the paint as Evan drove over it.

On the left again, set back from the street, the high school for this side of town,

which Duane attended until last year, when he left for the high school across town as a part of his scheme to drive his sports car more often than his father allowed him. On the school's red-brick side wall, Duane sees clearly the large, green G, the first letter of the name of the other high school, that he painted with Rick, Fred, and Shelby last fall the night before a football game between the two schools.

And on the right again, directly opposite the walkway to the entrance of the high school, the variety store and lunch counter where everyone goes during spares or to skip classes to smoke cigarettes and to look at the fast cars parked or watch them burn-out with tires squealing in clouds of smoke.

Then on the left, on the other side of the high school and back behind it, the small stand of high pine and oak, where five or six years ago in the spring Duane saw a hawk, the first one he ever saw. Perched and in flight, it was a marvel to him. But then one morning a policeman drove up (was it Golding, Duane has wondered since) as he and Brendan and some other kids were looking at the hawk perched at the top of a high pine. The policeman got out of his car with a rifle. As Duane and the other kids looked on in awe, the policeman without a word to them steadied himself on the top of a fence post and fired a shot. Duane saw the hawk flutter and then try to dive into flight, but it could not break its dive, and flapping its wings vainly, it fell to the ground. Though it did not move anymore, the policeman shot it again. As he walked back to his car with the rifle, he turned and ordered Duane and the other kids to stay back. He returned from the car with a white plastic bag and the rifle, clumsily climbed the wire fence, and walked warily up to the hawk. It must have been dead, because Duane did not hear another shot. The policeman returned with the plastic bag tied up, and he placed it and the rifle in the trunk of his car and then drove away. Beyond that stand of trees, Duane can see from Evan's van the houses of the subdivision he has

been raised in. Had Evan driven them half a minute sooner to where Duane can now see the subdivision beyond the trees, Duane would have seen his father's long, white car driving into it.

Evan turns right off of Tillson Avenue and onto Brock Street to head back downtown. "Which place for the pizza?" he asks.

"The place by the Royal has thin crust, and it's too greasy," replies Pete.

"The one by the cop shop has a thick crust, but you have to order double sauce," adds Karl.

Duane sees the liquor store coming up on the left. "Stop at the liquour store," he says. "I want to get a bottle of wine."

"Wine with pizza?" grimaces Pete. "Yech!"

"It's for later," says Duane.

Evan stops, and Duane steps past Pete and out the passenger door, walks around the front of the van, across the street, and into the liquor store. He goes to the closest display list of white wines and sees a French name that looks good. He writes the code number of the wine on the sales slip and walks to the counter for service. An older clerk comes forward. He looks at Duane suspiciously. Duane looks at him hard. The clerk blinks, then turns without speaking to get Duane's wine from the back. He returns with the bottle, bags it, and takes Duane's money. Duane is given his change, and he walks out back to Evan's van. He slides open the side door and enters the van, closing the door as Evan pulls away from the curb. While Karl holds the blanket up to give him light, Duane drops to his knees, opens the cooler, and puts the bottle into it, then closes it and moves to the front of the van beside Karl. As Duane sits down beside Karl on the cowl, Karl says, "We decided to go to the pizza place by the cop shop."

Evan drives up to Broadway and turns right. The street is less busy now, the jammed traffic having broken up almost as soon as it had become jammed, and the sidewalks are almost empty. In the fading afternoon light, coloured neon and plastic signs illuminate the altered store fronts of the old, brick, two and three storeyed buildings. They pass on the left small stores and then the town's one cinema. Approaching the turn to the right, they pass the modern concrete and glass post office and government building and then a large, vacant lot that goes to the corner. Before the railway overpass, they turn right onto a short boulevard. On their left side between the one-way streets is a long, narrow flower garden and lawn with an obelisk cenotaph for the war dead at the far end. Beyond it is the high, old, red-brick town hall, which also has the police station in it.

On the large, empty lot on the corner at their right, there once stood a big, old hotel. Duane has seen photographs of it, a richly ornate building with a turret at the corner and bay windows. The last owner was a European who had made money in tobacco and then bought the hotel. He stopped growing tobacco, but still grew vegetables for the hotel's kitchen. Because arson was suspected, he is said to have burned his hotel for the insurance, though business was good until the fire, especially in the dining room, and he looked haggard and despairing in the pictures of the fire. After the fire, he returned to tobacco, but he later bought a small diner in another town.

Beside the vacant lot and facing the boulevard is a long, low, ramshackle meeting hall. It has a sagging ridged roof and curling asphalt shingles. The walls are covered in rusty, corrugated metal and old, faded, soft drink signs. The hall has a dirty, stucco front with stained, purple curtains pulled across the large, plate-glass windows, one of which is cracked. Between the windows is a splotchy, black naugahyde-covered door.

Attached to the other side of the hall is the pizza place. It is a squat,

single-storeyed, concrete block structure with a glass door and without windows. It was built quickly for take-out service. Three cars Duane saw at the beer store earlier are there now.

Beyond the pizza place to the end of the boulevard is an open space that once had a hedge and trees around a large yard with covered stalls for a Saturday farmers' market, but it is now a paved parking lot inside a chain-link fence for the police cruisers and the cars of the municipal employees. The lot stretches to the corner, after which are big, old houses, an old church, and a small, recently-built, auto accessary factory.

Evan pulls up along the curb in front of the pizza place and stops. As Pete opens his door, he says, "Cops'd never think we'd be dumb enough to come here with booze." He jumps out and says, "Large deluxe, right?" as he closes the door without waiting for an answer.

"I wonder if he's gonna remember the extra sauce and to ask for eight slices," says Evan as Pete enters the pizza place. "Better go remind him," he says and then gets out of the van and goes into the pizza place too.

As Duane sits with Karl, he thinks again to try to tell him. But he is already indifferent, and the music from the tape deck makes him drift. He stares out the window at the bricks in the side wall of the high, old town hall. In grade eight, he did a project on the architecture of it and the old Carnegie library across Broadway from it. He was allowed to wander freely through the buildings, and he still remembers fondly their fine, unpainted woodwork, the parquet hardwood floors, the high wainscoting in the municipal offices, the glass-doored, wooden bookcases built into the walls, the elaborate window frames, and the heavy-beamed trusses he saw in their attics. There were little details that delighted him, things like the patterned, cast-iron ventilation grills, the intricate, brass door knobs and window latches, and the leaded, stained-glass

windows. The whiteness of the wide, high, stone steps up to the big, wooden-framed, glass doors of the town hall, and of the four, thick, stone pillars on either side of the carved, wooden, panel doors at the top of the library's steps, set before the deep-red brick of the buildings and under their grey, slate roofs and the blue of the sky beyond inspired in Duane a love and respect for authority that, whenever he looks at the buildings now, sometimes makes him want to stop drinking and doing drugs and become the scholarly lawyer his father wants him to be. Though he can not see the town hall's front from where they are parked, he can visualize in the red brickwork of the peaked roof above the fifth storey the large letters TH in white brick. He remembers how long it took him to figure out what the letters stood for and how pleased he was when he did.

Looking out the window at the building, Duane sees the side door that leads to the police headquarters in the basement. While he is looking at the door, it opens. Two policeman step out of the doorway and close it behind them. Duane notices Karl shift position as the police look across at Evan's van. But after looking, they turn and walk over to the cruiser parked in the parking lot. That door, thinks Duane, opening another time. And he is taken back to when just after he had entered high school, he was caught lying about vandalizing a house being built in the subdivision. His father that night before supper whipped him and then ordered him into his car. They drove down to the police station and his father said he was going to see if he could have Duane locked in jail. Duane began to cry, but his father told him to quit it and act like a man. They stopped outside that side door. His father got out and told Duane to get out too. He did and then followed his father to the door and then through it and down the narrow, brightly-lit stairway into the cellar. They came into a bright, white-painted office. There was a long, wooden counter Duane could barely see over.

Before his father went to the counter, he told Duane to sit in the chair by the door that led to the cells. Duane sat and looked through the door terrified. But then his father returned from the counter and took him by the arm back through the office. As Duane passed the counter, he saw the old policeman behind it looking down at him with a look he has never been able to understand. It was stern, but there was something else, too, in the way the policeman tilted and slightly shook his head as he looked from Duane to the papers on the counter. Duane's father led him back up the stairs and out through the door. He opened the car door and said, "Get in." Duane got in, and his father slammed the door closed, then walked around the front of the car looking hard at Duane all the time, got in his own side, and drove them home in silence.

Pete opens the passenger door as Duane is staring at the door to the police station. "Be twenty minutes," Pete says as he jumps back into the van. As Evan opens his door to get in, Pete says, "Wanna take a tour of the cop shop?" Duane turns quickly and looks hard at Pete. Pete jerks his head back and says, "What?"

"Huh?" replies Duane. Pete moves forward again to look closely at Duane. Duane blinks and says, "Nothing."

"If you're not on anything, you need to be," says Pete. Then he says to Evan, "Gimme a cancer stick." Evan gives him his pack of cigarettes. Pete takes one, lights it, and then says to them all, "Anybody know where we can buy some pot?" Turning to Duane, he says, "What about that heavy guy that lives on the river road, down by the auto wrecker's? Is he safe? You bought some from him a while ago, didn't you?"

"Who, Wickham?" replies Duane. "Yeah, he's okay. He grows his own."

"That's alright," says Karl. "At least you know what you're getting."

"Okay," says Pete, "let's go there while we wait for the pizza." Then he says, "Hey Evan, where's that Blue Oyster Cult tape?"

Evan pulls out a cassette tape from under his seat and hands it to Pete, then starts his van and pulls away from the curb as Pete changes the tapes.

At the corner, Evan turns left to go behind the town hall and then left again to go back up the other side of the boulevard to Broadway, where he turns left to go back past the stores downtown. The town's only traffic light turns red as they approach the main intersection. Evan comes to a stop, the only vehicle at the lights. Across the intersection and down the street to the left, Duane sees his father's building. The long, blue and white plastic sign above the plate glass windows is lit up, as is the showroom. Across the street from the building are the coffee shop of the Greek restaurant, the small lumber dealer, and on the far side of it at the next corner, the Royal Hotel, an old building of dark brick, large but plain, with an old, dying oak in a small plot of grass at the corner.

The light turns green, and Evan drives through the intersection. As they approach his father's building, Duane looks from it to the coffee shop and then back again. He begins to tremble. Again his hand grips the engine cowl he sits on. But soon they are passing the building, and then Pete says, "The band's moving their gear into the Royal."

Duane's grip loosens as he turns to look at the yellow Hertz van parked among the cars in front of the hotel. The long-haired guys around it are unloading amplifiers and speaker cabinets. As Duane and the others are watching them, waiting at the pizza place at the corner opposite the Royal and on the same side as their father's building are Duane's brother Brendan and his girlfriend in Duane's black sports car.

Now past the hotel, Evan slows for the sharp, right-hand curve that drops down to the creek. They pass the auto wrecker's on the right and then on the left the dilpated flour mill on the edge of the creek. Up a bit further, Evan turns left off the road onto a dirt lane that leads through small pines and over a rotting wooden bridge to a long,

black and white house trailer on concrete blocks. It is surrounded by overgrown bush which darkens the place. An older, red-primered, four-wheel drive pickup truck sits in the long grass beside the trailer. As they pull up, a growling German shepherd appears from under the truck.

"Jesus!" exclaims Pete. "Look at the size of that dog! Have fun," he says to Duane as Duane leans over him and rolls down the window to speak to the dog.

"Pink!" Duane says firmly, "Cool it!"

The dog continues to growl as it stands beside the pickup truck.

"Pink!" Duane says again, but then he gives up and calls out to the trailer, "Wickham?"

The trailer is dark, so Duane and the others can not see at the screen door the man who stands in unlaced work boots and soiled jeans, shirtless and barrel-chested, red-bearded and thick-haired and tall, but also stooped. Above the shepherd's growl, Wickham calls back in a deep, slow drawl, "That you, Duane?"

"Yeah," Duane calls back.

Wickham says, "Pink!" and the dog quiets. "Alright," he calls to Duane.

Duane opens Pete's door and gets out. The shepherd approaches him quietly. Duane looks at the dog and hears Wickham say again, "Pink!"

The dog stops. Wickham calls again, "Come on."

Duane begins to walk to the trailer as he hears Pete behind him say, "Jesus." Duane slowly passes the dog, then continues quickly to the screen door, where he finally sees Wickham.

Wickham demands in his drawl, "Who're you with?" as he opens the screen door and steps aside to let Duane in.

Duane mounts the two plywood steps up and says, "Friends from school," as he

passes Wickham and enters the dark trailer.

A black cat shoots out from inside the trailer. The dog sees it and turns to give chase. Wickham says, "Pink!" The dog does not stop. Wickham watches from the open screen door. "Damn animals," he says, and then to Duane, "You want smoke?"

"Yeáh, an ounce."

Wickham nods and flicks away the butt of a cigarette, then closes the screen door as he goes down the steps. Duane sits down on one of the stools near a table spread with the parts of a carburator on oily newspaper. He reaches over and picks up a part. Turning it over in his hand, he thinks again of his father but does not feel now the fear he earlier felt. 'Neither,' he thinks as he drops the part back onto the table and looks into the trailer's darkness. He can not see much beyond the dim light from the screen door, but from his past visits, he knows the trailer's appearance. There is varnished plywood and green enamel panelling on the walls. A wash-tub sink and a small wood stove sit against a wall. Around them are built-in benches, counters, and cupboards. A shower stall and curtain-surrounded toilet are halfway down the trailer. At the far end is a cot covered with woollen blankets. Fishing net is suspended on the ceiling, blue terry cloth curtains cover small windows, and reed matting lies on the floor. Above one bench is a rack with fishing poles and a shotgun. In a corner, below a shelf of ratty paperbacks, an old guitar leans against a stack of *Esquire*, *Rolling Stone*, and sportman magazines. Under an uncurtained window and propped on the counter by the table is a small, unframed oil painting on canvas in greens and blues of the Long Point marsh seen from the Port Rowan bluff. Wickham's wife painted it when they lived in Port Rowan, where together they ran a party fishing boat after leaving Florida in the early sixties to escape the Vietnam draft. But his wife got homesick and returned three years after they arrived. Wickham could not return and did not

very much want to, either. He gave up his boat and found a farm to sharegrow tobacco, and he continued to grow his own marijuana.

There are other southerners in the area who, like Wickham, live in trailers and sharegrow, so he is not suspect in town. Duane met him two years ago when he primed tobacco on the farm Wickham sharegrows. Wickham was the first man Duane had ever smoked marijuana with. Before that, Duane and his school friends would huddle in some corner of Metal Fabs to smoke a joint someone had got off a brother in university. With Wickham, it was like what Duane imagines smoking a peace pipe must have been like. Wickham treated the plant with reverence and only smoked when his mood was right. His calm kept Duane from getting as hyper as he usually did, and his quiet stories about the life in the back country of central Florida were unlike anything Duane had ever heard before. It was not the Miami his father dragged them off to every winter until Duane was old enough to refuse to go. After Wickham had said he liked and trusted Duane and would sell to him, one of the few people he would sell to, Duane began to go to Wickham's more often, and usually to visit, not to buy pot. But finally, Wickham told him not to come over so often, because, he said, as much as he liked Duane, he did not like company that much. Duane seldom visits now, and he usually goes only to buy pot.

The plywood steps outside the screen door creak as the door opens. Wickham enters carrying a gallon glass jar full of marijuana. He pulls the door closed, then goes around to the other side of the table Duane sits at. He folds the newspaper over the carburator parts to make a space, and then he sits on a stool in front of the space as he places the jar on the table. He twists the wide lid off the jar, drops it onto the table, and reaches in and pulls out a fistful of limp, narrow, dark-green leaves. As he spreads the leaves on the table, he says, "I jus' dug this jar up yeste'day, tha's why th'

leaves are s' moist. Should be nice an' mellow." Looking at the leaves, he says, "Tha's 'bout an ounce."

Duane knows it is at least half an ounce more, which is how Wickham usually gives his ounces. Duane pulls out his wallet and gives Wickham a twenty dollar bill.

Wickham takes the bill and looks at it a moment. He then looks with lowered head out the darkening window. He sighs deeply, then puts the bill on the counter by the painting. He picks up the lid and screws it back onto the jar. After putting the leaves on the table into an empty bread bag, he leans back against the wall.

Duane sees him looking at the parts of the carburator and says, "Givin' you trouble?"

Wickham reaches under the newspaper and picks up a part, looks at it a moment, then tosses it back onto the newspaper as he wearily drawls, "Yeah, belongs t' the boss. Dirtied up on 'im. Not 'nough sense t' keep tha' fancy car your daddy sol' 'im out o' th' fields. Gettin' too dark to work on 't now." Wickham looks from the carburator parts to Duane. "Boss's boy tol' me you paid 'em a visit couple weekends back."

Duane looks at Wickham and sees his features only barely in the fading light. He looks at the carburator parts again and hears his father's voice faintly as he thinks back to the weekend of the busted party. "Oh yeah. Christ. After the cops broke up that party that was raided, me and that chick I used to go with, Lucille, took a drive out Potter's Road, just to get out of town. Soon after we turned onto it, an OPP cruiser turned on after us. I still had that ounce I'd bought the week before, and he was so close I couldn't throw it out. I knew he was going to pull us over, so when I saw the entrance to Kerenyi's circle driveway, I just signalled an' turned in like I was going for a visit. Those big lanterns on the veranda were all lit up, so it looked like they was expectin' company. I drove up to the pillars watchin' the cop in my mirror

the whole time. He slowed down almost to a stop at the entrance to the drive an' crawled along till I stopped in front of the house. I got out of the car just as he reached the exit of the drive. He speeded up an' disappeared beyond the bushes, an' I ran to one of the shrubs along the drive an' shoved the bag into the wood chips, then went to the front door an' knocked. Shit, was I lucky Junior answered it. I was tellin' him what was happenin' when the cop drove by again from the other direction. When he saw us talkin', he speeded up an' was gone. I went back a couple nights later to find the pot, but all those bushes look the same. Junior says he can't find it, neither, so I paid, but a lot less than thirty days."

Wickham smiles slightly as Duane concludes. "Heh," says Wickham, "an' now you all are cruisin' ag'in tonigh'. You dogs. You're goin' t' see th' inside of a coffin 'fore you see th' inside of a kennel."

"Hell, Wickham," protests Duane, "we don't specially like it, but we ain't got n' other place to go an' get high."

"Easy, now. I know," Wickham says. "Ain't much you can do. Bad times all 'round."

In the darkness of the trailer, Duane sees Wickham's outline turn to face the painting. From outside, he hears Pete call, "Duane?"

Wickham turns from the painting to Duane. "Your buddies callin'," he says.

"Yeah, we're waiting for a pizza."

Wickham rises, and Duane does too. Duane turns and walks behind Wickham to the door. Wickham opens it and holds out his hand. "Good night, now. You boys take care. An' keep off them damn highways."

Duane shakes Wickham's hand as he walks past him. "Thanks, Wickham. See y' around." He walks down the steps into the shadows of the falling night. The dog and

cat are nowhere to be seen.

As Duane approaches Evan's van, Pete opens his door to let him in. "Everything okay?" asks Pete a bit nervously.

"Yeah, no problem," replies Duane as he enters the van. Pete moves to the cowl with Karl, and Duane sits in the passenger's seat. He pulls the bag of marijuana out of his jacket pocket and gives it to Pete.

"Not bad," says Pete pleased as he opens it and smells.

"Five bucks each," says Duane. "We can work it out when we get the pizza."

Evan starts the van and wheels around out the lane over the bridge. Pete gives the bag to Karl, who looks at it briefly and then ties it and drops it into Duane's lap. Duane is surprised and turns to look at Karl, who looks at him a moment and then stares out the front windshield. Evan turns right onto the road, and they drive back toward town with only the music playing.

As they go up the hill, Duane takes a package of rolling papers out of his pants pocket, but he fumbles it at a bump in the road, and it falls to the floor. The floor is too dark and cluttered to search for it. As they reach the top of the hill, they see Broadway lit up and stretching ahead of them to the railway overpass. They look over at the Hertz van still in front of the Royal, but now unloaded. Duane does not see his brother Brendan in his car on the other side of the street eating pizza with his girlfriend. He does not see his father's building either, but by the light of its long sign, he searches for and then finds the rolling papers.

As they drive through the downtown, Duane starts to untie the bag of marijuana to roll some joints, but then stops because of the irritating and revealing brightness from the store signs and streetlights. He puts the bag and the papers into his jacket pocket and realizes he did not look at his father's building. Looking out at other buildings, he

begins to wonder about his father, wonder what it will be like to be free of him, of his anger and his violence, wonders, as his fear begins to return, how he can become free so young and with so little to do to earn money. He had foreseen dependency for some years still, what with his father's insistance that he become a lawyer. He wonders how well prepared he will be to study law after struggling as he now is to get through grade twelve while spending most of his time in the architectural draughting studio or skipping classes and still having grade thirteen to get through. It does not occur to Duane that he could consider architecture as a career. But then it does not need to occur to him. Even if he did consider it, he would still believe it impossible to change his father's mind to allow him to study architecture instead of law. From before Duane can remember, he has been told he will be a lawyer and nothing else. After what has happened this afternon, it appears to Duane that he will finally be free of his father, but that he will also be left with nothing. The joy he feels is useless against the fear. As Evan turns the corner for the pizza place, Duane looks out his window at the vacant lot where the old hotel used to stand. Looking, Duane realizes he has nothing, and he begins to feel he is nothing.

When they turn the corner, Pete reaches over and turns the music down, then says, "Okay, let's work out the money." Evan parks and they do. The money for the pizza is given to Duane, and he gets out to go for it.

Inside the pizza place, Duane squints in the glare of the lights and the whiteness of the walls and counter. He begins to feel nauseous from the smell and the heat of the oven. He quickly pays, takes the pizza box, and leaves. He returns to the van without looking at the town hall, opens the door, hands the box to Pete, and gets in relieved.

"Where we goin'?" asks Evan.

"Coronation Park," says Pete, and he turns the music up again.

Evan drives around the boulevard back out to Broadway and turns left to drive back through the downtown again. As they turn left at the traffic light, Duane only glances indifferently now at his father's building. They go across the cement bridge over the ravine of the creek that upstream flows by the grove and downstream flows past Wickham's. After the bridge, they turn onto the lake road and wind up the hill and turn off to the right to enter the park. They drive down the lane into it and continue to the back of it, where they pull off into the trees and bushes around a pond. They are the only ones there. Evan turns off the engine and the music. It is nearly dark now, and the crickets are beginning.

Duane and Evan get out their doors as Karl and Pete slip under the blanket to go out the side door. When Duane gets around to the other side, the side door is open, and Pete is opening the pizza box while Karl opens beers. They eat and drink standing beside the van near the pond as the night comes on

"Let's have some tunes," says Pete. He goes into the van and puts in Deep Purple. When he returns, he says between bites of pizza, "Frenchmen'll be down here again soon."

"I heard the town wasn't gonna let them camp here anymore," says Evan.

"They've been sayin' that ever since they closed the hostel," replies Pete. "They have to let them stay here. Where else they gonna put 'em? Farmers don't have to take them right away."

"But they want them there when they need them," says Karl as he tosses his empty beer bottle into the pond.

Duane thinks about the summer and the men and women of all ages who come from Quebec to look for work in tobacco. Until two years ago, a Catholic church had provided a hostel for them, but it was closed when the police found some marijuana on

one of the residents and the town got scared about drugs coming into it. Duane knows that the guy who had the pot had bought it from Wickham, but the guy never told the police that. After the hostel was closed, the Quebeckers who protested their innocence, and the farmers who depended on them for their harvest, talked the town council into allowing them to camp in the park Duane and the others are in. Some tents and equipment were provided, and the Quebeckers seemed to prefer the camp to the hostel in the church basement. But one night, some local thugs raided the camp while most of the Quebeckers were at the Royal and tore it up, and also beat up some of the people there before they left. When the Quebeckers in the hotel found out about the raid, a brawl started in the hotel. Some people say it was begun by some of the thugs who had gone there after the raid. The police came and broke it up, and they put some of the Quebeckers and the thugs in jail for the night. The next day, the mayor publically apologized and had some new tents and equipment sent down. But many of the Quebeckers left after that, so the farmers were hard pressed for help that year and the wages went up, which surprised and pleased the thugs, who mostly worked in tobacco and then collected unemployment insurance and did little else. They let it be known to the Quebeckers who remained that they had heard that there would be another raid next year to drive all the Quebeckers out of town, and last year only about half as many Quebeckers stayed in the park. But the police patrolled it, and it was not raided, nor did wages rise any higher. No one was certain what the town was going to do this summer. Everybody said they should just wait and see what needed to be done.

Pete says, "You should've seen the fight at the fair last fall. Two big Frenchmen really pissed were goin' at each other. One of them got punched and fell on a coke bottle, and he grabbed it and broke the bottom off on a pole when he got up, and just

when he was gonna charge the other guy, a carny clubbed him--put 'im tits up."

"Hey Duane," says Evan, "didn't you work with some Frenchmen last year on that farm Wickham grows?"

Duane takes a drink of beer after swallowing the last of his piece of pizza. "Yeah, a guy and a girl from Quebec City. They were separatists." Duane remembers him. Bertrand, average-sized with long, straight, black hair and dark eyes. "He was in university. Kept trying to talk politics with me, but I couldn't have give a shit." Bertrand had once exasperatedly asked Duane why the tobacco farmers and people in town don't learn French, but Duane was by then tired of his questions and said nothing except that they had no need for it. "His girlfriend was good-looking. She was from Ottawa. Cute blond. They met when she was studying French in Quebec City." Duane does not say that he had fallen in love with her. He did not tell her, either. He could not even remember her name now. She was quietly devoted to Bertrand, and every morning when Duane saw them come out of their tent together, he longed to be him. Priming tobacco in the cold mornings and hot afternoons, he imagined being alone with her on an isolated beach at Long Point. "They both worked hard, but they left right at the end of work on the last day. They didn't even eat, just showered and put on clean clothes and got a ride with Wickham to the bus station when Wickham went into town to get beer for the harvest party."

"They comin' back this year?" asks Evan.

"I don't know. Probably not," Duane replies.

"No problem," says Pete, "lots of Jamaicans comin' up now. Won't have any Frenchman around here anymore before too long." Pete tosses his empty beer bottle into the pond.

Out on the pond, some ducks quack, and in the descending night, they can barely

be seen swimming to the other side. Duane remembers two summers ago, his first time in the Royal just after the drinking age had been lowered to eighteen, and how the Quebeckers were such partiers: They sang when the band took breaks, and they sang and danced in the aisles when the band played. They always sat in large groups around the big, round tables and were always talking and laughing. They never started any fights, but never backed down from any, either. The owner of the hotel, a middle-aged European, never gave them any trouble, nor they him. The Jamaicans who had come up to work were quiet and reserved, and they looked and must have felt so out of place that they seldom stayed longer than an hour in the early evening. They were never hassled, not even by the thugs.

As the night descends to near full darkness now, forms in the distance become indistinguishable. There is no moon rising, and only within a whisper's range can Duane tell what it is he looks at. So when he and the others see the headlights coming up the lane toward them, Pete says angrily, "What a piss off!", and they throw their beer bottles into the pond. Pete and Evan quickly carry the cooler and beer case into the bushes to hide them. Duane puts the bag of marijuana down the front of his pants. When Pete and Evan return, the car is close enough that they can all see by the location of the amber parking lights that it is not a police cruiser.

As Duane stares into the headlights, he is drawn back again to the afternoon, the glare from the sun on his father's building. Suddenly the car's highbeams flash on.

"Prick!" says Pete as Duane closes his eyes and jerks his head sideways. His knees buckle when he turns to escape the glare, but when he collides with Karl, he is able to recover the balance he was losing. He turns again to look at the car at the same time as its high beams turn off and then flash quickly on and off once more.

They all relax. "No cop, anyway," says Pete as he and Evan go back into the

bushes for the cooler and case of beer.

By now, Duane can tell by the parking lights the type of car. As it approaches and slowly turns to follow the lane past where Evan pulled off, he sees by the silhouette that it is his car and that Brendan and his girlfriend are in it. Duane watches it drive on slowly a ways, and when it stops and its lights go out, he wants to run to it and take it back from Brendan, yet kick in its fenders and smash its lights too

Pete and Evan return and place the cooler and beer case on the floor of the van inside the side door. Evan says, "Wonder who that was?"

"Early Frenchman," replies Pete. Then he says, "Pizza's gone. Let's smoke a joint."

Duane has heard Pete, but is still staring at the silhouette of his car 'Either take it,' he thinks, 'or smash it. Either. Or go. Go.'

"Duane," says Pete. "Hey, space cadet. Toke time."

Duane hears Pete say, "Karl, you find out what he's on?" but hears no reply from Karl. Suddenly a light flashes in his eyes. He starts and raises his hand to block the light, then after a moment lowers it and sees in front of his face the flame from the lighter Karl holds.

Karl looks intently at Duane a moment, then puts out the lighter. He says nothing.

Without saying anything, Duane pulls the bag of marijuana out of his pants. On top of the cooler, he rolls a joint and hands it to Pete, then begins to roll more.

Pete lights the joint and hacks forcefully as he says, "Good stuff!" He tokes again and passes it to Evan. The ember brightens as Evan draws in hard, and when he has a lungful, he staggers backward into the side of his van. Pete coughs out his smoke as he laughs at Evan. Evan returns to them and passes the joint to Karl, who takes only

a light toke and holds the joint until Duane finishes rolling another, then passes it to him. Duane draws in slowly and just as he is near full, a seed explodes shooting sparks. The others laugh as Duane jerks the joint away from his mouth and loses his smoke.

"Son-of-a-bitch," Duane mumbles as he looks at the joint. After a moment, he takes a quick toke, then passes it to Pete, who tokes hard and passes it to Evan.

After Evan tokes, he says to Karl, "Enough for one more toke."

Karl says flatly, "I'll pass." Evan gives it to Duane. As Duane tokes, he looks questioningly at Karl, but he turns away when Karl looks at him. The ember reaches his fingers, and he flicks the roach into the pond.

"Let's cruise," says Evan.

"Where's your corkscrew, Evan?" Duane asks.

"In the glove box."

Duane puts the joints he has rolled into the bag and the bag into his jacket pocket, then gets his bottle of wine out of the cooler and walks around to the passenger door to get the corkscrew. When he opens the door, a beer bottle rolls out and falls to the ground. Duane thinks to pick it up and throw it at his car, but instead only kicks it away into the darkness. From the glove box, he takes the corkscrew, then peels off the foil on the top of the wine bottle, screws in the corkscrew, and yanks out the cork.

"Gut rut," says Pete as he and Karl get in the van before Duane, who follows and sits in the passenger seat: Evan starts the motor, and Pete takes out the Deep Purple tape and puts in Black Sabbath. They drive up out of the park and turn down the road toward the lake. Duane takes three deep swallows of wine and stares out the front windshield as he sinks back into the seat.

At a break in the music, Pete laughs and says, "Yesterday in machine shop I was

turnin' a piece of brass for a stem for a hash pipe, and Mr Moses walks up and says, 'What are you making, Peter?' 'Hash pipe, sir,' I says. He looks up at the ceiling and shakes his head and walks away." They all chuckle. "Hey!" says Pete as the next song begins. "You guys hear about Duane in mechanical draughtin' yesterday?"

Duane cringes. He raises the wine bottle to his lips and swallows deeply.

Over the driving guitar of the music, Pete says, "We were all workin' on the boards after a lesson, an' Mr Pacey was at the back of the room bent over Harrison's board with three or four guys around him. Duane's at the blackboard drawin' gears an' great, gross bo-dangs, an' all of a sudden he shouts, 'See Boyd fuck! Fuck, Boyd! Fuck!' Pacey's head pops up an' he says, 'Hey!' You should've seen the look on Duane's face!"

As they all laugh, Duane remembers his English class and the story they were reading last week, how he and some other guys had thought it so juvenile that they started to make fun of it and how he had got so carried away when he thought Mr Pacey had left the class.

Pete says, "Good thing you're Pacey's favourite an' there ain't no babes in the class. Your reputation'd be even worse than it is now."

Duane takes another drink of wine and then passes the bottle to Pete, who takes a short swallow and gives it to Karl. Karl drinks and passes it to Evan, who waits for a car to pass and then tips it up to drink. He lowers it and gives it to Pete. Pete takes another quick drink and returning it to Duane asks, "What is that stuff?"

"It's from someplace in France called Bordeaux," Duane replies. "The Frenchman I worked with last year told me wine from there was good and didn't cost much."

"Bordeaux," says Pete. "Is that far down on the list? Me an' Evan have been workin' our way down from the top, but I don't remember that one."

"The list only tells the name of the grower," says Duane, though he in not certain that is true. He is about to say something about grapes when headlights in the outside rear mirror reflect into his face. He squints and turns away as Evan says at the same time, "Car coming up fast."

"Goddamn it!" moans Pete.

Karl says worried, "Duane–where's the pot?"

Duane pulls the bag out of his jacket pocket and stuffs it down his pants. He guzzles some more of his wine, but can not finish it.

"It's okay," says Evan. "It's gonna pass us."

In a moment, a dark-coloured GTO screams by and flashes into and then beyond the van's headlights. "Lucas Godnik's Goat," says Pete as they watch the car's taillights until they are out of sight at the short curves ahead. "Wicked machine." When they reach the curves, they look for signs that the car has gone off the road, but do not find any.

Going through the curves, Duane remembers three weeks ago alone driving fast into them and missing the second one and ending up in the field beyond it. Had he missed the first or the third, he would have crashed into a gully. He raises the wine bottle to his lips and drinking discovers there is less wine left than he thought. He finishes it, and as they round the third curve, he opens his window and tosses the bottle into the black gully. After he rolls up the window, he pulls the bag of marijuana out of his pants and takes one of the joints out of it. He lights it and passes it on as he feels his body fold itself together around his insides. Above the music, he says to Pete, "Give me a beer."

Pete exhales and passes the joint to Evan, then goes under the blanket and in a moment returns with an open beer. "Duane," he says.

Duane turns from looking out the side window and takes the beer. The joint continues around as they drive in the darkness with the music loud.

"Spooky Hollow?" says Evan as they approach the turnoff for it.

No one speaks, so Evan slows and turns right onto the gravel road. He picks up a bit of speed, but has to slow down because of ruts and pot holes. They continue in the darkness, the beams of the headlights bouncing and shifting to show the fields and bush and trees on either side. Evan turns onto a dirt road that winds down to the bottom of a deep, narrow ravine overgrown and swampy on both sides. As they wind along the road, Duane feels his stomach tighten. He lowers the beer he was about to drink from. Suddenly their lights go out.

"Hey!" cries Pete as they drive slowly in the blackness.

Evan laughs and switches the lights on again. As they flash on, Duane says quickly, "Evan—stop!" Even before Evan stops, Duane has his door open. He gets out and drops his beer as he staggers in the darkness to the back of the van. Leaning against it above the taillight, he stands head bent back and remembers the last time he came down here, three weeks ago with Lucille after the house party that was raided, and how he was trying to keep her from breaking up with him because she didn't like his drinking and doing drugs and wild driving and how he was so upset because he liked her so much because she was unlike the other girls he had taken out, she sang in a band that played school dances and took private art lessons. He became so desparate that he said he would get a new car if she would stay with him, and all she did was sigh and say, "Oh Duane," and then ask him to take her home, and afterward he had driven too fast and gone off the curve.

"Duane," says Pete out the door. "You okay?"

Duane bends over into the smell of the exhaust of the van. "Yeah," he gasps just

before he vomits in the red of the taillight.

When he has finished, he straightens himself, his back against the side of the van. As he turns and takes a step toward the open door, he feels his foot hit the beer bottle he dropped. He looks down, but can not see it. He kicks blindly at it and loses his balance and falls to the dirt road. He pushes himself up and stumbles to the door of the van and gets in. The music is off. Pete, Evan, and Karl are not talking. There is only the idling of the motor. Duane feels his shoulder nudged. He turns and sees Karl holding a rag for him. Duane takes it and wipes his mouth, then drops it to the floor. "Evan," he says, "you got that Alice Cooper tape? The one with 'Eighteen' on it?"

"Yeah," Evan replies. He finds it on the dashboard and puts it into the tape deck.

"Duane," says Karl as they begin to drive again. Duane turns to look at Karl. He has a beer held out to him. "Drink it slower this time," Karl says.

Duane takes the beer from him, raises it and drinks, and, as his nausea lessens, he follows the headlights as Evan drives them up out of the ravine.

They drive out, and in the darkness, they drive along gravel roads past wood lots, fresh-turned fields, and farm yards with a house with one or two windows lit and a barking dog beneath a light bulb burning on a high pole. They drive, and they talk only briefly between songs. It is talk that they would forget by the end of the next song, but it is talk that they would immediately recognize for a long time after, would remember always, but never be able to repeat or say when it had been spoken. Between swallows of beer and tokes of joints, they talk not about, but around the fear and desire and absurdity of lives that, were they told of them by others, they would refuse to believe were theirs, but were they spoken of by each other, they would know as their own.

As they drive, Duane feels the strength of their friendship, but he also feels his

loneliness in it. He thinks of Wickham and of how so many, even among Wickham's friend's, fear him, yet how he has never felt anything but ease and comfort with him. He thinks of his own friends, of Karl, Pete, Evan, and many others, who always want him to party, yet who always keep their distance when he parties as hard as he wants. He thinks of his father and the cars that are his father's life, and he thinks of how he has cared for the sports car everybody, even his father, admires, and yet how he now, since this afternoon, wants only to pound it with a sledge-hammer, as he did an old Cadillac junked in an alley, or tip it over down into a gully, as he and some others had done to a thug's parked car, or burn it, as he and Pete had one night for the insurance money burnt Pete's car. Duane feels his loneliness, yet feeling it, he feels only what he has always felt. As he throws another empty beer bottle out the window and reaches for another joint, the spite, the bitterness, and the despair that are also his loneliness, but to him seem only normal, he does not think of at all.

Gradually, the road in front of them lightens. They realize they are coming to the highway. The lights of the cars and trucks on the highway intensify as they approach the intersection. Evan slows well in advance. "To the Royal?" he asks as he slows to a stop. They agree. Evan waits for a long stretch of darkness in the highway, then pulls onto it. Driving back toward town, Duane squints and feels nauseous as he turns away from the lights of every car that passes them.

They return to town along the river road. There is no light at Wickham's. As they drive up the hill and see the Royal, night seems to them to have disappeared. Cars creep nearly bumper to bumper as they search for parking spots near the hotel beneath the bright store signs and streetlights. Kids are standing about the entrance to the hotel's bar, some alone and some in small groups. Others just arriving stop to talk to those standing about or walk directly into the hotel. Evan turns left from Broadway

onto the sidestreet beside the hotel, and they see groups of tokers together in the shadows around the glow of joints. They find a parking spot between streetlights beside the back fence of the auto wrecker's lot that starts before Wickham's at the bottom of the river road hill.

They leave the van for the hotel. Walking to it, they walk up past the tokers in the dark beside the hotel and then round the corner into the lights of Broadway. Duane squints, and the first thing he sees is the long, blue and white sign on his father's building across the street, but he only thinks now of how it resembles a joint rolled with blueberry papers.

Eyes squinted against the glare of the lights on the street, Duane walks quickly to the hotel's recessed entrance, mounts the three cement steps up, and pulls open the heavy glass door to enter the narrow, darkened foyer to the barroom. He walks down the hall ahead of the others and enters the broad, low barroom dimly lit by wagon-wheel chandeliers and lamps on wooden ceiling posts and along the stone and stucco walls. Loud rock from a tape plays through a sound system, and the smoke is heavy in the heat and noise of the crowd. In search of a place to sit, Duane and the others walk the long aisles between the excited drinkers standing and seated at the large, round, oaken tables. Walking through the crowd, Duane glances frequently at the equipment of the band, at the row of unlit spotlights above the speakers, at the amplifiers, the organ, guitars, and drums, the wires everywhere over the floor-level stage midway down the wall opposite them. Waiters and waitresses move to and from the bar along the back wall, dodging in the aisles the long-haired kids in denim and leather.

Duane looks around and sees people he knows, but the noise and activity that he had earlier looked forward to now begins to wear on him. His walk becomes less

steady as his head begins to ache.

"Hey Pete!" Duane hears someone cry behind him. He turns and sees in the dim light three guys from school at a table with four empty chairs. He follows Karl, Evan, and Pete back through the crowd to the guys at the table. They all greet each other and sit down. The table is directly in front of the stage, one aisle back. They can see everywhere from where they sit.

Now that they are seated, Duane feels the initial rush of the entrance subside and the unwelcome weariness continue to grow. He reaches into his jacket pocket to feel the bag of pot and decides to go for a toke after they have ordered their beers. A waiter soon appears.

After they order, Duane says, "Anybody want to go for a toke?"

"Really?" says one of the three excitedly.

Pete says, "Yeah, let's go out to the alley."

"I'm going to wait for the band to come on," says Evan.

Karl, eyes narrowed, looks at Duane, then turns away.

Duane looks at Karl a moment longer, then sneers, but then he starts to see double. He stands up unsteadily but recovers enough to walk without stumbling ahead of Pete and the others. They walk through the crowd to the back door and out into a dark alley. Outside, Duane breathes deeply in the welcome quiet. They all walk in behind a large garbage bin. Duane pulls out the bag to get a joint.

"Wow!" says one of the three. "How much pot is that?"

Duane looks at him and remembers him as a guy who gets good marks and who has only begun to go out at night. "About an ounce," replies Duane, unable to avoid a hint of coolness in his voice.

"How much did you pay for it?" the guy asks eagerly.

"Twenty bucks." Duane pulls a joint from the bag and then hands the bag to the guy to look at. 'Handles it like a frog in lab class,' thinks Duane.

The guy finishes looking over the bag, then looks wide-eyed at Duane and gives the bag back, saying too earnestly, "Hey, thanks a lot!"

Duane wonders who the bigger loser is, the naive guy or he himself for being with him. He lights the joint, tokes hard, and passes it to Pete. After he exhales, he says, "I'm going back in."

"See you inside," says Pete as Duane walks out from behind the trash bin. Walking unsteadily back along the side of the hotel to go to the entrance at the front, Duane's head begins to swell, and he again feels sick to his stomach. He stops and leans against a parked car. His stomach heaves, but he is able to hold it down. As he tastes the bitter acid of his sickness, he hears the band begin to play. He pushes himself away from the car and more staggers now than walks to the corner. As he reaches the corner, the light of the street hits him. He moans inwardly and feels sick again. He stops to lean on the dark side of the large oak there. "Please," he moans, then he feels his insides explode and jerks over and vomits a stream of liquid into the grass.

"Son-of-a-bitch," he mutters as he recovers and wipes the water from his eyes. He wipes his mouth on the sleeve of his jean jacket and rests a moment. He then stumbles around the corner into the light and walks unsteadily past kids leaning and sitting against the wall of the building. His eyes narrowed almost closed against the light of the street, he gets to the entrance and glances blurry-eyed at his father's building and at the same time trips on the bottom step up to the glass door, but only falls against the door. He recovers, pulls the door open, and staggers into the foyer through the crowd and on to the barroom entrance.

The band has finished its song and the crowd is clapping and whistling. Duane

stops inside the entrance and leans against a post. As he looks at the band on the dark stage, his eyes blur, his hearing becomes distorted. Suddenly there is an explosion of light and sound as the band begins to play again. Duane falls backward from the post into someone and staggers from the collision to a chair along the back wall. Reaching the chair, he falls forward into it, grabbing at the back and arm to turn himself. Seated, he faces the band. Bright flashes of changing colour make him squint and blink as the sound beats into his body. He leans his head back into the stucco wall and closes his eyes to a continuous swirl of light and sound that in a moment becomes empty blackness.

In the noise of the crowd, Duane hears his name called. "Duane!" he hears again He opens his eyes.

Karl stands bent over looking at him. He says, "Where have you been?"

Duane looks past Karl at the dark stage and can not see the musicians. "What time is it?" he asks.

"Just before midnight. Have you been sick again?"

"The band's only got one more set?" Duane says in disbelief.

"Yeah, they're back on at twelve. How come you're sitting here?"

Duane raises his hands to his face and rubs it, then says, "One more set. Son-of-a-bitch. Is my beer still at the table?"

"Yeah," replies Karl, "but it's warm as piss. Evan wants to divide the pot. He's leaving soon."

"I'll wait here for him."

Karl looks closely at Duane a moment longer, but says nothing more He turns

and leaves. From his slouch in the chair, Duane pushes himself up in the seat and looks at the crowd. Many are standing and moving unsteadily. Against the back wall on either side of him, he sees guys seated at different tables with their heads back against the wall or dropped to their chests or onto the table. After a few moments, Evan comes through the crowd with Pete behind him. Duane sees them and rises unsteadily as they approach. He turns and begins to walk to the back door. Evan and Pete reach him and begin to ask questions, but he says nothing. They go out into the alley and walk to Evan's van in silence.

When they are in the van, Pete gives Duane some baggies, but Duane gives them back to Pete with the bag of pot. While Pete divides the pot on the engine cowl, Duane closes his eyes and leans his head against the window of the door.

"Duane," says Pete.

Duane opens his eyes and turns to Pete, who holds out Duane's portion of the pot. Duane looks blankly at it a moment. As he reaches for the bag, the streetlight in front of them reflects on its surface. Duane stops his hand and looks hard at the bag, then grabs it and stuffs it into his jacket pocket and gets out of the van. Evan and Pete get out also, and together they walk ahead of Duane in the darkness back toward the hotel.

Following Pete and Evan onto Broadway, Duane squints over the cars and across at his father's building. He looks not at the illuminated sign this time, but at the now dark showroom. He stops and stares at it. Evan and Pete keep walking and glance back at him before they enter the hotel, but they do not wait for him. Duane stares at the dark showroom until the changing light at the intersection beyond the building catches his attention. He sees the light turn from yellow to red, and then he sees turning up Broadway away from him his low, black sports car. In the car he sees two

heads close together, but then the car is lost to his sight behind all the empty cars parked along Broadway. Duane looks down from one empty car to the next, until he comes to the white car in front of him. As he looks at it, he begins to tremble. He reaches into his jacket pocket and fingers his bag of marijuana. He grasps it and pulls it out of his pocket. Feeling it in his hand, he turns it over and over as he looks at the white car. He is about to throw the bag onto the hood of the car when he sees a police cruiser approaching down Broadway. He puts the bag back into his pocket and walks quickly back into the hotel.

As he enters the foyer, he notices the crowd is quiet. Then he hears an organ playing softly and recognizes the opening of "Whiter Shade of Pale." He stops in the hallway that leads to the entrance of the bar. He is alone. He hears a singer begin, but listens for only a moment. He turns and walks quickly out of the hotel onto Broadway to the corner of the sidestreet and across to the other side of Broadway never looking at his father's building and in the dark down the continuation of the sidestreet, walking quickly down toward the cement bridge over the creek at the bottom of the hill and then before it turning up Tillson Avenue to the street that leads to the subdivision and then down the street walking from one space of darkness between the streetlights to the next, walking quickly the streets he has at night walked too many times before. He turns in the darkness onto his street and follows it and comes to the long, dark house on the corner. He stands in front of it, breathing rapidly, fists clenched, his body shaking, the echoes of shouts and cries throbbing in his head. He sees his father's long, white car parked in the driveway.

He stands there in the street shaking and staring at the car until the light and sound of a car turning onto the street send him running across a neighbour's yard into the darkness of the bushes at the side of the house. From there, he watches his black

sports car turn into the driveway and park beside his father's car. Before his brother has turned off the lights, Duane has turned and fled from the bushes across the neighbour's backyard, and he continues in the darkness running across other yards and then into another street out to the end of the subdivision and on into the darkness of the field and through it and further on still further into the bush running and tripping and stumbling until his body aches and he finally has to stop to catch his breath. He stops briefly, breathing deeply in the darkness, then continues, but slower now, until he reaches the grove. In the darkness and the silence of the grove, he hears the creek below. He walks slowly now among the silhouettes of the tree trunks, breathing the cool, sweet night air now deeply and calmly, walking slowly in the quiet darkness. He walks on the soft, silent ground to the crest of the hill above the creek. There, he sits against the trunk of a tree, looking into the darkness until tiredness overcomes him and he drops his head to his knees and sleeps.

In the silence of the early morning, Duane awakens lying on his side, knees to his chest, on the old leaves and new grass. Sitting up against the tree, he looks out over the misty creek to the scrub bush of the flatland beyond. His body and head are sore, but he is too wasted to feel anything but distant numbness. He closes his eyes again and leans his head back against the tree trunk. A rustling crackle behind him startles him. His body tenses as he opens his eyes and turns to see what the rustling is. A black squirrel is digging among winter-blackened leaves. Duane impulsively grabs a stick to throw at the squirrel. Twisting to throw it, he strains a muscle in his shoulder. The stick lands short, and the squirrel runs up a tree. Duane closes his eyes and turns forward again, rubbing his shoulder and saying, "Son-of-a-bitch."

'Son-of-a-bitch,' thinks Duane, 'son-of-a-bitch--father, brother--mother. Car. Cars. Won't go. Who? Either. No. Who? Neither. Car. School. Who? Law. Lawyer. Who? Either go. Who? Neither. Who? You. Who? You! You! You! Son-of-a-bitch!'

"Son-of-a-bitch," he moans amid shouts and cries deep within him for a long time, feeling blows and tears deep inside come to the surface until he shifts against the tree as though to avoid being struck. He opens his eyes startled. He sees through the shadows of the grove the softly tinted, dawn-lit mist of the creek. Calming, he hears a bird in the grove and then inside himself a singing, sees a figure on a stage, she is dressed in white, her blond hair shimmering in a spotlight, she is alone, alone and singing, "Turn a whiter shade of pale," alone, singing, in the spotlight, alone. Alone. 'Lucille,' thinks Duane. "Lucille," he says to the mist.

Duane thinks about his essay as he stands watching yeast bubble in a bowl of water. He is alone in a small, tacky space that serves as a bakery. It is isolated and hidden in the back corner of a restaurant and cheese shop. Two years ago, Duane ran the bakery. This is the first time he has been back in it since.

After a moment, he moves the bubbling, stainless steel bowl from the top of the hot bread oven to the large, sturdy, oaken kneading table, and he wonders how he will write something he has never written before. He returns to the oven and opens its wide, top door to put in the tins of bran muffins and trays of peanut-butter cookies, and putting them in, he wonders how he can make Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* into a play. He wonders, too, at how strange it is that in a political science course on revolution and political change, the professor would ask, almost plead, "Give me anything but a standard essay--a video, a play, an epic poem!" There is a lot that Duane could wonder at were he not preoccupied early this Thursday spring morning with coordinating the making of four kinds of cookies, five sorts of muffins, and six types of bread.

He returns to the bowl on the kneading table and sees the yeast is ready for some flour. Turning around to the two green, barrel-like, plastic garbage pails behind him, he opens the one with 'WHOLE WHEAT' printed in black magic marker on the lid. It is nearly empty. He reaches to the stack of large bags of flour against the wall behind the barrels and pulls down one of the eighty-pound paper sacks. He tears open the sewn end of the sack, hefts it, and pours full the green barrel, then drops the near-empty sack and turning again to the table reaches across for the big plastic measuring

cup to scoop out of the barrel a heaping cup's worth of flour. He turns to the table again and slowly pours and mixes the flour into the yeasty water. When all the flour is mixed in, he places the bowl on top of the bread oven once more and returns to thinking about Burke and Paine as he puts the lid back on the barrel and the remainder of the sack of flour back on top of the stack out of the way.

Duane remembers how amazed the professor was when he told him that he had not only read all of Burke's *Reflections*, but had liked it too. Duane was himself as incredulous as the professor, but for a different reason. It appeared to Duane that the professor was amazed because so few students actually read the whole book. Duane drifts away from Burke and Paine and begins to think about his difficulty adjusting to being a student again at twenty-four. "Twenty-four," he says aloud to nobody and then, despairing a moment, "Son-of-a-bitch."

Propped against the kneading table, he looks across the small, one-man bakery and at the purple paisley curtain over the glassed-in loophole beside the stack of flour sacks along the wall that separates him from the restaurant. He goes over to the loophole, lifts the curtain, and looks into the empty restaurant. Early morning light through the large, plate glass window at the front of the restaurant casts long, vague shadows among the floor plants and the wood-and-wicker chairs and small, glass-topped tables. The walls are papered in striped, soft pinks and blues and are hung with poster-size, metal-framed magazine covers from *The New Yorker*, *Punch*, and *Paris Match*. He remembers fondly the previous, country-style decor and the earthy manner of the people who used to eat here, and he wonders what the customers are like now since Winifred, the owner, has changed the interior. But then, dropping the curtain, he thinks, 'Ah, who gives a shit.'

The bing of the timer recalls him. He remembers the oatmeal bread in the oven.

Turning from the curtain, he goes to the oven, opens its lower door, and sees that the bread is nearly done as he likes it. Another two minutes, he says to himself as he closes the door. He sets the timer for the raisin bread in pans beside the oatmeal, then checks the cookies and muffins in the top oven. He closes the door and takes the bowl of risen yeast mix off of the oven and stirs it down, then pours it into the small kneading machine's bowl which sits on the table in front of the machine. He adds more whole wheat flour until he feels with his hand in the mixture that it is ready for the machine. He hoists the bowl up around the machine's kneading hook, secures it, and then switches on the machine and adds more flour.

When the mixture has formed into dough around the rotating hook, Duane returns to the oven. He opens the lower door, then gloves his hand and takes out a pan of oatmeal bread. Turning the loaf out of it, he sees that the bottom is firm and brown. He returns it to the pan, puts it aside, and removes the rest of the pans, putting them onto the counter, the garbage pails, and the table wherever he can find room among the utensils, trays, pans, and bowls. He turns to the kneading machine and adds more flour, then begins to remove the oatmeal loaves from their pans, admiring their appearance and savouring their smell as he places them to cool on the racks at the far end of the table. While he is doing this, he hears the back door of the restaurant grate open and the familiar lilt of Winifred's voice as she calls out, "Good morning, Duane! And a happy Saint Patrick's Day to you, too, dear!"

All the pans emptied, Duane removes the glove and turns to look over the two green flour barrels and past the column of white buckets of baking ingredients to the gap between the bakery and the long, narrow pantry. He hears Winifred walking along the pantry between its stainless steel sinks and shelves of dishes and then sees her appear and stop in the gap. In her long, white, woollen coat, she is slender and

fine-figured, a fair-skinned and sharp-featured woman with grey-flecked, black hair short and curled, and sparkling, grey-green eyes.

She smiles brightly at him and claps her hands together saying, "Well! Back where you belong! And everything already looking like it did when you were here before! It's too much in your blood for you to ever leave again!"

Duane smiles and looks at the large kneading table covered with the racks of bread, the kneading machine, and the confusion of stainless steel bowls, blackened bread pans and cookie trays, old yogurt containers semi-filled with different oils, nuts, and dried fruits, and various knives and spoons. He remembers his surprise and pleasure when Winifred installed the custom-made oaken table for him the Christmas of the winter he worked for her two years ago. When she phoned him last week to ask whether he would work today so that Sean, the baker he had trained as his replacement, could have the day off, he agreed, and besides welcoming the money, he immediately looked forward to seeing the table again. He was pleased to see this morning not only it, but also that the whole of the cramped though functional bakery was still as he had arranged it after taking it over from the previous baker early that winter.

Duane looks back at Winifred and sees that she is still smiling at him. He feels again the shyness he has always felt before her, still finds it hard to behave with her the way he does with others. He remembers how her beauty and grace awed him in themselves, but how together with her directness, ability to control, and precise sensitivity to mood, she represented for him what he imagined the ancients used to call a goddess. Many times he has been powerless to even talk in her presence. He is still awed.

Realizing he has not yet greeted her, Duane says quickly, "Good morning! Happy Saint Patrick's Day to you too! Are you wearing green?"

She smiles and says, "Of course!" and then opens mock-seductively the neck of her coat and flashes an emerald-green silk scarf knotted loosely around her neck. She winks and laughs lightly, then says, "You Irish are distant cousins of we Welsh, and we like to show you that you are still a part of the family." She looks his white-clad body up and down and says, "And you? Where is your green?"

Duane wipes his hands carefully on his apron and reaches into his pants pocket. From it he pulls a small piece of heavy, green paper folded in half. He hands it to Winifred, and she opens it to the photograph inside.

"Ah! The journalist grandfather you have mentioned?"

"Yes," Duane replies. "I had it taken when I visited him last year." He turns to check the whole wheat mix on the kneading machine and adds flour to it, then looks at the muffins and cookies and the rye bread dough rising in a big bowl on the oven before turning back to Winifred. "He was born on March seventeenth, and his mother was Irish."

Reflecting a moment, Winifred says knowingly, "And it is your mother who is Irish too?"

"Yes," says Duane, and just by the way she has spoken he feels a closeness to his grandfather he has never felt before.

The timer bings. Duane turns to look at the oven. "Raisin bread," he says as he turns back to Winifred.

She walks over to the kneading table and looks down at it. Searching for something and apparently not finding it, she goes back into the pantry and returns with a white plate and a deep, glass bowl. She goes to the table again, and finding a clear spot at the back of it, she lays the plate down. She sees him watching her and says, pretending at authority, "The raisin bread, Duane."

Duane turns to the oven, checks the raisin bread and sees it is done, and while removing the pans to the lids of the flour barrels and to the table, he watches Winifred open and stand the green-carded photograph of his grandfather on the plate and then put the glass bowl onto the plate over the card. She stands back and admires the arrangement, then turns to Duane.

"He won't inspire you very much in your pocket," she says. "Vision was important to him too." She looks at the breads, muffins, and cookies and inhales deeply. "Well! It is good to have you back, even if it is only for the day. Where is the key I gave you to get in this morning? What time did you arrive?"

Duane takes the key out of his pants pocket and gives it to her, then says, "I got here around dawn.... I--I didn't look at the time."

Winifred looks at Duane sagely and says, "Dawn. Just like a Leo--moving in a time no clock will ever capture. But no matter. What is important is what you produce, not the time in which you produce it. Genius can flash like lightening or be as slow as an arctic sun." With a wink, she reaches for a cookie, then turns back into the pantry and goes through it to a back table in the restaurant to do paperwork.

Duane checks the whole wheat dough on the kneading machine and sees it is turning smoothly on the hook. He moves the bowl of risen rye dough off the oven to the kneading table and pushes the dough down, then takes the raisin bread loaves out of their pans. That done, he flours the table, turns the rye dough out of the bowl, and begins to knead.

While kneading, he looks at the photograph of his grandfather. He studies the black and white image, an old, round face with a thick, white mustache, wind-tossled, white hair, and pale but alert eyes that look into the distance, and he is taken back to the spring of the previous year when he spent two weeks in Basel with him. It was the

second time he had seen him, but the first time alone. Once, his father had taken over his mother, his brother, and him, but he was fifteen then and interested only in going to the discotheques, which did not have age limits, to look at the women and drink as much beer as he could. All he remembers of his grandfather from that trip is an argument his grandfather and his father had in German, an argument that somehow concerned him because his grandfather kept gesturing at him.

Duane flours the table again and continues to knead, thinking how when he turned eighteen his grandfather began to write letters to him, one or two pages, three or four times a year, and they always included a clipping of an article he had written for one of the Basel newspapers. These letters and articles were in French and German, languages Duane had begun in high school but then had dropped, so he could not read them himself. He knew his father and grandfather did not get along, so he did not want to show them to his father, who was not interested anyway, and he did not know anyone who knew anything except English until he moved to London when nineteen. Until then, he just glanced at the letters and then shoved them away among the car magazines and skin books in the drawers of his little study desk. At eighteen, he remembers as he kneads the dough harder, he did not read anything except job applications after he dropped out of grade thirteen.

A burnt smell comes to Duane as he remembers the muffins and cookies. He leaves the rye dough and turns quickly to open the top door of the oven, gloving his hand at the same time and then pulling out the muffin tins and cookie trays. Relieved to see that only those cookies that were over the hot left corner at the back of the oven are burnt, he places the tins and trays on the racks to cool. Checking the whole wheat dough, he sees it is ready to leaven, so removes it from the kneading machine to a bowl. With the dough in the bowl on the oven and covered with a damp towel, he

starts the yeast for the eight-grain bread, the final one before the faster batter bread. Everything in order, he turns to knead the rye dough again.

"Duane," he hears Winifred call, "what is that smell?"

"Burnt cookie," he calls back.

"What! I don't believe it!"

"Just a few edges from the bad corner."

"Ah! Well, would you consider staying if we bought you a new oven?" she calls with a note of finality. Duane has heard this playful sort of question from her enough in the past to know she does not expect an answer. She has not expected one ever since she asked him, that winter two years ago, what he intended to do with himself. "I don't know," he replied, "maybe I'll be a writer—either that or collect garbage." She looked at him kindly for a moment, then said something he did not understand in her native Welsh and returned to cleaning cheeses. He never did ask her what she had said.

Kneading the rye dough, he looks again at the photograph of his grandfather. When he moved to London, he remembers, he rummaged through his little desk and found the letters and decided without knowing why to take them with him. Bringing them with him was fortunate, for the teacher he had in the land surveying program at the community college in London was from Germany. Duane had decided late to attend college and so came to London after classes had begun. The eight months he had spent working at odd factory and construction jobs after dropping out of high school passed in a haze of many mornings of half-stoned hangovers, and his father finally became so fed up with him that he told Duane to either go to school for a trade or move out of the house. His father had given up on law. Duane had dragged out making a decision until it was almost too late, but after an easy summer construction

job that had him man a transit, he decided on school and the surveying program. His father at least accepted the choice because there was some law in the program, so Duane drove up to London, found a room with some other students, and went to his first class. It was an elective English course, one unpopular with the technicians, but the only one with space left in it. Duane was told to read Hesse's *Siddhartha* for the next class. He went to the bookstore and bought the book, glanced at it and saw it had nothing to do with what he was interested in, and then went to his surveying class early to tell the teacher he was a new student. When he got to the class, the teacher, a young guy, was already there. Before Duane had a chance to say anything, the teacher spotted the book Duane had just bought and carried on top of his binder, and he cried out joyfully, "Hesse! Nobody in surveying reads Hesse!" Duane was embarassed at already being classed a freak and said, "I don't usually read this stuff--I was told to buy it 'cause of the English class I got stuck in." The teacher, still delighted, said, "Don't be embarassed, it's a great book--you'll like it once you get into it."

As Duane kneads the now firm rye dough, he thinks how the teacher was right. He believes now that he found something of himself in the story. He has forgotten, though, that he had difficulty with the book and even disliked it and that it was only with the teacher's help that he got through it, though it was help in vain, for Duane became bored and stopped going to the English course after three weeks. One day when the teacher was casually talking to Duane, he asked Duane where his family was from. Duane told him Switzerland and Ireland, and the teacher said his family was from Bavaria in Germany, and that he had even been born there. That night, Duane looked at his grandfather's letters and decided to ask the teacher whether he could read them. The teacher said he could not, but that his parents could. Duane hesitated to give them to the teacher to give to his parents, but the teacher talked him into it.

When he saw the teacher next, the teacher spoke reverently of his grandfather. He said his parents had read his articles back in Europe, even after the Nazis had forbidden the reading of them.

The rye dough is kneaded ready to cut into pieces to shape for baking. Cutting it, Duane feels pride at this memory of his grandfather, but has forgotten that when the teacher told him this, he thought that it was stupid that someone should talk about a writer the way a priest talked about God. The letters and articles turned out to be descriptions of the day his grandfather had passed in the company of all kinds of people, from street sweepers to prostitutes to artists, and about their views of society, politics, and art. Only the letters about prostitutes interested Duane, but when the teacher told him they were not the sort of thing he would find in *Hustler*, he forgot about them. But when the next letter arrived, he took it to the teacher again, and this one was different from the others. It asked him about himself, how he liked being away from home, what he thought about his friends and his father, and what his social and political views were. Duane had never been asked questions like these before and did not know how to reply. He did not reply until the next letter came and the teacher had it read and became upset with Duane because his grandfather was sad that Duane had not yet replied.

The rye dough cut, Duane begins to shape the pieces into rounds and place them on baking trays. He remembers sitting down that night and trying to write a reply to his grandfather, even though his roommates wanted him to join them for euchre and beer and joints. Long after his roommates had gone to bed, he finally managed after many tries to write two pages about how good it was to be out of his parents' house and the difficulty of life today. He thought of giving the letter to the teacher to have translated, but he changed his mind and sent it in English. His grandfather's next

letter spoke of his pleasure at having received Duane's reply and said he looked forward to many more. Duane and his grandfather and the teacher continued this way until Duane stopped seeing the teacher after they had an argument over Duane's decision not to return to the college to do three courses he thought irrelevant but still needed to complete his program. His grandfather's letters he then took to the library to try to translate with a dictionary, but he also wrote his grandfather to ask him to try to write his letters in English or have them translated. Sometimes they were, and sometimes they were not, but, until he died the winter past, his grandfather continued to send his French and German newspaper articles just the same. Last year, Duane remembers, when he visited his grandfather, the last night they were together, walking in a park and talking in broken English, his grandfather showed him that first letter Duane had written him and the French translation a friend of his grandfather's had written for him. Duane remembers how the old man began to weep a bit as he held the letter, and how when they stopped under a latern in the park, his grandfather raised his rigIft hand to Duane's face and outlined it with his shaking forefinger, then held Duane close in his arms and wept.

Duane hears the front door of the cheese shop open and realizes he has stopped shaping the rye loaves. As he looks down at the one he was shaping, he sees a drop of water fall onto it. He realizes the drop has come from his eyes. "Son-of-a," he says quietly as he dries them on his apron.

"Good morning!" Duane hears a voice sing from out front. The bakery is separated from the cheese shop in the front of the store by a high, wall-like refrigerator behind the bread oven, and there is a narrow gap between it and the building wall out to the cheese shop. In a moment, a figure glides through the gap into the bakery and suddenly stops.

"Oh! Who is this?" lisps a tall, grey-coated, slender man with blow-dried, blond hair and a cologne that rises above the cooling raisin bread and muffins. The man brings the fingers of his right hand to his lips as he strikes a thinking pose. He then points his forefinger at Duane and exclaims, "You're the baker who's replaced Sean for today!" Smiling faintly, he looks Duane up and down and then calls, "Winifred! Who is this strange man in the bakery! Winifred! Good morning, dear!"

"Cecil!" calls Winifred from the pantry. She comes into the bakery and says, "Good morning! Happy Saint Pat's, dear!" Cecil flashes a green-socked ankle and titters as Winifred walks up to him to receive a kiss on the cheek.

Duane has returned to forming the rye loaves, but stops and turns back when Winifred says, "Duane, this is our cheese shop manager, Cecil. He joined us, oh, what, about six months after you left. He came to us from a shop in Toronto, and he does know his cheeses."

Cecil rolls his eyes and smiles knowingly at Winifred. "'Duane'," says Cecil. "What an odd sort of name. Irish?"

Duane is irked by Cecil's English accent. "Yes," he replies, and he wonders whether he concealed his distaste.

"Well!" cries Cecil. "It is your day, isn't it! Will we have some green bread?"

As Cecil giggles, Duane glances at Winifred, who is looking at Cecil indulgently.

"What a perfectly bizarre idea, Cecil," Winifred says. "What do you think, Duane?"

"Green bread?"

"Why not?" she says. "Make it out of spinach and herb cheese."

"Delightful!" exclaims Cecil.

'Green bread,' thinks Duane as he looks down at the dark rye dough. "I can make

the batter bread green," he says finally.

"Perfect!" cries Cecil as he taps Duane on the shoulder and turns lightly to go back to the cheese shop. He picks up the large wicker basket of cookies and muffins Duane has set aside and going through the gap says gayly, "I shall take these out for sale."

Duane looks at Winifred, who is smiling after Cecil. She looks at Duane and says forgivingly, "He does know his cheese." She adds confidentially, "Poor fellow. He had his heart broken in Toronto. I knew him from dance school in England, and he was so in need of help." Winifred touches Duane's forearm and says gently, "Don't be hard on him." She looks at him softly a moment longer, then turns and goes back through the pantry.

Duane returns to the rye dough, shapes the last of the pieces, and then sets the trays aside to leaven before baking. After scraping the dried dough from the inside of the kneading machine bowl and emptying it out, he stirs down the risen yeast for the eight-grain bread, adding some flour as he does so, and pours it into the bowl. He then puts the bowl onto the machine to let the mix sit and work until it is ready for the soaked grains, more flour, and kneading. Turning to mix the batter for another batch of muffins, he hears the first customers enter the cheese shop and restaurant and knows it must be sometime after ten. He has not stopped thinking about his reaction to Cecil, and as he stirs the batter, he recalls the clerical job he got with the provincial government's land office a while after he left the bakery. Adding different dried fruits to the bowl of muffin batter, he realizes that he had known only heterosexual men before he had that job. Winifred's staff and customers at that time were students and hippies, and the land surveying work Duane had before the bakery was the last place to expect to find gay men.

Seeing that the rye loaves are ready for the oven, Duane paints them with an

egg-wash, puts them into the bottom oven, and then sets the timer. He returns to the muffin batter and, as he spoons it into tins, remembers the clerical job and his boss, Calvin. Duane thinks now that even at the interview for the job, Calvin's soft bulk, lazy eyes, and pouty, twitching lips made him look gay and more than professionally interested in him, but he has forgotten that then Calvin's look only puzzled him. During Duane's training, Calvin was always close by, and whenever Duane went to him with a question about a regulation or point of procedure, Calvin would in some way touch him during the explanation. Though Duane was uncomfortable with this from the beginning, he put up with it because he feared that to object might jeopardize his job.

Duane finishes spooning the batter into the muffin tins, but looking them over, he sees the cups are unevenly filled and the batter slopped over the edges. He cleans up the trays and then puts them into the top oven to bake. The whole wheat dough has risen, so he takes the bowl from the top of the oven, pushes the dough down, and turns it out to knead it. Thinking again about Calvin, he remembers as he kneads that about six months after he began, Calvin asked him to work with him on a report to the ministry on their department and jurisdiction. Duane was to research and write an historical overview and then help him with the main body of the report. Duane inwardly groaned at the task because he had little experience at writing something like that, and he had less desire. He was beginning to lose interest in his desk-confining job, and also, since the Christmas party, he was finding himself increasingly attracted to Calvin's blond and fashionable wife, who was coming to the office more often and becoming noticeably more friendly toward Duane. Finally, she one day silently entered his own small work space isolated among the printing equipment, came up behind him as he sat at his desk trying to write, and began to caress him, going down even to his

crotch. For an instant, he was so stunned he did not move and wondered whether it was Calvin himself. When he saw it was Calvin's wife and realized her intent, he jumped up from his chair and led her behind the blueprint machine, where they necked until he could no longer stand the risk and told her to leave. Duane found himself awkward around Calvin after that.

The whole wheat dough kneaded to the necessary firmness, Duane begins to cut it into pieces for loaves. He shapes them into lengths for their pans as he remembers how Calvin's wife became alternately hot and cold, sometimes not coming to the office for three weeks at a time and always finding excuses to avoid meeting outside it. In the meantime, Calvin was demanding more of Duane's time for the report. But Duane was not objecting, for at least he was kept from being bored, and he was even beginning to enjoy combing the old documents in the office files for information and then putting together what he found the way he wanted. He wrote to his grandfather about the report, and his grandfather replied with advice and encouragement.

After almost three months, with the report nearly done and Calvin ecstatic because of a favourable pre-publication review by a ministry deputy, Calvin invited Duane to supper at a European restaurant downtown that Duane would never have gone to otherwise. They ate food with names he could not even pronounce, and they drank two bottles of wine, though Calvin drank most of them, as well as liquors with the dessert. Calvin then said that they must go to the bar next door for a night cap before he drove Duane home. Duane was on edge because Calvin had by then begun to talk about his wife and even hint at what Duane believed to be bisexuality. But since he assumed that Calvin was going to end their evening after the drink in the bar, he went next door with him.

There, Duane saw a barroom unlike any he had ever seen before. He was amazed

at the luxury of its furnishings. The heavy, walnut tables, the solid chairs brocaded in burgundy cloth, and the rich, mahogony panelling were all made lustrous by the log fire on the large, stone hearth. Calvin said superciliously that the bar was named for an English poet, Chaucer, and then he loudly quoted some lines from what he smilingly told Duane was "that delicious poem, 'The Wife of Bath'." Calvin insisted that they stand at the oaken bar, and he ordered them pints of an English beer. He continued to talk with increasing sexual innuendo. Part way through his beer, Duane excused himself for the washroom. Standing at a urinal alone in the washroom, he heard the door open. Calvin walked up to the urinal next to him. He swayed as he looked at Duane. Then he looked down at Duane's penis and moaned and then drunkenly reached down to try to grab it. "Son-of-a-bitch!" Duane cried as he jammed Calvin's arm in the urinal with his body. He spun away from Calvin and got his penis back into his pants. Calvin, shaking urine of his hand, moved toward Duane. Duane steadied himself and clenched his fists. When Calvin got close enough, Duane drove hard and punched him in the face. Calvin fell back into the urinals, and Duane ran out of the washroom, through the bar, and into the street. He ran past the restaurant to the corner and turned downtown and went to a rock and roll bar, where he sat in the corner and stayed until closing, drinking and shaking and seeing over and over the image of Calvin coming closer and closer and then falling back, but not feeling or even remembering at all punching him, though he knew he had. He went home wondering whether he would find Calvin parked on the street waiting for him. But Calvin was not there, nor was he at work the next day, either. Duane only went in to tell them that he quit. He went to his office and tore up the near-complete history he had been writing, and then he left.

Looking at his fists in the dough on the table, Duane realizes he has stopped

forming the dough into loaves. He begins again as he remembers that Calvin's wife phoned him three days later and said she wanted to see him. At first he refused, but she insisted, so he agreed. They met at the indoor farmers' market across from Winifred's store, and she said she wanted to make love to him. Full of fatality, he agreed and said they would go out of the city to a secluded place he knew on the Thames River. She wanted to go to his apartment or a motel, but he was adamant. He would make this the worst, most bitter lovemaking he could. It was a late spring day threatening rain. She drove them out of the city and past fields and woods to the place by the river. He was sombre and morose despite her intimacy. Before they finally made love in the front seat, it began to blow and rain. Duane teased her into wanting it badly and then gave it to her so quickly she was angry. He was indifferent to her, and they drove back to the city in silence in the pelting rain.

Duane throws the last loaf into its pan and leans on the table, staring down at it. He looks at the photograph of his grandfather under the glass bowl now dusty with flour. It was after he quit the government job that Duane went to Basel, thinking now it was because he believed his grandfather could help him understand things, but forgetting that then it was more just to get out of London. Looking over at the kneading machine bowl, he straightens and goes to it. Seeing that the mix is ready for kneading, he switches on the machine and gradually adds the flour and the soaked grains until a doughy mass forms around the kneading hook. He leaves it, checks the rye bread and muffins in the oven, and then decides to go out front to the cheese shop to get the herb cheese for the batter bread.

He goes through the gap and is relieved to see that Cecil is at the other end of the white tile counter showing a plump, fur-coated woman some cheeses. Cecil nonetheless while talking to her sees Duane. He continues to talk as he looks languidly at

Duane a moment and then returns to the woman. Duane opens the cooler, takes out a small package of herb cheese, and returns to the bakery without looking again at Cecil. Again in the bakery, he flings the package onto the table among the pans of whole wheat dough and goes through the pantry to the small, cluttered kitchen to get some spinach. As he enters the kitchen, he sees a large, brown-haired woman dressed in white slicing roast beef on a machine. 'Lesbian,' he thinks. He does not speak to her. He reaches the walk-in refrigerator, opens it, and goes into it. He finds some spinach among the bags of vegetables on the shelves and takes a bunch of leaves. Standing for a moment in the cold, he remembers what it was like that winter, working with the students and the artist types, all of them so friendly that he was at first suspicious. It was Gwen who had got him the job baking after he left the surveyors he had worked for since leaving college. 'But they're all gone now,' he thinks, 'to Toronto, to Calgary, Vancouver, and Gwen, to India.'

"You shouldn't stand in there with the door open," Duane hears someone say. He looks over his sholder and sees the woman who was slicing roast beef standing at the entrance to the refrigerator. "You might catch a cold." She smiles slightly and says, "My name's Leslie. How are you making out in the bakery? Winifred told me you'd have no problem."

"Yeah, I'm alright," he replies, and then he turns to walk out of the refrigerator. She backs away to let him out and then closes the door behind him.

"I hear you were one of the old gang," she says, looking at him with guarded curiosity.

"'Old gang'?" Duane says.

"All those hippies that Winifred had in here after her husband took off on her."

'Jesus,' thinks Duane, 'I'd forgotten about Douglas.' "Yeah." But I started just

when everybody was beginning to leave." This is not exactly true, but Duane is piqued and wants to be sarcastic, though after speaking he does not want to talk at all.

"Oh," the large woman says and then, looking at the spinach, "well, back to work," and she goes back to slicing roast beef.

Duane walks into the pantry and stops at a sink to wash the spinach. Shaking the leaves dry, he remembers coming to work at the bakery after surveying and how long it took to get used to working with people whose views were not restricted to a transit and did not end at the bottom of a whiskey bottle. Learning to bake and run the bakery was nothing compared to that. He walks back into the bakery and drops the spinach onto the table. The whole wheat bread is ready for the oven. He checks the muffins in the top oven and seeing they are done takes them out and puts the bread in. He adds flour to the eight-grain as it continues on the kneading machine, then begins to prepare the batter bread's flour, yeast, water, and molasses in a large bowl.

Duane chops the spinach leaves into small pieces, remembering the three years he and Gwen were together. He can almost feel her beside him as he unwraps the herb cheese and then grates it into the batter. She taught him how to bake after she had said it would calm him. When the baker's job became available at Winifred's, where she already worked herself, she talked him into applying for it. He had resisted, because he had met some of the people who were there then and found them too strange, their soft, intense talk and affectionate touching seeming fake after the bluster and roughness of the surveyors. And yet, he was having difficulty fitting in with the surveyors too. Since Gwen had moved in with him, he enjoyed less and less the surveyors' Friday afternoon mickeys of rye and stories of seduction, and Gwen liked him the less for staying with the job while not liking it.

The batter stirred into a greenish-brown mass, Duane checks the eight-grain dough

on the machine and sees it is ready to rise. He stops the machine and removes the dough from the hook, thinking that he is glad this is the last bread, and puts it into a bowl to rise on top of the oven. Returning to the green-brown batter, he oils three bread pans and spoons the batter into them as he thinks how strange it is that it was in surveying that he had met Gwen. The pans full, he puts them into the bottom oven beside the rye bread. He goes to the basement stairwell landing to get a large box, then returns with it and begins to place loaves and baskets of cookies and muffins into the box to take over later to the little stall Winifred has in the indoor farmers' market across the street. Gwen was a student in the surveying program too, as well as the only female, and had begun when Duane was in his second year. Nobody could figure out what she was doing in the program. Even though she usually dressed in blue-jean overalls, T-shirts, and work boots, she was small, moved gently, and talked like an arts student from university. Despite that, every guy in Duane's class wanted to get her into bed. They would talk about her over coffee and cinnamon rolls in the morning, but the guys who had asked her out had been turned down, so they assumed she had a boyfriend in engineering at university and left her alone.

The timer bings. Duane leaves the box and turns to the oven to check the rye bread. It is done, and taking out the trays of round, glazed, reddish-brown loaves, he remembers the fall day Gwen walked up to him. He was sitting outside on the grass in the common, back against a wall, alternately reading Thoreau's *Walden*, which the teacher had given him, and enjoying the last of the autumn sun. While reading, a shadow came over him. When he looked up, he saw her standing in the sun, her thick, red hair ablaze. She asked what he was reading, and he showed her the cover, using the book to block the sun too. She said she hadn't read it, but had heard about it and would like to read it. He did not say anything and did not look at her either because

of the sun. She must have assumed he was not interested in her because she turned to walk away. He said, "Wait!" She stopped and turned her head to look back at him.

"Don't get too attached to it, someone's going to want to it eat it—unless you intend to."

Duane looks up to where the voice has come from and sees Cecil in the gap leaning on the side of the refrigerator.

Cecil looks from Duane's face down his body.

Duane follows his gaze to the round, glazed loaf of rye bread he holds in both hands.

Cecil moves, and Duane looks back at him. He is erect, and as he turns to go back into the cheese shop, he pertly says, "I can see you prefer a passive lover."

Duane looks again at the loaf and thinks how he would like to throw it at Cecil, but then he thinks, 'What would Gwen have said about such violence?' and instead places the loaf on the rack with the others. The eight-grain dough has risen, and he takes the bowl off of the oven and puts it onto the table. He punches down the dough, then flours the table and turns the dough out of the bowl. He looks at the dusty glass bowl over his grandfather's photograph and wipes the flour off of it. 'Passive lover,' he says to himself, 'who was the passive lover?' When he asked her out, it was she who decided that they would go to The Pace coffeehouse. 'A coffeehouse,' he laughs inwardly. 'Moaning folkies and mocha-java. At least they smoked pot.'

He begins to knead the dough and recalls that it was she who decided when they would first go to bed, even though he had tried to talk her into it from the very first night. And she wanted to be on top as often as he did. He kneads the dough more slowly as he remembers how they enjoyed sex so much, would skip classes in the afternoon to make love, would drink French wine and smoke hash and talk half the night

and then make love until they fell asleep exhausted. 'That talk,' he thinks. 'Something about rejecting aggression and discovering repression, about opening up and dropping defences.' They would tell each other stories about their pasts, not intimate, yet interested, stories about developing integrity and about finally achieving independence, but stories that always seemed to come back to past lovers. He was surprised and inwardly pleased that she had had so few, but somehow annoyed that it was because of a surveyor she had met when she worked at a hotel in Tobermory in the summer that she decided to get into surveying. He began to imagine scenes of them making love in the bush while they themselves were making love, but he never told her this.

The dough kneaded firm, Duane begins to cut off pieces, forming them into loaves for the pans and putting the pans onto the oven to leaven again before baking. 'The Pace,' he thinks, and he remembers that tonight is the poetry night Lawrence has planned there. It was through Gwen that he had met Lawrence. They had been lovers but had split up, though they said they were still friends. Duane was envious of him when they first met; Lawrence was a musician, a painter, and a poet, and studied French at university too, which was where Gwen had met him the year she was in psychology before switching to surveying. Duane thinks now that it was the inspiration of Lawrence's work that made him write a story to give to the college newspaper, but he has forgotten that it was blind jealousy over Gwen. The story was about shaving off his beard for her. When she read the story in the paper, she was so delighted she asked him to shave it off. He nearly did until he remembered that Lawrence was clean-shaven and so decided not to. She was disappointed and even began to doubt that he loved her as he implied he did in the story. It was about then that she said she was going to go to Vancouver Island to visit a friend for the summer. Even though the friend was female, things began to cool between them. When the school year ended,

he saw her off on the train and stayed himself in London to work in surveying, his first summer away from home. Placing the last loaf into its pan, he remembers that he spent a lot of that summer writing letters.

Duane realizes that he has forgotten to set the timer for the whole wheat loaves. He yanks open the upper oven door to check them. Still a few minutes, he sees, and he closes the door gently. He opens the lower door to check the batter bread and under his breath curses, "Son-of-a-bitch," when he smells and then sees that the edges are burnt. He pulls the three pans out and slides them onto a rack to cool.

Handling the hot pans, Duane recalls the descriptions in Gwen's letters of how beautiful it was on the island where she was along the Pacific side. Finally, he got so sick of reading and writing letters that he asked for a week off in August and flew out to see her. It was even more beautiful than she had written, he had never been in forest so cool and green and beautiful. During the week, he discovered that she had become impressed with the Indian guru her friend was following. Gwen and her friend and the people in her friend's group were always talking about vegetarianism and transcendence and illumination. When Duane told them he had read *Siddhartha*, they said Hesse had got it all wrong. Duane did not ask how, he just continued to smoke their hash, and when his week was up, he returned to London and work, even though Gwen wanted him to stay. They had an argument the last night, and afterward no more letters were sent. She did not return for school in September, so Duane assumed she had decided to stay out there. He had also decided not to return, but to keep working instead. He began to drink more heavily with the surveyors and even told some stories about his lovemaking with Gwen. He never felt right about it, but most of them were lies, so he did not care. Then one fall night in October she appeared at his door and moved in with him. She began to work for Winifred, and he cut back on the drinking

and did not tell anymore stories.

The smell of the burnt batter bread has whet his appetite for some roast beef, but he does not feel like seeing the woman in the kitchen. While wondering what else he can eat, he hears from behind him Cecil say, "Well! What kind of Irishman are you, burning your green bread?"

Duane turns from the rack to look at Cecil. "I'm half Jew."

"What! Oh my," Cecil says fretfully. "I didn't mean--I," but when he sees Duane begin to sneer, he huffs, "Oh! You're cruel!" and then turns back into the cheese shop.

Duane feels like shouting a warning to the Swiss cheese, but checks himself and opens the top oven to look at the whole wheat loaves. He pulls one out and tips it out of its pan to look at the bottom while he remembers how things began to change when Gwen lived with him. The bottom of the loaf is firm and brown, so he takes the pans out, placing them on the flour barrels until he can clear room on the racks. He looks at the curtained loophole into the restaurant and thinks that the lunch rush will soon begin. Gwen would work these lunches, preparing food and serving tables. She enjoyed the work, mostly because of the people she worked with. The men were unaggressive and the women uncompetitive, everybody, she said, was in a state of harmony. This impressed Gwen greatly, she said it fulfilled a need in her. Duane now wonders what that need was, but then, he only felt jealous again.

Gwen would tell him how Winifred's husband Douglas, who taught Eastern philosophy at the university, would sometimes read the scriptures of the Indian mystics to them before the lunch rush and how he encouraged them to write poetry and give it to him so that he could help them find and release their spiritual energies. Sometimes Gwen would stay up half the night reading a mystic and then writing a poem. Duane would be sleeping because he was exhausted from a day surveying and had to get up in

the morning to begin work at eight. She sometimes showed him her poems, but he could not make much sense of them. She said that was because he didn't know the mystic books, then gave him some to read. He could not make much sense of them, either, except the *Kama Sutra*, though it did not seem very mystical to him. She said he should try some poetry too, but every time he began a poem, a strange word would come to him, and he would have to go to Gwen's dictionary to look it up, and then he would often have to look up a word in the definition, or he would just end up browsing in the dictionary and forget about the poem. He did write a few poems, but he thought they were bad and so threw them away. He never did try another story after the one he wrote about his beard. As he finishes clearing space on the racks, he remembers with a smile that during that winter of surveying, at lunch and while warming in the truck after running a line, he decided to try to get into university. To begin to prepare himself, he bought and read from cover to cover a little pocket Oxford dictionary.

On top of the oven, the eight-grain dough has risen. Duane takes the whole wheat loaves from their pans and puts them onto the racks. He chooses the best loaf, then closes his eyes and holds it close to his face to savour its smell and feel its warmth. He smiles and opens his eyes, then puts the loaf aside for himself. He floors the table and turns out the eight-grain dough. Just before he begins to knead, he looks at his grandfather's photograph. It comes back to him how intrigued he was to discover that so many of the words in his grandfather's letters were like the roots of the words he had read in his little dictionary. Also, after reading the dictionary, he was able to understand more and more of the books he read, and this made him want to read more and more. Nights of getting stoned and going downtown to bars interested him less and less as he listened more closely to the words of the songs and discovered that their lyrics were as incomprehensible as Gwen's poetry. He wondered at first whether it was

being stoned that made the difference, so stopped toking and went to listen to the bands. But he still could not make sense of what they were singing. And yet, when he tried to read when stoned, he found he could not make sense of what he was reading, either. But to stop toking for the sake of reading was another matter altogether. Gwen enjoyed toking so much that she was upset when Duane said he thought he might stop for a while. At that point, she was smoking hash and treating sex almost ritualistically. Duane stops kneading for a moment and wonders was it because sex was so good with her that he kept smoking. He kept going to the bars, and he did not read anything he can remember, he knows that.

Winifred enters the bakery and says, "My, but you've been productive!"

Duane turns from the dough to look at her and sees beside her a tall, slim man with short, carefully combed, blond hair, and a precise mustache on a long face. He wears a dark coat something like a cape, which he with white, leather-gloved hands holds close to himself as he stands among the sacks, buckets, and barrels.

"Duane," says Winifred, "this is Francis Barton. He is at your Stratford now, but he is originally from ours."

"Good afternoon," says Francis Barton coolly. His eyes narrow as his look shifts from Duane to the gap that leads to the cheese shop. Even more coolly, he says, "Hello, Cecil."

"Hello, Frank," says Cecil as coolly. "How are you?"

"Very well, thank you. And you? Settled in well after your move?"

Duane sees Cecil's nostrils flare as Cecil says, "Yes--very well." Cecil looks hard at Francis Barton, then turns and goes back into the cheese shop.

Duane turns to look at Winifred, who appears nervous as she watches Francis Barton, who is himself still looking at the gap. 'Cecil's heartbreak,' Duane snickers to

himself.

"Well!" says Winifred almost as brightly as she wants. "Shall we go to luncheon, Francis?"

"Yes, shall we? Good day, Duane," he says without looking at him, and turning carefully, he leaves the bakery ahead of Winifred.

Winifred turns back to Duane and says quickly, "Be sure you mark down everything you have made and that you pay yourself accordingly! I may not be back by the time you leave! Thank you so much for coming in!" She half-turns and then, looking back, more slowly says, "Have you heard at all from Gwendolyn? Is she still in India?"

Duane feels his chest tighten. "No, I haven't. Not since she left."

"Oh," says Winifred as she absently raises her hand and touches a bucket in the column. "If you do, do say hello to her." She turns from him and looks at the column, then follows after Francis Barton.

Turning back to the eight-grain dough, Duane feels it, then pulls some bread pans over and begins to cut pieces and shape loaves. 'India,' thinks Duane as he drops a shaped piece into a pan. Winifred's husband left her to go there. After he had gone, Gwen became a vegetarian and began to read more about India and write more poetry. When Duane began at the bakery, he noticed Gwen and Winifred were not as friendly as he had believed they were. The more Duane got to like Winifred, the cooler Gwen became toward him. Winifred's articulateness as well as Gwen's increased reading and writing made Duane more interested in reading again, and as he began to go to used book stores and bring home novels and books of history, he cut back on smoking hash with Gwen, which was not very difficult at that point because of the tension growing between them. Duane had figured out that it was because of Winifred's husband that Gwen was acting the way she was, and he suspected Gwen

believed he was acting the way he was because of Winifred. Duane wonders how they managed to go on that way as long as they did, but he does not remember how much time each of them spent in books avoiding each other. They seldom talked about what they were reading, and talked even less about themselves.

Then one afternoon when they returned home from work, they found a letter from Winifred's husband to Gwen. She opened it quickly and read it through on the spot. Duane saw that there was a poem on one of the three pages. When he asked her what the letter said, she said defensively, "Nothing much," and then she went into the bathroom and closed the door. After waiting a few minutes for her to come out of the bathroom, he decided to go to the library and take a shower later. Standing at the bathroom door, he said he was going to get a book. She said, "Okay, bye." He went to the library and looked around the shelves, but found nothing. Not feeling like going home, he went downtown to Fryfogle's Tavern and drank beer and stayed until the band came on, then left and walked down to the river and sat in the bushes in the dark until he began to fall asleep. He woke himself, got up, and went home. There, he found a note from Gwen on the table. It said that she had discovered that their karmas were bad for each other and that she was going to go to India and until she left she would stay with friends and that he was not to try to find her. She said she had taken only her clothes and that he could keep what they had bought together. She also said that she had decided to quit working for Winifred and that her key to the apartment was in the mailbox. The note ended with three lines of poetry, but Duane did not read them. He got some matches, went out into the night, and burnt the note. Next day at work, Winifred looked at him a long time before she said anything, and when she did speak, all she said was, "I'm sorry."

Duane drops the last shaped loaf into its pan. He shakes the pan a bit to make

the dough more square, then sighs and raises his head and looks over his shoulder at the column of buckets. He turns around and leans on the table, and he looks from the buckets to the sacks of flour, to the curtained loophole, the green plastic barrels, and the oven, and turning again, at the racks of cookies, muffins, and bread, then at the cluttered oaken table. He looks at his grandfather's photograph under the glass bowl. Wiping off his hands, he lifts the bowl and picks up the photograph. Looking at the black and white image, Duane remembers that shortly after Gwen left, he received a letter from his grandfather saying that he did not think he would live much longer and that he wanted to see Duane again before he died. There was also a newspaper clipping about an exhibition of Sanskrit manuscripts at a Basel museum. Duane nearly burnt the letter and the clipping, but did not and instead went to the library at the university to see whether he could find the books his grandfather mentioned in the article. He could not find any of them, but was given a tour of the rare book room and looked with awe at the thick, leather covers with copper and brass corners and at the illuminations on the stiff, thick pages that smelled of wax and stone. Wishing he had seen his grandfather again before he died, Duane folds the green card of the photograph and puts it into his pants pocket. Feeling hungry again, he takes down from the rack his loaf of whole wheat bread, tears off a corner, and eats it.

He looks at the box of baking for the market stall and realizes he will not get everything over by noon. The eight-grain bread is still rising and has yet to bake. But he is satisfied, he has nearly kept the old schedule. He decides to take over what he has made and then clean up while the eight-grain bakes and take it over when it is done.

Looking from the box to the rack, Duane reaches for a loaf of the green-brown batter bread. Setting it on the table, he finds a bread knife and trims off the burnt

edges, then slices the loaf into pieces. The slices have the colour of the green-brown patina he has seen on the roofs of the buildings at the university, and they smell like wet leather. Ignoring the look and smell, he tries a piece and is surprised at how good it tastes. He gets a plate from the pantry and arranges the pieces on it before taking them out to Cecil to sell in the cheese shop.

"Good Lord!" exclaims Cecil when he sees Duane carrying the plate of green-brown bread toward him. "What is that?" he asks dismayed, forgetting the well-dressed, tall, thin lady he is serving at the counter.

Duane hesitates a moment, then says with an attempt at a brogue, "Hello, missus! Would you like some of Saint Patrick's Irish bread? Made wit' everyt'in' green you can t'ink of!"

As he offers the plate to the woman, she recoils and replies, "Oh my! No! No, thank you! I–I have just now had luncheon!"

Duane hears that she has an English accent. "No? Well, at least light a candle at t'e church for our good saint and read a passage of t'e holy book in memory of him."

"But–but I am Protes–"

"Remember the snake," Duane says archly as he leers.

"Oh-h-h!" she perturbedly warbles. "Yes–yes, alright!" and as Duane stretches out the plate to her, she bolts for the door and is gone.

"Your change, madame!" cries Cecil after her. He scowls at Duane and hurries around the counter and out the door. Some customers in the restaurant look at Duane through the archway to it, but they turn away when he looks at them. He leaves the plate on the counter by the cash register and returns to the bakery. Seeing the eight-grain loaves have risen, he begins to put them into the oven. A moment later, Cecil comes huffing through the gap.

"That was very rude! She is a regular customer and has never been so insulted! If I believed I could get one, I would expect an apology!"

"Do you apologize to her when she is not so insulted?" says Duane.

"I beg your--why you... you... Oh! You are incorrigible! I shall inform Winifred of this immediately upon her return!"

"You're the one who wanted green bread."

"Not presented like that!"

"Why don't you try a piece?"

"No, I shan't! And I shan't allow it to be sold in the shop, either!" Cecil stamps his foot, cocks his head, and returns through the gap to the front.

Duane laughs to himself and then says aloud, "Heretic!" He hears Cecil slam something and waits for him to come through the gap again, but he does not. After a moment, Duane returns to the oven and puts in the rest of the eight-grain loaves, then sets the timer. He packs into the big box the remainder of the baking, then picks it up to take it across the street to the indoor farmer's market. He squeezes the box through the gap and goes into the cheese shop. As he walks into it, he looks at Cecil, who avoids him. "Cecil," Duane says, "the door, please."

Cecil turns and looks smugly at Duane, puts down the knife he is cleaning, and walks slowly out from behind the counter to the door. He opens it wordlessly and when Duane is through it closes it quick on his heels.

"You prick!" says Duane as he half-turns to the closed glass door and remembers with satisfaction punching Calvin. "Sons-of-bitches," he mutters as he looks back over the box and squints in the sun at the sidewalk crowded with people and the street busy with noon-time traffic. 'Either the corner,' he thinks, 'or wait for a break and go for it.' A gap appears in the pedestrians. He hefts the box and starts to walk across the

sidewalk. A sudden glaring from the rear window of a parked car makes him stop at the curb. He squints and looks across the street at the dark, tunnel-like walkway between the large, plate glass windows in the high, brick wall around it. Even while saying to himself, 'Either I go or I don't,' he wonders why he says it.

"Stopping for lunch? Like a beer with it?"

Duane blinks and turns to see who has spoken. Straight, oily blond hair parted in the middle, a pale face with steel-rimmed glasses. Lawrence, holding a large case of beer.

Lawrence moves the case from one side of his body to the other and says, "We could get some cheese and go into the alley. It'd be like Paris. Or Montreal, anyway. Just about finished work?" His glasses catch the light a moment. Duane shuts his eyes and jerks his head away, nearly losing his balance with the box. Eyes open and balance recovered, he moves into some shade.

"You okay?" asks Lawrence.

"Yeah, it was your gla--ah, hell, never mind. What's the beer for? Tonight?"

"Almost every bottle. Some for this afternoon. Come down to The Pace around seven and have supper--Irish stew." Lawrence looks closely at Duane for a moment. "You look like you could use a beer. Either that or a toke." He then walks behind Duane and on down the street toward the coffeehouse which is across the intersection a few doors down.

Duane looks after Lawrence's denim-clad body, then turns and walks between the parked cars to cross the street for the market. No cars stop for him, but when the light at the corner changes, there is a gap for a moment, and he crosses and mounts the other sidewalk, then enters the tunnel-like walkway through to the three lanes of the multi-level, indoor parking lot.

Aggressive, noon-hour traffic squeals into and out of the lot. The air is foul from exhaust fumes. Duane takes shallow breaths and worries about the bread. He sees he will have to dodge cars to get across. He crosses the first lane between cars jumping from the ticket gate. He waits for the exiting second lane to clear, then hurries across in time to avoid a car shooting out of the concealed, spiral downramp. At the third and last lane, cars are again gunning it for the street. He stops and then starts across a gap, but pulls back when a car squeals out of the second downramp. He tries again at another gap, but is forced back by another car.

Two scruffy boys who have come out of the market are waiting on the other side. They see Duane's difficulty. After the next car, they jump out into the lane, one facing the ramp and the other waving at Duane and crying, "Go for it, man!"

Duane hefts the box and starts across just as a car turns out of the ramp. The boys face it and wave it to a squealing stop. They turn to Duane, and one says, "That costed you a cookie each."

"Gladly," replies Duane as the car horn blows. "They're in the wicker basket below the muffins." One boy reaches into the basket as the other gives the finger to the driver of the car. A second car squeals to a horn-blowing halt behind the first just as the two boys and Duane clear the lane.

At the swinging doors to the market, a balding businessman in a blue suit who had crossed behind Duane holds a door open for him. As Duane passes him, the businessman says, "It's not worth a cookie, but I'll buy a loaf of bread."

Walking together toward the stall, the businessman says, "It's hell trying to cross there. I sell life insurance and I never realize how useful it is until I have to get from the office over to here."

Duane and the businessman look around at the people and the fruit and vegetable

stands and here and there among them the counters of juices, gallon jugs of cider, bottles of maple syrup, and big and small jars of honey. A pleasant murmur rises from the noon-time shoppers and lookers.

As Duane and the businessman pass the fragrance of the flower stand next to Winifred's stall, Duane says to him, "What bread would you like?"

"Have any eight-grain today?"

"I just put it into the oven before I came over."

"No problem," says the businessman. "It's an excuse to come back later." He looks into the box and asks, "What's that greenish-brown bread?"

As the businessman asks this, they reach the stall. Duane sees that the young woman minding it has her back to them and is busy with a customer. He puts the box down on the floor and lifts out a loaf of the batter bread. "This?" he says. "This is the Saint Patrick's Day special, a light molasses batter bread made with spinach and herb cheese. To be served only with whiskey and potatoes, or, if they are unavailable, butter will do."

The businessman chuckles and says, "Is there any of that bulk Mennonite butter you sell today?" He looks into the floor cooler. "There it is. I'll have a piece of Saint Patrick's bread, buttered, please."

"Yes sir," Duane replies. He goes to a small counter to cut off a piece.

As he cuts and butters it, he overhears the young woman say to her customer, "It's on Talbot Street, just below King, and starts at eight. It should be a good night." Duane thinks she must be talking about Lawrence's poetry night. He hands the buttered batter bread to the businessman, who asks, "How much?"

Duane looks and sees that the girl is still with her customer. He leans toward the businessman and says, "For the door."

The businessman winks, then holds up the dollar he has in his hand. "My green for the day," he says, and then he crushes the bill mock-savagely. He smiles and takes a bite of the batter bread. After chewing a bit, he says, "It'd go with a Guinness, that's for sure." He then winks again and turns into the crowd.

As Duane watches his blue suit and bald head disappear, he hears behind him a slightly astonished female voice say, "Are you the guy who's replaced Sean?"

He turns and looks at the young woman who had been serving the customer. "Yes, I am," he replies as he notices her round, milk-blue eyes, pointed nose and chin, and full, red lips. He recognizes the long, dark brown hair that curls out of a pony tail and disappears down her back, he has seen her not only in the market when he has come here to buy food, but also on the street and in the bars he goes to. He may have seen her at Lawrence's parties too, except that after his parties he usually does not remember much. "Were you talking about the poetry reading at The Pace tonight?" he asks.

"Yes!" she says eagerly. "You know about it?"

"Yeah."

She looks at him a moment before speaking again, her eyes lightening a little. "My name's Clare. I think we met at Lawrence's. Do you know him?"

"Uh-huh." 'Wonder whether she's interested in my name,' thinks Duane. 'I'll wait till she asks before I tell her.'

After looking at Duane a moment longer, Clare says slowly, "So... it should be a good night. Lots of people from the street and the university reading. There'll be lots of new work and... voices..." and she trails off but shows an anxiousness at the same time.

Duane thinks she wants him to ask her whether she is reading. "Lawrence ask you to read?"

Clare brightens. "Yes, he did. And I've written some new poems for tonight, too. I have them here. If you have time, I'll get–"

"I'd like to see them," interrupts Duane, "but I have to get back to the bakery. I'll hear them tonight."

The momentary look of dejection disappears from Clare's face. She says, "Okay. Well, see you later then," and she reaches into the box to unpack it. But then she says, "Hey! What's this bit of turf?" and wrinkles her nose as she holds up the third batter bread loaf.

Duane sighs and says, "It's the Saint Patrick's Day special–baked peat from the bogs of Ireland. You can sell it in slices and tell people to eat it with kelp. It's very nutritious."

"Really?" says Clare, somewhat puzzled. "How much should I sell it for?"

Duane turns and laughs loudly as he walks away. "What an airhead," he says under his breath. The crowd has separated at his laugh, and he walks easily through it, meeting gazes that question him and that turn away as soon as he meets them. He thrusts his hands into his pockets and saunters back through the market, admiring particularly the peppers, cucumbers, and zucchinis as he caresses the card of his grandfather's photograph.

Running across the parking lot lanes, he feels like stopping in the middle of one and pretending to tie his shoe, but does not. From the darkness of the parking lot and the tunnel walkway, he emerges into the noontime brightness of Talbot Street. "Son-of-a-bitch," he mutters to the glare as he squints into the traffic coming up the street.

Looking to his left down the street and along the fronts of the old brick and windowed buildings, he sees across the intersection with King Street that Lawrence is laughing with two young women at The Pace coffeehouse entrance. Duane thinks,

'What a stud-game poetry must be.' Pretending at inspiration, he says aloud, "My love is like a day-old French stick," and then laughs at himself, but lowers his head as an elderly couple passes by. "What a tool," he mutters derisively as he starts back across the street to Winifred's store, deciding not to go for Irish stew at seven.

Inside the cheese shop again, he looks at the counter around the cash register for the plate of batter bread he left there, but he can not find it. He then looks at Cecil, who is planing some Stilton for a slim, elegant man to taste. Cecil ignores Duane. Looking over the counter into the waste basket, Duane sees the green-brown slices. "Ha!" he cries. "An atheist!"

Cecil and his slim customer and the diners under the archway look at Duane startled. Duane bares his teeth to imitate some rabid fundamentalist and then marches head-up and wild-eyed across the cheese shop, through the gap, and into the bakery, and in it, he bounces the deep kneading machine bowl up onto the table and begins to drop noisily into it the knives, spoons, and steel bowls he has to wash, but suddenly the clanging becomes too much for him, and he has to stop. He spreads his arms over the top of the bowl, then drops his forehead to them. Looking into the deep bowl, he sees on the surfaces of the bowls and utensils inside it multiple, distorted reflections of himself. He closes his eyes and can taste spinach and molasses on the back of his tongue. Tightening his stomach, he drops his right arm and puts his hand on his pocket to feel his grandfather's photograph.

After a few moments, he raises his head from the bowl. 'Water,' he thinks. He goes into the pantry to a sink, but before turning on the tap, he looks at the sinkful of dirty dishes and decides to get a bottle of Perrier instead. He walks through the pantry and into the refrigerator, takes a bottle from its case, bangs the cap off on a shelf edge, then closes the refrigerator door and guzzles the Perrier in the dark.

The door opens a minute later. "What are you doing in there?" demands the large, brown-haired woman.

Duane drops the empty Perrier bottle back into its case. "I got tired of the oven," he replies flatly as he walks out past her back to the bakery.

He puts the remainder of the utensils into the deep bowl, then carries it to the pantry. Finding no counter space to set the bowl down, he sets it on the floor. The three sinks all have dishes in them, so he clears the least full, then runs water and adds soap and the utensils from the bowl. Silently cursing the lack of space, he wets a brush, bends over, and scrubs clean the deep bowl. He lifts the bowl to the sink and rotates it on the edge to rinse it in running water. After putting it back on the floor, he washes the smaller bowls and utensils, then puts them back into the deep bowl. Finished, he drains the sink, but does not fill it again with the dirty dishes. Looking around, he sees at the far end of the pantry the glass vase of the carnations used for the restaurant tables. He goes to the flowers, takes out the only white one, and returns to the sink. Clearing the drain of pieces of dough, he sticks the stem into it, remembering how this is like what they used to do that winter. He looks at the dirty dishes and utensils and wonders where the dishwasher is. 'She used to come in at noon,' he remembers, 'and it's close to one now.'

"Did I hear you starting the dishes finally?"

Duane turns and sees the large, brown-haired woman standing at the kitchen entrance to the pantry.

"Me?" says Duane. "You expect me to do them?"

"Didn't Winifred tell you? When the old dishwasher left, the baker said he wanted the extra money and that he would wash them."

"She didn't say anything to me about dishes. I washed the ones I used." Duane

looks at the white carnation. He sighs and takes it from the drain.

"What's that flower doing in the sink?" the woman demands.

Dejectedly, Duane replies, "I don't know, trying to grow or escaping or something," and as he speaks he feels his stomach tighten. He quickly turns to the sink, but instead of vomiting, he only burps.

"'scuse me," he says as he turns with the flower from the sink and walks past the woman back to the vase. He puts the white flower back into it, then looks at it among the pink and red ones. He closes his eyes a moment, then turns to the woman. "Sorry, but I only came to bake." That winter, he would have washed the dishes

The woman looks hard at him, then returns to the kitchen. Duane walks back through the pantry, picks up the deep bowl, and returns to the bakery. He wonders why Winifred did not tell him about the dishes and blames it on her preoccupation with Francis Barton without thinking that her nostalgia for the old days might have made her forget. He opens the oven to look at the eight-grain bread and sees it needs a minute more. As he closes the door, the timer bings. Its sound annoys him, and he remembers longingly that winter when, once he got the schedule down, he could bake without it.

Duane scrapes dough and caked flour from the table, then slowly washes and dries it, stopping sometimes to feel the wood with his hands. Onto it he carefully empties, dries, and arranges the bowls and utensils, then puts the deep bowl back onto the kneading machine. From the oven he removes the pans of eight-grain bread, turning the loaves out onto the racks and stacking the pans. That done, he turns off the oven and wipes the flour dust off it. While the eight-grain cools, he sweeps the bakery and then gets a box to take the loaves to the market in. He packs them, putting in his partially eaten whole wheat loaf too.

Wiping off other small surfaces, he stops to lift the purple curtain over the loophole and look out into the now nearly empty restaurant. That winter, he and the others would sit down to lunch together after the noon rush. He sees now that all but one of the waiters have already left. He can not wait to leave himself. He drops the curtain, decides to throw the rag he has into the garbage rather than wash it out in the pantry, and then he goes downstairs to clean himself and change his clothes.

In the musty, stone-walled basement crowded with bottles, bags, and boxes, he goes behind a mauve blanket that hangs from the joists of the ceiling and secludes a corner. He removes his shoes and baker's whites and at the small sink washes himself, then puts on his jeans and blue and green flannel shirt. He takes his grandfather's photograph from the white pants and puts it into the left breast pocket of his shirt. The tattered canvas runners he has worn seem worthless to take home now. They were new when he began that winter. He drops them into the waste barrel, then slaps the flour out of his socks and pulls on his black western boots and black leather jacket. He grabs the whites and tosses them into the dirty-linen bag, then mounts the stairs two at a time.

In the bakery, he calculates on a note pad what he has made and the percentage he and Winifred have agreed on. Finished calculating, he tussles his black curls, smooths his short beard, and undoes another button on his shirt, then swaggers out into the cheese shop.

Cecil is alone arranging cheeses in the wall fridge. When he turns and sees Duane, he catches his breath, then absently places the cheese he holds and closes the glass door, never taking his eyes off Duane. In a voice quavering somewhere between fear and desire, Cecil says, "Well, what do you want now?"

Going up close to Cecil and looking him in the eye, Duane says deeply, "My pay."

"Oh!" gasps Cecils as he sinks away to the cash register. "Winifred has told me of your arrangement. I think it very odd, Sean is paid by th--"

"I don't give a damn how Sean is paid."

"Oh!" cries Cecil as his fingers drum the side of the till.

Duane holds out the note-pad slip. "Here's what I baked and how much you owe me."

Cecil turns from the till and gingerly takes hold of the slip. Duane holds it a moment longer, and when he lets go of it, Cecil's arm jerks back, his other arm going to the counter to catch himself. Cecil smiles weakly.

Softening his tone, Duane says, "You didn't like the batter bread?"

Showing a bit of confusion at Duane's change of tone, Cecil looks blankly through the archway into the empty restaurant. "All the customers were--when they saw it they--it repulsed them."

Duane realizes that he has provoked Cecil more than he intended. Trying a brogue in a conciliatory tone, Duane says, "Ah, well, lots o' people don't go to t'e church no more, neither."

Cecil turns and warily studies Duane.

"My pay, Cecil."

"Oh, yes." Cecil looks at the slip, then opens the till and takes from it some bills and coins and counts them onto the counter. Duane reaches over and picks them up, putting the bills into his wallet and the coins into his pants pocket. Slightly patronizingly, Cecil says, "You ought to count it."

His tone goads Duane. "I have no reason to distrust you," he says, and then, with an edge to his voice, "do I?"

Cecil tenses and says sharply, "Certainly not!" and then angrily, "And you can

take your impudence out of here immediately!"

Duane is about to say, 'Fuck you,' but catches himself and just shakes his head as he goes back into the bakery for the box of bread. He does not bother to go say good-bye to the large, brown-haired woman. As he walks with the box out of the bakery, he resists the urge to take one last look at the oaken table.

Cecil is again sorting cheeses as Duane walks through the shop. Cecil does not look at Duane nor move to open the door. 'Prick,' thinks Duane as he struggles with the doorknob while holding the box. Getting the door open, he thinks, 'Cunt?' Outside, the street is dark from clouds that block the sun. Duane thinks, 'What would he have said if I'd said, "Fuck you"?' and he laughs as he answers, 'Probably, "Where?"' He shifts the box, and as he does so, he feels his upper left chest pinched. He looks down and remembers his grandfather's photograph. An urge to apologize to Cecil rises in him, but he does not feel like putting the box down or struggling with the door again, so he ignores it.

Standing at the curb, Duane waits for a gap in the traffic, then crosses and enters the dark walkway. At the parking lot lanes, he walks in front of an entering car, making it stop suddenly. Though he wishes for some, there are no cars in the exiting lanes. He is easily able to kick open the hinged door to the market. The lunch time crowd is gone, only old men and women stand about idly as a few shoppers handle the fruits and vegetables. When Duane gets to Winifred's stall, Clare is not there. He sets the box of bread down on a stool by the open-topped floor cooler. In the far corner of the cooler, he sees the whole and the sliced green-brown batter breads in a plastic bag. A temptation to write an obscenity on the bag passes. He rips a plastic bag from the roll suspended in front of him and puts his whole wheat loaf into it. Turning around to leave, he sees an old lady waiting. He says to her, "Sorry, I don't work here," and then

walks away:

From the stall, he goes toward the King Street exit to go home. Passing a butcher's stand, he stops at the low, glass and metal display fridge to look at the meats and buy something for supper. Looking up, he reads the chalkboard of specials and sees something called 'LIGHTS'. A butcher comes over. Duane asks, "What are 'lights'?"

The butcher points to a whitish, cellular mass in the display refrigerator between them and says, "Lung."

Admiring the pattern a moment, but thinking, too, 'How could anyone eat something like that?' Duane says, "Two strips of beef liver. Put it in a paper bag big enough for this bread."

The butcher reaches into the cooler, and from a deep, metal tray full of reddish-black cuts of liver, he forks out two strips and puts them on a piece of waxed paper on a scale. After weighing the strips, he wraps and bags them, then gives the bag to Duane. "Sixty-four cents," says the butcher.

Duane pays him, puts his bread into the bag, and goes out the exit to King Street and turns left to go down it. Under the cloudy sky, the street is busy and the store fronts dull. Duane decides to go to the book store in Wellington Square Mall and looks up the one way street to cross over. He crosses in a gap of traffic. Walking past the green front of the old building of Kelly's Bar, a little, old rubby stops him and asks, "Would you buy a lighter?"

The near-bald, unshaven old man has a lilt and a soft eye, so Duane looks at the thin, square, black lighter and says, "Flick it."

With both hands, the old man shakily presses down the mechanism, but when the little chrome cap jumps up, no flame appears. "Just a minute, lad," the old man says. "It worked when I lit a fag t'is mornin'." With determination, he presses the

mechanism again, and this time there is a weak flame. "Needs gas, t'at's all. One dollar--'tis a bargain, for sure."

Duane looks at the entrance to Kelly's and says, "And what do you intend to do with the dollar, sir?"

"Honour Saint Pat, you can be sure," winks the old man as he straightens himself.

Duane chuckles and reaches into his pants pocket and pulls out a handful of coins. He sees something between a dollar and a dollar and a half in his palm. "Okay, there's at least a dollar here. Give the waiter a good tip." Duane takes the lighter with his other hand, and the old man eagerly cups his two small hands to receive the coins.

"God bless you, lad," he says as Duane drops the coins into his hand. "I'll toast you wit' our saint." The old man looks at the coins in his hand and then raises his head. Sad-eyed, he says, "Er, would you spare a cigarette, son?"

"Sir, I am sorry, but I do not smoke."

The old man pulls his head back wide-eyed, and coins fisted, he gestures to the sky. "Now t'ere's a t'inkin' man! Stay off t'e weed, son, and keep y'r God-giv'n healt'!"

"Yes sir!" Duane says. He pockets the lighter in his jacket and claps the old man on the arm, then walks on down the street remembering frosty dawns as he cursed and primed cold, wet tobacco leaves that slapped in his face and left a nicotine sting and bitterness tasted in every cigarette he had ever tried. 'Wrong weed, old man,' he thinks as he reaches the corner of Clarence Street and crosses against the red through the smoke of an oil-burning car.

He enters the mall, and walking down the long, wide foyer among the shoppers and loungers, he pays little attention to the stores on either side, intent only on the book store at the far end. But gradually visible among the people in front of him is a

green and white booth strangely decorated with barbed wire and candles. Approaching it, Duane sees a sign across the top of the booth. It reads, 'AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'. Below the sign and beside the booth is a table with leaflets and magazines. A young black woman is inside the booth and is talking to a fair-haired and bearded young man who stands outside it. Duane stops at the table and looks at the material. He picks up a journal called *The Candle*. Leafing through it, he sees photographs of people of different nationalites and stories about the abuse of human rights. He stops at a green-tinted page with the heading, Letter-Writing Campaign, and begins to read about prisoners of conscience and writing letters to governments on their behalf. While he is reading, he hears a woman say, "Hi. Interested in Amnesty?"

Duane looks up from the page and sees the young black woman. "Ah, no--I mean, I don't know. What is--are these things free?" Duane inwardly curses his incoherency, but does not think about his unwillingness to talk with the young woman in the booth. He just wants to read the journal.

The young woman looks attentively at Duane a moment, then says, "Yes, they are. There is information on Amnesty in the one you have in your hand, and our local group's address and phone number are stamped on the back. Give us a call if you want." She smiles, then turns from Duane and resumes talking to the young man.

Duane puts the journal into his bag and walks from the booth into the bookstore. While he browses, he continues to think about his incoherency, and he begins to despair about his politics essay. Coming to the reference section, he skims it, but stops on the bottom shelf at a small book called *The Elements of Style*. He picks it up and looks at the contents pages. It looks so simple that he almost feels embarassed and insulted that he has thought he could use a book like it. Reaching down to put it back on the shelf, the bag he holds begins to slip. He pulls it tighter to his chest, and as he

does so, he feels something pick him. He looks down and remembers his grandfather's photograph in his pocket. As he is looking down, he also sees in his bag the Amnesty International journal. Remembering his incoherency at the booth, he straightens with the book in his hand and walks with it to the cashier. He pays for it and walks out of the store, leaving the mall at the Wellington Street exit and turning back up to King for home.

Walking along King Street, he sees stapled on a telephone pole a photocopy poster advertising Lawrence's poetry night. "'Poetry at The Pace'," he reads and then, beginning to speak mockingly, "'Noted area poets and Irish stew for you'." He becomes gloomy and walks on past run-down houses to Burwell Street, where he turns left and goes up to a high, old, Victorian house. He goes around back to the clapboard addition among the overgrown alley trees.

Walking past his black Toyota pickup truck, he stops and looks at the dents and resin-spattered paint and windshield. He looks down at the stains of urine on the front tire. On the front fender, there is a hand-sized spot of rust. Duane raises his foot and nudges the spot. It flexes, and a few small chips of rust drop off. He remembers the bad deal he made on the truck, too much money for something that needed too much work. "Fuckin' thing," he says, and he kicks in the rust spot. Chips of rusted metal fall in a puff of dust. He turns from the truck and walks under the trees across the small, patchy lawn to the wood and window door of his small apartment. He unlocks it and lets himself in.

Inside, he takes the package of liver from the bag and puts it into the old fridge, puts the bread on the counter, and empties the journal and the book onto a arborite kitchen table that is covered with the pages of notes he has made from reading Burke and Paine. He flattens the bag and puts it onto the paper pile he has kept since

hearing about saving trees by recycling. Going to the table, he removes his jacket and puts it over a chair back, then turns to the table and sits down, thinking he will try to work on the essay for a while.

After a few minutes of shuffling through notes, he picks up the Amnesty International journal and turns to the letter-writing campaign article. He wonders what he would say in letters to the Russians about how they treat the Jews, or to the Israelis about how they treat the Palestinians, or to the Irish about how they treat each other. Increasingly, he thinks that because he knows so little he could say nothing at all. That is what he has learned so far from his politics course, of that he has no need to wonder.

Laying the journal aside, he picks up the style book he bought and looks at the contents pages again. The section about choosing and holding to a suitable design interests him, so he turns to it. Reading it, he yawns, and when finished turns to the chapter on style. While reading it, his head begins to drop from drowsiness, and after three pages of the chapter, he closes his eyes to rest them, but then closes the book and lowers his head onto it, and as the sun comes out from behind the clouds, he drifts off to sleep. He semi-wakens a while later, long enough to push himself from the table and shuffle over to his unmade sofa bed.

When Dúane awakens, he is in darkness. Rising from his bed, he looks out a window and sees in the alley trees the last faint light of dusk. He switches on a floor lamp and sees by his watch that it is a few minutes after seven. Enough time to shower and eat before going to The Pace, he thinks. He turns on his small table radio and tunes from the university rock station to the CBC's "As It Happens", then undresses.

Taking his grandfather's photograph from his shirt pocket, Duane straightens the bent corners of the green card, then opens it and looks at the picture. An urge to write a letter to his grandfather arises, but he dismisses the absurdity of the idea, being that the old man is dead. He lays the card on the radio, then goes to the bathroom, and as he turns on the water and steps into the curtain-circled bathtub shower, on the radio an interview with a persecuted writer begins.

Stepping from the shower, Duane starts to dry himself and hears someone on the radio say, "writing what you want without interference from the authorities," but he ignores the rest as he dries his hair. The wrap-up music plays and then a story follows about a Canadian put in jail somewhere in Africa because he had broken a law he did not know about. Duane only half-listens as he combs his hair and then urinates. When he goes into his bedsitting room, he feels like music, so he tunes in the rock station again. A heavy metal program is on and he listens to it while he dresses, putting on his jeans and a dark green sweatshirt. But after the first song, he can no longer take the screaming guitars. He tries another station and gets gospel, then another, and dissatisfied finally turns the radio off.

For supper Duane fries the liver with some potatoes and onions and eggs that begin sunny-side up but become scrambled. The meal cooked, he takes it to the table. He shoves his notes out of the way to clear space. Picking up the Amnesty International journal, he leafs through it again thinking he has read enough of it. He moves to toss it onto the paper pile, but moving, sees his grandfather's photograph on the radio and decides instead to read the rest of the journal later. He lays it aside on his notes, then sits to eat.

While eating the liver, he recalls the lungs and thinks, 'What a name, "lights".' On an impulse, he rises while chewing and goes to his Funk and Wagnalls desk dictionary

to look up the word. He finds it, and reads its etymology as he swallows. He returns to the table only a bit annoyed that the word refers to weight and not, as he thought, to colour.

Finished his supper, Duane puts his dishes into the sink, then takes a fruit jar full of marijuana from the cupboard and rolls three joints, priding himself that he can use one Zig-Zag while Lawrence has to use two Exports. The joints rolled, he puts the jar back into the cupboard, pulls on his boots and black leather jacket, then pockets the joints in his jacket as he turns out the lights and leaves for The Pace.

Outside, he feels a breeze in his face. He looks into the dark sky, and seeing the faint clouds, he is reminded of nights before rainy mornings in tobacco fields. Looking back down, he is attracted to the activity of Dundas Street, so he walks up to it rather ~~than down to King.~~ At Dundas, he turns left toward the lit-up downtown three blocks away.

Passing in the dark the old houses converted into business offices and stores, he watches kids in cars with only their parking lights on cruise up to the Mr Submarine, then turn around in its lot to cruise back toward the downtown. 'Broadway,' thinks Duane, 'back and forth, yo-yos--get out of the house, car or not.' He thinks briefly about his parents, who he has not talked to since the news of his grandfather's death, but then at the corner of Dundas and Waterloo, crossing with the green, he looks over to the corner on the other side at the converted house and the lights in the second-floor apartment.

He sees a familiar, white-haired man walk by one of the windows and imagines him, Stephen, among the art works from around the world that clutter his apartment. Looking, Duane remembers the art show for new art in the city Stephen held in his downtown gallery the past winter and how Stephen had after talking to Duane about

naiveté accepted for the show a pencil-crayon drawing Duane had done last fall just for something to do, a drawing of a tree with curled, abstract leaves coloured from light to dark. A newspaper critic panned the show and Duane's drawing in particular, calling it "unedifying." Duane was not certain what this meant, but he knew it was bad. Out of spite, he did not look it up. To his surprise though, the drawing sold. With the eighty dollars he got, he took Stephan out to dinner and spent the rest on books and hash. Since then, he has visited Stephen occasionally. Stephen once said to him, "I think you have more going on inside you than you let on." Duane knew immediately what Stephen meant, but could not have told someone if asked to.

Near the intersection of Wellington, a wind whirls around the business towers and blows Duane into a quicker step. The light turns yellow just as he reaches the corner, and he crosses quickly into the downtown strip of brightness. But starting down the strip, he stops almost immediately at the darkened front of the padlocked door of Fry-fogle's Tavern, and he remembers sitting in its darkness two years ago in a darkness of his own. 'Gwen,' he thinks, 'what was the dictionary's meaning of the name? Light-browed—no, something like that, though... an old story, anyway.... Too bad about the fire in Fry's kitchen--good bar gone.'

He starts walking again, down the street between the old, three and four storeyed buildings, looking at the lit signs and the movie marquees, the store windows, the people, and the cars. The warm, spring night has drawn people out. Kids lounge around the big, concrete, planter boxes, while young and old men and women walk together or alone. Cars with windows down and music playing move slowly bumper to bumper on the two narrow lanes of the street.

Crossing Richmond Street before the light changes, Duane has to jump to avoid a car trying to beat the red. He usually curses drivers like that, but seeing she is an

attractive blond, he only sighs and remembers Lucille.

He continues down the sidewalk to Talbot Street and turns left down its quiet darkness toward The Pace. Through the windows of the bars in the big, pink Talbot Inn across the street, Duane sees the bars are already busy. Since he has been in London, he has gone regularly to one of the bars, The Firehall, and he decides to go there after the poetry reading. He looks from The Firehall down the street to Winifred's store and sees it is still open. He decides to keep to the opposite side of the street until he has passed the store. Passing it, he looks in the large windows of the restaurant and cheese shop and thinks how the customers, waiters, and Cecil all look like cars in a showroom. He looks further down the street to the corner of King Street and at the black and white painted punk bar, The Boot. 'Cars,' he thinks and scoffs as he walks on, 'Father with his Lincoln and Brendan his Cougar, me a rusted Toyota and a bicycle... mother still refusing to drive....'

Duane crosses Talbot on the green toward the punk bar and tries to cross King against the light, but fast cars on King force him back to the corner. While he waits for the light to change, a punker with his hair bleached and wearing a spiked dog collar and a swastika earring passes him. They look at each other. The punker growls at Duane, then laughs and walks on. Duane laughs too, but as the light changes to green and he crosses the street, he recalls Wickham's black cat and sneers. Then up ahead at the entrance to The Pace, Duane sees three young women arrive from the other direction. He recognizes one of them as Clare. He hangs back a bit to give them time to enter.

A travel office is to his right. He stops and looks at the posters in its window. 'PARIS: CITY OF LIGHT!' reads one of the Eiffel Tower lit up at night, and 'Cool Green in the Hot Summer', reads another of a misty stream in the forested hills of

Ireland. Duane remembers last summer sweating on a construction site and begins to calculate his budget. Realizing he would have to sell his truck, he decides to check it over to see what he can ask for it.

Clare and the others have gone in, so Duane walks on to The Pace. He opens the wooden door and going in mutters, "Son-of-a," as he squints in the narrow, brightly lit, yellow-painted corridor to the staircase up to the coffeehouse. As he climbs the stairs, he gradually leaves the brightness until at the top he passes through thick, burgundy curtains and enters a small, dark foyer. From it, he sees in the darkness many people in the plain, long, low room of the coffeehouse. The lights have been dimmed, and candles in coloured jars burn on the small, wooden tables. Along the back wall beside the foyer is a row of windows. On the glass, Duane can see his faint reflection among those of the people inside, and through the windows, he sees the silhouette of roofs and chimneys against the blue-black night sky. Smelling coffee and cigarettes as his eyes adjust, Duane sees that the place is full of people, mostly young, standing and sitting at tables. He senses an eagerness and intensity in the murmur that both attracts him and puts him on edge. After the Royal and Fryfogle's and The Firehall, he has never felt entirely comfortable in the mellowness of The Pace, but this crowd tonight is to him even stranger. If there was even a touch of violence, he would feel more at ease.

"Your peat moss didn't sell very well today."

Duane looks to his right and sees Clare standing there smirking at him.

"What?"

"That green bread you brought over from the bogs of Ireland.'"

Duane rolls his eyes and says, "Give it to Cecil, he likes it."

"Liar. When I took it back to the store after work, he nearly shrieked." She smiles as Duane looks up at the ceiling. "You two didn't get along today, eh?" she says

with what Duane perceives to be a hint of seduction.

"Like grapes and onions," he replies looking at her.

"Like what?" grins Clare.

"Like bananas and sausage?" he says slightly irritated and then testily, "I don't know, the guy's a fag, he kept looking at my crotch. What'd you expect? Nuts and bolts?" 'Hmm,' thinks Duane as he looks over her jeans and dark flannel shirt, 'did her eyes perk when I said bananas and sausage?'

"Obviously," Clare nearly purrs, "you're not gay."

"Me? No way! I like to kiss when I fu–make lo–. Jesus." Duane breathes in slowly. "You, ah, you seen Lawrence?" He nervously looks away from Clare and out over the crowd, thinking, 'What a pig I am.'

"Lawrence?" says Clare, standing tip-toed to look over the crowd. "I saw him a few minutes ago–oops!" and she grabs Duane's arm to keep her balance. "Went up too fast," she says, blinking her eyes widely once for emphasis, then whispering conspiratorially, "We smoked some marijuana before we came in." She has not let go of Duane's arm. "Say, why didn't you tell me your name this afternoon? Cecil nearly spit it at me when I asked him."

"I don't know–forgot, I guess. To tell you, I mean, not my, ah, name." 'Christ,' thinks Duane, 'this is getting bad.' "There's Lawrence by the kitchen door," he says lying and starts to move away. Clare squeezes his arm.

"Hey," she drawls, "wait a minute. Come join us after you talk to Lawrence. We're sitting in the corner back there," and she nods toward it. She lets her hand slide down Duane's arm to his hand. She squeezes it once, then turns and walks back through the crowd to her table. Duane watches her long curls bounce on her back.

When she disappears, he turns again to look for Lawrence. Looking through the

crowd, Duane finally sees Lawrence's head bob at the microphone, and he walks through people toward him. When he reaches Lawrence, Duane sees that he has crouched to try to untangle some wires that lead to lights above the floor-level stage. "How's it goin', Lawrence?"

Lawrence looks up from the tangled wires. "Duane! Okay. You? Happy Saint Patrick's." He looks down again. "These wires are a pain," he says, then he looks at the ceiling and half-chants, "But you gotta have lights. Light: soul of inspiration." Crouched still, he looks at Duane and says normally again, "You missed supper."

"Yeah, I, ah, was wacked after worked," Duane says as he turns to look over his shoulder at Clare's corner. Then looking back at Lawrence, he says, "You got a pretty good crowd."

"Not bad," Lawrence says, still fooling with the wires. "Less than I expected though. You know any of them?"

"I recognize some faces. Oh yeah, and a girl from the market, Clare. You know her?" Duane looks at Lawrence for his response.

Lawrence looks up from the wires. His glasses glint.

Duane resists squinting.

"Yes, I do," Lawrence says slowly before adding carefully, "and I've been wanting to get to know her better." He looks at Duane a moment longer before turning back to the wires. He says less guardedly, "She writes some interesting stuff about mother-daughter relationships and searching for the female muse. Pretty heavy on the Plathian confessionalism, though she moderates it with some Rousseauian primitivism. We communicate pretty well, but she seems to want to keep things platonic. Hold these two wires, will you?"

Duane takes the wires, and Lawrence runs his hands down them to a knot of three

other wires. He pulls at them a few seconds, then stops and stares at them.

Sensing Lawrence's frustration, Duane says, "Try those two coming out the bottom."

Lawrence turns the knot over and sees the wires Duane means. He pulls them. The knot jerks away, but Duane grabs it and says, "Push them." Lawrence does, and the knot begins to untangle.

Duane lets go of the cords and says, "Where can I get a beer?"

Without looking up as he separates the cords, Lawrence says, "Go to the kitchen. It's self-service tonight."

Duane turns from Lawrence to walk toward the light of the kitchen entrance at the far end of the dark, crowded coffeehouse. On tables lie pens, notebooks, and pages of paper. People talk over them, drinking beer and coffee, or sit absorbed in reading or writing, a cigarette dangling from a mouth or held between fingers. When Duane gets to the kitchen, he is met by a small, dark young woman in a green blouse and a stained, white apron. "What can I get for you?" she asks pleasantly.

"A beer, please."

She turns and goes to a big, steel sink. Duane looks into the kitchen and sees a cauldron on the stove. When the girl returns with the beer, Duane says, "You make the stew?"

"Yes, I did," she replies. "Did you like it?"

"I got here too late to have any." Duane wonders why he didn't say that he ate supper at home.

"There's a bit left if you'd like some," the girl says.

"Thanks, but I'm, ah, not hungry. I'd like a taste though." He remembers the poster and thinks, 'Irish stew for you—I can imagine.'

The girl smiles and goes to the cauldron. She takes a wooden stirring spoon from a jar jammed with utensils and reaches with it into the cauldron. She stirs and then raises the spoon, drawing it over the edge of the cauldron to remove gravy from under it. With her free hand below the spoon, she walks carefully back to Duane. "The best gravy is always on the bottom," she says as she hands the spoon to him.

As Duane raises the spoon to his mouth, he does not see the drop of gravy that falls onto his green sweatshirt. Savouring the gravy, he is surprised at how much it tastes like his mother's.

The girl says, "A bit dripped onto your sweatshirt. Just a second, I'll get a cloth."

She goes to the sink again as Duane looks down at the spot of gravy. 'Goddamn,' he says to himself.

The girl returns with a damp cloth. She puts her hand under Duane's sweatshirt and beneath the spot, then rubs it clean. "Nice colour," she says, grazing Duane's chest as she withdraws her hand. "Are you Irish?"

"Oui," Duane replies.

She looks at him strangely for a moment, then smiles and says, "So am I. The gravy is a family recipe. Did you like it?"

"It was really good." 'Oui,' he thinks, 'what a goof.' He gives her the spoon and says, "Thanks," then turns to leave.

"It's a dollar for the beer," the girl says.

Duane remembers the bottle. "Oh yeah," he says, and he gives her the beer to hold while he pulls out his wallet.

"Nice try," she says as he gives her a dollar.

"I wasn't–" and he sees her smile slyly. He smiles ironically himself, then takes back his beer and moves into the crowd.

Uncertain whether or not he wants to go to Clare's table, he sits at a bench along the wall opposite the microphone. The last minute excitement loudens the murmur. Bodies gesture and move quickly in the candlelight. On the bench beside Duane, a young guy is bent over reading to himself from the poem on the sheet on his knees. Duane tries to read it, but can not make out the writing, so looks up again at all the people.

After a minute, a white spotlight flashes on over the microphone. Duane squints and turns away slightly. Lawrence walks into the light. The murmuring subsides.

"High, everyone?" says Lawrence, mixing his greeting with a questioning glance and then pausing. People snicker as he continues. "Welcome to The Pace Saint Patrick's Day poetry night. Everybody wearing green?" He peers over the mike. "Good. Anyone who isn't will have the local facimile of the shamrock stuck to their forehead." Someone guffaws. Lawrence looks askance, then says, "We've got eight poets reading, and what they're going to do is read for fifteen minutes each, and after three there'll be a break for about fifteen minutes. After the last reader, the mike is free to anyone who wants to read. There's lots of coffee and beer. The only thing green to be consumed in here is food colouring." Some knowing chortles. "Okay, so, we're going to begin. These poets are original and strong writers and readers. You probably know all of them already, so I don't need to do anything but introduce them. Just to break the ice, the first reader is—myself!"

Good-humoured groans rise. Red and purple spotlights turn on. Lawrence pulls some folded sheets from his back pocket, opens them, and begins to read a poem.

As Lawrence reads, Duane lets the words and images play in his head, but he becomes puzzled and stops when he is made to think, 'How is woman like a streetlight?'

"–and me a pole that reaches for her

suspended in the sky–"

Duane forgets his puzzlement as he nearly laughs aloud. He sighs instead, then takes a long drink of his beer and looks around. The kid next to him has tilted the page he was reading to catch the light from the stage, but now only stares at the floor. A few others are still writing or reading in the candlelight what they have written. Most people are fixed on Lawrence. He finishes his poem, and there is soft applause. Duane claps a few times too. Lawrence continues with other poems. Duane listens, more picking out than caught by words or phrases to think about, but he usually misses how the ending fits the rest of the poem. He has told Lawrence about this problem he has with endings, and Lawrence said that it was because in contemporary television culture endings are arbitrarily imposed by commercial interests and that people don't have a sense of open-endedness anymore. Then he said, "Read McLuhan," and went on to talk about his most recent relationship. Duane was in the middle of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* at the time, and he forgot about McLuhan.

Lawrence concludes and calls the next poet to the mike, then sits in a chair at the edge of the stage. This next poet and the one after him sound like Lawrence to Duane, and he thinks he may go to The Firehall earlier than he planned.

By the break, he is thirsty for another beer and some music. He decides to slip down to The Firehall to catch a few tunes and have a fast beer, then think about whether to come back for Clare's reading. As he makes his way through the crowd to the stairway, Clare appears before him. "There you are," she says. "Have you snubbed us purposely or are you–"

"No, no," Duane interrupts, "I was–some guy showed me his poems and I got stuck there when Lawrence began. I was... was just going out to get some air, and then I

was going to join you."

"Oh, okay," Clare says brightly. "I'm going to get a coffee. Can I get you one?"

"No, thanks. I'll get a beer when I come back in."

Clare nods, and passing Duane to go on to the kitchen, she says, "See you in a bit."

Duane thinks, 'I doubt it.' He walks on to the exit and goes through the curtain and down the stairs into the bright yellow light. "Goddamned lights," he mutters as he squints. Out of the door and onto the sidewalk, he sees cars parked all along the street and a few driving up it. He turns left up toward The Firehall. Crossing King, he sees some punkers with high, orange Iroquois cuts jumping around as they wait to get into The Boot. A gust of wind blows his long, black curls. He finds himself thinking about Wickham, but can not tell why, so forgets about him. He crosses the street and walks up past Winifred's store, now dark and closed. Slowing to look in, he imagines Cecil whimpering elbow-deep in dish water, but he also wishes that he had before he left felt one last time the oaken table.

Continuing up the street to The Firehall, Duane tenses when he sees in front of the bar three black Harley-Davidsons backed against the curb. He slows and remembers the night last fall in the bar when as he was passing a table of three bikers and their women, one of the bikers, a scrawny greaser, shouted at him above the noise, "You!" Duane looked at him and felt strangely honoured at being hailed by a biker. He stopped and leaned over to the greaser and said, "Yes?" The greaser mumbled something about walking somewhere else. Duane said, "What? I can't hear you." He looked at the greaser, who scowled and then sucker-punched him. Duane staggered backward more from surprise than from the blow. He shouted, "What'd I do, man?" A massive, thick-bearded biker at the table rose and stepped up to Duane and said,

"Okay, move on, we don't want trouble here." Duane walked out of the bar shaking and did not go to The Firehall again until winter came. He did not see the bikers there through the winter. This is the first time he has seen motorcycles here since he has come back.

'Maybe they aren't the same ones,' Duane thinks as he despite himself admires the Harleys. Then he hears the band begin to play and decides to take the chance. He opens the red, metal-sheeted door and walks in. The long, narrow room is dark, smoky, loud, and packed with people. Dim, red lamps glow among the fire buckets, hoses, and ladders that hang on the red and black walls. At the far end, in a blue light on a low stage, a four-man band is playing hard a wailing blues tune. Duane closes his eyes a moment and inhales deeply, then cuts through the crowd to get a beer at the small bar against the wall opposite him, looking around for the bikers as he goes. Not seeing them, he gets to the bar, a control panel salvaged from a fire engine, and above the noise shouts to the bartender, "A beer!"

While he waits, he watches the lead guitar player, Matt. Matt's band often plays The Firehall and is the only band Duane has continued to see since moving to London. Matt and Duane had seen each other often in the bar and then the winter Duane worked at Winifred's introduced themselves there when Matt went in for lunch from his day job at the furniture store next door. Talking another day, Duane discovered that Matt knew bands that used to play at the Royal and that he himself had played there. Duane said he knew he had recognized Matt, but he was not really sure he did.

The bartender gives Duane his beer. Duane pays, then moves into the crowd to get closer to the stage. As he moves through the crowd in the smoke and the noise, he looks around for the bikers and feels safer with Matt playing on the stage. Stopping at a free spot against a wall near the front, Duane has a clear view of Matt, his

blue-tinted blond head bent down to see his fast playing as his long, lean body sways. As Duane stands near the wall, Matt gets into some sizzling bottleneck. Rays of blue light shoot off the stainless steel tube on his last finger as it slides up and down the guitar neck. The crowd is really into it, shouting and whistling and dancing between tables. Matt shoots off riff after riff as he intensifies to a searing climax. He slashes the last chord and the crowd goes wild crying, "More! More!" as the drummer flips his sticks away into the air and Matt peels off his guitar. Even as Matt and the other musicians leave the low stage, people clap and shout and bang bottles and glasses on tables.

Duane watches Matt walk from the stage and into the crowd. Then, beyond Matt and seated at a table in the corner by the stage, he sees the bikers, the same three and their women. They all sit aloof and motionless. As Matt searches for a route through the crowd, he sees Duane and gestures low with a clenched fist, then makes his way toward him. The massive, bearded biker rises from the table and begins to follow Matt. Matt gets to Duane and they reach out their right hands and power shake.

"What's happenin', Duane?"

"Hot stuff, Matt! Jesus!"

"Yeah, only the first set too. You here alone?"

"Yeah. Just came from the poetry reading at The Pace." Duane sees the biker approaching.

"Oh, yeah," says Matt easily, "that's tonight, eh? Many people show up?"

"The place is packed. Pretty subdued though." Duane looks past Matt and nods. "Guy coming over."

Matt turns around and sees the big biker. Duane notices Matt's body harden. The biker reaches them. Matt turns to make him face both himself and Duane.

"Bobbie," says Matt to the biker.

"Matt," replies the biker, who then looks down at Duane.

"Duane," says Matt, "Bobbie."

"We met," the biker says. Then to Matt, "We got the picnic comin' up May twenty-fourth weekend. Wanna play it again? Same terms as last year and what you're makin' now."

"I don't know, Bobbie. It got too heavy last year." Duane sees Matt look at the table the biker has come from. "Your buddy Albert started doing things a guy his size shouldn't do."

"I know, I know," says the biker agitated. "He gets pissed, and he's a pain in the ass." The biker looks down at Duane, then back at Matt. "We told him this year to stay off the liquor or stay away from the picnic. We're watchin' him, we know he's trouble." He pauses, looking at Matt carefully. "So, ah, how's Angela, anyway?"

"Fine. I'll talk to the boys about it. Call me next week."

The biker looks at Matt a moment longer, then nods to him. He turns to Duane and says, "See y'," then makes his way back to his table. Duane sees that the scrawny greaser has his arm around one of the women and is staring at the stage.

Matt says, "If it wasn't for the beautiful bikes, we wouldn't do this gig." Then darkly, "Never take Angela again."

Duane looks at Matt's guitar on the stage, then at Matt, and says, "Had your Triumph out yet?"

"Yeah, first time today. Just tuned her. Have to get new rubber though." He pauses reflectively, then says, "Well, I'm gonna get a beer. Stickin' around?"

Duane looks at the bikers. "No, I'm going back to The Pace. Maybe come back after it."

"Okay. See y' later." Matt looks at the table of bikers once more, then starts through the crowd for the bar.

Duane looks over at the bikers again. Bobbie is talking to the third biker, the greaser is still staring at the stage, the women look around indifferently. Looking at the blankly staring greaser, Duane remembers a night in the Royal, just after he began to go there when he was nearly sixteen. At a table, again in a corner, a group of the town thugs were drinking. Duane was watching them, afraid yet fascinated by the power they had by, as far as he knew, reputation alone. Suddenly one of them, a small guy with slick, blond hair, picked up an empty glass from the table and tossed it almost casually at a group of people a few tables away. The glass hit on the shoulder one of the guys at that table, but it did not break until it hit the floor. The guy who was hit looked around surprised, but he knew where to look. He rose and went toward the table of thugs. Duane saw the slick guy move closer to one of the bigger guys, who stood up as the guy who had been hit approached their table. As he stood, the other guy stopped, stood looking at him a moment, then said something Duane could not hear to the slick guy and turned back to his table. The slick guy was provoked and picked up another glass, but the big guy who was beside him grabbed his arm before he could throw it. The big guy took the glass from the slick guy's hand, then cuffed him on the side of the head.

Duane looks from the bikers to the crowd of people sitting and standing and milling about in the narrow, smoky room. 'The violence,' he says to himself, 'my God, the violence.' His gaze around the room stops at the table where the scrawny biker had struck him. A sudden quick movement draws Duane's attention back again in the direction of the bikers. He sees a guy recover from tripping and nearly falling, and looking at him and then the bikers, he remembers in the Royal again another night a

few weeks later and the same thugs were there, but this time a fight broke out. Eight or ten of them must have been involved. They lunged at each other and punched themselves into a chair-breaking frenzy. Duane was terrified, yet in awe. He could not leave. He stood watching as others around him fled. The two hotel bouncers were powerless and only kept to the side hoping to contain the fight. But the owner of the hotel, seeing his chairs and tables being smashed, ran into the crowd of fighters. Duane can still see him throwing a wild punch and his old, flaccid body falling to the floor. The bouncers went to him and pulled him out of the way. Soon the police arrived and stopped the fight. But then one of the bouncers cried out wildly and leapt onto a thug and went beserk beating him until the police had to club him to get him to stop. After that, they found out the owner was dead.

Duane looks at the bikers again and feels ashamed that after that fight he would repeat the story and feel proud to be able to say that he had been there the night Johnny died. He would tell it and feel proud, and soon he, too, began to try to be a fighter. But he never got it that far, he did not want to be hit and did not like to think about hitting. He would only pretend to have been in fights, would sullenly yet proudly tell the story after it supposedly had happened. Everybody believed him, and he was feared, until one night in the Royal after telling one of these stories, an older guy Duane respected rebuked him saying, "Dark walls don't hit back, do they." After that, Duane did seek a fight, and though he found one, and did not come out the worse, he never sought another, nor did he ever tell the stories again.

On the other side of the room, Duane sees Matt walk past the table of bikers and step onto the unlit stage. Matt goes to his guitar, and with his back to the audience, he crouches with the guitar and begins to tune it. After watching him for a moment, Duane decides to return to The Pace. He thinks about smoking a joint, but

remembering that Matt does not toke, he changes his mind. He drinks the last of his beer and turns and walks through the crowd to the door, leaving his bottle at a small, empty table he passes. He walks out into the street, glances at the motorcycles, then walks back toward The Pace, looking again into Winifred's, thinking this time only of how much the wood of the oaken table resembles the unpainted body of Matt's guitar.

Into The Pace Duane follows some gayly talking people. He feels his mood begin to sour. In the brightness of the corridor, he considers returning to The Firehall, but someone in the crowd in front of him says Clare is reading next, and he is drawn on up the stairs, through the burgundy curtains, and into the darkened coffeehouse again. The murmur of the crowd is loud and continuous.

"Duane!" he hears a woman cry from the corner. He looks and sees Clare, who stands at her table beckoning. He makes his way through the crowd to her and is about to say that he wants to get a beer before the reading starts again when Clare says, "Come sit down. I bought you a beer." Duane sees on the wooden table in the green-tinted candlelight a sweating bottle of beer among the coffee mugs and note-books. Clare is alone at the table. They sit and she asks, "Do you know Elizabeth and Barbara? I saw you come in with them."

Duane thinks of the people who had walked in ahead of him and of the two young women he had seen with Clare earlier. "No, I just came in behind them."

"Oh. They and some other people went down to The Firehall to see what was going on. I would have gone too, but I wanted to go over these poems before I read. I'm next." She looks at Duane with nervous anticipation. Then she says coyly, "I have a surprise for you."

"Oh yeah?" says Duane apprehensively.

"Uh-huh." Then looking past him, she says, "Here come Elizabeth and Barbara."

Duane's apprehension increases. Two attractive young women carrying coffees join them. Clare says, "Duane, meet Elizabeth and Barbara."

"Hi!" they say together brightly as they set their coffees down.

"Hi," Duane says. They take off their pea jackets, Elizabeth girlish with a delicate, oval face and shoulder-length, straight blond hair, Barbara athletic with short, thick, reddish curls around a wide forehead and full cheeks. Both, like Clare, wear jeans and dark flannel shirts. "Are you a student?" asks Barbara.

"Part-time," Duane replies, wearily readying his usual explanation.

"Me too, in dance. What are you doing?"

"Just a politics course."

Elizabeth says, "I was in politics until I switched to English. Who do you have?"

"Vernon Richards."

"Really! He's great. He likes unusual work. In his revolution course I wrote an ironic long poem as an essay on Marx. He loved it. What course are you doing with him?"

"The same one," Duane replies as his apprehension lessens.

"Have you thought about the essay yet? He's been dying for someone to do a dialogue with Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine."

"Well, yeah, I've been looking at Bur--"

"Welcome back, everybody!" says Lawrence in a flash of light at the mike.

'Shit,' thinks Duane.

"At who?" says Elizabeth as she leans closer to Duane.

"What?" says Duane startled. "Oh, at Burke and Paine. I thought I might, ah, do a play."

Elizabeth leans back and nods appreciatively as Lawrence continues. Duane

looks from her to Clare, who smiles. They all turn to look at Lawrence.

"Okay! First scene, second act–three performances! Ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs, the first star, la première étoile, Clare Dubois!"

The audience groans at Lawrence and applauds for Clare. She rises from her chair with her black notebook and squeezes Duane's shoulder as she passes him to make her way between the people and tables for the mike. She gets to the mike. Duane sees her in profile, her long, brown curls tinted gold in the soft yellow and red light, her face clear against the darkness behind her.

With a low voice sharp and clean, Clare begins to read. It is not the same casual, bright voice Duane has heard her talk with. Her words come clearly, each one to Duane deep, distinct, and clear. He does not know how, but he understands immediately the allusions to home and love and strife, the loss of faith and the search to recover it. With each poem, he goes further into himself and yet, at the same time, feels further away. No applause interrupts the poems she reads. Sitting intent and still, Duane gradually loses his sense of his body but for around his eyes. He sees clearly and perfectly, he feels pulsations beat from his eyes to the very core of his mind. Mesmerized, he sees in the hazy silhouettes of the room's soft-lit smoke the year's ago mist of a morning among trees.

"–either we go there, now,

or we never find–"

Duane begins to shake. As his shaking increases, he feels he can not stand it. He grasps the table and rises from his chair and turns in the darkness to look for the exit and seeing it stumbles past people and tables toward it and then through the curtains as people hiss at him, runs down the stairs into the blinding light, arm up to protect his eyes, careening off the walls to the door and into the street and the cool night air. He

turns down the sidewalk and coming to a wooden telephone pole raises his arm to it and rests his head against it breathing deeply.

He hears footsteps come up behind him, then feels a hand on his back. "Duane," Clare says anxiously, "are you okay? What happened?"

Leaning with his head still on his arm, he says trembling, "I—I don't know! No—yes, I do! I do! But I," he stops and trembles more still, "I know! I do! I—but I—I do know!" He shudders violently. "But I—I can't—I can't say it!" He cries, "Oh God!" and drives his fist into the wooden pole. He pushes himself from the pole and begins to stagger down the sidewalk.

"Duane!" cries Clare. "Wait!" She runs to him and pulls his arm to turn him around. "Duane."

He looks at her through blurred eyes.

She wipes his eyes with her fingers, then puts her hands into his hair, pulls his head down, and kisses him long and gently.

Slowly, he puts his arms around her, and they hold each other close.

"Duane," Clare says softly, "you can tell me. I think I already know. But tell me—you can. We'll go to my place. Wait here, don't go away. I'm going back in for my coat and notebook. I'll be right back. Okay?" She backs from him slowly, looking at him calmly. "Okay?" she repeats softly.

Duane looks at her, uncertain, but trusting, and says, "Okay."

Clare smiles and turns back to The Pace. Duane looks after her and sees people, Lawrence among them, standing at the entrance watching. Clare goes through them without stopping. Duane looks at them as they watch him. Soon, except for Lawrence, they turn away and go back inside. A moment later, Lawrence turns and is gone.

A pain shoots through Duane's left hand, and he looks at it. Two knuckles are scraped and bloodied. He raises his hand to his mouth and sucks away the blood, then spits into the gutter.

Clare is walking up to him and says, "Are you alright? Oh! Look at your hand!" She takes hold of it and looks at it a moment. "There's a splinter. Can I try to get it out?"

Duane nods, and with her fingernails, she works around the splinter and soon gets it out. She kisses his knuckles and says, "Can you flex the joints?"

Duane makes a fist, then opens it.

"Good," says Clare, and softly, "Let's go, then. I live up on Hyman Street." She takes Duane's arm, and they begin to walk up Talbot Street in silence. The Boot is raucous, but they pass it quietly. Passing Winifred's, they both look in but say nothing. At The Firehall, the motorcycles are gone. A soft blues tune is playing. They slow a bit, but do not talk. They cross Dundas Street, neither of them motioning to turn onto it into the cars and the brightness, cross it and in silence go away from the lights of the buildings and parking lots, go further up Talbot under the high trees that begin to line the street. They turn at Central and beneath the trees walk along it quietly to Richmond. At the bright corner of the busy street, they narrow their eyes as they watch for a break in the traffic, and getting one, they cross quickly to Victoria Park and then slow again to walk in the quiet at the edge of the park. Clare turns them onto the grass, and they walk in the dark among the trees to Wellington Street on the park's other side. They turn up it and walk to Hyman, then turn in the quiet, streetlit darkness down Hyman and walk to an old house and then around to the back where they stop among the bushes and the trees in the quiet and the dark.

"Clare," Duane says hesitantly, "I... I'm sorry about walking out. It--it wasn't

because of your poems–no, wait, it was because of them but, but not because they were bad or anything. They... they made me feel like I was, was losing control. I couldn't stand it in there anymore." He pauses. "But not because of the place so much as... because... of how your poems were making me feel. I started to feel... like... how I did when I was still at home." He stops, then breathes deeply and sighs, looking up at the cloudy night sky. "Is that... can you understand that?"

"Was it that way for you too?" Clare asks. "Wait. Let me go inside for a minute. Do you need a band-aid for your hand?"

Duane looks at his knuckles and shakes his head.

Clare puts her hands into Duane's hair and looks at him gently, then rises to his lips and kisses him lightly before she turns and goes to the door on the porch at the back of the house.

In the darkness, Duane makes out a picnic table and goes to it and sits down on the bench. He stretches out his arms over the table and flattens his palms on the rough, wooden surface. Pressing down, he draws them slowly toward himself. At the edge of the table, he raises his hands to his face and cups it with them, inhaling deeply the sweet, night fragrance of the weathered wood. Recalling the oaken baking table, he lowers his hands to the wood and massages it with his fingertips.

The door on the porch opens, and Clare comes out holding a small tray and on it two steaming mugs beneath the flame of a thick, white candle. Approaching, she says, "The porch light is burnt out. The candle is better anyway." At the table, she sets down the tray and sits beside Daune on the bench. "Hot chocolate," she says, raising her mug to drink. Duane takes the other mug and drinks too. Lowering her mug, Clare says, "I didn't have a chance to give you your surprise. I wrote a limerick this afternoon about your peat bread."

"What's a limerick?" Duane asks.

"It's a five line poem with rhymes and a rhythm good for silly subjects. Want to hear it?"

"Yeah, okay."

Clare recites the poem, in a voice to Duane that differs again from the one he earlier heard. He chuckles at the conclusion. "That's pretty good--I mean, I like it."

"Thank you. It's fun."

They drink again from their mugs and for a while are silent in the candlelit darkness.

Clare is looking at the candle as she says, "I like this time of year, when spring is just beginning. Not cold, but still cool, the rains washing the salt and dirt away and the trees on the verge of leafing. It's a lot different where I come from in northern Ontario." She turns to look at Duane. "Are you from around here?"

"Yeah," he says, "south-east of here, tobacco country. Near Long Point."

"Long Point. Do you know the wilderness sanctuary there?"

"Yes," says Duane, pleased she knows. "It's beautiful."

"I like it there a lot. I've camped there to walk down the beach. It's so peaceful, beyond the park where nobody goes. To me, it's like what Heaven must be--the water, the beach, the sun."

Duane thinks a moment, then adds darkly, "There's talk about building a steel mill down there." Clare sighs and says nothing. Duane raises his mug and drinks it empty, the hot liquid burning his mouth and throat, but he not caring. He remembers the marijuana he has. "Would you like to smoke a joint?"

Clare looks at him carefully, then says, "How are you feeling now?"

Defensively, yet trying to avoid being so, Duane replies, "I'm okay."

After a moment, Clare says, "Alright."

Duane reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a joint and the thin, black lighter he bought in the afternoon. When he tries to light the joint, the lighter's small, blue flame burns faintly, then goes out. He flicks the lighter again, and again the weak, blue flame dies. He tries a third time, and there is no flame at all.

"Looks like it needs fluid," Clare says. "Use the candle."

Duane looks at the candle and wonders why he didn't use it in the first place. He leans over to the flame and lights the joint, draws deeply, then passes it to Clare.

She draws but coughs right after. Recovered, she says, "Weak lungs. Too many cigarettes when I was a teenager. I should stop toking too, it's messing up my body." She gives the joint back to Duane. "It interferes with my writing too, and that's even worse."

Duane holds the joint a moment, looking at it. When Clare had said lungs, he recalled for a moment the lungs in the butcher's display case he saw at the market. He blinks and raises the joint to his lips, but as he draws, he finds himself for the first time wondering whether he wants to get stoned.

When he offers the joint to Clare, she says, "No, thanks. I have to rest my lungs."

Duane lowers his hand to his knee and looks from Clare to the flame of the candle. Holding the joint, Duane begins to think of all the times he has been stoned, and as he thinks, he begins to wonder how much time he has spent stoned. As he sits thinking this, the ember of the joint burns out. Duane begins to feel the anger and shame of time wasted and lost. He looks down at the emberless joint. While he looks down at it, he feels Clare's hand on his cheek. In the candlelight, he looks up at her softly-shadowed face and feels again the anger and the loss, then feels the desire to also be able to say that marijuana is interfering with his work, but then, as she lowers

her hand, he realizes what he already knows, that he has no work like Clare's, that marijuana and drinking and everything else interfere with nothing at all because he has nothing they can interfere with. He feels empty. Looking back down at the joint again, he slowly rolls it between his finger and thumb until the marijuana falls out of the paper. He rolls the paper into a ball and drops it into the wax beneath the flame on the thick, white candle. The paper uncurls a moment, then catches fire and burns to a black spot of ash in the white wax.

"Duane," Clare says quietly, "what was it like for you at home?"

Looking at the black spot, Duane feels his chest tighten and head begin to swell. He breathes in deeply and closes his eyes as he exhales slowly. Opening his eyes, he sees the candle flame flickering. As it becomes still again, from amid faded echoes of shouts and cries, he says, "I,.. it was pretty bad. I—my brother and I, and my mother, too—we got, our father, he," Duane breathes short, "he beat us a lot." The echoes fade to distant whispers. "He—he drank a lot and hardly ever stopped working. His views were pretty severe."

Duane stops and looks at the steadily burning flame. "He—I think he had it pretty rough when he was a kid. He's pretty bitter anyway."

Duane hesitates, then goes on. "He went through the war, but was in Switzerland. But he lived with some Jewish relatives—his parents broke up when he was young, and he was their only child—and his father told me, I mean wrote me, that after the war when my father heard about the death camps, he freaked out and became a Trotskyite Communist. He was arrested for something and put in jail, and when he got out, he left Switzerland for Montreal and worked there for a while and somehow got to where he is now, but I don't know how, he's never told me."

Stopping again, Duane narrows his eyes as he looks at the candle flame. "He

never talks about his past. He hardly talks about anything. It's funny, but most often when I think of him, I see him sitting alone in the dark watching a war movie on television. He doesn't drink then, maybe that's why I think of him that way."

Duane looks from the flame to Clare, then down at the table. She is quiet. He remembers that Clare has asked him about himself, yet he thinks only briefly that he talked only about his father. He thinks a moment longer, then looks into the flame again.

"I've tried to figure him out psychologically, but I can't get any further than saying that his aggression comes from repression. I know that's too simple, but I don't know what else to do." Duane ceases a moment, then sighs. "I feel like it doesn't matter anymore, either—I just don't care. I don't see him much anyway, only at Christmas for the last three years. We hardly talk to each other even then."

"Do you know what he thinks of you?" Clare asks.

Duane turns quickly from the flame to look at Clare, at her candlelit face and hair that curls down over her open blue jacket. He hears in himself louder and louder words spoken years ago, feels the anger and hatred rise. Clare's face begins to distort in an increasingly brilliant light.

"Duane?" says Clare. She touches his knee. "Where are you?" he hears her asks a light blinds him and he in his mind repeats over and over, 'Go–go–go.' He feels her hand on his knee and tenses readying to lift his arms as though to protect himself.

Clare says again, "Duane?" She leans forward, raising her arm to touch him, and as she does, he lifts his arms quickly and doing so hits Clare's arm as she reaches out to caress his face and hitting her arm pushes her hand hard against his face. He grasps her wrists tightly.

"Duane!" she cries. The blow from her hand has brought Duane back to himself.

He still holds her wrists, but less tightly, and she ceases trying to pull away.

"I'm sorry!" Clare says. "I didn't mean to hit you!"

"No, no, it was my fault! I–I just–I don't know, I just spaced out for a moment. The pot, I guess." 'My fault?' Duane thinks. 'What did I do?' And he can not remember. "What did you ask me?"

"About your father? What does he think of you?"

'Father,' thinks Duane. And feeling Clare's wrists secure in his hands, he calms and begins to speak. "Think of me? I don't really know. One time though, I, I got a pretty good idea. I was seventeen, and he told, he told my brother and I to meet him one afternoon. Out of the blue, he says–he says...." Duane stops and closes his eyes to a fist forming in his mind. His grip tightens on Clare's wrists. Then he hears, "Duane, my wrists."

He opens his eyes, and the fist vanishes. He looks at his fingers pressing into the flesh of Clare's wrists, feels his fingers loosen and then let go. He looks at her again.

"Your father?" she says as she takes Duane's hands in hers.

Holding her hands too, now, he says again, "My father?"

"The afternoon," says Clare softly. "You and your brother went to meet him."

Duane holds her hands tighter again, but careful now. He breathes deeply, but he has to tense his chest over a pain beginning in the middle of it.

"My father," he says. "Yes. We went to meet him, and he says," the pain increasing now, beginning to pound, "he says, 'Your mother and I are'"–the pounding hard in his temples too–"'are going to'–No! Wait! Not 'going to'," Duane feels the pounding of the pain suddenly begin to lessen, "not 'going to', were 'thinking about'–they were only thinking about splitting up, and he, he wanted to know who we would go with if they did!" Duane feels himself trembling, but the pain subsiding.

'Going to?' thinks Duane. 'Only thinking about?' He hears Clare say, "My God," and then more hears himself say than feels as though he says it, "It was weird. My brother looked really scared and said he would go with my father. My father said to me, 'And I suppose you will go with your mother?'"

"What did you say?"

Suddenly the pain pounds again even more violently. Duane closes his eyes and shudders, his mind screaming brilliant white as he tries to speak. Then, amid the screaming, he hears Clare gently say, "Duane?"

He opens his eyes and sees her candlelit face softly shadowed in the darkness, and all is quiet again. He lets out the breath he has held and in the calm of letting it out feels flow from him the words, "I said that I wouldn't go with either of them. I still don't know why. I couldn't decide who to go with."

"Are you cold?" Clare asks. "You're shaking."

"No, I'm alright," Duane replies as he becomes calmer.

They both look at the flame and sit silent in the dark. Duane begins to feel the need to tell more, but searching for something to say, he can find nothing. He feels he needs the words brought out of him, that he can not tell it on his own. He hangs his head and becomes sullen.

Clare asks carefully, "Did your parents split up?"

Duane lifts his head. "No," he says uneasily, "they never did. My father came to his senses, I guess. Or maybe my mother did. I don't know. I never heard anything more about it." Duane stops, searches, but finds nothing more to say. The need to speak he had felt, then for a moment when Clare spoke to him hoped he could fulfill, subsides and slowly disappears. He sighs, and his body goes slack as he releases Clare's hands. He hunches over, hands hanging under the table.

"What is your mother like?" Clare softly asks, and as she asks, Duane feels the need return.

He thinks a moment, remembers his mother's dark complexion, black hair, and black eyes, her soft voice, her delicacy, her fear, and her sadness, and then he straightens and raises his hands to the top of the table and joins them. He looks into the soft flame ~~of~~ the white candle. After a few moments, he says, "She's kind, but she's pretty helpless too. Like most women from her generation, she's too passive. Always going to church and doing what my father says. She comes from a really traditional Irish family." He stops, an urge to say something about himself passes, and he goes on. "They were one of the first settlers here. Most of them still live on farms around London." Despite himself, Duane chuckles as he says, "I have never figured out how a Catholic and a Trotskyite managed to get together." He thinks a moment, then says darkly, "She's got some problems of her own though." Again, he falls silent.

Clare begins to say something, but stops and then says, "You're Catholic, too?"

"Uh-huh. You, too?"

"Yes. Old French Catholics."

Duane smiles uncertainly and feels himself becoming uncomfortably easier. "I haven't gone to mass since I was fifteen though. I stopped going after a, a priest tried to seduce one of my buddies. My mother even had him after me to go--go back till my--my father threatened him." Duane wonders at his bad speech until he sees Clare sadden. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, I--church, I mean... I haven't gone either, not since I was seventeen. The last time was my mother's funeral." Clare turns to the candle and raises a hand to hide her eyes. "She died in childbirth. It was her eighth child." Clare stops talking and lowers her hand to her lips and stares into the candle. After a moment, she closes her

eyes and sighs. She opens them again and faces Duane. "I was the oldest and had to take care of the other children for two years." She turns to the candle, and with a hint of bitterness, says, "I missed a scholarship to university because of that. My father didn't help any either, he was always in the mine or at the bar." More calmly, she says, "It wasn't easy for him either, I guess. They were both pretty stuck in traditional values, too." She pauses. "Ever since I can remember, they wanted me to enter a convent. God, that was hard. The school principal was a liberal Jesuit, and he wanted me to go to university for history and philosophy."

"Is that why you came to London?" Duane asks.

Clare turns sharply from the candle to him. Duane is surprised by her sudden look of anger. But then it lessens, and she says, "No. When I was nineteen, my aunts were trying to marry me to a guy I hardly knew." She stops, and Duane sees her face harden. "One night on a date, he raped me. I moved here because I knew he wouldn't."

Duane can say nothing. He is devastated by a memory of his own, a memory that to even think of it in the presence of Clare makes him loathe himself. His beginning ease at telling her has changed. He had begun to think that he could tell her everything, but now, even though he still wants to, he knows he can not, that if he were to, she would despise him even more than he now suddenly despises himself.

He searches for something to say, a way to change the subject. Clare has turned to stare at the candle again. Finally, he says, "My--my mother was married once before." Clare turns to look at him with what he perceives to be relief. He continues, less nervous, but a hatred of himself building.

"I--I didn't find out until I was nineteen. She was... was going through menopause and had a, had a breakdown one day when I was home from college. We were alone,

and she told me. About him. Her first husband. He was Irish, from Ireland. They met at a wedding. He was a stable guy, a printer, and... really considerate of her, wanted to take her off the farm and give her a nice home in town. She wanted to leave the farm too, and her parents liked him too." 'Oh God!' thinks Duane. 'Let me talk!' "So they got married. About three months later their best man--he was from Toronto--he was killed in a car accident. They went to the funeral, and her husband drank a lot at the wake. They left the city sometime after dark and made it as far as Oakville." Duane stops, looks at the candle, then looks away from it as his hands squirm in each other. "He fell asleep and they--they went off the road into a tree." Duane stops again, more troubled still. He turns toward but then quickly away from Clare. "The doctor said he died instantly."

"Oh God," Clare says, "how terrible."

"She--she wasn't seriously injured, but she broke down and went to a retreat to recover. Three years later she met my father." Duane looks at Clare and begins to regret having come back to her place with her. He wonders how he had thought or even hoped he could tell her what she wanted to hear and what he believed he wanted to tell her. Yet, as much as he now wants to leave, he finds he can not. He has never known her kind of caring before, her gentleness, her desire to understand. He feels his body closing in on itself, yet he wants to reach out and touch her.

"Your name," she says, "'Duane'--that's Irish, isn't it?"

Duane looks from Clare to his hands now tightly joined on the table. He looks at the candle and sees the black spot. "Sort of. It was her Irish husband's name. When she had her breakdown, she told me that, too." He thinks a moment, then suddenly becomes aware of how right it is to be with Clare now. Watching the soft flame, he says, "I found its meaning in a dictionary I have. It's Celtic and means 'poem'."

He turns to look at Clare and sees she is looking at him. "'Poem'," she says softly. "You were made to tell."

'Oh God!' thinks Duane. 'Please let me! Please!' "Clare, there's something I need to tell you, more than... it's about...." 'Oh please! Why can't I say it!'

"Yes?"

"About--about the violence I grew up with and, and what it's done to me. When I was younger, I--I used to go to places where there was a lot of violence, I guess because I thought it was normal--it was everywhere--and one night at this dance I... I began to pretend"--'No! Oh God, no! That's not it!'--"that I was like the guys who got into fights all the time. I'd scrape my knuckles on walls and scratch the skin around my eyes until it bled to make it look I'd been in fights, but I never was, never. I--I just faked it." Duane closes his eyes in self-detest. 'You liar,' he thinks, 'that is not what you wanted to tell her.'

"Duane," Clare says softly, "you poor man."

He feels her hands on his face and then around into his hair. She caresses him gently, while he can only hate himself. "Duane," she says softly. "Duane, come inside."

'Oh God, no!' he thinks. 'Please! Please, no!'

Clare moves closer to him. He opens his eyes and in the quiet darkness sees her softly lit face near him, coming slowly closer. He closes his eyes as her lips gently touch his, and as she caresses him gently, all he can hear are the desparate pleas and crying of a girl of fifteen. 'Please!' she cries. 'Please don't! No! No!'

28

Duane puts onto his plate another toasted and buttered slice of the bread he earlier baked. He and Gil, a musician whose apartment he shares, have just finished supper and are starting dessert. As Duane turns from the kitchen counter to the table, Gil drops a scoop of French vanilla ice cream onto the slice of toast on his plate. When Duane is seated, Gil passes the ice cream to him and then reaches for the maple syrup, saying as he does so, "I didn't think you'd get me to try that first piece, let alone that I'd want a second."

Duane looks across the table at Gil's long, thick arms and watches his large, greying, brown-haired head tilt as he pours the syrup. Duane says, "A guy your size ought to be able to eat three helpings." He then decides not to tell Gil that what he earlier told him was a French-Canadian dessert is nothing of the sort.

Passing the maple syrup to Duane, Gil says, "You'll be sick of this by the time you get back from Quebec. What time did you say you're leaving tomorrow morning?"

"Seven," says Duane as he generously pours the syrup over the ice cream.

"Ugh--what a time to have to travel." Gil pauses, then says, "You're coming back the end of July, right?"

"Either then or the beginning of August." The pleasant anticipation Duane has of riding the train in the morning turns sour for a moment. He attributes the mood to nervousness over going to Quebec, dismisses it, then asks, "What time are you guys going to Toronto?"

Gil cuts a piece of his dessert and says, "We don't know yet. The meeting about the new record is at three, and we have to be set up to play at nine. There's supposed

to be a thunder storm tomorrow too." He almost puts his forkful of dessert into his mouth, but stops and adds, "These meetings are such a drag–nothing but agents and producers trying to impress each other with the latest trash their favourite critic scribbled. If you ever write a book, publish it yourself." He raises his fork to his mouth again and this time takes the piece of dessert, then closes his eyes and chews contentedly.

"Where are you going to play?" Duane asks.

Gil swallows and says, "At the Isabella Hotel. You've been there before, eh?"

"Yeah, a couple of times. I like it. Looks like it could get heavy at times though."

"Yeah, it's a tough neighbourhood."

They finish their dessert in silence, Gil eating his second helping quickly so he can make his band practice on time. When he is done, he says, "Thanks for doing the dishes. If the roast pan won't clean, leave it and I'll do it later." He then drinks the rest of his coffee.

Duane watches him drink, his trim, grey-brown beard raised with the tilt of his head. When Gil sets the empty cup down, Duane says, "Thanks for the duck. That stuffing was good." He pauses and sighs. "Too bad we haven't had time to do this more often."

"Life of the men of action," says Gil as he rises from his chair.

"I could use some of that–specially the horizontal kind. Lines on a page ain't no substitute for the real thing."

As Gil takes his dishes and utensils from the table to the sink, he says, "Yeah, you've been living like a monk since you went back to school. Going in the summer, too. Brutal." As Gil reaches the sink, the knife falls from his plate and clangs into the sink. "Ugh," he says, "sounds like Billy's sax with a bad reed."

Duane finishes his dessert and says, "One of the advantages of books is that they only whisper."

"Tell me about it," says Gil ruefully. "Fifteen years as a musician, and all I have to look forward to is premature deafness." He turns on the tap and rinses his hands, dries them, then turns and leans against the counter and looks at the floor.

Sensing that Gil is about to enter another of his increasingly frequent periods of despair, Duane says encouragingly, "I know a lot of students--hell, not just students--who'd rather be in a band that plays jazz festivals from Montreal to Atlanta than sitting in a library reading articles about essays about poems that nobody reads anymore anyway."

Looking from the floor to Duane, Gil says, "They must all be English students--nobody else could expect to make less than a musician."

Duane chuckles and then sighs as he thinks about his unmarketability. As Gil pushes himself from the counter and goes into the living-room of their apartment, Duane again recalls the paradox that it is mutual pessimism about their economic futures that has allowed him and Gil to derive more pleasure from their few luxuries than the wealthiest plutocrat could from his hedonism. Duane burps lightly and then looks contentedly over the blue table cloth at the empty bottle of Alsatian white wine and the remains of the roast duck and scalloped potatoes Gil made for their last meal together before Duane leaves London for the summer to learn French in Quebec City.

Remembering the gift he has for Gil, Duane rises from the table and goes into his bedroom. From his study table, he takes a small bundle of stringbound joints and walks to the living-room. He goes into it, sees Gil is sitting at his desk in the corner with his back to him, and goes to the multiple window that stretches across the front of their apartment at the top of a three-storey walk-up. He looks out at the trees and the

big, old houses in the increasing darkness of the cloudy May evening and wonders what he will see this time tomorrow. After sharing Gil's apartment for three good years, he does not especially welcome the change. But Quebec feels like it will be more than just a summer course, feels like it will be the chance he has been waiting for for a long time, the change and the distance and the time alone that will finally allow him to begin to seriously write.

Turning from the window, he looks across the living-room at Gil, who sits in lamplight at his small wooden desk in the corner going over sheets of music. Duane looks around the softly lit, blue-green room, at the wall to Gil's right covered by a brick and board bookcase and an album collection in a dozen milk cases, at the coffee table in the corner next to them with the turntable, power amplifier, and portable television on it, and at the large, lush schefflera between the coffee table and the end of the windows, which are hung with bamboo blinds. To the other side of Gil against the wall are a music stand and his black guitar amplifier and bass speaker cabinet, and on the floor beside them rest his big acoustic bass in its open black case and the smaller closed case of his electric. Above them on the wall hang a lute and an old acoustic guitar worn from years of playing. Framed and autographed posters of jazz festivals hang elsewhere. Against the wall opposite the windows is a blanket-covered chesterfield, and in a corner is an old, leather lounge chair with a floor lamp and an end table covered with magazines beside it and a worn hooked rug on the hardwood floor in front of it. Outside, a horn blows. A little annoyed, Duane looks out the window and sees in the street below the van that belongs to one of the guys in Gil's band. Duane smiles, a little sad, then walks across the room and says to Gil, "Going away present."

Gil turns around from his desk and looks up at Duane, who holds out the little bundle of joints.

"Ho, ho!" Gil cries. He takes the bundle and unties it, keeps one joint in his hand and puts the rest in a drawer in his desk. Fingering the joint in his hand, he says, "Haven't seen any of this for a while. I almost thought you'd quit."

"Quit!" exclaims Duane. "Never! I just cut back while I was studying. The half-ounce I bought is the first since New Year's though. It's Mexican. For Quebec."

"There's nothing but hash down there. They'll love the novelty." Gil shuffles some pages, then raises them and bangs their edges on the table to straighten them. Putting them into his leather briefcase, he says, "Gotta run," and closing the briefcase while rising from the desk, "don't forget that address I gave you for the hotel we're at during the Montreal festival." He goes to the door out and opens it as he drops his briefcase beside a closet. From the closet, he takes his grey-black tweed jacket and puts it on. Running his hands through his hair, he returns to pick up his electric bass. When he has it, he turns to Duane and stretches out his hand. As they shake, Gil says, "Well, good luck deciding which school you'll go to in September. I'd go to Montreal before I'd go to Windsor--but only for the women." He winks and says, "See y'," then goes to the door and says, "thanks for the joints." He picks up his briefcase and goes out, saying as he does, "Get the door, will y'?"

Duane closes the door and then goes to the window and looks down into the darkening, tree-lined street. After a moment, Gil comes into view below. He goes to the van and gets in. As the van pulls away, it honks twice. Duane waves as it disappears down the street under the trees.

After lingering a moment longer at the window, Duane turns, looks slowly around the living-room again, then goes into the kitchen and clears the table of dishes. He runs dishwater and puts in what dishes will fit and lets them soak a minute. As he waits in front of the sink, he looks out the window above it, through his reflection and

into the darkness beyond, and he begins to think about the three years of university he has just finished.

'Three straight years,' he thinks, 'without a summer off. I managed to get all the courses for the honours English though. That was really lucky, having the one's I needed offered in the summers, specially after blowing Eighteenth Century and Romantics too. Y'r life's blest, boy, stop foolin' y'rself. These plates ought to be ready now. Last Saturday at The Pace was pretty flat. That poetry reading would have gone a lot better without wheezy Professors Chrysler and wife's little dirty furnace contest. Old professors–don't know the street, too much time in the tower. High altitude. Oxygen starved. No fire. Cold brains. Him saying, "Our oil furnace is pretending to be ill"–sounded like a nursery school teacher–"and we have talked to it and talked to it until we have become blue in the face from more than the cold. We want you to help us think of what to say to make it behave again. The winner will be announced at the conclusion of the afternoon, and the prize is Noreen's latest chapbook!" Chrysler and his Noreen smiling at the responses–Jesus!–you'd think they'd forgot what they wanted. Can't even remember them now, except, "Out, damned soot." The guy looked pompous enough to say it too. Shakespeare. Derivative. No originality. Must be a scholar–can only dirty what an artist does. And Al telling me he won. I should have stuck around. The way they looked at each other when I said, "Get your act together or we go electric," him saying to her, "Oh no we don't," and she pleading, "Jules, please!" Should have won. Would have had I not got sick of all that simpering verse passing for poetry and left before the reading was over. Chrysler gave me the evil eye at school on Monday. What would I do with a chapbook by her anyway? Get it autographed and sell it when she's dead. That's the dishes. Greasy. Duck. Store-bought duck. Not like the Long Point duck Wickham used to shoot. Do that big knife now.

Long Point. Hunting and fish. Game. Theory. Literary Professor Marvin Cuda, world famous literary critic. That conference. He looked like a CIA operative in that Brooks Brothers and those smoked glasses. Predacious. Tenacious. Ungracious, fallacious, sedi-a-tious. I could have asked something more intelligent than, "Critics argue that your theory is too much into the head and too little into the heart—what do you say to that?" Him jumping, "What is this, grade school? Don't bother me with such pubescent interrogation." Vicious. Do these other knives now too. Got him back though, him talking about his "unproblematical, radical, and profound shifts in theoretical orientation." "You must have a pretty easy life," I said and he, "What do you mean?" and I, "If you'd ever suffered, you wouldn't so easily give up what you'd worked so hard to get." Didn't say anything after that. Avoided me the rest of the conference too. This grease is thick. Going to need more soap. Duck. Mallard. Forks and spoons now. Knives blackened from hash. Crow-black. Wonder if Ted Hughes has poems about ducks too? Bird calls. Professor Lapin, nature poet. French name. Rabbit. What's his book? Something-flight or Flight-something. Bit of a lame duck, he is. Calling me an intellectual when I showed him my poems. As though I couldn't do art. Satisfying in class later when he asked after Walker Percy's *Last Gentleman*, "Any questions?" and I ingenuous, "I'd like to know the answer to the question that closes the book," and he sarcastic, "That sounds like something you'd ask in high school," and I—fuck was I pissed off—"Well, if it's that simple, then, you ought to be able to answer it," and he not saying anything and looking like he wanted to wing a piece of chalk. Sons-of-bitches. Send 'em to the farm a while. Settle down, settle down—Jesus, Ah'm thu wid all dat. Faulkner's pantaloon black men say that. How can a white man write their lives? Only one life possible to write—the writer's. Metaphorical black. Slave to vision. Emancipated, emancipator. Critic Klans: metafictional,

phenomonological, Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, formalist, structuralist, deconstructionist, post-modern, post-structuralist, post-post-structuralist. All those posts. Do these coffee mugs and wine glasses. Nice stems on these glasses. Bit phallic. Ha! Professor Woodby and me and sensuous and sensual. These professors—what a laugh! Should've had him for Romantics first time around instead of that ironic prune Professor Ms Olds. Him and me in class comparing Wordsworth's and Byron's use of the senses and him saying to everyone, "I always get sensuous and sensual mixed up. One applies to the senses and the other to sexuality—anybody know which we want here?" and then to me, "Duane?" and me, "Yes sir. We want sensuous. You can tell the difference between the two by thinking of the l in sensual as a phallus." And he laughing longer than anybody else. He's a jazz musician too. Artist, that's why he laughed. Like minds. You're ready, man, you're ready! Goddamned right. Do that casserole dish. You've got a good wit, you just need the right people to bring it out. Look at Professor Foresthal. First year, he asks, "What's a mock epic?" and points to me and says, "You!" and I, "It's an epic that mocks," and he freaking out, then second year appealing the failed Pope essay arguing *The Dunciad* is a eulogy and him saying, "Clever, but sorry," then this year he reads my story "Goliath til the Ninth" in the student paper and says he's going to have to revise his book on the David character in literature. You've got it, man, you've got it! And Doc Ash! Get your real literature there. English course, and he says y' can't know the eighteenth century 'less y' know jest books, Grub Street, and French formal gardens. Do this roast pan and that's it. "Profound frivolity" he called literature—or was it "frivolous profundity"? Hell, what's it matter? In his office with that life-size statue of a dog shittin'. Too much! Boswell and Dr Johnson and the dog we were talkin' about. Then later in class he rolly-pollyin' around and writin' on the board and carryin' on about Boswell lost in decadent London

and suddenly askin', "Who knows the climax of the London journal?" and lookin' at me even before I shoot up my hand, and when he twirls around to the board and starts writin' to make a point, I say, "Boswell's discovery that he doesn't have the clap," and he hollers, "No!" still writin' on the board while the class busts up, and then I knowin' all the time sayin', "His meeting with Johnson," and he hollerin', "Yes!" and still writin' on the board makin' his point. Shit that was funny. Makes up for all the others. Ugh, this pan is grungey. More soap. All those essays. Should have known when I did that play for the politics course that I'd end up in English. Telling Richards, too, that I wanted to be a writer and him saying, "What do you want to write?" and I not knowing what to say, but the play's the thing that came out. And he said I ought to tape it for radio. Oh, Jesus! You've got it! Rinse this pan and that's that. Too much water, drain the sink. Got it? Hell, you got "Goliath til the Ninth" back for the third time—today, of all days. Goddamned magazines. Publish their editors and subscribers, and the rest can go fuck themselves. Easy with the pan, it'll chip. Maybe you should subscribe. Sure, and pay to publish. No different than a vanity press. Piss on that. What's publishing but ego masturbation anyway? People read too much as it is. There—dishes done. Wash all this crap down the drain, wipe the counter and the table, and have a farewell toke. No wine left, damn it. Maybe I'll go down to The—what's that, somebody knock at the door? Probably Melanie downstairs about the stairwell lights again. Goddamned bulbs last for two weeks and the next time you buy 'em they cost twice a much. Neat pop when thrown against something. She's knocking again hard. Going to break the door down before I get there. Maybe she wants more than light bulbs. Turned on.'

"Hi Mel—oh, evening ladies."

"Good evening, sir. Has the light of God been brought to this house?"

'Good God,' thinks Duane despite himself. "Yes, ladies, it has, in the form of Matthew chapter six, verses five to eight. I suggest you read them when your knuckles get sore. Have a nice night, now. Bye." Duane closes the door and thinks that if he got nothing else out of his class on the Bible as literature, he at least found out how to get rid of proselytizers.

He walks back into the kitchen, turns off the light, and goes to his room. Turning on his table lamp, he sits down at the wooden table and looks at the brown manila envelope lying in front of him. Inside of it is a copy of a short story he had three months ago sent to a fiction magazine in Toronto. He had also sent copies of it to two other magazines. They had been sent back too. Picking up the envelope and pulling out his pocket knife, he decides to read the story to see whether after not having looked at it for three months he can figure out what has caused it to be rejected. He cuts open the envelope and pulls out the pages of the story, looking briefly at the rejection slip and then laying it aside.

He reads aloud from the title page, "'Goliath til the Ninth'," and then, lower to the left, "'Duane Marcuse'." He likes the title for its catchy rhyme and for how it contains the two dominant motifs of the story, and for a moment he wonders, as he has before, what he might change his name to. He decides to read the story straight through so that he can get a fresh sense of its coherence and continuity, then think about what stands out as objectionable, 'If,' he thinks, 'anything does.'

Turning the title page face down onto the rejection slip on the table, Duane looks over the first page of the story and then begins to read.

GOLIATH TIL THE NINTH

"there was no sword in the hand of David." (1 Samuel 17:50)

FIRST

"Is he real?" I hear someone say as we look across the diamond at Wags and his teammates while they walk to their cars.

"I can't believe that guy."

"What'd you expect from a jock?"

"Yeah. Did you see the way he flexed his ears to intimidate Dave?"

I wince. "C'mon, let's get a beer."

We pick up the rest of our equipment and walk to my truck. Comments of dismay and exultation are mixed with reflections on the game. I look back at the diamond. The sun is setting, and the half of it still above the horizon has made a dome over the pitcher's mound. It is blood-red.

Jesus, my face could have looked like that.

That game.

SECOND

"C'mon, Davey-boy! That's the stuff!"

"Pitch 'er in here, Dave!"

"Pitcher's got a rubber arm!"

Shut up, you jerks. God, my arm is sore! One more inning? This must be the eighth.

I pitch.

"Strike one!"

"That's the stuff, Dave!"

I'm never going to pitch again! Ough, my arm!

I pitch.

"Strike two!"

"Yeah!" "Yeah!"

"Put 'er in for three, Dave!"

Ough–I can hardly hold this ball!

I pitch.

"Strike three! You're out!"

"Yeah!" "Yeah!" "Great stuff, Dave!" "Atta boy!" "Eight innings!"

Coach calls.

"Dave, come here. Everybody else too."

"Yes, Mr Rawlings?"

"You're throwing well. No hits in eight innings. How's the arm?"

"It's really sore."

"Well, hang tough. There's only one inning left. Now, the rest of you guys, try to get some hits to get us safe. One run doesn't guarantee us the game."

Batting order.

"Karl, Dave, and Randy!"

Karl at bat.

C'mon, Karl, knock it over the fence! Boy, I wish I could hit like you.

Karl hits.

"Wow!" "Run, Karl!" "Run!" "Peel it!" "A triple!" "Alright!"

I bat.

"Knock me in, Dave! C'mon, big guy!"

This guy throws mean. He hit Fred in the shoulder already. Ough--I can hardly swing this bat!

First pitch.

"Strike one!"

What! That was way high!

Second pitch.

Holy--!

"Hey! Umpire! Get that butcher outta there!" "Christ, he just about took Dave's head off!" "You prick!" "What a guy!" "You see that pitch? He went straight for Dave's head!"

Son-of-a-bitch! I'll get you, you bastard!

"Shake it off, Dave!" "Knock it down his throat!"

"Batter up!"

Third pitch.

I hit right for his face--shit! He caught it!

"Back to third, Karl!" "Back!"

Oh no!

"Batter's out! Runner's out too!"

Randy at bat.

"C'mon, Randy!" "Put it over their heads!" "Get us on base, Randy!" "Keep us alive!"

Randy hits.

No! Straight up! "Watch out, catcher!" "Beside you!" "Behind you!" He's got it.

"You're out! Three down!"

I go to the mound.

"Okay Dave, keep our lead!" "You're playing good, guy!" Keep it up!" "Just three, and the game's ours!"

I'm on the mound.

"Chuck 'er in here, Dave fella! Chuck 'er in!"

Ough, my arm! Don't rub it—it just hurts more!

I pitch.

"Ball one!"

"'s okay, Dave!" "He's scared of you!" "Put 'im down!"

I pitch.

"Ball two!"

"Hang tight, Dave!" "Keep 'er cool!"

I can't throw anymore—I just can't!

I pitch.

The batter hits.

Shit! "Back Jimmy!" "Move in!" "Mine!" "Get it to third!" "Third!"

Next batter.

"'s okay, Dave!" "'s alright!" "Just give us the game!"

"Batter up!"

I gotta go out! This guy's gonna hit and the next guy too--they're all going to!

"C'mon, Dave! Chuck 'er in here!"

I pitch.

Batter hits.

I knew it!

"Back Jimmy!" "Back!"

It's gone.

"Dave! C'mon out! Leon, go in and keep 'em at two."

THIRD

"Dave, I want you at third next inning--Bill's ankle's twisted. You're on double-deck. Talk him up, Karl."

"See, I told you you'd get a chance to play this year if you did more at practise. Fix your attitude, and everything else'll take care of itself. What's it matter where you play, long as you play? That bad game was years ago--get it out of your system. Look at Leon out there. He sat on the bench most of the time when he played with us--he didn't do dick-all! When he moved to Ingersoll, he quit being lazy, and now he's pitching."

"Batter!"

"Knock a big one, Boyd!" "Put 'er outta the park!"

"Dave's on deck!"

Why did Leon get interested when he went to Ingersoll? Probably because his girlfriend lives there. I wonder if he still remembers that party at Fred's when she ignored him and talked to me all night. God, we even talked about making love. Hmm, this bat feels good.

Leon's walked Boyd. Strange.

"Batter!"

"Hi Leon!" Scowly ass.

"Turn that ball inside out, Dave! C'mon fella!"

C'mon, give it to me where I want it.

Holy--! "YEOW!"

"Butcher!" "Maniac!" "Throw 'im out, ump!"

"You see that, Karl! He was going for his balls, the prick!"

"Yeah. Good thing Dave's got hiker's thighs."

"You okay, Dave?"

"Yeah yeah."

"Walk it off."

Look at that smug son-of-a-bitch. He threw that on purpose–it didn't even curve.

"Batter!"

"Steady, Dave–he'll throw to you now!" "You freaked him–he didn't think you'd be back!" "He's yours!"

Just try it again, Leon, and see what happens after the game.

Here it comes... looking good, no curve–ugh! What a connection!

"Look at that ball fly!" "Take your time, Dave–she's gone!"

Watch out for the fence, Ingerholer. You might as well stop running–I'm going to.

"Dave, here comes the waiter."

"Whose have you got, Karl?"

"Bill's."

"You guys got I-D?"

"Yeah, here."

"Okay."

"Bring me a Black Label, waiter. What do you want, Bill?"

"A Blue. Shit, Dave, you should've seen Leon gawk when you stopped running–as if putting it over the fence wasn't enough."

FOURTH

What a summer. Five years between high school and university won't be a problem, they said. I should've stayed at home. Then again, Karl is married. He doesn't even play ball anymore. Too tired growing her old man's tobacco. Too tired after his wife, too.... Jesus, I miss him. Least I still have baseball. Such as it is. I don't know about these co-ed class teams, specially when a woman's captain. Professor Angy and his feminism. That's philosophy for you. I wouldn't mind it if she paid at least as much attention to the game as she did to John's buttocks.

You're just spiteful because Bernadette didn't want you on her team.

Maybe. But she chose that wimp Jeffery ahead of me--I have a right to be. He doesn't even wear jeans! Me spiteful! She's the one who's spiteful! Thought she knew Plato well enough to argue he was a poet, just like all those romantic airheads do. No fascist was ever a poet, or ever will be.

That's pretty severe.

Well, it's true. Any politician who tries to make poetry what he wants it to be is.

Poetry is only propaganda of the soul, anyway.

Screw off!

FIFTH

I walked down the steps and into the extracurricular affairs office. Summer was coming, and I wanted to play ball again. Not knowing many people on campus, and those few I knew either uninterested or away from London for the summer, I couldn't get a team together so had to take a chance at finding an already organized team that wanted another player. The large-shouldered woman behind the counter looked up from her desk.

"Hi. What can I do for you?"

"Hi. What's your arrangement for summer baseball?"

"You can register a team if you have five guys and four girls—"

"I don't have a team. I'm alone."

"Oh. Well, in that case, you can come to the meeting this Thursday afternoon at four. All those who want to play but don't have a team will be there, so you can make up a team, if there are enough players. It's also a meeting for the captains of the teams already organized, so if there are too few players to make up a team, you can ask the captains if they'll let you play on one of theirs. You'd probably be a substitute player though."

This possibility had a disconcerting familiarity. I hoped there would be enough single players for a team.

"The meeting is in the office behind this one," she added.

I thanked her and left.

Thursday afternoon came, and I returned to the office.

"Hello again," I said.

She looked at me quizzically.

"I was here on Monday. About baseball?"

"Oh yes! There are too many faces around here."

I hadn't thought mine was that common.

"You can go back there now. The meeting will start as soon as I lock the door."

I went around the counter and past her desk into the back office. There were wire mesh cages in it full of footballs, soccerballs, basketballs, volleyballs, and baseballs. There were some field hockey sticks too. The smell of leather, sweat, and earth mixed for a fragrance that ought to have a flower named after it. A globular and smooth flower, plain, like a white rose before it opens, when it's still a bud. Be called Ball-something or Something-ball.

Fifteen people sat and stood in the room. They all looked at me appraisingly. I breathed in to enlarge my chest. Unfortunately, this pressed on my bowels, and a fist of air began to push its way down my colon. I sighed, and the fist drew back. Eyes were averted half-approvingly.

The woman from the desk out front came in after a few minutes. As she pulled up a chair for herself, I noticed her bare forearm flex muscular. She noticed that I noticed, and she proudly but discreetly gave the arm of the chair another light squeeze for further admiration and then sat down.

"My name's Sally. I'm the co-ordinator of summer baseball, so any questions you have, you ask me. Now, how many people here don't belong to a team?"

Eight of us put our hands up.

"Alright, you people hang on for a minute. I want to talk to the captains first."

While they talked, the eight of us looked at each other. We all knew that we were about to become members of the same team, yet we were kept from speaking to each

other by that uncertainty that mixes with shyness whenever one is about to meet another for the purpose of doing something together. We instead pondered what kind of baseball we were in for with each other as teammates. The assessment was punctuated with glances at the cages of balls.

Sally turned to us after she'd finished with the captains. She had us write down our names and phone numbers, and then she asked if any of us had played much baseball. The "much" threw my teammates off; none of them put up their hands. Later, I found out that they'd all played, but not enough for "much". I'd raised my hand, but not, once it was up, without the embarrassment of the oddball. Absurd, I thought, they're the ones who ought to feel that way. They did, of course, and it showed on their faces. They looked at me hopefully.

"David, right?" said Sally.

I sighed. "Yes."

"Looks like your the one to captain the team. Anybody else want to do it, or does everybody agree?"

They all agreed. Though I didn't especially want to be captain, they succeeded in looking less competent than I knew I was, so I resigned myself to captaining.

"You'll have to find another girl," said Sally. "You've only got three."

One of the three said to another, "Joan?" and they both nodded.

We introduced ourselves, then decided on a name–The Catch-Alls–and arranged for a practise on Sunday.

Though that practise didn't promise the type of ball I'd played as a teenager, the competition turned out to be no better than us, so we did alright. Actually, we did quite well. Since only three of us knew each other from before, we were all extra-considerate in the way that new friends are, and we did become friends. Where the other

teams had the bonds of department, office, or class, our bond was solely baseball. We got to know each other by the way we threw balls, not innuendo. None of us knew the limitations of the others, so we always tried to play better than our best, which made the errors that soon distinguished our team forgivable. The spirit they were committed in was one of zeal for team and teammates, and we all knew that. When we were not committing errors, we played our best, and we knew that, too. The standings at the end of the semi-finals confirmed what we knew: second place, behind the phys ed department's team. We played them in the final.

SIXTH

You watched them as they stood at their bench. They were muscular and bronzed by the sun. Compared to them, your players looked like children, with skin as pale as pages in a book.

The umpire called to flip the coin. As you walked out from your bench, their biggest player scoffed, "Let them have the choice–they look like they need all the help they can get!"

SEVENTH

The late August afternoon sun sparkled in the dust Judy kicked up as she rounded third for home.

"Yeah!" "Yeah!" "Go, Judy!" "Go!"

The fielder had a good arm and got the ball Dave had hit close to him into home—but too late for the catcher to tag Judy. She was dancing gleefully on the plate when the ball smacked into his glove. He turned and stepped toward her menacingly.

"Bat your wings harder, y'little fairy, or I'll blow you through the screen."

Judy looked at him uncomprehendingly for the moment it took him to open his mouth again, and then she ran for the Catch-Alls' bench faster than she'd run for home.

"Is he ever mean!" she cried as she bounced from Catch-All to Catch-All to press the flesh for her run.

They all looked over at the catcher. He stood behind the plate, kicking a foot into the ground, punching his gloved hand with his bare one, lips tight, nostrils flared, eyes bulging.

Al was about to say, He's built like a brick shithouse, when he remembered his talk with Dave about dead metaphor—they were both in literature—and said instead, "He's built like a Mack truck."

Judy wished he'd said brick shithouse, instead; she'd smelled him when he'd threatened her.

"Isn't it weird how his neck is thicker than his head," said Moira.

"Makes him look cone-shaped from the shoulders up," added Tony.

"Time!" shouted the catcher.

"What's wrong, Wags?" asked the pitcher.

"I want some water."

A substitute player on their bench pulled a Dixie cup from its package, picked up the yellow plastic bucket by his side, and walked over to Wags. Ignoring the cup, Wags took the bucket, lifted it above his head, and turned it upside down. The water poured over him and splashed onto the ground. He dropped the bucket into the muddied earth and kicked it away. The sub walked backward a few steps, then slowly turned around and returned to his bench. The rest of his team watched silently from their places in the field. First base tapped his trapper against his thigh.

Wags said, "Okay."

Joan walked up to the plate.

Who is this artless thug? thought Dave as he stood at second base. He looked over to third and started. Is Ray ill? How come he's shaking so much? "Hey, Ray, you okay?"

Stuttering, Ray replied, "Y-yes; I'm alright."

"Watch it when you go into home, eh."

Joan stood poised at the plate. Out of the corner of her eye, she watched Wags. He hunched over and looked more like a linebacker than a catcher.

"Put it inta her chest, Phil!" bellowed Wags. "Give 'er an extra one!"

Joan turned to look at Wags just in time to see the ball enter his glove. Wags rose laughing and brushed past her to return the ball to Phil.

Wags got back behind the plate. Joan stood ready, facing the pitcher. Suddenly she felt hot air on the top of her head. She turned and looked up. Wags stood hunched over her, leering.

"Ugh! Please get back!" she cried as she crouched.

"Play ball," Wags drooled affectedly, and then he dead-panned to the pitcher, "Struck out, Phil."

Phil raised the right corner of his mouth for a smile as he lowered his head and then turned to the first baseman. He was looking at his shoes as he tapped his thigh with his trapper.

"Let's go, pitcher!" cried the umpire, who stood behind Phil, who cringed.

Phil threw a lob that Joan hit just over the girl covering second. Dave decided to play it safe and stay at second. He watched Ray stumble from third and run for home. Second base had got the ball. She threw it to home. Wags caught it just as Ray got to the plate. In the flash of Wags' glove swinging down to tag Ray, Dave saw a fist follow it.

"HEY!" Dave cried.

The umpire also saw it. "You! Outta the game!" he cried as Wags tumbled onto Ray to try to cover up his punch.

Dave ran toward home plate. Wags' teammates moved in. The Catch-Alls cursed as they ran to help Ray. Wags pushed himself off of Ray, who lay on his side with his knees to his chest. The umpire got to the plate before Dave and stood between Wags and Ray. Wags slouched away.

"You son-of-a-bitch!" Dave shouted at Wags.

Wags wheeled about, but Dave had got to Ray by then and was kneeling down to him. Judy ran up a second after. Dave looked up at her as Ray gasped for air. There were tears in her eyes.

After Ray had got his breath back and the Catch-Alls were satisfied he was uninjured, they returned to the game and played out the final two innings. Though they led

by four runs, their anger at Wags put a zeal into their hitting and fielding that gave them another four runs and kept Wags' team from getting any at all. Wags sat on his team's bench and scoffed at the play he was no longer part of. He even mocked his own team, and their errors increased.

Near the end of the game, Dave made a flying leap from his short-stop stance to catch a ball on its way out of the infield. Feeling the humble glory of his teammates' praise, he trotted back to his position. When he crouched into his stance, he glanced at Wags. Wags was watching him. Wags raised a finger to his throat and dragged it, slowly, across it. Dave shuddered.

By the end of the game, Wags was quiet. A 12-4 loss in the final was not how he wanted to end his summer. Dave had ignored him while he mouthed off--he seemed fairly harmless, then--but as his taunts became less frequent, Dave became more apprehensive. Wags seemed to grow in size the quieter he got.

Running off the field to their bench at the end of the ninth, the Catch-Alls cheered and threw their gloves into the air. They hugged and patted and praised. From their huddle, Judy looked over at Wags' team and said fearfully, "They're lining up to shake our hands!"

Ray turned quickly and became pensive when he could not see the umpire. Dave saw his anxiety and moved closer to him. Joan turned her glove in her hands.

Al said, "Wags looks pretty subdued now."

"C'mon," said Dave, "they played fair, except for Wags."

Dave led them out of their huddle toward the other players. As he walked toward them, Phil, who was at the head of their line, tossed him a ball. Dave caught it, and Phil said, "Good game."

Hm, Dave thought, bit of contrition in that tone. He smiled, and as he got to Phil,

reached out and returned the ball, then shook his hand as he passed him.

Looking from hands to faces as he passed each player, saying, "Good game," and, "Maybe next year," and hearing, "Good hitting," and, "Good catching," Dave saw Wags at the end of the line. Wags' eyes narrowed when he saw that Dave saw him. As Dave let go of the hand of the player two up from Wags and took the next player's hand, he saw Wags curl and uncurl a fist. He looked up into Wags' face as he let go of the second-last player's hand. His arm became weak, his hand froze as though it held a ball. Then Wags' punching Ray and all his mindless taunts came back to him, and the blood of anger surged to strengthen his arm and free his hand. He kept Wags' eyes as he got to him, and sensing where Wags' hands was out-stretched, he slipped his hand under it. He passed Wags and breathed out relieved. Suddenly his back was rammed forward, his head whipped back.

"Dave!" cried Joan as he staggered to stay on his feet.

"Prick!" shouted Wags. "Why didn't y'shake my hand?"

Eyes out of focus and head spinning, Dave turned round to face Wags. Fingertips pulled into palms. Dave steadied himself and cleared his eyes. Wags was bent in threat.

"NO!" cried Joan. She sprang forward and stood between them, facing Wags. "YOU PIG!" she shrieked at him, and then she slapped him.

Wags' head didn't move. He stared at her. Then his head drew back and his eyes widened.

Joan stepped backward toward Dave. He grabbed her shoulders and moved her aside. He let go of her and faced Wags again, clenching his fists as he lowered his arms to waist level.

Wags' face flamed as his eyes bulged. His mouth opened, his jaw jutted forward,

he pulled his fist back to strike–"NO WAGS!" cried Phil, and he and two teammates leapt onto Wags and hauled him cursing to the ground.

Dave stood still, trembling. "You want m-me to shake your hand?" he stuttered forcefully. "You apologize to everybody, and I'll shake your hand."

Wags glowered at Dave. He said nothing. Dave turned and walked away.

EIGHTH

I turn from the setting sun and walk on with the others to my truck. We joke about the game and Wags, but our laughter is nervous and at moments forced. Wags and his teammates are just getting into their cars. As we near my pickup, they drive off.

"Which bar do you think they're going to?" asks Joan.

"Not ours, I hope," replies Moira.

"They probably won't go to the Grad Lounge," says Al. "Let's go there."

We agree, drop our equipment into my truck, and while those of us with bicycles pedal over, the rest clamber into the bed of my truck and we drive to the Graduate Students Lounge.

"There's a table on the patio," Judy calls above the din of the crowded bar as we enter. Joan turns to walk out and claim it while the rest of us get in line for drinks.

"You like a beer, Joan?" I ask as she goes.

"Yes please--a Blue."

Having got our drinks, we go out to the patio. Joan sits at a picnic table, watching the dusk. I set her beer down as the others seat themselves.

"I'll get the next one," she says as she looks up at me. She holds my sight for a moment, then looks from me to something beyond me. I turn to look. It is the moon, half-full.

"Harvest moon in two weeks," she says quietly.

At the other end of the table, Ray and Judy are talking animatedly. She is in

theology, he politics, and their talk always keeps us going once we wear out baseball. I go over to see how Ray is.

Judy sees me coming. "David, come here. Ray says he doesn't want to play next year."

"I did not say that," says Ray to me as I squat at the end of the table between them. "I said I would not play if that brute Wags did and if you were not captain."

"Well," Judy chides, "the brute is sure to fail his year, and David has said he is going to Toronto after his, so you may as well say you're not going to play."

Ray sighs.

"Anyway," chirps Judy, "we did wonderfully well this summer--cheers to us and our captain!"

The others are watching, and as Judy raises her bottle of beer, they raise theirs too. Judy, however, a bit zealous in her toast, knocks Ray's near-full bottle so forcefully that it begins to foam over. Ray screws up his nose as the foam rolls over his hand. Judy grasps the bottle with her free hand and tries to stop the suds with her thumb. Ray's attempt to maintain his grip at the same time as Judy tries to hold the bottle gives them both an uncertain grip, and as Judy's thumb slips off the top, ~~the~~ suds spray onto me.

Judy giggles, and Ray rolls his eyes. I rise, take a drink of my beer, and go to sit by Joan.

A few minutes later, while I talk with Al, he suddenly stiffens and stares at something above and behind me. I hunch my shoulders as Joan reaches over to hold my forearm. She turns to see what Al stares at. Her grip on my forearm loosens. I glance at her and see a faint smile. I slowly turn, relaxing my shoulders as I do so.

"Uh, hello," says Phil, "I, um--I'm glad you're here--I saw you sitting here, and I

just wanted to come over and say that Wags wanted me to say he's sorry."

As he looks at me, he raises his right hand and rubs his brow.

"He didn't pass a summer course he needed... and... he's been kind of upset."

"Upset!" says Judy indignantly.

Phil looks at Judy. He stops rubbing his brow and lets his arm drop. He looks back at me, then down at the ground.

"Tell him we accept his apology," says Joan.

Phil raises his head to look at her.

She nods.

He smiles.

Ray adds calmly, "Wish him good luck in school too."

With a glance around the table, Phil says, "Good night," and leaves us.

Knowing that some of my teammates want to leave early, and having promised I'd give those who needed it a ride home, I finish my beer. Ray and Judy had wanted a ride, and when they see that I've finished, they rise in anticipation. They've already finished.

As I rise to step over the bench of the picnic table, I say to Joan, "I'll have to get that beer some other time."

She looks up at me. I stop, one leg on either side of the bench. She looks at me, then looks back down at her near-empty bottle. She is holding it with both hands. Her left hand lets go of it. Slowly, she spreads her hand on the table and presses her fingertips down. Relaxing her fingers, she draws them together. She moves her forefinger apart, then traces on the wood a small circle.

"I... have some wine at home," she says. She raises her eyes to look at me.

Hesitantly, Judy says, "We're ready."

I look at Judy and nod. I turn back to Joan, and she looks at me searchingly. She raises her right hand to the neck of her sweater and strokes the collar between her forefinger and thumb.

A spark of the moon in her eyes catches me. "I... I'd like some wine."

She presses her hand to her sweater and smiles.

The other side of the table, I catch Al nudge Tony. I look directly at them, and they stand and extend their hands. The others stand too. Everybody begins shaking hands and hugging.

NINTH

David will see Wags twice more. The first time will be on a morning in the fall. Wags is sitting outside the entrance of the university community centre. Before David enters the building, he will see Wags, but Wags will not see him. As David enters the building, he will see Wags stand and walk away.

David will see Wags the second time on an evening in the spring at the corner of Richmond and Hyman. Wags is standing at the bus stop which David will pass on his way Joan's. Wags will not look as David will have expected him to; he wears a blue suit and a beige trench coat. A middle-aged woman talks with him. As David approaches them, Wags will see him. Wags shows no sign of recognition, but stops talking. For a moment, David will feel fear. Then he will look at the woman again. When he looks back at Wags, he will see that Wags no longer looks at him, but has resumed talking with the woman. David will walk close enough to hear them talk of children, and he will walk on feeling strangely happy.

Duane turns over the last page of the story and puts it onto the other pages on the table. Picking up the pages, he remembers getting the idea for the story after reading in a book review that baseball stories were popular among writers. He thought that because he had played a lot of ball he could easily write a story about it, and that because he was studying literature he could give it a suitable subtext, which he has been taught all literature has and must have.

Looking at the pages, he still feels as strongly about the story as when he wrote it over the Christmas break because he had nothing more than a few poems and his play to submit to schools with Master's programs in creative writing. He was ecstatic when he completed it. But of the eight schools he applied to, only Windsor has accepted him, and McGill, which does not even have a creative-writing program, but only the option, which it advises against, of doing a creative-writing thesis. He had applied to it anyway because of its high reputation, and especially because of its courses on Conrad, Orwell, Lawrence, and Hemingway, though he had little hope of acceptance.

But thinking about his story, Duane finds he has grown tired of it. The ideas that seemed important when he wrote it strike him as tedious now, and he wonders how he could have written such inconsequential nonsense. He shuffles the papers and knocks them straight on the table, then returns the story to the envelope and puts it into a cardboard file box.

Reaching for his jar of marijuana, he recalls his idea of trying to rewrite the Bible using the late-twentieth century anti-war, new-age post-romanticism he hears about so often, and how the non-violent, non-sexist resolution of the conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians represented in "Goliath til the Ninth" was to have been part of the fictive revision. Opening the jar of pot, he dismisses the idea as laughably absurd and himself as a cretinous iconoclast. But taking the Zig-Zags out of the jar, he still has to

wonder whether the editors of the magazines he sent the story to saw the representation, and he feels at the same time his anger at still reading jew, philistine, gyp, and welsh used perjoratively. He picks up the rejection slip and reads its comment of "complex and challenging narration, though unsuited for our purposes." 'Confused trash,' he says to himself acidly, 'is what they're really trying to say.'

He drops the slip back onto the table, then takes a paper from the pack of Zig-Zags. While he rolls a joint, he wonders whether the editors had sufficient imagination to figure out the impressionistic theory of the memory of trauma that he had worked out and structured the story around by using different narrative techniques. He wonders whether he was stoned when he composed the theory, concludes he probably was, but striking a match to light the joint, thinks pessimistically, 'Who cares?'

Holding the burning match, he looks again at the rejection slip on the table. He picks it up and puts the match to it, then blows out the match. The slip burning, he raises it and draws slowly on the joint to light it. He holds the burning slip until it curls black, then drops it into the brown, cut-glass ashtray on the table. He sees reflections of himself and the ember of the joint in the dark glass, and drawing deeply on the joint, he remembers post-game tokes and beers with Karl and Fred and the others when they all played ball together. 'I wonder what they'd think of this story,' he asks himself, 'whether they'd catch things like the puns, "Is he real?" and, "Is Ray ill?" representing the question of Israel and through that a questioning of the Bible, the book of the people of the book. The line, "Skin as pale as pages in a book," ought to clue them in,' he thinks with a touch of disdain as he sighs and exhales.

After a moment, he raises the joint to his lips again and draws deeply. 'I wonder if writers who use epigrams can expect their readers to go to the source and know it before they read the story. "There was no sword in the hand of David"—Goddamned

right, no more swords, violent sons-of-bitches. Only baseballs. Game theory of conflict. 'Bang, you're out.' Exhaling, Duane looks at the row of books in front of him at the back of his table along the wall. He sees the Oxford Scofield Bible and beside it Fowler's *Modern English Usage*.

Drawing deeply on the joint again, Duane thinks, 'I'd rather know Fowler better. I should play hardball again. Real baseball. Where's my glove? There, a left-hand throw to the bookcase. Hardball in black leather pocket. Caught. "Like a white rose before it opens." What a coincidence it was when that German Nazi resistance film "The White Rose" came out just after I'd written the story. 'tis God's guidance, boy-o, go wit' it f'r all y'r wort'!' Duane coughs and leans back in his chair.

Breathing deeply before he tokes again, he raises the joint and tokes hard as he remembers the big jock punching him in the back after the jock's team lost to his in the final. '"Who is this artless thug?" Strange how I've always remembered from the David and Goliath story David asking, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" Who are these sado-masochists who have institutionalized the mutilation of the innocents, that is the question. Religion. The infidel's fidelity to infidelity. Vatican manicures in the name of the elect and the no damned chance to be good, so be a bigot. Burn the big-G Goddamned lot of them–all heretics from nature.' Duane drops his head back and blows his smoke to the ceiling.

Feeling the joint getting hot between his finger and thumb, he lowers his head and tokes one last time, then drops the roach into the glass ashtray. 'That passage that says the souls of David and Jonathan were knit together–I wonder if they were lovers. The sweater passage in 'Goliath til the Ninth' sounds a bit salacious for Joan. Clare did things like that. Maybe if you don't know the Bible story it works better. Would've liked a lover like Joan,' Duane thinks as he exhales and looks down into the ashtray at

the roach dying on the black curl of the rejection slip.

He looks from the ashtray to the cigarette burns and faint stains in rings and spots on the thick plywood top of the table he bought from Wickham three years ago when Wickham decided to go back to Florida after the death of his father. As he draws his hand over the surface, he thinks, 'Where's that book Wickham gave me?' and he turns to his left to his bookcase to search for it. It is a collection of stories about the part of Florida Wickham came from.

'Wickham said he'd brought the book with him when he left Florida so that he could remember where he was from, but that since he was going home he didn't need it anymore. He said he wanted me to have it because he thought I was going to be a long way from home too, and since there were no books about where I came from, maybe having this book would help me remember at least one person from there, even if he was not really from there.'

Duane leans further back in his chair and spots the book and thinks to read from it, but his anticipation about going to Quebec for the summer and then either Windsor or Montreal after and then to Toronto after that makes his mind drift away. As his tilted chair falls backward, Duane fails to catch hold of the table.

Still seated in the chair, Duane lies on the floor and is perversely glad of the pain in his back because it lessens that in his head. He rests there looking at the ceiling, waiting for the hurt to go away. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees the two old, leather suitcases standing packed by the closet door. To ignore the pain, he thinks of the last time he travelled. It was to Ireland for three weeks the summer after his politics course. He went to Ireland hoping to discover his mother's family and find inspiration for himself after reading Joyce and Yeats, but he found nothing except that, after too much Guinness and whiskey and too many arguments about politics and religion,

he wished he was with Clare again and at Long Point. He had hoped to go to Stratford and Poet's Corner too, but he found that after two weeks he was short of money. He cursed himself for the obstinacy of his continued refusal to ask for or accept money from his parents and stayed in a Shannon Valley bed and breadfast for the last week.

The morning before his evening flight from Shannon Airport home, he took one last walk along the tree-lined cliffs over the soft rolling green of the misty river valley. While walking, he encountered an older woman, white-haired and red-cheeked, herself walking the quiet ridge. Duane did not particularly want to talk to anyone, but she stopped, and he felt obliged to stop as well. Yet, she said nothing, only looked out over the valley as though she were in Eden. Finally, she breathed deeply and said, "Lovely, isn't it?" Duane was looking out too, and even though he was thinking of the marsh and dunes of Long Point, he said, "Yes, it is." And then she said, over the low thunder of a jet in the distance, "Perhaps some day you will write of it before it is all gone." She then smiled sadly and turned and went back through the trees the way she had come. When he got back home to London, Clare told him she had decided to move to Toronto. He got a job draughting in a surveyor's office and did not get out of London for the rest of the summer. He wrote nothing, not even a letter to Clare. She had written him three times, then stopped.

Duane stiffly turns his head to look on the bottom shelf of his bookcase for the slender book of Clare's poems published the fall she moved to Toronto. Looking at the dark green spine and the white letters, he recalls that after she had left for Toronto, he decided to go to university to study literature. He began classes in September, but after the politics course he had taken, he found the study of literature tedious and boring. After three weeks, he decided to change to politics courses, but when he compared the texts for the politics courses to the stories in the Amnesty

International journals he was by then reading regularly, he found them even worse than the theory and criticism he had been expected to read in literature. He decided that he could do more good by writing letters for prisoners of conscience than writing essays about dead theorists, so he quit the university.

Restless and tired of London, he went out to Vancouver Island to look for work in the area that he had seen when he had visited Gwen. Just before he left, Clare's book arrived. There were some poems in it that he could tell were about them. On Vancouver Island, he found a job surveying for a timber company. He would sometimes watch the big trees fall, and watching them, he would think of those poems. He began to write poems again himself, but after reading the notebook he had filled with them, he was vexed to find that all of them were about fallen trees and barren landscapes. He began to resent the cutting of the trees, so quit his job in the spring and moved to Vancouver. There, he rented a room in a cheap hotel and found a job washing dishes, and he did not write any more poems. He only sat in his room and read. Most often, he would read Clare's poems.

After three weeks of rain already into the summer, he began to miss the heat and sand of Long Point, so decided to return to London. Once back, he rented a car and early in the morning drove to Long Point. Carrying only a blanket, a knife, matches, some hash, a bottle of red wine, and Clare's book of poems, he walked as far as he could before dusk, then stopped. Alone on the beach, he gathered wood and made a fire. Through the night, sitting by the fire with his blanket wrapped around him, he drank his wine, smoked his hash, and read Clare's poems. As the cloudy dawn came, he could no longer see to read, and he did not much care whether he ever could again. He went to the water's edge, and in the beginning rain, as he looked out over the grey waves, he wept as he fought the urge to throw Clare's book into the fire.

As Duane looks up from Clare's book to all the others in his bookcase, he still can not say whether it was because of love or because of spite for her that he decided that he would do a degree in English literature and then a graduate creative-writing program so that he could write a book of his own and send it to her. Now, suddenly weary, he thinks only of getting the French credit he needs to complete his honours degree and then going to Toronto to get a job editing.

Duane edges sorely from his chair to the floor. He drags himself up onto his bed, then pulls off his clothes. Rising stiffly from the bed, he shoves the chair out of the way, hobbles to his table, and turns off the lamp. From the table, he stumbles in the darkness onto the bed, then crawls beneath the covers hurt and wasted.

30

In Diane's basement apartment, in the bedroom and at the oaken desk, Duane looks up from the page he has been writing and rewriting to the page of the month of Août torn from a Banque Royale calender and tacked on the wall in front of him. Through the squares of the days up to the twenty-seventh, there are red X's. It is now the night of the twenty-seventh, the night of the dernier quartier. Duane looks at his watch for the time; a quarter after two. He picks up a red pencil crayon and draws an X through the square of the twenty-seventh.

The story Duane has tried to write over the month of August has not turned out as he has thought or hoped it would. When he has sat down to write, he has drifted soon after beginning, and when he has caught himself drifting, he has become upset and then has lost more time to anger. But when he has started to write again, he has again soon drifted. Because of this, he has written sporadically, and, because he has tried to keep the schedule he has set himself, he has become too tired after he has spent at the desk too much time too late into the night. Also, because he has become nervous over finding a job in Toronto, he has disregarded his commitment to spend all his time on the story and has instead interrupted his writing to search daily in the Toronto newspapers and prepare cover letters to send with curriculum vitae. He told himself he would make up the lost time at night. He has had no offers of a job.

Duane reaches for the near-empty glass of red wine on the desk, but taking hold of it, he sees purple, circular stains from previous glasses and bottles on the oaken surface of the desk. He puts the glass down again. Looking back at the page in front of him, he sees three-quarters of it lined through. He looks at the previous page and sees

the same. Most of the pages from the previous nights and weeks also look the same. What he has written in the day, he has tried to rewrite by night and by the end of it has produced from fourteen or sixteen pages only three or four he has thought worth keeping. In the mornings, he has doubted the worth of those pages. To give himself more time while trying to write his story, he has drank coffee to keep awake, has eaten fast food when he has eaten at all, and has gone for days without a shower. He has gone back to drinking wine and smoking hash the way he used to before he was in school. His birthday passed without celebration. He can count on one hand the number of times he has for more than one hour seen the sun.

Duane picks up the sheet of paper from the oaken desk and places it on the pile of pages resting at the corner of the desk. The pile is not even half as thick as he hoped it would be. What he has written has not been the art he has tried to write, nor even the moral philosophy he has wanted to turn into art. Many of the memories he planned to use have become distorted by what he has wanted those memories to be. Most of the ideas he tried to use have become lost in the unbelievable action that was to have developed them. All of what he had imagined as useful for the story, he has rejected as false to the reality of it. Of all he has written, there is nothing he can respect.

Pushing himself away from the desk, he rises from the chair and goes out of the bedroom and into the darkness of the kitchen. From the waste paper pile he has kept despite knowing the city does not recycle paper, he takes a brown grocery bag and returns to the bedroom. At the desk, he picks up the pile of paper and drops it into the bag, then folds over the top. Leaving the bag on the desk, he goes over to the corner of the room to the three boxes that contain his books. He lifts the top two boxes off the bottom box and sets them aside. He unties the cord around the bottom box,

opens it, and from it removes a pine cigar box. From the cigar box, he takes a thin, black lighter. He flicks it once, and the flame leaps high.

At a chair by the door outside, he sits and pulls on his boots. He rises and takes his worn, black leather jacket off the back of the chair. He puts the jacket on, then goes back into the room for the bag. He turns out the lamp on the desk and in the darkness with the bag goes to the door.

Outside in the pale night, he turns down the dim street to the side entrance of the university. Walking into the campus, he sees the patinaed cupola of the Arts Building. The vague, orange light of the city gives it a sickly hue. He has had his graduate English classes in the building for the past year. This is the last time he will see it.

Walking by the building, he looks at the dark windows of the professors' offices and the seminar rooms where he sat and listened and sometimes talked and, as the year progressed, became increasingly uncertain of exactly what was expected of him and of how to give it. But this did not bother him much, he was a creative writer, not an academic. With each report and seminar and essay, his critical ability was judged unsatisfactory and his writing increasingly faulted. But this did not concern him much either, he did not intend to write as a critic, but as an artist. His professors and classmates, none of them artists, he ignored, and invitations to parties, lectures, and readings, he sneered at, then declined and instead continued to read book after book to enhance his own judgment and vision. Yet, despite believing that he was coming closer and closer to a true artistic consciousness, he grew depressed. But this, even when he began to avoid people and then stopped going to bars, he viewed as only a stage in the development. When the depression persisted and then worsened, he only viewed it as the necessary but temporary suffering of the repressed artist and looked forward to beginning his story. Until then, the only part of the day he looked forward to was the

walk along Sherbrooke Street, between his room on St-Marc and the university, when he could escape the traffic and go into the art galleries to look at the pictures.

Duane walks out of the campus and turns up toward the mountain behind it. From the faint, orange light which tints the street, the parked cars, and the buildings, the mountain rises, massive and black, into the clear night sky. Walking, Duane goes from one street to another until he crosses the last and starts up the mountain, a black figure with a bag, walking slowly, but without hesitation. He walks up to the gravel road in the trees and the darkness, away from the orange tint of the streets. He walks along the winding road, smelling the sweet, night air now nearly void of metallic taint. He walks, hearing the crickets above the lessening mechanical hum of the city below. From the gravel road, he walks slowly in the darkness up the long staircase that goes up the mountain, never stopping or turning to look down at the city. At the top, he turns, not toward the chalet and the observation point, but away from them and goes instead to the gravel path and up further among the trees in the quiet and the dark.

At the shattered oak, he turns right off of the gravel path onto a dirt path wide enough for one person only. Holding the bag behind himself, he walks slowly between bushes and trees along the path in the darkness, walks careful and slow so that even when his foot does strike a root or a stone, he does not trip. He walks, and then he enters a clearing on a cliff that faces east. There is, he has seen before, on the edge of the cliff a circle of stones for a fire. He goes to them. There, he drops the bag into the circle and then turns in the darkness to look out over the dotted rows of the pale orange streetlights far below. He looks beyond them to the river and for a while follows, below the crescent moon, the faint lights of a ship moving away, downriver toward Quebec City and the sea.

Hélène wanted to live by the sea. Duane had met her when he went to Quebec

City to learn French the previous summer. She was a member of an artist's co-op his French teacher belonged to. They met at a party the teacher had the night Duane arrived. She was a painter, painted portraits in the street, but wanted to live by the sea and paint the light she saw there on the water and in the air, the light from the sun, from the moon, and from the stars. By the end of two weeks, they were lovers. Duane moved out of his room in a residence at the university to live with Hélène in her sky-lit attic apartment in the old city. They taught each other their languages as they shopped for food, drank wine in ivy-walled courtyard cafés, and late at night, her black curls entwined in his, made love wrapped in a blanket under the trees on the Plains of Abraham.

Duane did not leave Hélène when his French course concluded at the end of July. He had told her the night of the first party that he would probably go to Windsor, but as the summer progressed, he became less certain he wanted to. First he said he would go to Montreal instead, and then he said he would stay in Quebec City and find a job teaching English, said that he had studied enough literature to know how to write. But as the end of August approached, and he had not yet found a job and had begun but then scrapped three stories, he told Hélène that he was less certain of his ability than he wanted to believe and that he must go to Windsor. Hélène begged him to stay, said she could support them both while he continued to look for work and write. But he was adamant. The night he left, she was enraged and tearful. She told him never to return. He knew she meant it.

Duane hears a siren. He looks down at the orange-tinted city and sees in the darkness a flashing red light going up Avenue du Parc. It was while he has been in Montreal that Karl died. On his way down to Windsor from Quebec City, Duane had stopped to see him. After he told Karl about Hélène, Karl said that he was a fool to

have left her. Duane became angry at Karl for not recognizing his commitment to becoming a writer and criticized Karl for his small-town narrow-mindedness. Karl's wife became upset at Duane, and Karl told him to leave.

In Windsor the next day, feeling the anger, yet also the shame, of what had happened with Karl, Duane listened to the secretary of his department at the university repeatedly call him "kid", and even though he knew she meant it affectionately, when he remembered three days before in London telling a surveyor he had worked for that he was going to Windsor to study writing and the surveyor saying, "Grow up, Duane," he decided that he was beyond a creative-writing program and that he would go instead to Montreal, to McGill, where he could write a creative-writing thesis but not have to do any writing classes, where anybody who was there would be understood to know more than others, and where the prestige of being there would prevent anyone from ever again calling him kid. Just after Duane arrived in Montreal, Karl was told he had cancer. In two months, he was dead. Pete phoned to tell Duane on the day of the funeral. It was the first Duane had heard of it.

Duane follows the flashing red light until it disappears. He reaches into his pants pocket and pulls out the thin, black lighter. When he turns around to go to the bag in the circle of stones, he sees the illuminated cross further over on the mountain. After looking at it a moment, he raises between himself and the cross the hand with the lighter. He flicks it, and with the high flame, he makes the sign of the cross against the illumination.

With the lighter still aflame, he goes to the bag and touches the flame to the four edges. He puts out the lighter and returns it to his pocket as he watches the flames spread from the edges. Soon the whole bag is ablaze, and then the pages inside it catch and crackle, and as they burn, they curl over in the flames, one page after

another. In the burning and curling and finally the disintegration to ashes of the pages, Duane sees the demolition of the town hall and library he knew when younger, destroyed, his father said, to build bigger and better.

The last of the flames die out. It is dark again. Duane stirs the ashes with his foot. No embers remain. He looks at the ashes and circle of stones a long while, thinking nothing, then turns his head and glances one last time over the city to the east before he starts back down the mountain.

Back in Diane's apartment, he returns to his boxes what he has taken out to use for his month there. The pile of papers, he ties into a bundle and takes outside to the garbage pail. He returns to the room and goes to bed.

Asleep, he dreams of the black Porsche Turbo he has seen parked in front of a bar on Crescent Street, dreams of driving the Porsche fast with the music loud and a joint between his lips, but he does not dream about the ragged, muttering old man who scavenges in the garbage in the alley behind Crescent Street he has also seen.

In the morning, he showers and dresses in his suit. He then calls a taxi, loads his boxes, suitcases, and typewriter, and goes to the train station. When he arrives in Toronto, he rents a room above a store downtown on Bloor Street.

Within three weeks, he has a job as an editorial assistant with a trade journal for the pulp and paper industry.

In December, on a dismal late afternoon, Duane returns to his room tired from work. Before now, he has usually gone to bars to drink and look for women. He has stopped going though, because the women he has met become depressed by what they call his cynicism. They have sometimes asked him kiddingly if it is because he has

AIDS. Sometimes, he has said he does.

He enters his room and sees a letter on the floor. He picks it up and sees that it is from his department at McGill. He sits wearily at a small, arborite table and slowly tears open the envelope. The letter requests a fee payment and a draft of his creative-writing thesis story and its critical introduction, or failing that, a letter of withdrawal from the program.

Duane re-reads the letter, then drops it onto the table. He reaches to the left corner of the table and takes from a pine cigar box his hash and hash pipe. He looks to the right corner at the half-empty bottle of red wine and the book that leans against it. It is the book of stories Wickham gave him. He takes hold of the bottle and slowly raises it. It clears the book, and he watches the book fall over onto the table. He fills and lights the pipe, then uncorks the wine and drinks from the bottle. Smoking and drinking, he stares blankly at the book.

The bottle empty and the pipe dead, he picks up the red pencil crayon on the table. It is dull. He pulls out his pocketknife, opens it, and carefully sharpens the red pencil to a hard point. He lays the pencil down, then cleans the knife and lays it aside. He picks up the pencil again, and holding the letter on the table in front of him, he slowly draws, from corner to corner, a large, red X.

The X drawn, he drops the pencil crayon onto the table and pulls out his typewriter. He turns the letter over to the blank side, puts it into the typewriter, and types his reply. Finished, he removes the letter and addresses an envelope by hand. He puts his typewriter back into its case and takes it with him as he goes out.

In the damp rush hour, he bumps and shoves his way down Bloor Street with the letter and the typewriter. He drops the letter into a mailbox at the Spadina subway entrance, then pushes his way through people down into the subway. He rides a

crowded car down to Union, then walks through traffic down to the ferries. On the Centre Island ferry, he stands alone outside against the railing and stares down at the dull water as the ferry crosses in the heavy mist of the darkening harbour. Off the ferry, he slowly walks with the typewriter across the island's empty park. Seagulls scraw as wet squirrels go to him for food. He walks on, unaware of them. When he reaches the other side of the island, he goes to the rocks at the edge of the lake. There, alone in a cold wind and drizzle, he looks out over the rough water to the darkness rising in the east. He begins to tremble, then to weep. His tears fall as he sobs piteously. Suddenly he shudders violently, then cries out wildly, "Sons-of-bitches!" and hurls the typewriter into the black waves.

In January, after the chairman of the department has returned from his holidays, his frowning secretary gives him Duane's letter to read.

21 decembre 1986
To: The Chairman
From: Marcuse, Duane
Re: request for MA intent statement

INCIDENT IN A MONTREAL STORE

Hungover Saturday morning after a 3:00 a.m. St-Denis Friday night, I go into a store on St-Laurent to buy a package of envelopes. My French is so poor I can only gesture at the larger of the two remaining packages behind the counter. The girl behind the counter gives me the wrong package, not seeming to care when I make tentative objections--she evidently has also had a rough night--and when I remonstrate at her indifference, she assumes that I want the smaller--and last--package of envelopes too. She bags both. I do not care to even attempt to argue with her now; I could not if I wanted to. Besides, a rather manic customer--small, wiry, five-day bearded, beer-breathed, and anxious--waits for service. I give the girl what I think she says I owe, which is close enough, for she gives me some nickles and pennies for change. As I pocket the coins, the manic wiry springs to the counter and asks for what I think are envelopes. The girl says something to him, gesturing at me simultaneously. The manic wiry turns to me and stares with blood-shot, out-of-focus eyes. He looks me up and down sort of sideways, then turns to the girl and stammers, "C'est anglais?"

"Oui," she replies.

He turns to me again. Suddenly his brow wrinkles and his mouth turns down as he groans. He looks at me intently, eyes no longer out of focus. I watch him raise his left hand and see his fingers begin to form what I think will be a fist. But then, hand raised, he gestures as though writing. Finished, he raises his imaginary letter, lays it on his heart, and sighs. He then folds his imaginary love letter, points politely to my bag of envelopes, and smiles charmingly. I open my bag of envelopes and pull out one envelope. He raises two fingers. I give him two envelopes. He gives me two dollar bills and then leaves. The bag of envelopes had cost me $1.76. The girl behind the counter rolls her eyes and sighs.

This is not a true story.

Yours academically,
#80640

The chairman slowly smiles to himself. He turns the page over and looks at the red X. He studies the even pressure of application and the straightness of line. After a few moments, he sighs and looks out a window, then gives the letter back to the secretary and says distantly, "Close the file."

A Critical Introduction to *A Portrait of the Young Man as a Failed Artist*

> There is, I think, a fundamental difference between the creative and the critical minds. The good critic, particularly if he is a teacher-critic, is less interested in expressing himself than in understanding someone else, and the acts of teaching and explaining a work of literature imply a certain degree of social responsibility. The archetypal artist, on the other hand, is an anarchist: he seeks not only to express his individuality, but also to free himself from the obligations which would entrap him. (Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce*, 307)

The story *A Portrait of the Young Man as a Failed Artist* is a *Künstlerroman*. As the story's title suggests, irony guides its telling. In this critical introduction to the story (hereafter referred to as *Failed Artist*), I will show how the story follows the genre of the *Künstlerroman* and overlaps with the picaresque, how tragedy and irony inform the story, how the formal genre of the novella governs structure, and, finally, comment on how contemporary critical and moral stances have influenced it and perhaps made it

inevitable. With respect to my epigraph from Beebe, I quote him to acknowledge my indebtness to his study of the *Künstlerroman*, and also to note his distinction between the "social responsibility" of the "teacher-critic" and the "individuality" of the "archetypal artist". They are qualities that I have tried to unite and to write into *Failed Artist*. The distinction, nonetheless, is not--and should not be--forgotten.

Prior to Beebe, no major work on the *Künstlerroman* exists. It is subsumed, however, in the standard study of the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, or apprentice-novel, Susan Howe's *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen*, (1930). The primary concern in the genre is the spiritual, intellectual, and creative growth of the protagonist. Among the best known examples are Voltaire's *Candide*, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Hesse's *Siddhartha*. The *Bildungsroman's* protagonist, says Howe, is heir to several types and traditions in literature.

> His kinship with the recalcitrant hero of the moral allegory makes it necessary for him to meet certain abstract vices and virtues, often but thinly disguised as human beings.... The picaresque hero... is another near relative who lends his taste for carefree, rambling adventure of a realistic and often amorous sort--a tendency to go on long journeys and see the world, meeting... characters... who represent all sides of the social structure of the time. The "universal man" of the Renaissance, bent on developing all his gifts to the utmost and welding them into an artistic whole, is another part of our hero's complicated family tree, and over all this variegated group of apprentice heroes there falls, though ever so palely, the shadow of a still more remote ancestor, Parsifal, "the brave man slowly wise" through experience, learning painfully from the blows the world deals him, but a dedicated spirit destined from the beginning to reach the goal of his

> quest.... [T]hese heroes... are more sensitive and gifted than the average young man; their perceptions are sharper, their failures more heart-breaking, their struggles for adjustment to the world more desparate than those of their fellows, but their ultimate victory is assured. (5-6)

Before we look at the protagonist of *Failed Artist*, Duane Marcuse, Beebe's specific observation on the hero of the *Künstlerroman*, or as he prefers to call it, the "artist-novel", must be added to Howe's more general definition.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Rousseau's *Confessions*, represent for Beebe the beginning of the artist-novel genre. He sees in them an emphasis on life outside the self. But after them, the "confessional novels", such as "Senancour's *Obermann*, Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*, Lamartine's *Raphael*, Turgenev's *Diary of a Superfluous Man*, and Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*", changed the emphasis in fiction "from outside the self to analysis of the hero's psychology [and] prepared the way for the artist-novel proper" (50). For Beebe, the new emphasis represents the dominent motif of the *Künstlerroman*, the interiorization of conflict:

> Narrative development in the typical artist-novel requires that the hero test and reject the claims of love and life, of God, home, and country, until nothing is left but his true self and his consecration as artist. Quest for self is the dominant theme of the artist-novel, and because the self is almost always in conflict with society, a closely related theme is the opposition of art to life. The artist hero is usually therefore the artist-in-exile. (66)

The interior conflict of the protagonist of the *Künstlerroman*, Beebe goes on to say, works itself through the "familiar features of the artist-hero tradition: dissatisfaction with the domestic environment, estrangement from a philistine father, a conviction that art is a vocation superior to time and place, the discovery that you can't go home

again [cf. Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*], and withdrawal to the Happy Valley [cf. Johnson's *Rasselas*]" (22). Duane is of the apprenticeship and artist-hero traditions Howe and Beebe describe. With regard to Howe, Duane's story is realistic; he has, in Lucille, Gwen, Winifred, Clare, and Hélène, his amours; and he meets characters—the women preceding, and also Wickham, the Quebeckers, his grandfather, Cecil, Calvin, the balding businessman, Lawrence, Matt, and Gil—who represent a well-defined slice-of-life. Duane's quest for self and his conflict with society are seen in his struggle to tell about his maladaptation to society and the danger of that maladaptation. Also, he has, at home and elsewhere, an unsatisfactory environment, he is estranged from an insensitive father, and, until his failure, he believes in the superior vocation of art. His life, then, with its alienation, makes him an exile. But he never becomes the artist he wants to be. The tragedy of Duane's failure is the basis of my ironic treatment of the *Künstlerroman*. A look at that tragic irony now follows.

Failed Artist is a tragedy about the inability of a potential artist, Duane Marcuse, to realize his potentiality because of frustrations he suffers as he grows up in a time and place that neglects art. Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, defines two types of tragedy, the high mimetic and the low mimetic, and it is to the low mimetic, which Frye also calls "pathos", that *Failed Artist* belongs. "Pathos," says Frye, "presents its hero as isolated by a weakness..., is increased by the inarticulateness of the victim" and "the catastrophe of defective intelligence", in which the "root idea" "is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong" (38-39). Duane is trying to belong not only to society as a whole, but to the society of writers as well. But his defective intelligence, a consequence of his troubled life, makes his weakness the inarticulateness that always has him trying to tell but seldom succeeding: His growth, then, as the protagonist of a *Künstlerroman*, is ironic,

is really degeneration.

What Frye says about irony together with tragedy also pertains to the story of Duane's failure: "Irony with little satire is the non-heroic residue of tragedy, centering on a theme of puzzled defeat" (224). Satirical irony is by intent rare in *Failed Artist*, as the satire would evoke a laughter in conflict with the tragedy. Duane's failure, though tragic, is not on the scale of Hamlet's; Duane is not a hero, his puzzled defeat is more like that of Willy Loman's. The comment about irony by Wayne C. Booth in his *Rhetoric of Irony* represents well the intent of the irony that informs *Failed Artist*: "Since irony is essentially 'subtractive,' it always discounts something, and once it is turned into a spirit or concept and released upon the world, it becomes a total irony that must discount itself, leaving... Nothing [sic]" (177-78).

The reduction to nothing figures importantly in Duane's self-image at crucial points in the story. In the "17" section, when Duane's father says that he and Duane's mother may separate, his faulty grammar leads Duane to believe that his parents really are going to separate. This misperception, which Duane later discovers when with Clare, in "24", leads him to conclude that he will be left "with nothing," and he then "realizes he has nothing" and begins to feel that "he is nothing." Later, in the "24" section, he is with the poet Clare, and awakens to his spiritual and creative poverty: "he realizes what he already knows, that he has no work like Clare's, that marijuana and drinking and everything else interfere with nothing at all because he has nothing they can interfere with." Then, at the conclusion of the story, after Duane in his arrogance has tried to write his thesis story and discovers that he has failed, the failure is again in terms of tragic, reductive nothingness: "Of all he has written; there is nothing he can respect." The discounting is final when in the concluding section, "30", Duane hurls his typewriter into the lake, an ironic act for the would-be writer, and one that symbloically reduces

to nothing Duane's hope of writing. The irony is total for the *Künstlerroman*—no artist develops.

The movement to tragedy is shown in the ironic treatment of the motifs of the *Künstlerroman* noted above. Duane adopts the vices of the characters he encounters, but few of the virtues. The violence he grows up with turns his talents toward vituperation, not valourization. He has enough sense to change his behaviour when he sees, or is made to see, it is wrong, behaviour such as the false fighting told about in "24", but he is tragically flawed in that he can not get beyond the psychological maladaption of his formative years. The gifted and sensitive mind and spirit evident in his early excellence in art is stifled by the world as he knows it, violent and lonely. His talents, which with a better upbringing and education might have made him Howe's Renaissance polymath, are instead limited to proficiency in baking, rolling joints, lying, and self-deception. His stifled development progresses until, like the slowly wise Parsifal, he achieves the ironic wisdom of his failure.

Duane's world is one of the opposition between art and life Beebe finds in the *Künstlerroman*, noted above. The opposition began for Duane in his early life with the golden dog and the accordian. It intensified when he entered a high school without a course in art, art being until then his favourite and best subject. It continued with the fighting in the Royal Hotel, an ironic place for fighting because of the music; with the traumatic recollection of the past at the poetry reading; with the punch from the biker in The Firehall, which is again a place of music; with his later difficulty over the concepts of art and morality; and finally with the destruction of the buildings–the town hall and library–that represent the closest he ever got to reconciling the opposition between art and life. His realization that he can't go home again is not one that comes with the greater knowledge of the artist, but with the fact of a bad reputation and an

insensitive father. There is no consecration of the artist, as Beebe observes, only the corruption that takes Duane to a job in the pulp and paper industry, a job symbolically--and ironically--antithetical to the place he would be consecrated, the grove that he fled to in times of want and need.

To further suggest the irony of my treatment of the hero of the *Künstlerroman*, I have used a light and colour symbolism that emphasizes darkness and particularly a movement from light to dark. Normally, of course, the progression to suggest artistic enlightenment is from darkness to light. Victoria Cattell, in her *Irony and Alazony in the English 'Künstlerroman'*, writes of the symbolic significance of light in the *Künstlerroman*: "perhaps the single most important reconstitutive notion that the naive artist of the *Künstlerroman* received from his Romantic precursors was that of the 'illuminated moment' or so-called 'epiphany' in which the individual perceives a momentary vision of wholeness" (22). In *Failed Artist*, the ironic treatment of light as the symbol of the vision of wholeness that leads to creativity occurs with Duane's repeated trouble with light in his eyes. The physical cause of this trouble, the blinding light reflected at Duane off of his father's building, mixes with the psychological cause, Duane's father telling Duane that their family may break up, to create the condition of an aversion to light or, symbolically, to creativity.

The ironic colour symbolism in the story is carried by the women Duane is intimate with. It occurs in the meanings of their names and the darker hair colours of each successive woman. Lucille, Gwen, Winifred, Clare, and Hélène are all names that, in the languages they come from, mean or pertain to light. None of these relationships Duane has works out. On the importance of women to the *Künstlerroman*, Cattell states that "the artist's development of a love relationship often leads to his first creative expression and to a renewed sense of unity" (20). In *Failed Artist*, Duane's first

love relationship, with Lucille, leads to the near-destructive act of his driving his car off the road. When with Gwen, his first literary creative expression, the story about shaving off his beard, is not one that leads to a renewed sense of unity but one that perpetuates his divisive jealousy over Lawrence. Overall, the movement through the increasingly ironic female representations of light--increasingly because of their darkening hair colours--symbolizes Duane's movement into darkness, or failure, by the end of the story, at which he writes his letter/story to the chairman dated 21 decembre, the longest night of the year.

In Howe's description of the apprentice-novel, she notes the influence of the tradition of the picaresque. How *Failed Artist* partakes of that genre will now be looked at. In her essay "Picaresque Novel", Anna B. Katona says the characteristics of the genre include

> a loose episodic structure; a rogue-hero (the *picaro*) who is on the move and goes through a series of encounters with representatives of a hostile and corrupt world; a first person narrative; and finally, a satirical approach to the society in which the adventures occur. The typical social background of the *picaro* involves a disordered, disintegrating world in which traditional values are breaking down. The instability of the social structure permits the emergence of the *picaro*, a resilient rogue but not a criminal, a person of low birth or uncertain parentage, an outsider whose adventures take him from innocence to experience. In this sense, the picaresque novel has affinities with the *Bildungsroman*, but unlike the protagonist of the latter, the *picaro* is a fixed character. While he learns survival techniques from his adventures, he does not change inwardly; he remains faithful to his healthy instincts without questioning the larger order of things.

> Pressured by circumstances to choose between integrity and survival, the *picaro* makes the pragmatic choice and learns to adjust to the corrupt values of his environment. (3101)

Though the structure of *Failed Artist* is tighter than what Katona notes as typical of the picaresque novel, it is episodic, especially in the greater structure of the sections defined by the ages of "29", "17", "24", "28", and "30". Within these episodes, Duane is roguish; with Pete, Evan, and Karl at seventeen, in the bakery and cheese store with Cecil, the market and The Pace with Clare, and, to a lesser extent, with Gil the musician and Hélène and Karl at the end of the story, Duane exhibits less than exemplary behaviour. Overlapping with an aspect of the apprentice novel noted above are the encounters with representives of a hostile and corrupt world: Wickham would be seen by the insensitive as such a representative; certainly, the thugs and the bikers are.

The first person narrative Katona lists has not been followed in *Failed Artist*. Used instead is mainly a third person, single-character point-of-view with interiorization and in the present tense; the present tense for dynamism and urgency, and to distinguish for the reader what is happening to Duane from what has happened to him; the interiorization to aid the demonstration of the psychological complexity; and the third-person voice for authorial distance and freedom of representation. There is an exception to the use of the present tense in the opening section, "29", in which the tense shifts between present and past and gives two present tenses, that of Duane at twenty-nine years of age and that of him at seventeen. While most of what in the section concerns Duane at seventeen is written in the past tense, the passage about the grove is in the present. I have written it in the present to suggest the enduring quality of his memory of being there as "the moment at which his life either ended or began," a moment with an indeciveness important in considering his later indecisiveness about art and

morality, for it reflects Duane's essential lack of progress since his psychological devastation.

There are two further changes in narration, those in the two stories within *Failed Artist*, "Goliath til the Ninth" and "Incident in a Montreal Store". In the "Goliath til the Ninth", the voice and tense change as the protagonist, Dave, recalls his past, the changing meant to evoke the surreality that would for Duane accompany the recollection of significant moments. The light symbolism of *Failed Artist* is carried over in "Goliath til the Ninth" with the image of Dave looking into the sun in section "1" and beginning his recollection then and concluding it at the beginning of "8", which returns to the narrative voice and tense of "1" to show the return from memory. In the story "Incident in a Montreal Store", the first person, single character point-of-view in the present tense is meant simply to separate radically from the main story the story Duane has written in reply to his departmental chairman, make that story appear as his own rather than another provided by the narrator of the main story.

Katona observes satire in the picaresque, but, as explained above, satire has been played down in *Failed Artist*. If any satire applies at all, it is somewhere on the vicious side of the Juvenalian; there is little laughter, but every intention to hurt and heal. The social background from which Duane comes is the disintegrating world Katona notes, the replacement of the trees with tobacco implying this at the story's beginning and the emphasis on the unhealthy city implying it at the story's end. Duane does not have the low birth of the *picaro* Katona describes, but this assists all the more the irony and tragedy of his fall from grace as he moves from innocence to experience. With respect to the *picaro's* fixed character, that can be seen in Duane's continued use of drugs, an ironic treatment of the healthy instincts of Katona's *picaro*, and in the abiding mental mediocrity shown in his dropping out of high school, leaving college incomplete, failing

in university, and taking a job as an copy editor. Finally, as he "drinks and drugs and fucks himself into late-twentieth century normalcy," Duane will have learned to adjust, as Katona says the *picaro* does, to the corrupt values of his environment. Having now seen the mainly thematic aspects of the genres and modes that influence *Failed Artist*, a look at form follows.

The formal genre adhered to in *Failed Artist* is the novella. In his essay "The Novella," Charles E. May says that the novella is generally "between fifteen thousand and fifty thousand words" (*Failed Artist* is approximately fifty-five thousand) and that "the novella occupies the middle ground as a distinct form between the short story and the novel" (3250). To further define the genre, May quotes Irving Howe's introduction to Howe's anthology of short novels, as novellas are also known, *Classics of Modern Fiction*:

> "The short novel does not rely on incident alone, like the short story, yet neither can it contain a complex and many-stranded plot, like the novel. As a rule, it moves a single line of action into rapid fulfillment or completion.... From this genre we gain a sense of character in depth, character as it reveals itself through a central text or crisis.... It is tight and exclusive rather than expansive and inclusive.... In the short novel, we are almost always aware of the strong executive hand of the writer, modelling and shaping, cutting and tightening: he must adhere to a strict standard of relevance when deciding what can be included. As compensation, however, he often achieves a clearer narrative design than the novelist does." (3252-53)

In *Failed Artist*, the single line of action Howe notes overlaps with the theme of the *Künstlerroman*, the development of the artist. That development in *Failed Artist* also carries Howe's sense of the look at a character in depth, and the irony and tragedy of

that development follows Howe's observation of crisis. The rapid completion of action is a consequence of the unwavering, non-digressive concentration on the subject, in this case, the development of Duane.

With respect to the strong executive hand Howe has discovered, I can note some aspects of *Failed Artist* that I believe demonstrate this. First and most important is the emphasis on telling. Duane, as the protagonist of a *Künstlerroman*, must learn how to tell, or become an literary artist, but because of the irony in *Failed Artist*, he must fail to learn how. In the "17" section, he does not tell Karl about his traumatic meeting with his father; in "24", with Clare, he does tell for the first time, after intense effort, about that trauma, but after telling about it, and as his desire to continue to tell grows stronger, he discovers that there is something else he wants to but can not tell, that about the girl of fifteen, and so he is frustrated and fails again. In "28", there is a symbolic and portentous failure of telling when his story "Goliath til the Ninth" is rejected for the third time. And, finally, in "30", there is the climactic failure of the inability to write the thesis story.

On a smaller scale, a typical example of the authorial control in *Failed Artist* is in the tension created in the passage at the end of "24". The first of the two elements of the tension is the hierarchical arrangement of the synonyms of the word "hate" in the passage in which Duane is devastated by the memory of the girl of fifteen (my lexicographical references for the usage of the synonyms are Funk and Wagnalls, Webster, and Oxford); the synonyms--loathe, despise, detest, hate--are ordered in increasing severity to show Duane's growing hatred for himself and aid the movement to climax in the section. The tension's other element is in the alienation Duane now feels toward Clare being made stronger still by an emphasize on Clare's softness and gentleness. This makes the sense of the implied brutality of Duane toward the girl of fifteen all the

greater when it is implicitly revealed.

A final example of the authorial control maintained in *Failed Artist* is the absence of an interior voice in the "30" section, the last section of the story. Through the whole story I have used increasingly an interior voice as Duane learns and gets closer to being able to tell. At the end, with his failure to do so when he most wants to, the absence of the interior voice is a symbolic notation of that failure.

The tightness and exclusivity Howe sees in the novella, May considers more closely as a "complex symbolic and imagistic method" of narration (3252). Such a tight and exclusive narration blends well with the irony that guides *Failed Artist*; Frye calls irony "a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible" (40). The symbolism of light has been noted above. Other symbols include the trees, cars, music, and books that reflect the state of Duane's mind and the condition of the surroundings that affect him. Added to those symbols can be the symbolically significant images of the dishwashing (ridding oneself of the past) at the bakery in "24" and at Gil's in "28", of bread-baking (limited creativity; compare Clare the poet in the same section, "24"), of Duane vomiting (ironic purgation) in "17", and of him throwing his typewriter into the lake in "30" (abandoning his attempt to write, or tell). Letters and letter writing are particularly important among these symbols and images. They are the closest Duane gets to being a writer and they make the irony of his failure as a protagonist of a *Künstlerroman* all the more poignant because they represent a beginning never gotten beyond.

The novella also has a correspondance with the psychological theme of the *Künstlerroman*, as May notes when he paraphrases Howard Nemerov's essay "Composition and the Fate of the Short Novel": "Nemerov says philosophical problems become the center of the novella form, and the philosophical problem most frequently addressed in

the novella is the problem of identity, a theme which, Nemerov says, is 'pervasive to the point of obsession'" (3255). Duane is obsessed with trying to become a literary artist. Behind that obsession is the question posed to the reader of whether Duane can become an artist after having grown up as he has. The action in the inner life of Duane is meant to suggest the psychological conflict of his personality and his obsession, and his failure to become an artist is his psychological failure to reconcile that personality with his obsession.

The thematic and formal influences on *Failed Artist* have now been shown. The story has been written securely within the tradition of the *Künstlerroman*, has been studious and careful in presenting a tragedy through an ironic treatment of the genre, and has interacted knowledgeably with the picaresque and the formal concerns of the novella. The liberties I have taken in style and content also show that *Failed Artist* was no mechanical repetition of formula, but a fully creative effort guided by the balance of a regard for tradition and my intuition. Next is a consideration of what might have influenced that intuition.

As a product--albeit of indeterminate worth--of a literary education in the epoch of post-modernism, certain critical ideas have inevitably influenced me and the writing of *Failed Artist*. As a *Künstlerroman*, *Failed Artist* partakes of the metafiction that currently interests and challenges contemporary literary activity. Linda Hutcheon, in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, notes the place of the *Künstlerroman* in the development of metafiction with a description of metafiction that uses the myth of Narcissus as a metaphor for the increasing self-reflexivity in the development of the novel. The novel, she says, after a period of realism,

> became Romantically intrigued with its own reflection. Now even more self-conscious, the novel increasingly took this image as a thing in itself

> worthy of literary treatment: the novelist and his novel itself became legitimate subject matter. The process of narration began to invade the fiction's content.
>
> Out of the *Bildungsroman* or *Entwicklungsroman*, then, came the *Künstlerroman* with its preoccupation with the growth of the artist. (11)

Though *Failed Artist*, as a *Künstlerroman*, fits into an earlier stage of the development of metafiction, the *Künstlerroman* can in no way be called, with respect to contemporary criticism, a dead form. However, it is at present when writing a *Künstlerroman* concomitant on the author to demonstrate in the story not only a writing about the writer, but a writing about the writing of the writer as well. I have done that with the passage in "28" about Duane's education and his appropriately brief thoughts about his story "Goliath til the Ninth". Self-reflexivity also informs both the enveloping "29" and "30" sections, where it operates on the literal level of the story, that is, in Duane's concern about how to write and in the reasons he fails to write, as well as the ironic level, where it works in two ways. First, the generic requirements of the *Kunstlerroman* are self-consciously inverted, and second, the inevitable consequence of the first, the turning on itself of the literary device of irony creates the reverse irony of the creation of a text when none is expected to be created because the author's writer is going to discover he is not a writer.

In the post-modern epoch, the writing of an ironic *Kunstlerroman* appears unavoidable. The failure to realize artistic potential, when its realization is fundamental to the archetype of the *Künstlerroman*, is in keeping with the attitudes of despair evident in comments about post-modernism, the period of the so-called "literature of exhaustion." Alan Wilde, in *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Post-Modernism, and the Ironic Imagination*, notes this despair, as well as implies its presentation in the

self-conscious, self-reflexive form of metafiction:

> If, as I've several times suggested, the defining feature of modernism is its ironic vision of disconnection and disjunction, post-modernism, more radical in its perceptions, derives instead from a vision of randomness, multiplicity, and contingency: in short, a world in need of mending is superceded by one beyond repair. Modernism, spurred by an anxiety to recuperate a lost wholeness in self-sustaining orders of art or in the unself-conscious depths of the self..., reaches toward the heroic in the intensity of its desire and of its disillusion. Post-modernism, skeptical of such efforts, presents itself as deliberately, consciously anti-heroic. (131)

The protagonist of *Failed Artist* is a crossover figure, embodies a modernist desire for the heroic--the completion of a quest--but his tendency and behaviour is decidedly post-modernist anti-heroic. The combination of modernism and post-modernism inevitably furthers the irony of the story.

Another impression of the post-modernist rejection of the possiblilty of the world made whole again is Paul Jay's, in his *Being in the Text: Self-Representation from Wordsworth to Roland Barthes*. Jay discusses the post-modernist program as it appears in the work of one of its major exponents, Roland Barthes:

> Abandoning narrative as a mode of self-representation, Barthes' *Roland Barthes* seeks by its fragmented form to be the systematic deconstruction that Eliot's poem [ie, "The Four Quartets"] avoids. This strange kind of mimesis constitutes the rhetorical logic of his book. Wholeness, unity, and especially "transcendence" are viewed by Barthes as "risks" to be avoided at all cost. He insists that the Wordsworthian conception of the self as a "single enormous network" is a wornout metaphor, that the subject

> today must be recognized as "divided," "dispersed," "contradictory," and without "a central core" or "structure of meaning." Thus his *Roland Barthes* denies the recuperative hope of *The Prelude* and consciously seeks to reverse its nostalgic, ordering, and unifying strategies. (38)

For the writer of a *Künstlerroman*, the clash of the heroic, integrating modernism of Wordsworth and Eliot (at least in "Four Quartets") and the anti-heroic, fragmenting post-modernism of Barthes is useful as a further aid to the presentation of the greater conflict of his protagonist, the struggle to realize his artistic potential.

Yet, useful as the clash is, in the post-modernist epoch it represents the inevitability of a more difficultly arrived at ironic and tragic conclusion to a *Künstlerroman*, for the denial of the heroic also denies the fulfillment of the quest, which again, in the *Künstlerroman*, is for artistic fulfillment. At the same time, however, the very completion of a text in such circumstances reverses that irony and proves the post-modernist stance a fallacy—a text has been created, there is unity between the covers. Though the narrative may deny it, narrative is the wrong place to look for it. The place to search for the unity is in the moral tone.

In essence, what Jay, Wilde, and Barthes are talking about is the reflection in literature of the breakdown of values. The hero only becomes the anti-hero when he loses the moral virtue that makes him heroic. The unity in the post-modernist narrative is in its implicit comment on the absence of the morality that once gave us the hero. The denial of the hero in post-modernist literature is not the rejection of him—it is the ironic desire for his return. In *Failed Artist*, that desire is implied in the failure of the protagonist to accomplish his quest because he has been defeated by the immorality of a civilization—post-modernist civilization—that values the superficiality of Porsches and Crescent Street bars over the preservation of architecture that inspires

reverence, a civilization that as it neglects an education in the arts in its schools for the sake of technocratic efficiency also neglects the victims of that efficiency, the old men who mutter as they scavenge for scraps of food in the filthy alleys behind the Crescent Streets everywhere.

It is fearful to a young writer to see the avant-garde so evidently negligent of the problems that have led them to where they are. It speaks of a lack of courage, a pusillanimity, and finally a despair over confronting directly the moral issues all their texts revolve around. Victim, then, as I am of post-modernist despair, I can only write the *Künstlerroman* ironically. But in the resultant tragedy is the moral view of art in which John Gardner, in *On Moral Fiction*, believes: "true art is moral: it seeks to improve life, not debase it" (5).

It has been my intention with *A Portrait of the Young Man as a Failed Artist* to write not only a *Künstlerroman*, but to present a moral critique of late-twentieth century civilization as well. I believe moral judgment is implicit and sometimes even intended in writers of the epoch of post-modernist anti-heroism. If the presentation has become ironic, it is only an indication of the lengths we will go in order to achieve the heroic in a time that we perceive denies what I with Gardner assert we need and what moral art tries to give us: "valid models for imitation, eternal verities worth keeping in mind, and a benevolent vision of the possible which can inspire and incite human beings toward virtue" (18).

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