BLUE BOOK IN STEEL

a novel
by

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Department of Creative Writing

The University of British Columbia
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a novel
by Richard Kitaeff
This novel is concerned in part with the development of the associated feelings of guilt, atonement and expiation from a young man's crisis of self-betrayal to his crisis of self-sacrifice. It also affirms the absurdity of imposing a personal spiritual quest on a society promiscuously addicted to debased representational modes of expression.

The action occurs during one evening in New York, with mixed chronology flashbacks that reveal the evolution of the protagonist's consciousness in the overall mosaic design of a jazz tune. Various media (prayer, psychedelic vision, popular songs, radio program, nightclub routine, etc.), images from the "carny" world, and "but-up" style at heights of intensity all serve to externalize events of consciousness.
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FOR ANNE, MY PARENTS, WILLIAM BURROUGHS, BOB DYLAN, AND LEONARD COHEN

THANKS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CREATIVE WRITING, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, AND TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE IN ESTABLISHING THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO THE COMPLETION OF THIS NOVEL.
"Twice he's wrong, third time he's gone."

-Teddy Felton, M.C. at Kit-Kat Club, Vancouver.
HEAD CHORUS: Piano Atempo
Throughout the airless Fourth-of-July evening, Roman candles and sparklers snaked over the East River, now and then momentarily lighting up the faces of the mental patients on the island, who were gathered outside to watch the spectacle as a special treat: one of them, a long-faced French-Canadian, picked up in Times Square several days before for assaulting passersby in an attempt to recruit them for a rebel army, waved his arms and hurled ecstatic Tabernacle's and Grace-à-Dieu's at the fireworks, recognizing them as signals for the mobilisation of democratic forces for his long-awaited invasion of Quebec to topple the autocratic Duplessis regime, which he was convinced had exiled him to lifelong imprisonment on this foreign island ten years before; while beside him a middle-aged Jew, a former millionaire who had several years ago withdrawn all his money, scattered it from the top of the Empire State Building, and declared himself a Communist, now finally welcomed the Red hordes who were about to dissolve the guilt of other American capitalists. Somewhere in the Village, a protest singer intoned:

The Second World War
came to an end:
we forgave the Germans,
then we were friends.

Though they murdered six million,
in the ovens they fried,
the Germans now too
have God on their side.

Up 105th Street from the River as far as Lexington, Puerto Rican men clad in clean pressed suits and sometimes ties sat in partly-paid for Triumph's and Fury's, which they spent all week polishing so that they could sit in them on a Sunday or a holiday like today, and smiles played over their lips as they wondered vaguely what was behind the phrase they had glimpsed in their children's history books, "Spanish-American War"; the children, unwashed and ragged, climbed on top of the cars and jumped high to reach the tails of these comets that made their tenement roofs glow like the Christ-child's barn.
Monroe, standing across Roosevelt Drive on the River embankment, allowed the irony to flash across his tight mask of desperation, if only to reaffirm that with less than six months of New York life behind him, he was not yet, like the native, prepared to take the fantastic for granted. He turned back to the River and tapped on pistons and keyboard as the moon drew attention away from the brilliant, short-lived intruders with a grotesque dance to the marimba music of a hundred radios all tuned to the Spanish-language station. But these hombres are evidently Tonathiuh-worshippers from way back, though here the sun doesn't give them as much brightness in a year as they see tonight.

The bright ball in the blue bumped into a clump of white and dropped a piece of itself onto the grey-green, and there it rides, dancing on the tips and gliding in between, until the low rumble rises and rushes white upon a rock, wet upon the face, dark on the sand, and—Where has the piece of sun gone now?

"Da-a-a! Ah, ah! Da-a-a-a-a!"

"Keep away from that rock, Monroe, or you'll get splashed!"

Another rumble mounted to a crash of white over the rock. And another. So many pieces of bright sun skip over the waves and wash the rock and leave the face of the rock smiling with them. Face wet, maybe some sun there too. Why does the sun taste salty?

"Ah! Da-a-a-a! Ah! Da-a-a-a!"

"That's a good baby. Just stay right where you are, boychik, and keep out of the sun."

Sun-bathing will inevitably have in North America the proscribed status that psychedelic drugs now suffer: even babies will be pinched. Sunheads will be apprehended on the beaches, mountaintops, rooftops, clotheslines; they will be tossed in solitary, and their homosexual guards will come on with, "How 'dja get your groovy tan, sweety?" Public health officers will issue public warnings
against "taking extra-terrestrial substances into your body"...

FROM CHIEF OF NARCO SQUAD TO ACTING HEAD OF HOLY SOCIETY OF TONATHIUH-WORSHIPPERS, JUNE 19th, 1975-

With summer solstice almost upon us once again, I feel it my duty to repeat the warning which I issued to your organization last year at this time, when we launched a rehabilitative offensive which culminated in the arrest of your leader, Sol S. Beams, New Thing jazz musician and certified herbalist, after he was reported floating under the Golden Gate on a raft of 24-karat cymbals tied together by daisies and sunflowers, his body coated with an unidentified iridescent chemical and his perception of time and space altered, as he admitted, in a most "tasty" manner....

A new odour penetrated the prevailing atmosphere of River sewage and street tar as a vacant-eyed lush bore down in a parody of a ballet spin. Back to the water: in the fiery blasts, faces of old men--and one middle-aged man smiling painfully....

Monroe's father, Boris Schallman, did not look up from the carbon-copy invoices headed "The Canadian Zionist Monthly Bugle, Gottigen St., Halifax, N.S." spread out on the blanket before his crossed-legged stocky form.

Light coloured sand stretches in waves as far as walls of rock and patches of green at the sides. But no sun dancing on the sand, and rocks dry and dull. Small rocks flat or round, smooth or pointed.

"Da-a-a-a!"

"Careful you don't hurt yourself with those stones, Monroe. Look at our little pioneer, Eva. Already he works with the land."

Monroe's mother looked up from her book with unsmiling eyes.

"Don't be a fool, Boris! Save talk like that for your newspaper!"
In the Bessie Smith revivals issuing from the loudspeaker of a passing tour boat, he tried to discover Leila's softness at the core of her songs and dances at the Uptown tonight: Old man fought in the battle, old man got burned again today.... silent tingling hot between the thighs ... Nobody knows you when you're down and out.... cradling obscure forever in her fur-lined cunt... Well I hate to see the evening sun go down.... loving as you might take a bath in sunlight and dry yourself with wind. For he yearned to crack that bitchy assumption of the reasonable, that men so often evade through some kind of innocence....

Boris Schallman's features tightened and he fixed his blue eyes on the dark wet sand.

"Why do you have to say things like that, Eva?"

"It's the truth. Zion is oceans away, and you forget there are other things."

With every crash of wave upon rock, squeals from above, like her voice. Sometimes, from far across the grey-green, long drones, like his voice. Long drone -- and rumble rising -- crash -- and squeals. And --

"Of course there are."

"No, Boris. You don't believe it just because I tell you."

A huge flare hung in the air for a full ten seconds and dropped down over the island park where Monroe often went to study. The French-Canadian fell to his knees, crossed himself interminably and muttered, "Dieu sauve!"; the ex-millionaire Jew yelled, "give 'em hell! I'm on your side, balabashim!" Into the whistle of the tour boat, Monroe cried, "Why don't you love me?", then suddenly jammed his hands into his pockets and looked down, as the boozehead, stumbling
farther along the embankment, turned in surprise. Monroe remembered "Honi soit qui mal y pense", the inscription in Leila's antique copy of the Blue Book, directory of the "sporting women" in New Orleans' Storyville ("the only district of its kind in the States set aside for the fast women by law"); he began to laugh softly.

As if the gaseous atmosphere of a glass-covered world had suddenly grown too hot, the apparition in the flaming water shattered with a thunderous splash. A spotted cat had leaped over the cliff and now swam about contentedly. Like that first time at the beach, when he had frightened his parents so much....

The tall white cat perches erect on the rock and the water returns his yogi's stare. Closer and closer, silently over the sand and pebbles, getting closer to the supple, unmoving form. The tail twitches and the whiskered face turns. At once, the tail and softly rounded behind arch upwards, and the front legs strike out towards the line of the tide. Down the beach and into the water after her, and deeper into the water. The gentle grey hump heaves slightly, moving straight ahead; the tail continues to twitch, making a light splashing sound and sending a spray over her wake. Closer to that silent grey. Cat smell strong. Water up to the chin. Reach for the tail -- the furry, twitching tail. Touch of wet fur. A cat's loud screech, scarlet light, screams from the shore, then the drop into a grey world.

Monroe gaped at the spectacle, felt his cotton jersey sticking to his chest, and swayed at the edge of the embankment, panting slightly, until a plump white hand touched his arm. He spun around, half expecting to see the pained, middle-aged face from the water.

"If the cow can jump over the moon, then why not the cat jumps into it?" The
soft, accented words and the nervous giggle issued from a sardonic mouth stretched across a floury face with blue eyes and raised brows frozen down into thick-lensed glasses and with gnome-like nose and ears that, taken with the rest, suggested a youthful Peter Lorre. Monroe's gaze ambled uneasily over the short figure, dressed in white shirt, coat-sweater and untapered trousers, and leaning on an oak-handled umbrella.

"We must have a talk, Emil," Monroe began, lighting himself a cigarette.

"If ve must, then-" -Emil recognizing the cosmic irony of Monroe's lighted cigarette promenading before the backdrop of multicoloured comets and exploding stars. "If ve must talk, then let us talk about a thing as innocuous as Fourth-of-July fireworks. Ve vill talk less about man than about Superman."

Tonight, Monroe resented a little having his serious intent undermined by his friend's charming habit of letting a word like "innocuous" fall off his lips more easily than the simple English pronouns whose pronunciation he botched. Was he charming, or just unsettling -- like a precocious child? That inveterate fondness for G.B. Shaw he had noticed in other Hungarians: Emil had explained it once, "In order to sell the twentieth century, he uses the Hungarian salesman's trick of going negative on his customers."

"Okay, my friend, then let's talk about you as Don Juan. Let's say that I've asked you to meet me here tonight so that I can rescue you from Hell."

"'Hell is myself, and I am ever in it.'"

"Fuck you, Emil!"

Monroe puffed harder on his cigarette as he grew more irritated with Emil's quickness and his lobster eyes and his giggles. Finally, he threw the cigarette into the water and gripped Emil's shoulders. "Listen man, we don't really have to go through all this bullshit you know!"
Emil smiled too hard. "Go ahead, Monroe. What's in your head?" The fireworks had subsided for a moment, and the darkness was more effective than the smile in hiding his fear.

"You ... and Leila."

A blue flare overhead -- tilt light in the celestial pinball machine -- made them both look up. But just as no real action was forthcoming tonight from the Red hordes or the democratic forces, so no great change in their relation was signalled. This showdown had been coming for some time, perhaps since Emil had held Leila's hand too hard the time he was introduced to her by Monroe who was showing her around the music school, or perhaps since Monroe discovered that while he was gigging, Emil was spending his evenings watching Leila at the Uptown, or perhaps since only a couple of days ago, when it became obvious that as she was slipping from Monroe, Emil was visiting her more and more. Yet Monroe knew that all this didn't really make him angry any more than it made Leila sorry or secretive, and now he was just mouthing the words, miming the actions, because the situation seemed to call for it. He sought anger rather in those magnificently pointless hassles back at Hatikvoh, the summer camp in the mountains, where he and Emil had been brought together by music and some dark expiation they were both tormented to perform through it....

Before the door of the cabin now, where a line of towels and bathing suits dripped intermittently, forming a turbid pool to catch the morning rays, and beyond the stables and the pines, mountains blue-grey, cold and still, while all tinselled gladness spreading through the bunkhouse window to melt the paste of eyelids, to pulse through toes and back again, rustling sheets and pushing up yawn and hmm-ah-h-h don't want to no not yet hmm so warm skin and cool green and
red inside. Someone steps, the window squeaks open, letting in low cracking

"Been at camp before?" Ralph, the Negro stable-boy, inquired. Monroe shook
his head and Ralph continued, looking gravely off into the distance, "Maybe
hard to get used to. Some of the counsellors pretty turned around. But jus
hang loose. Like playin a standard in a different key. Hey! Piano-man, eh?"
Ralph studied Monroe with a mysterious glint in his eye. "What kind d you
play? Long-hair stuff?"

"Sometimes. But more jazz. Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner, Cecil Taylor. You
know."

"No shit!" Ralph dropped the bag and beamed at Monroe. "Oh man! This is
too much! Too too much!" He giggled irrepressibly and continued to talk quick­
ly and gesture with his free hand. "Ah'm a drummer myself. Really dig Elvin
Jones and Sonny Murray. Ah tell ya man it's been fuckin lonesome up here with
nothin but lectric guitars an' rock n roll an all that there shit. But now- Oh
man, this is somethin else! We can have sessions, huh?"

"Crazy!" Monroe assented, smiling.

They turned to peer through the screen door at staggered silhouettes shouting
hoarse commands, as curious eyes perused the newcomer from within the bunk.

"Jus wakin up now. Lots o commotion. You jus better like kids, mister!"

They entered the central room of the bunk, large enough for a couple of cots
and heavily-laden night tables. Between the cots, a bathroom door opened and
shut frequently for a stream of young visitors who yawned and rubbed their eyes
as they flowed like ants from the large, narrow dormitories at the sides. Walls
low and cracked in places, the skeleton of the roof impended above like a web.
On the wall several feet above one of the cots, a full-colour photograph of a
nude, the region from her neck to her knees ingeniously concealed from innocent eyes by a flap of cardboard, taped at the top. A dark youth in pyjamas slouched over the edge of the bed, simultaneously directing traffic before the bathroom door, whittling on a tiny figure with hacking but precise motions, and glancing at an open newspaper. He turned from his tasks to rub his eyes and watch the newcomer with some irritation.

Ralph introduced Monroe and Emil in a tone of mock authority: "Emil's assisting you with the musical shows, Mister Piano-man. Emil composes elegies and dirges and all that there morbid shit. But right now he's messin with politics. Ain't that right, Emil?"

Emil did not reply at first, but continued to whittle. Finally he nodded. "You might call it that, Ralph. See this newspaper?" He sliced across one of the pages with his carving knife. "Deutsche Nachrichten: A German-Canadian Weekly. I read all the other German papers too, including the vuns from Germany. In these pages, I've discovered that scores of high-ranking Nazi war criminals remain in hiding or occupy high government posts under aliases. I keep track of all of them through my scrapbook and my voodoo dolls," - bouncing a few pale wood shavings in front of his face and grimacing.

Monroe eyed him warily, curious yet reluctant to pursue the subject.

"You are thinking -- Why? Vait a moment." Emil disappeared into the bathroom, displacing a couple of toothbrush-wielding kids, and reappeared holding out a slippery bar of soap to Monroe. "My parents. Also a few aunts, uncles, cousins. Either this or they are bad smells." Emil's voice, suddenly clear as the pedal-point of a baritone, drifts up around the rafters; his face, a thousand ashen pockets, spirals through the doorway, demobilizes itself by spilling over a jutting lower lip. Closer, his voice impinges itself on every nerve-end, sibilants belonging with the snake-like motions of his head. "I chust vait for my
restitution money to come through. Then I push for exposées, purges, and my own kind of quick justice if necessary."

Ralph temporarily broke Emil's death-magnetism by bending to pull out from under the bed a radio with its chassis cracked and tubes and wires hanging out of the back.

"I wouldn exactly say Emil is a fanatic," he grinned, "but look at what he did to my Grundig the time he explained all this to me." They both laughed. "Don't let the evil genius bug you. C'mon, I'll show you your cot. It's nex to a bed-wetter but he's not prolific, an you can jus yell if you smell any trouble."

Ralph helped Monroe with his bags to one of the side dormitories and Emil returned unsmiling to his whittling and to buttonholing one of the kids with a newspaper account of a recent convention of boy scout commissioners that concluded the necessity for changing the sissy image of the scouts and preparing youth to do battle against the enemies of world peace.

The fireworks were coming less frequently now, and the mental patients and the Puerto Rican kids with one voice sobbed their protests against going home to bed disappointed of their expectations.

"You've been fucking up, man," Emil was saying with slow, sad seriousness, "and she needs someone to take care of her."

Monroe suddenly knew that his anger was towards Emil, because he was coming on with this same bloody reasonableness. He felt like putting his fist through those ice-thick glasses and watching Emil clutch at his blood-spilling eyes.

"Emil, do you realize you have a cowlick?...Yes." -Emil looked uncomprehending- "on top of your head, that's it."

Emil was feeling around wonderingly in his hair, until he patted the pro-
-tubrance gingerly. He giggled, and Monroe joined him, laughing hard and pointing, knowing now that they were both merely poor foolish creatures victimized by an anger that had its source and its direction beyond persons or situations, an anger that was born in Monroe long before the music school or Hatikvoh or Emil....

Boris tried in vain to concentrate once more on his account, afraid to break into the child's cries and his wife's silence. At last, he rummaged among papers in a folder and pulled out a large photograph, glossy but faded and with its edges furled. He waved it boyishly before his wife's hard eyes.

"Look Eva! Look what Cantor Grossman has given me. A picture he took just before his escape from the concentration camp at Dachau. See? It's the Jews with their Nazi guards gathered around the big pit -- Jews waiting to be pushed into their graves, buried alive. You see? These are the bodies piled on top of one another -- just frail skeletons with hollow eyes and sticks for limbs, most of them half-dead before they got there. And look!"

"Emil, you funky Hunky, she doesn't need someone to take care of her" - Monroe, still laughing. "She just wants someone to bang her around so bad she can go to the club every night and sing My-man-he-never-treats-me-right! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT, YOU FUNKY HUNKY?"

Monroe was choking with laughter, and his stomach was tight with crying, so that he had to double up. Emil raised his knee, catching Monroe on the jaw, making him suck in his breath and fall forward on his knees.

"SHUT UP, MONROE! I don't know what you've been on, man, but you must be so blasted, man, that this time your head has just gone! You're SICK!" With mouth
open wide and eyebrows tensely raised in the baby-smooth face, Emil was trying hard to scream.

Monroe raised himself quickly, hearing the challenge of lions in Emil's cry: he should never have denied himself that deafening voracious death-attraction towards Emil. He pressed his hands around the warm neck and drew it to him until Emil pushed him back and tripped backwards himself on his dumb jive-ass Foreign Intrigue trenchcoat, rolled the couple of feet down the embankment to the edge, and -- unable to stop himself -- down into the water with the echoing crash of an ocean wave against a rock.

The last rocket of the night lost heart on its way to the moon, and burst into a red core fanning to blue bubbles. Another Circle Line tour boat was coming up the River, but it was hardly close enough yet -- even with the sky lighted up -- to the absurd shoot of hair bobbing above the white puppet face with the glasses amazingly still jammed on and the wheezing cries like those of a paranoid laryngitis victim. That whole summer at the camp he had never bothered to learn to swim. His head went down for the second time and ballooned up out of his trenchcoat in the centre of a circle of silhouetted figures rocking stiffly. Keep away from that rock Emil's face bathed in fire Stay out of the sun Emil's wet face no longer reasonable...

Eva turned slowly from the infant and her gaze of mingled contempt, hurt and commiseration alternated between the ghostly forms of the wrinkled photograph and the wildly bobby fleshy countenance of her husband, who had to shout to make himself heard above the baby's cries.

"Look at this bearded alte with the pais, and the tallis over his shoulders and the tefillin on his arms and the sidur in his hands. That's Rabbi Roth-
-stein, a very good man and always a good leader of all the Jews in the camp, according to Cantor Grossman. He's reciting the Hashem for himself and for the others who are about to die. And the Nazis are mocking him, poking their guns into his side and laughing -- "

"Ah-h-h-h! Ah-h-h-h! Ah-h-h-h!"

Sounds thrown out over the grey-green are thrown back a little. They grow louder and softer, louder and softer, and die there somewhere beyond. Now more sounds thrown out and back, so fast that none appear to die out....

The cries grew louder rather than fainter as Emil went down for the last time, but the tour boat was still too far, and there was no longer light from the fireworks to locate them. Monroe hung on the cries like a professor at the music school on the playing of an exceptional pupil; he sucked deep on the air where lingering sound mingled now with tar smell and River breeze, as if people could be smoked to get you blasted, although it would be closer to the truth to say on the contrary that he was taking the cure, getting the monkey off, yet high on withdrawal!

The tour boat, called the Insurrection, finally glided by easily, the guide on board probably making some passing reference to the mental patients and the Puerto Ricans. Its concern for the finished and the expected chilled Monroe, but he knew he had nothing to fear from it.

How could Emil have possibly known what he was blasted on, since yes Emil himself had been the addiction, Leila just maintaining the connection for him. Monroe suddenly regretted the whole conversation with Emil, and generally the whole inevitability of that self-exposing, self-justifying veil of incessant babble, really a desperate whining discharged under the guise of discussion or explanation....
"Cantor Grossman says that the rabbi was given an opportunity to escape and he turned it down, he preferred to stay with his people to the end. Such a good and holy man! And his story will provide the theme of the next cover story in the Chronicle -- a feature on Jewish martyrdom through the ages, starting with the Biblical examples of Daniel and Joshua and culminating with Rabbi Rothstein, this great modern-day martyr. And this picture will appear on the cover. Well, Eva? Isn't it an inspiration?"

"Ah-h! Ah-h! Ah-h! Ah-h! Ah-h!"

Low drone as loud as the rumble and crash of the waves and the sounds from inside that are thrown back over the grey-green tossing with white. Inside, the piece of sun grows warmer and pushes harder, pushing the low rumble and crash up and out, faster and louder, until outside and inside all is one. Low drone -- rumble rising -- crash -- and --

"Boris, for God's sake, stop your yelling! Can't you see the child is bursting his lungs with crying? You must be out of your mind!"

Monroe put his hands to his ears and tried to look away from the movements on the face of the water where the familiar circle of grey faces was forming and across the pedestrian drawbridge beyond the buildings of the mental hospital to Hell's Gate the railway bridge an ideal suicide set-up for the nuts and he only wished it were possible to cop out on the hell that was himself but the hang-up just builds to the point where it infects others so that we do make our hell in others and also our heaven..."

The glow died from Boris' face. The blue eyes withdrew beneath a perplexed frowning brow, and he let the photograph drop to the sand beside Monroe.

"Ah-h-h-h-h! Ah-h-h-h-h!"
A piece of sun dancing over the dark forms, men and women standing beside a large black hole, one standing form wrapped up and mumbling. Bodies lying in the hole thin with wide-open eyes. Low drone -- rumble rising -- crash -- and squeals, sounding all about in the grey-green-white-blue. Inside and outside, all one now. Low drone -- rumble rising -- crash -- and -- "

"And take that horrible picture away from the baby, Boris!"

Boris obeyed and returned to his accounts in silence. Eva picked up her child and rocked him on her lap.

"Poor little Monroe! You're having a hard time today, aren't you tiny baby?"

Monroe turned and fled from the faces in the water and especially the one smiling painfully across the parkway without looking for the cars and down 105th Street between the silent tenements feeling cold without the fireworks but afraid of what they had showed him knowing that you can't ever be high on withdrawal that he would always be hung on withdrawal and as any junky can tell you that is the coldest trip might as well have stayed on the habit but what do you do when you don't know that you're hooked and even that you've kicked until it's too late.

Yet it wasn't so much this: It wasn't with him the way it was with the neighbourhood under-21's who mainline themselves an O.D., then dutifully take the ferry to North Brother Island and make the whole scene at Riverside Hospital -- detoxification ward, kibitzing with the other spics and cocolas and the nurses (getting them all pissed off at you by calling them "Mother"), carving on the walls of the solarium the title "Junkie's Place" over a coat of arms consisting of the works. At least they had a name for it, and so they could be ashamed or even proud of it -- yes, maybe even some comfort in that saying, "Once a
junkie, always a junkie". (Popper Juan once asked his buddy, "Why do straight John's treat me like dirt?" "Because you're a junkie." Popper Juan stuck out his chest and said, "I'm no goddamned junkie. I'm a Drug Addict, you bastard.")

But what do you do when you have a nameless disease and a nameless fear? Where was the detoxification for whatever it was he thought he was purging by letting Emil die, but which was still tearing him up worse than any O.D. could?

Just before the corner of Lexington, Monroe stopped to watch Anna Martinez sitting on the steps of the tenement across the street, cheerfully rubbing talcum powder on her impregnated tummy and singing, "Please Help Me I'm Fall-in" (since her husband left her, she had nothing to do all the time but listen to the rock songs on the radio). Yesterday she was at the Botánica that has the advertisement in the window for the cleaning fluid that says "Three Days Fast Dying" and she was considering castor oil, quinine pills, teas and the other purgatives and talking to a comadrona about an abortion, but her friends told her about the talcum powder that would make her baby turn out white. Monroe stared at her until she yelled, "What'sa matter you want my picture?" and then he wondered what it was about her that held his gaze more than the other sights in the flea market that was El Barrio in these six months of walking briskly close to the wall with hands in pockets and eyes down, on Emil's warning taking 103rd St. after getting off the subway because the cop-shop was on 103rd. When he really looked at Anna Martinez and El Barrio now, he decided they held for him both fear -- of hearing Emil's voice in their songs -- and envy -- of Anna's power to choose purgatives or talcum powder.

"Please Help Me I'm Fall-in". Emil had found music in these street: Emil never turned on, never went to parties, wasn't much interested in chicks before Leila, but he listened to the rhythms tapped out on the fire escape outside his window and to the thousand other varieties of real and imaginary drumming here,
and he grooved with the Boricua youths that couldn't keep their bodies still, and perhaps he treasured the thought that it wouldn't be such an ignoble destiny to be the Bartok or the Joaquim Rodrigo of East Harlem. Monroe had brought music, but Emil had discovered it. Was it really possible that Emil, in his life more than in his death, had been making him young? Now that he realized he may have murdered not only a false image of Emil but also those young songs that he had wanted above all to preserve, he cherished them with an empty longing....

Monroe's mother began to sing Shein Vi Di Levona, and when she forgot the words, she hummed.

Grey-green, white creatures and white and blue above all steady now, and rumble and crash more quiet inside and outside, and the piece of sun has spread all over inside, pushing sound up and out more slowly now. Low drone almost gone, squeals still loud but softer than before. Light and dark, light and dark, wet sand moving back and forth.

"Ah-h-h! Ah-h-h! Ah-h-h!"

"Stop crying, little tiny Monroe. Sleep, kleiner, sleep--"

All dark now, and silent, except for the low rumble and crash inside still and always.

If it was true what Emil had said once, that we sing a song to everything we do, is it possible- Was he singing The Star-Spangled Banner when it happened? The white baby of Anna Martinez now seemed an eventuality that could not be doubted and Monroe was ready to plunge into the carnival of El Barrio. He almost felt like passing the hour or so before his gig at the Salle Sappho
with a visit to Mr. Horowitz, the pretzel-vendor in Times Square subway station, who talked always of death, who even wrote a book on it called Worlds of Death and who was currently investigating the possibility of a Jewish afterlife, and to Tommy's on 52nd St. for a beer with Earl, the Negro who cured him of his Whitey ratiocinations his first week in the States by telling him, "I am not a cause, man, I am an effect!" But Mr. Horowitz would surely be able to sense in Monroe a fear of death stronger than his own, and Earl's eyes would blaze through his uncertainty about whether he was not a cause after all. El Barrio it would be then.

Please Help Me I'm Fall-in'. East River water dissolves memories of the slight dark body of Emil and the almost surely white baby of Anna Martinez and sustains the swim of old men's faces and spews up the only briefly submerged realization that Monroe would never be high on withdrawal he could only be hung on withdrawal ... unless ... unless he went to see Leila and she would understand and would not hate him.

Monroe crossed Lexington Avenue reeling and a wave of nausea pinned him to the side of a building. He wasn't aware of how much the heat had been weighing on him, until a huge Negro wearing a black cape and beret appeared and turned on the nearby water hydrant. The jet of pure liquid miracle drew kids from all over the block, shouting "Míra, míra!" and dancing about, worshipfully cupping hands and turning up beatific smiles as one of their number controlled the direction with his fist, alternately dousing open tenement windows and passing cars. The spray revived Monroe enough to look more closely at the big Negro, who also paused at the sight of Monroe. For the moments that their eyes met, Monroe saw in the network of black lines radiating over his whites headlines from Muhammed Speaks DON'T CRY WHEN THEY LYNCH ME and the names in lights at the Apollo Theatre *PARKS PARKETTES CHAMPION TWISTERS*JOCKO ROCKET-SHIP SHOW*CHIFFONS*RUBY AND THE ROMANTICS* and the screaming syllogisms and
unequivocal dicta of Harlem Square NATIONAL MEMORIAL TO THE PROGRESS OF THE
COLOURED RACE IN AMERICA PEOPLE IN AMERICA A PEOPLE THAT WALK IN DARKNESS
GODDAMN WHITE MAN'S GOD 2,000,000,000 (TWO BILLIONS) AFRICANS AND NON-WHITE
PEOPLES' REPATRIATION HEADQUARTERS BACK TO AFRICA MOVEMENT DOWN HOME BALL.

"Policía, policía!" The Man approached to turn off the hydrant with one
firm silent motion and then to beat back the wave of plaintive protest. Monroe
and the Negro fled in opposite directions, and his paranoia at the appearance
of the bull prevailed over his recognition of the weirdo spade as an avenger
of the Black Nats, whose meeting Monroe had disrupted last week with his red-
hot reality sandwich.

He walked quickly past papered-over windows above tiny bodegas and winced
in hurried appraisal of the signs announcing Defective Serviss, Public Relation,
Heeler & Advizor, and the elegant Happy Valley Animal Funeral Service (-Cadillac
Transportation-Visitation of Deceased-). He recalled that Harlem was once pub­
licized as the "Happy Valley" for Manhattan millionaires desiring a brownstone,
Saratoga retreat, where you-don't-do-but-simply-are.

Emil once bought a book at the Botánica called How to Get Your Winning Num­
ber and went to an alley down the street to watch Diego, a thirteen-year-old
expert at the numbers game, who learned it from his father, a fundamentalist
convinced that God had put him in this neighbourhood to test his faith through
the numbers game. While Emil was looking on from a doorway, the Man, a ner­
vous rookie, came up and took Diego aside and asked to join the game: Diego
wouldn't let him, and the cop first bullied, then offered to bribe the kid if
he would just forget the whole thing; Diego got scared and started to run,
the rookie called out for him to stop, then pulled his gun and shot him. He
holstered the gun and looked around frantically, seeing that the other kids had
got away and Emil was the only witness. "Listen!"—He was breathing hard and shaking Emil's shoulders. "I told the kid to stop! You heard me, didn't you? Listen, you tell them and they won't believe you, unnerstan? At Police Academy, I took a bloody course in human relations, goddamn, and I tried to be diplomatic with that kid. You saw that, didn't you? But he wouldn't stop when I told him to. What else you gonna do when these kids got no discipline, huh? You wouldn't see no guy who went to West Point actin like that, would ya?" Emil shook himself free and walked off. When he got home, Monroe had to stop him from using the gun he still kept from the Revolution.

Perhaps it was this capacity to react to death that he had feared and envied in Emil. One morning on East 110th Street, a newspaper photographer mistook Monroe for a smackhead, handed him a revolver and offered him a cap of heroin for shooting the next person to turn the corner: Monroe had taken the gun and considered calmly that the cap must contain an overdose, so they would call it homicide-suicide, then returned both without a word. It had never entered his mind to point the gun at the photographer. He closed his eyes tightly, trying not to cry and wishing he could cry -- yes no better than these Boricuas who don't-do-but-simply-are (so many from the Puerto Rican units killed in Korea and Viet-Nam because they couldn't understand commands given by officers who didn't know Spanish) -- and seeing again the old man at the Festival of San Gennaro who stopped every few paces and screamed "Cristo vivo! Muerto, no!" and thrashed viciously at the air, and the old man's face had the features of a mad dwarf, Emil's face.

Some people say of the Jews, don't they, that they went to their extermination like sheep? He was at East 100th Street now, and down the block he could see the Negro-Puerto Rican church, formerly a storefront synagogue. After the sale was made to the new wave of Harlem residents, some of the Jewish congregation asked permission to hold Friday evening services on folding chairs on the
sidewalk in front of their former temple. When the weather grew cold and the
snow came, the street synagogue died out. What else could be expected?

Monroe walked over and sat down on the step. Like the Santo Domingon mediums who attend at the celebrations of saints' feasts, he invoked the spirits of the dozen or so altes, rocking back and forth as they mumbled the Amidah, while inside the Pentecostal preacher begged forgiveness for his sins and at the mention of each the coloured congregation groaned and yelled "Oh Jesus" and "Emmanuel" and moved into "O rise! shine! for the light is a-comin', my Lord says he's comin' by 'n by..." and afterwards at the record dance canteen in the basement the attending minister made sure that the teenagers danced "fish" and not "grind", and outside the altes still swaying and chanting low. But for those who are still awaiting the Messiah, patience is only to be expected. Monroe listened where the folding chairs had stood for that Shabat song learned in Cheder, "The sun in the tree-tops no longer is seen: Come gather to welcome the Sabbath, our Queen", wiped his brow with his shirt-sleeve, and wondered if they were waiting for him in Montreal....

Squeak and pound of big brown boots on thin soiled crusts over Cote de Neiges Snow Hill white, melting into curb-side slush, where spinning wheels of a stalled car make a low slurping siren. Up ahead, the grey of St. Joseph's all those steps a prayer on each one by the really religious you have to be to know that many hundreds of prayers and the gravestones on the slopes of Mont Royal marble against a sky red-orange streaking black. Turning towards Snowdon and drawing up collar to keep dark and warm inside while whiteness blows needles slap across the face and breath forms round cloud something to make that you can watch while you walk. So bloody cold the people keep walking like that with big boots and duffel coats the first days of spring, not realizing.
Monroe’s family had moved to the winter city after Frieda was born and when he was ready to start high school. Because of the large Jewish population, it presented no problem for his father to re-locate the headquarters of the Chronicle there and to continue his favourite pursuit of Jewish scholarship.

Monroe opened the door of the lower apartment of the duplex, placed his books and coat in the hall closet, and slipped noiselessly into his seat at the table, where his parents and sister had been waiting for him to join them in the Shabat dinner.

Eva’s head, covered with a folded, silken white napkin, rose above the lifted glasses, and she turned with her glass slightly towards Monroe. Boray pree ha-gafen. Dark red sweetness through the lips and down the throat making hot all inside. Ah-mayn. She took the match and the light danced in her greyish eyes; she passed one hand lightly over the candles and spoke the remainder of the Kiddush.

Monroe half-closed his eyes and followed the lighted match as it approached the candles in the silver candlestick. Elohaynu melech ha-olam. Fire up and down silver columns resting on white, and soft hands rippling waves that rise into the air above the fire something you make that you can see. Brightness dancing in grey-green, roar of wind knocking against the window. Lee-tzeeat metzraieem. Brightness flickering over dark forms, one standing with head covered, others silent and wide-eyed. Be-ahavah oo-ve-ratzon. I love you. Ah-mayn.

Monroe’s mother resumed her seat, and Boris talked as he carved the chicken and distributed portions, a painting of peasants working in the field on the wall over his shoulder.

"Do you know that at an affair given by the Association of American Hebrew Congregations last week, all the rabbis from Conservative congregations walked
out en masse because shrimp was being served?"

No one seemed surprised.

"I just got the bulletin today, and it sounds like a good story. We're putting it in next month's issue. 'Rift in Jewish Churches,'" he added abstractedly.

"The Reform movement doesn't go as far as the Israelis do," Eva said, without looking up from her plate. "I've heard that most of them are not religious."

"Eva, you don't know what you're talking about! Do you think it's there like it is in America -- with crime and big-business and petty dissensions?"

"Of course. Israelis are human. Their country has murders and fraud and prostitution--"

"Prostitutes? In Israel? Eva, you're being foolish. And besides, what do you want the children to think of their homeland?"

"My God, Boris, why don't you grow up? This is their homeland."

Boris ate more quickly and took larger mouthfuls as he grew more excited. Monroe dreamily considered taking all the copies of the Chronicle in the house and burning them in the Shabat candle flames.

"Boris, aren't you always telling me how much Israel is like America?"

"It is: A European peasant boy will work and save, even steal and stow away just to get to America. He may be fitted to do no better than shine shoes on Broadway to earn his bread, but he'll feel pure, seeing a new world open to him, opportunities he never knew before. That's like Israel -- only there maybe it's richer in spirit than in resources."

Boris put a potato in his mouth and reached for his glass of wine.

Clinking of fork and glass. Roar of wind knocking on the windowpane, and the light flickers.
Eva went to the kitchen and Boris took Frieda on his knee and tried to force her to eat a carrot from a glass bowl on the table.

"C'mon." His voice was pitched to a harsh, furtive baby-talk. "It won't kill you, honey. Go ahead!"

Frieda whined in vague spurts. Monroe tapped his fingers on a thick book resting on his lap and cleared his throat.

"I've been reading Shakespeare."

Boris seemed annoyed as much by his son's quiet, laconic tone as by the remark.

"Why haven't you been studying your Haftorah?"

"I like Shakespeare better."

"Mon-roe, Mon-roe!" Boris exclaimed loudly, holding the carrot on one knee and bouncing Frieda on the other. "Why make a fuss over a literature that is called rich because it has a few classic tragedies, when we have a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and actors were also the heroes?"

"So you don't like Shakespeare, huh?"

"Listen, Monroe." Boris was gesturing with the carrot. "I don't say he's not important. The poets are important, and the philosophers -- sure! But they don't make history. Listen to me! Your Haftorah is Joshua, right? Well, Joshua was a true Jewish martyr -- a hero. When you study Torah, you learn about men who didn't just think their ideals, they lived them!"

Monroe rose to leave. Boris tried to stop him, and Frieda fell off his knee, knocking over the bowl of carrots to the floor. As Frieda sat crying on the floor, surrounded by the carrots and the bowl, which fortunately did not break, Boris grabbed Monroe by the shoulder.

"Monroe, don't go! Sit down for a minute. I want to talk to you."
"Okay," Monroe assented, shrugging off the hand and returning to his chair. "Just keep your hands off me."

He gazed sulkily out of the window, while Boris tried to pacify Frieda. Monroe's mother, wondering what all the racket was about, had entered the room and set about picking up the carrots.

"What's all this yelling about Shakespeare and Haftorah?" she inquired calmly. "Boris, why don't you leave the boy alone?"


In the painting, peasant women become angel-faced shoeshine boys on Broadway, with Star of David engraved on their foreheads, all awaiting the Queen.

"It's a question of responsibility." Boris was cradling Frieda and kissing away her tears. Eva had washed the carrots and replaced the bowl on the table, and then returned to the kitchen. Boris was trying again to force one of the carrots on Frieda, while he told Monroe: "You can't just do what you like all the time. Some things you have to do for your family, for the Jewish people. Yisrael Averim zeh bazeh, Jews are responsible for each other." Boris was indicating to Frieda that if she didn't eat the carrot he was going to eat her up. He picked up a salt shaker, poured a little salt over her arms, and pretended to eat up her arm. "Mmmm-mmmm. Dee-lishus!" He shook his head and licked his lips. "You're a big boy, Monroe. It's time you stop fooling around and get serious."

The Queen come and gone, the peasants back at work, sun sleeping in the tree-top, but the battle still being fought and the walls soon to come tumbling down. Ah-mayn.

He jumped up and ran from the spirits, filled with the desperate joyful
message that he had wanted to hear from them -- that maybe Emil had to die because Monroe was his own Messiah, and that now he waited only for the Queen, his Sabbath bride.
SOLO 1: Leila's Voodoo Whip
Leila's mother was staying with her in Leila's railroad flat across from the Marqueta: in the halls, smell of burning, and somewhere a television with the Spanish-language "What's Your Problem?", the program hated by the Puerto Ricans because it publicizes their problems and follows up with a commercial for roach spray, and on the walls along the stairway, inscriptions usually found only in public toilets -- some by the queers ("Young man with big cock wants to meet same"), nursery rhymsters compared to the junkies:

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Heroin is my shepherd. I shall always want.
It maketh me to lie down in gutters;
It leadeth me beside still madness.
It destroyeth my soul, etc.
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"The junkies, they don scare me." Leila's mother, a middle-aged Creole mulatto, ordinarily gaunt but now pregnant with her fourth child (two had died at birth) talked in between coughing fits about the junkies who had been using the vacant apartment upstairs to fix in, as she led Monroe into the kitchen. She sat before the window, half-open on the fire-escape: this window and another in the front room facing the railway bridge shed a torpid gloom. As he sat across from her at the table, Monroe took in the headlines of La Prensa (HERMIT MONKS PLAN UNIT IN U.S.; PLEASED BY ALONENESS IN CITY) and Maman's proud black eyes and perpetual suggestion of a moustache ("ton ombre de cinq heures," Monroe once kidded her), and the Southern calico dress she had worn for her other pregnancies. "The junkies, they take the sink out an sell it so they can buy junk. So the cold water fall from the ceilin" - she nodded towards a pail on the floor of the front room - "an you got to use umbrella when you go to the toilet. But ah know ah got some rights: Leila couldn bother, so ah take the baseball bat ah keep for the rats, ah go up there an tell em all ah call the cops less they fix the pipes. Say, you hear bout the rats big as cats ah bin seein in here lately? One come through the window outa that garbage!" She pointed to the pail on the fire escape, clutched her throat and shook her head. "Water fallin from the
the ceilin an rats all over. An me with T.B. an a chile comin!"

"If you have T.B., Maman, you better get X-rays."

"You know bout that, son. You know ah don trust doctors now! Not sure bout men either."

Monroe knew the reason Maman came to stay with her daughter a couple of months ago was that her husband had accepted money from the doctor for letting a friend of his watch her being examined.

"Leila's not at home, Maman?"

"Nope, she might go right to the club. Don't you know where she's at, Monroe? Thought you two're pretty tight, huh?"

Monroe tried to smile. "Not much lately, Maman."

"Aw, she jus tryin to make you jealous, that's all! Leila, elle n'est qu'une vraie mauvaise Kaintock!" She laughed too hard and couldn't stop coughing.

Monroe went to Leila's room to wait for her there, and paused before the poster on her door which she had printed for her act at the Uptown, drawing on the Blue Book advertisements for the sporting women: 1910 photograph of Mademoiselle Rita Walker, attempting an alluring pose on a leopard-skin, necklace grazing one of her breasts and jewels adorning her hair-clasp and bikini, with the modified caption:

Yes; this is the Famous

MADEMOISELLE LEILA LEVEAU

The Concert-Saloon Danseuse, who some years ago set the society folks of New Orleans wild about her "Voodoo Whip" dance. She was one of the first women in America to dance in her bare feet.

Nowhere in this country will you find a more popular personage than Mademoiselle Leveau, who is noted as being the handsomest octoroon in America, and aside from her beauty, she has the distinction of possessing a $5000 wardrobe which she uses for her dances. To see her at night is like witnessing the electrical display on the Cascade, at the late St. Louis Exposition....
Leila had been billing herself as Leila Leveau, the Voodoo Queen, since she made a visit last year to New Orleans, where she saw the Haunted House of Madame Lalaurie, who had manacled her Negro slaves with chains, iron bands and spiked collars, and beat them with iron bars and heavy whips, and gouged their flesh with sharp instruments, assisted by her handsome mulatto butler (all this discovered during a fire set by the cook of the house, who preferred death). Leila claimed descent from Marie Leveau, the most celebrated and powerful of the Voodoo queens, who wielded extraordinary supernatural powers, sold charms, like "gris-gris" (a leather bag filled with powdered brick, yellow ochre, and cayenne pepper, with the occasional addition of mail parings, hair, and bits of reptile skin, which when left on a doorstep in the dark of the moon was supposed to work incalculable harm to the occupants of the house), revised the ritual of the cult to include worship of the Virgin Mary and the Catholic saints, and presided over the secret meetings and the St. John's Day festival; and, further back, from Annie Christmas, the two-hundred-and-fifty-pound mustachioed captain of a floating brothel catering to the flatboat men (According to legend, she offered a keg of whiskey on every cruise as a prize to the girl who could make it with the most men in a given time and, naturally, always won it herself; she was strong enough to tow a loaded keelboat from New Orleans to Natchez on the dead run and to whip every bully on the river; and, in the Negro legend, she was a coal-black Negress who killed herself for love and was placed in a coal-black coffin and taken to the river in a coal-black hearse drawn by six coal-black horses, and at the levee the coffin was placed aboard a coal-black barge, and in the dark of the moon Annie Christmas' twelve coal-black sons -- each seven feet tall, all of whom came into the world at one birth -- floated it down the river to the sea.)

Leila obsessively surrounded herself and fortified her mother with the lore of the Vieux Quartier and even a bit of the language of the Creoles. Standing
in the darkened room with the blue walls, Monroe understood so much about the difference between drawing life from death and blindly imitating death that he felt like crying and he fell down on Leila's bed and prayed to her fetishes: over her bed, the beef heart scented with spices and perfumes and wrapped in white crepe, like the love-charm that hung over the bed of Doctor Jack, the voodoo sorcerer, who could not die until it fell to the floor. Monroe raised his head to sniff the scented heart, wishing it was over his bed so that he could hurl it to the floor (What could be more perfect than a voodoo suicide?), and closed his eyes (No point in waiting here much longer: Leila must be at the club by now, perhaps into her Voodoo Whip already, after the intro by Benny, the toothless spade M.C. who still lives entirely in that photograph taken of him years ago arm-in-arm with Cab Calloway: "Let me jus warn the gennelmen gainst keepin their hands in their pockets for our nex attraction: gennelmen -- no shakin hands with the unemployed!...")

Leila comes on torchlit with blue tights and a satin gown embroidered with diamonds and swans' down and a plume like the quadroons wore, bells on her ankles like those of Bras Coupé, master of the Bamboula Dance in Congo Square and Brigand of the Swamp, and a Madras kerchief to form the tignon head-dress of the female slaves at Congo Square. The band is comprised of teen-agers playing cigar-box fiddle, harmonica, bull-fiddle, kettle, cow-bell, pebble-filled gourd, and assorted home-made whistles and horns, some with their horns in their hats, while standing on their heads, howling and screaming "hi-de-hi" and "ho-de-ho" -- an obvious take-off on the original, notoriously nauseating Spasm Band, Inventors of Jass. Kidney-Beans and Lamb-Chops, two Negro underworld characters and itinerant dancers, rush onto the stage and attempt to butt each other into insensibility (when examined by doctors, their skulls were found to be over an inch thick), as in the butting matches at the old Buffalo Bill House. At the same time, Leila does a concert-saloon clodoche (similar to a can-can), while
she is flagellated by Joe the Whipper, the professional flagellant who served the needs of the sidewalk carpet ten-cent strumpets with his perennial black bag of switches, whips, and thin, flexible metal rods. The music stops as Leila -- now in her guise of Annie Christmas -- turns and grabs the whip away from Joe and drives the three men off the stage, screaming the war-cries of the flat-boat bullies: "I'm a child of the snapping turtle! I'm a roaring rip-snorter and chock-full of fight! I can wrestle a buffalo and chaw the ear off a grizzly!" She moves to the front of the stage and deposits in her head-dress the red turkey-feather of the boat-crew champion and Annie Christmas's necklace, with one bead for every nose or ear chawed off and two for every eye gouged out (thirty feet long, and it could have been longer, but Annie counted only white men). Leila stamps up and down, a tin cup filled to the brim with whiskey in each hand, singing the traditional challenge:

I'm looking for the bully,
The bully of the town;
I'm looking for the bully,
But the bully can't be found;
I'm looking for the bully of the town.

And when I walk this levee round,
I'm looking for the bully of the town.

All the torches are extinguished except one, as Leila pulls off the head-dress, letting her hair fall into rolls and knots forming pockets containing the magical paraphenalia of the Voodoo Queen -- pebbles, shells, dried lizards and frogs, bird skulls, bottles of snake oil, and the hoot owl's head with which Doctor Bauregard had unsuccessfully tried to charm the policeman who arrested him. She takes up the beef bones and beats faster and louder, while leaping and chanting "Dansez Bamboula! Badoum! Badoum!" She dons the magic shawl sent to Marie Leveau by the Emperor of China in 1830 and dances with the Voodoo Queen's life-size doll carved out of a single tree trunk, painted in brilliant colours and
bedecked in beads and gaudy ribbons. The drummer rolls up his snare, and Reverend Mr. Turner, chaplain of the Louisiana Legislature in 1870, is wheeled onto the stage, lying on a plain board table, ill with the symptoms of delirium tremens, although he is a teetotaler; he seeks the aid of Malvina Latour, successor to Marie Leaveau, to overcome the effects of the Voodoo charm which he believes has possessed him with an evil spirit. Leila manipulates his hands and rubs his chest with a pungent oil, while chanting a Voodoo exorcism, then steps back, whereupon the Reverend Mr. Turner retches up a black mouse, which leaps to the floor and scampers into the audience in search of a knothole. The preacher stands up cured, the band plays a fanfare, and Leila produces a pistol from underneath the swans' down: it is a weapon known to the New Orleans police of the 1880's as "the Mafia gun" -- a shotgun with the barrels sawed off to about eighteen inches, and the stock sawed through near the trigger, hollowed out and fitted with hinges, so the entire gun can be folded up like a jack knife. As the band plays the chaser, "Swamp-Fire", she goes off firing blanks into the audience (Often, one man will fall down repeatedly, pretending to be hit.)

Monroe smelled the beef heart again, and out of the perfume and the spices he tried to materialize Leila's amazing offstage gentleness, but instead saw her still at the club the time a respectable-looking Negro sitting at the front table turned to his wife during Leila's dance with the voodoo doll and said, "You know, this act doesn't have enough oompha!", whereupon Leila stopped dancing, waved the doll in front of them and yelled "oom-PHA!"

On the wall beside the bed, a copy of General Butler's infamous Woman Order (against the ladies of New Orleans who persisted in wearing Confederate colours, singing Southern songs and contemptuously withdrawing themselves in the presence of the occupying Federal troops) "that hereafter when any female shall, by word, gesture, or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the
United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her vocation." — to which the incensed "women of the town" responded by pasting portraits of General Butler on the insides of their tinkle-pots. On the wall opposite, a magenta-coloured handbill for a "grand national rat-killing match" held on March 10, 1879:

Harry Jennings, of New York, has matched a certain New York dog, whose fighting weight is twenty-three pounds, to kill twelve full-grown rats per minute, for five consecutive minutes, being one of the greatest feats a dog can accomplish -- sixty full-sized rats in five minutes....

Mr. Salvador Habar will also exhibit his wild Mexican boar, and is prepared to pit him against any dog produced.

Harry Jennings will, on this occasion, exhibit twelve varigated rats.

And turn-of-the-century personal items about the hustlers from the "Society" column of the Mascot: "Several amateurs have been enjoying quite a good time of late in the residence at the rear of a grocery store on Deligny Street....It is safe to say that Mrs. Theurer can brag of more innocent young girls having been ruined in her house than there were in any other six houses in the city... etc." And even the famous Storyville ordinance No. 1084 "concerning Lewd and Abandoned Women":-"That it shall not be lawful for any girl notoriously abandoned to lewdness to occupy, inhabit, live or sleep in any one-story building situated within the following limits, viz...."

Fragrence of Leila filled Monroe. When Leila gave herself to him, she sang Chantez-Les-Bas in a whisper, and flowered beneath him with an airy pulsation. But he knew that it was her control as much as her gentleness. In making her movements obedient to his rather than devouring him, there was the same deliberation with which she appropriated the comic spectres of Storyville to protect her and her mother from the death assault of El Barrio. What was not control in...
everything around him tonight, except death? Had Emil discovered in Leila some core of tenderness that he had not? What was tenderness? Not control, not death. A kind of freedom. Perhaps he had never really been free, but he had come close tonight. And a few times before -- once while dancing in his own resusitated mardi gras, a Carnival d'Hiver to celebrate winter's death-swoon....

Spring was when tiny, semi-hardened islands of snow coloured schmutzig grey slithered down the slopes of Mont Royal and melted in a flood of holy water from St. Joseph's to bring out the Blooms and the Baums of Snowdon. The return of the ducks and sailboats to Beaver Lake and the sight of streets and sidewalks appearing clean merely from the fact of their being bare and dry contributed to a shivering from warmth between the legs, a low hum heard in the streets, among the trees and in the classroom, like an airplane's drone or a storm wind outside the window at night, stealing the mind away from a softball game, the new cars and Canadian History.

Sunlight plays over the White Silver Sand hair and skin of Oh please stay by me Diana. And Love Me Tender love me true never let me go for my darling I love you and I always will. How to ask her -- sitting there so straight and shining and a shikseh -- to go to the dance Saturday and One o'clock two o'clock three o'clock rock we're gonna rock around the clock tonight. Class breaking up, better to phone tonight. She passes through the door with the crowd, too late now. Out into the hallway. Faces.

"Hey, Monroe, listen to this one: Jack jumped over the candelstick.... 'Great Balls of Fire'!"

"Scuse me, Don. Gotta go."

Laughing.

"Okay, Monroe. Hey, just don't forget: 'It Only Hurts For a Little While'..."
More laughing.

"Sure." Funny?

When Monroe entered the house, his father was in the hall, speaking over the phone to his editorial assistant about the Chronicle feature on Rabbi Rothstein and Jewish Martyrdom Through The Ages, which, due to more pressing concerns, had still not been completed after so many years. Boris wore a bathrobe that was torn in several places, and out of the cuffs which were stiff from being dipped accidentally in soup and coffee, protruded fingers that toyed with an angry shaving sore on his chin, as his blue eyes fixed themselves on some point beyond the living-room window.

"I don't know, Myer. Of course, a photograph of a rare and recently-discovered Rubens would dress up the section on Daniel nicely, but if the lions are as realistic and ferocious as that, then perhaps it might be too extravagant. A little pushy, you know? Especially if the Rabbi Rothstein pic is on the same page."

Monroe delayed hanging up his jacket, as he stood listening to his father and turning the pages in one of his mother's poetry books left open on the hall bookcase. His eyes paused momentarily at the line, "The one place in our body where we are all children." Boris did not seem to notice his son's entrance. His hand moved from the shaving sore to a torn pocket of the robe.

"Mm-hmm...m-m-m...That's right, Myer. Forget about things like the painting and just get the facts straight. Things like dates of birth and death. And not just the year -- make sure you get the month too; the month is important."

Monroe saw his father's hand fumbling in the pocket of the robe.

"M-m-m...Hah! Horoscopes. That's funny, Myer. But listen, Myer, I'm serious. You stick to the facts and leave the poetry to me."
Boris turned and grew conscious of the appearance made by his hands moving around the torn pocket, as his eyes met the curiosity in Monroe's and took in the lips parted and bent in vague repulsion. His face darkened, he withdrew the hand from his pocket and turned back to the living-room with a nervous motion. His voice was hurried and thin.

"Uh...listen, Myer. I'm going to leave you now, and I'll see you at the office tomorrow. And remember what I told you about the facts. Okay?...Fine. Goodbye, Myer."

Boris stared at a point somewhere behind Monroe's head and spoke in a strangely soft, flat tone: "Hang up your jacket and go eat your supper, son."

Monroe obeyed, thinking that this was the first time his father had called him "son".

Boris looked down at the wrinkled photograph of Rabbi Rothstein lying before him on the telephone table. He picked it up, walked slowly to the fireplace in the living-room and stopped there, turning over the photograph in his hands.

Monroe's date wore a thin, white dress and pink lipstick softer than any his mother ever used. As they entered the school building, she positioned his arm and grasped it firmly. They stood for a moment at the entrance to the gymnasium, taking in the balloons and streamers, the muskians dressed in long red sashes and oversized turques because of the Carnival d'Hiver theme of the dance, and the huge Bon Homme Carnival leaping around the dance floor and laughing like a Santa Claus with a lighted firecracker up his ass.

A White Sport Coat And a Pink Carnation -- I'm all dressed up for the dance. Tan shoes and pink shoelaces, a polka-dot vest, and man oh man - We're gonna rock rock rock till broad day-light - and a big Panama with a purple hat-band.

"Come, Monroe, let's dance."

The band was playing a slow rock. The floor was dark except for spotlights
playing over the dancers. She led him to the center of the floor and pulled his arms to her shoulder and waist.

"Don't you know how to dance, Monroe? It's okay, I'll show you. You're so shy!"

Oh please stay by me. Whiteness and warmth and two hearts beating and hair with the scent of ocean breeze. Honeycomb. Forehead and nose curving like the motion of a waterfall. Love me tender love me sweet till the end of time. You have made my life complete let me make you mine. Warmth spreading all over inside with a low rumble rising and trembling from hot strength. Great Balls of Fire. Pulling closer and closer. Oh, please -

The one place - "Please not so close" - in our body - "Please don't" - where - "No-o-o" - we all - "O-o-oh" - are - "Get away from me" - children - "Please".

She was whimpering and her flesh had turned cold and trembling. Couples around them stopped dancing to stare, and Bon Homme too stood silent, watching. Monroe closed his eyes tightly.

After the weekend, Monroe's father brought home a trumpet for him. Eva had suggested the present, because she noticed that lately her son had grown sullen; although she did not say so, she hoped that he would grow to love the instrument and that music would remain with him. Boris followed up the idea enthusiastically, because he thought that interest in a musical instrument might encourage Monroe in his studies of the Haftorah portion he was preparing to chant at his Bar-Mitzvah.

"After all," he explained to Eva and Monroe, as he made the presentation, "didn't Benny Goodman receive his first clarinet in a synagogue?"

Monroe held the instrument up to the light from the living-room window, and watched the gleam playing up and down the silver surface. He pushed the keys and blew lightly into the mouthpiece. Don't Be Cruel to a heart that's true.
In the roar of wind outside the living-room window, perhaps all the sounds and songs of the world. It Only Hurts For A Little While.

"Why don't you love me?" Monroe cried to the beef heart. Didn't Leila realize that all this was a grotesque parody on the hell around her that she was trying to escape? The Boricuas had their own voodoo, brujería, and they were the victims and the aggressors in continual matches of rat-killing and butting and bullying and Lewd and Abandoned fucking, and they were as desperate as the New Orleans dissipés she invoked, like the Chevalier, who abhorred the ideals of equality which had developed among the Creoles around 1800 and appeared in public dressed always in powdered wig and queue, knee breeches, silk stockings, frizzled cuffs and shirt-front and silver buckles on his slippers and accompanied always by his dog and monkey, or Colonel Charles Starr, who used to hire Negroes to meet his steamboat at various landings and hail him as "Massa Kunnel" to impress his gambling partners, and who died penniless after pawning his overcoat for the best five-dollar dinner obtainable at his favourite restaurant, which he deliberately turned upside down on the table. Couldn't she see that their grimy expiations belonged to a Storyville that was just as much El Barrio? A Smoky Row of the battling bawds (Fightin' Mary, Kidney-Foot Jenny, One-Eyed Sal, and Gallus Lu) who sat in the doorways of their dives in their loose, dirty Mother Hubbards and spat tobacco juice in men's eyes and knocked them down and rolled them that was just as much 110th Street? And a barrel-house of racked barrels filled with phony home-made Irish whiskey, brandy and port, and usually knockout drops (to make sure where all the customer's money went) that was just as much the Uptown and the Salle Sappho? Spanish Harlem, Montreal, the world were the Blue Book's dead promises of "jolly" girls, and
at the same time living reminders of death, like "the narrow house", the brick ovens above ground where because of the moisture burials were made of all bodies in New Orleans except those of Jews (The land was promised to them, remember?). The altes had spoken to Monroe from Emil's river grave the words of the grave-tender Leila had met in New Orleans, "These folks who come round to check n see their relations' tombs are locked, double-locked, triple-locked, with steel doors -- they wouldn have to do that if they'd treated em proper in life." Yet, she didn't realize: she would continue to draw life from death until she saw it as death, and she would keep the steel doors on her Storyville locked until she found out that they don't exist for ghosts. But Monroe would never be the one to tell her: he envied her too much.

He wondered if there was a way left for him now to discover some love-charm in this brutal nightmare of a voodoo spell that had possessed him tonight, and he thought of his music -- a new thing, sort of a jazz synthesis of his mother's Yiddish songs and the Baroque pieces he had studied, a way of playing himself instead of running the tired chord changes, which was the way of the bop imitators like the other musicians at the club who were always putting down his playing.... On the remaining wall, a sheet music cover picturing "The Darktown Banjo Class" with the title "Off the Key" and the "Massa" saying "If yous can't play de music, jess leff de banjo go!" And beside it, an article from the New Orleans Picayune, June 17, 1917, on "JASS AND JASSISM":

Why is the jass music, and therefore, the jass band? As well ask why is the dime novel or the grease-dipping doughnut? All are manifestations of a low streak in man's tastes that has not yet come out in civilization's wash. Indeed, one might go farther, and say that jass music is the indecent story syncopated and counter-pointed. Like the improper anecdote, also, in its youth, it was listened to blushingly behind closed doors and drawn curtains, but like all vice, it grew bolder until it dared decent surroundings and there was tolerated because of its oddity...
In the matter of jass, New Orleans is particularly interested, since it has been widely suggested that this particular form of musical vice had its birth in this city -- that it came, in fact, from doubtful surroundings in our slums. We do not recognize the honor of parethood, but with such a story in circulation, it behooves us to be last to accept the atrocity in polite society, and where it has crept in we should make it a point of civic honor to suppress it. Its musical value is nil, and its possibilities of harm are great.

He laughed and thought of his father. Monroe had spent so much agony over the realization that he could never say quite enough with his axe, that after he had sapped himself and sunk into himself breathless, there was still so much to say: yet he would never believe it was just a stupid horn, it would always be important to him, as long as his music might make Leila understand about Emil and even begin to show his father where things were at. After all, hadn't music always been his way of breaking down the steel doors of the "narrow house"?

Out into Montreal's winter night, the comfort of downtown lights that shine on everyone the same, and-

"La Bohème!" -exhaled gently in a puff of Gitane between sips of panachet by René the drummer at the Grand National twist parlor on the Main; also, from Louis the Lush, bass-player, formerly of Perez Prado, etc.: "Oui, mon vieux! La Bohème! Bon pour le jazz." - beamed breathless between quick trips to the vodka tap behind the bar, with spaces in the middle of words, while he downs his fifth before the boss comes back and catches him copping the juice. "Ah, oui! At that place, good music -- for to listen! Not like here, Taber-naclé! Bonsoir, mon vieus." Murmured in parting, as le patron returns, points to his watch, barks, "Louis! Musique! Okay?" Heard also from Sylvestre, the Université de Montréal student next door ("C'est las meilleure pour les jeunes filles! Mum-ah!").
La Bohème, La Bohème, La Bohème! -- spoken so often and always with the same serenity, that the name begins to assume the parfums of Parisian glaces and the aroma that perpetually slips underneath the doors of Chinatown restaurants.

Close to eleven, when things should start happening, below St. Catherine St., away from the boîtes and cabarets à la mode, along a business street assez tranquille, and then a long way down an alley that's easy to miss and tout à coup the flashing red neon sign.

Across from the entrance, someone pissing in the shadow of a car, and the trickle spreads underneath the car into a pool that mirrors the neon. Farther along the wall, hugging a doorway opposite the entrance, a kid with flaxen hair who giggles and slaps his knee and gasps, "Haut Homme! Haut Homme! Oh-h-h-h!," and points to a tall, dark figure who rocks in and out of the doorway with arms and fingers extended electrically above his head.

Inside, a young Mulatto sits on a checking-room counter and shakes his head violently over a French-Canadian kid, flushed and gesturing wildly, shouting through cigarette smoke and R & B organ from the juke box. From the end of the bar, located just beyond the checking-room, the black body of Buttercup, the proprietress, balloons up between two middle-aged businessmen.

As Monroe takes a chair at a corner table away from bright lights that might reveal his age, the zombie Haut Homme staggers in, his arms still upraised, his expression frozen in a sickly grin. Buttercup waddles over to meet him before he can get any further into the club, and after some discussion, at cross-purposes, Haut Homme is helped out to the street, where he is left to lurch about as before. There are others like him inside, sidling along the walls and pretending to search for the washroom.
The juke box is turned off and lights are lowered for the featured group -- a ten-piece band, with rhythm section, trumpets, trombones, saxophones. Monroe has boldly ordered a beer, but it stands in front of him untouched, as he waits for the opening —

Jazz cadences in brassy clarity crystallize smoke rings, cause diamond brooches to shiver and glasses to rattle on table tops, strain against the walls, forming a tight circle of sound bulging at the seams. When the horns are loudest, it seems that all the people's voices shouting at once shake the foundations of the building. During the applause, the musicians bow their heads, finger their instruments over their chests.

Monroe picks up the glass of beer: yellow bitterness through the lips and down the throat making cold all inside, and in the glass, the dark forms of Jewish martyrs standing perpetually on the brink who once knew the power of brass instruments and shouting to create a tumble. And now, here -- in answer to the hunger, the straining here is the great happening of this world. And all the rest -- Haftorah, Bar-Mitzvah, Yisrael -- no longer possible....

Just so quickly had he decided against a Bar-Mitzvah, sorry only that he may have disappointed Cantor Grossman, his tutor, in his Haftorah portion, a gnomic orthodox Jew who knew about people and explained to Monroe the sight of the opening of the heavens on Shavuoth night to the deserving and so must have had little trouble really in comprehending Monroe's acceptance of a new world.

Monroe walked over to Leila's desk and picked up her copy of the Blue Book, noted the lattice-like floral design on the cover and leafed through it, impressed more than usual by its authoritarian tone ("Anyone who knows to-day from yesterday will say that the Blue Book is the right book for the right people.") It occurred to him that no matter how often the walls came tumbling
down, they would always reappear somewhere, but for him either to accept or to break down the steel doors of Leila's Storyville, or Emil's, or his father's, was only misplaced martyrdom as long as his own remained to be dealt with.

Also on the desk, some music manuscript sheets. Monroe picked them up. It was the beginning of a suite Emil had been working on, entitled *La Isla Encantada*. Monroe hummed through it with growing excitement, as he realized that all of *El Barrio* was there -- the ironic-sweet strains of the Spanish ancestors, followers of Ponce de Leon, seekers after gold and youth and captors of neither; the Boricua's customary grief-filled ataque of crying, screaming, shaking, falling on the floor with arms rigidly extended and hands clenched; the church services that began "high" with the funereal "Come, O Come Emmanuel", chanted by the all-Negro female choir, and finished always with "This is the time for Joy and Mirth, My Lord says he's comin' by 'n by..."; the kids gyrating over the street and at the study club Twistorama, where the Freedom Singers carry signs saying STRENGTH THROUGH STUDY and KNOWLEDGE IS POWER; and all the carny gansters like The Batman, who used to rob tenements back in the 40's, dressed in a large black cloak and two small garden rakes with clawlike prongs sticking out the sides. And there were even some of the charts from Leila's act - Of course! This is why Emil had been visiting her at the club, this is why Emil had come to New York: He was sucking every drop of the groove juice of East Harlem and the Uptown to pour into his romantic fucking social epic about these successors to the Jews in the role of the oppressed, using *El Barrio*, the soured Happy Valley - *Isla Encantada* -- what was actually here, all around!

Monroe had to sit down to catch his breath. It was clear now: *this* would be his way -- he would finish Emil's composition, finding place in the Boricua
slum for the anguished endurance of the *altes* and Haut Homme and the hollow jollity of the Salle Sappho and the Storyville pros and weirdos. And so offer some answer to the questioning faces floating about Emil's body.

He could see from Emil's notes that two movements remained to be written — *"La Marqueta"* and *"Saints' Feast"*. Monroe checked his watch and found that he still had some time before his gig. He ran out to the Marqueta, taking Emil's music and kissing *Maman* on his way and wishing her luck in her crusade against the rats.

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SOLO 2: Marqueta of the Mind
"Suppose vun hass a long vacation. Lots of time and lots of money and nothing to do but travel around the world, or even around the country, or even just the city -- and enjoy whatever presents itself. Then the world becomes a Marqueta of the mind."

So had Emil declaimed before the cityscape walking with Monroe down Park Avenue past the invisible Check-Point Charlie that everyone senses at 96th Street, presuming to guide Monroe though he himself had arrived in the city not much before. Now in sight of the rows of stalls under the railway arch, Monroe couldn't suppress a consciousness of Emil's spirit mocking the deliberation of his present quest at the Marqueta.

The lights were off and the Marqueta was officially closed until the early morning, but a freakish few purveyors of night mysteries remained straggled about the entrance.

In the perennial shadow of the el tracks, Transistor Alley: maybe a hundred or more men along the wall asleep or leaning over and upwards towards their various connections (mariachis, Beatles, newscasters, preachers) with the heat-shrouded heavens. Monroe walked down the row, eyes averted from the sprawled and hunched forms, deliberately listening.

"FOLKS, EVERY YEAR OVER 300 NEW YORKERS EITHER JUMP OR FALL TO THEIR DEATHS, SO YOU BETTER BELIEVE RAY CHARLES WHEN HE SINGS (MUSIC) 'PLEASE HELP ME I'M FALL-IN!'... ANDANTE ANDIAMO, REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FOR NEW YORK CITY COUNCILLOR REPRESENTING THE EAST HARLEM DISTRICT, TONIGHT SPOKE AT A CITIZENS' MEETING IN WHICH HE DECLINED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-BIAS HOUSING BILL, RECOMMENDING INSTEAD 'VOLUNTARY INTEGRATION' PROMOTED BY A 'TENANTS' COUNCIL', WHICH HE
TERMED 'A MORE AMIABLE COURSE'. IN THE RECORDING OF HIS SPEECH MADE FOR AIRING ON OUR NEWS BROADCAST, HE CONTINUED: 'DO YOU WANT TO BE SHOT? DO YOU WANT TO BE ROBBED? IF YOU DON'T, YOU"D BETTER SUPPORT THE TENANTS' COUNCIL -- BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO GET RID OF CRIME AROUND HERE. OTHERWISE, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU. THE PARTY OF MY OPPONENT, WHICH IS INFILTRATED WITH AGITATORS, PINKOS, NATIONALISTS AND NON-RESIDENTS, HAS CHARGED ME WITH BEING UNFAIR TO PUERTO RICANS. LET ME REMIND YOU THAT I COME FROM A MINORITY GROUP TOO: MY FATHER CAME FROM ITALY -- STEERAGE. MOST OF YOU BORICUAS, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, CAME TO NEW YORK FROM SAN JUAN BY THE NIGHT FLIGHT -- AIRPLANE -- AM I RIGHT?'... AND NOW, FROM THE EAST HARLEM PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, REVEREND ERNEST GOODFELLOW, EX-MAGICIAN FAMOUS FOR HIS MIDNIGHT MASS LIVE NATIVITY PERFORMANCE AND A RECENT SERMON TO A PREDOMINANTLY TEENAGED AUDIENCE ON 'JESUS AND HIS GANG', TONIGHT PRESENTS HIS FOURTH-OF-JULY PAGENT, 'BIRTH OF A NATION'. REV. GOODFELLOW-'FRIENDS, FREEDOM IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS! YOUR BUSINESS! MY BUSINESS! THE CHURCH'S BUSINESS! AND THE POWER OF THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IS THE STRONGEST DEFENSE OF FREEDOM AGAINST COMMUNISM. LOOK AT CHINA. THE FAITHS THERE WERE WEAK, AND THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES HAD NOT ENOUGH POWER. REMEMBER WHAT ECCLESIASTES SAID: 'WOE UNTO HIM THAT IS ALONE WHEN HE FALLETH.'...."

(An elderly Methodist slaps his knee and shortles, "He sounds like he's on the telephone with God Almighty, doesn't he?") Monroe started back along Transistor Alley, this time looking full at the stick-limbed, pallid-faced old men, ironically turned on by their sound-boxes, yet -- and yes he knew that he had felt exactly the same a thousand times playing his horn -- striving for something
that was not there. And he knew that each one of them, if given the chance to return to that other Isla Encatada, would refuse, since he would have to entertain his whole village as a typical New York millionaire, complete with watch chain.

At the entrance again, Monroe passed up TIME JUSTICE LOVE MONEY ART LABOUR FRIENDSHIP - WHAT LIES IN YOUR FUTURE? - MADAME DORA ADVISES (Madame Dora attempts to pull him over to the booths where beautiful gypsy girls motion towards their couches from behind curtains adorned with half-moons, stars, constellations and crucifixes) and paused to hear the spiel of Luis, the octogenarian parrot from South America, ostensibly trained to rattle off anybody's sales pitch in return for a swig of brandy, actually the front for Ahmed Abdullah, a swarthy Arab ventriloquist and dope merchant who sits cross-legged surrounded by his wares in his nearby tent. Luis was currently pushing Chinese tea for the LOONG FOK KEE TEA CORPORATION:

"OUR PRODUCTION IS MADE FROM THE WORLD-FAMOUS TEA PRODUCT OF FORMOSA. IT IS A REAL QUENCHER TO THIRSTS, A STIMULUS TO APPETITES AND KEEPING ONE REFRESHING. OUR TEA IS ALWAYS ON TOP OF THE SELLING-LIST OF THE TEA TRADE OF OUR COUNTRY, AND HAS WON THE WORLD-WIDE REPUTATION. OUR 'DRAGON AND BAT' AND 'DOUBLE LEAF' BRANDED TEA ARE OF THEIR HIGHEST QUALITIES WHICH ARE CAREFULLY SELECTED BY OUR EXPERTS AND PACKED BY SKILLED HANDS FOR LOCAL AND WORLD MARKET. TRUST YOURSELF TO A NEW EXPERIENCE IN DRINKING OUR BRANDED TEA. IT GIVES YOU A HEALTHY, WHOLE-SOME, FRANGRENT DRINK AND WE GUARANTEE WITH ASSURED SATISFACTION."

Inside the tent, Ahmed Abdullah chuckles and runs greasy green grains of hasheesh through his fingers. He held the keys to the kingdom in his gold-encrusted turban, and it was within his imagination to make of his kingdom a vast experimental farm for the raising of Grade A government-inspected acid-
high chickens! Knowing world bank trends, stock fluctuations, etc., Ahmed was convinced that acid-high chickens would fetch a pretty price on the world market, recent wage fixing to the contrary. (How was he to know -- poor slob of a foreigner -- that his decision was to provoke the Trial of the Century?).

Monroe ran from the Marqueta as he had run from the river, fearing what Emil had once warned him -- that music like *satori* cannot be sought, for when we listen outside of ourselves we hear only ourselves and when we listen down into ourselves, there is only the silence. There was a time when he had desired this silence: during the summer at Camp Hatikvoh, where he was music councillor and piano accompanist for the brats doing *My Fair Lady* (although he always had to cover for them by playing melody instead of accompaniment and by altering tempos and keys at every rehearsal) and where he practised every morning on a dusty upright absent its top, bench, and even a few keys in the upper octaves in the old recreation hall that awoke with a yawn and a stretch lasting as long as the dew on the bushes beside the balcony; there he competed with the music of sun-sprinkled, pock-marked oaken benches like the ones in the small, rundown synagogue where he might have had his Bar-Mitzvah and tattered posters on the wall announcing in extravagent colours a penny fair, a twist contest and a concert featuring camp folksingers, and during the vibrations of a particularly dirge-like chord of Chopin's Prelude No. 20 in C minor (for which he was working out jazz variations), he strained for an impossible silence at the core that would tell the sad story of the old men outside the walls and around the pit, and that would expiate something important as yet left undone.

But months later, that autumn afternoon of the first lesson with Rob at the music school in New York, city sound filled him without his wishing one way or the other -- the feeling this time again a kind of freedom, the freedom of confession to Rob and absolution by the birds....
Outside the Sloane House of the "Y", mist rising on the Hudson like the mist on the lake at camp, and sharp air and thoughts of football and roar of traffic on the parkway and smell of freshly-baked bread from the German bakery down the block. He pulled his coat collar over his ears and shifted from one foot to the other, but allowed waves of cold to ripple over him and giggled, because he was on his way to groove with Rob, Mr. Out-of-Sight, the truly boss horn-man, the master.

"Where do I get the crosstown bus?" (Doo-dah...Doo-dah) Sitting slumped into a seat at the back and peering through sunglasses at the three-dimensional face puffing real smoke over Times Square and shuddering now more from the rumble and roar of the bus than from the cold. When he closed his eyes tightly, the people around him, the walls and ceiling of the bus all fell away and there remained the bus as a bed of springs and steel chassis, bouncing along on four monstrous wheels through ribbons of smoke from the subway outlets.

The bus moved past the club where Monroe had heard Rob play the night before and in between sets had got from him the promise of a lesson today; it yielded briefly to a surge of Fifth Avenue pedestrians and rumbled across the intersection, past the library, past the sea of yellow taxicabs, on to Grand Central, Lexington Avenue, more taxicabs, more pedestrians -- all framed by beetling canyons of concrete, steel and glass, and seldom seeing the face of the sun.

At Second Avenue, a crowd at the base of a whitewashed bank building, squinting skyward with relish, respectfully withdrawn from a large space on the sidewalk. A middle-aged man with walrus moustache and shabby clothes ventures into the periphery of the space and his voice crackles above the screech of approaching sirens, as he speaks animatedly of Jehovah's Kingdom. Monroe doesn't bother to search the sun-drenched rooftops for the quaking desperado.

Off the bus and a bouncing walk downtown-East Side (Scooby-da-be-doodah ba-
de-doodly-bop-be-da. Yeah!) In the duck-pond of the park it was yes his own very actual groovy-as-a-movie face ah slowly draw back your thick lips to reveal brightness like that of the tiepin haughtily embedded in the funereal cloth of your only tie the surfaces catch the sun's gleam and send it shimmering through the ripples created by a nearby duck and off with the dark glasses to delight in the further two dancing pinpoints of light produced by the reflection of your eyes fiercely indissoluble before the duck's motion You found yrself a soul brother today sweety and he's gonna show ya how t blow yr ass off.

A familiar figure leaning over the edge of the pond at the other end. A breeze from the trees over his head ruffled the man's flowing white hair and oversized pant legs, as he extended a fistful of crumbs to an assemblage of swans and ducks. Monroe waited until he had reached his side before speaking:

"Hey, Whitey! What's happening, man?"

Whitey turned from the birds with a start. It was only slowly that the deep wrinkles of his forehead relaxed in timid acceptance of a friend's greeting and the tired eyes mirrored the young man's ebullience with a slight glow. At the height of the swing era, everyone had known Whitey, tenor saxophonist with Fletcher, Benny, all the great bands. But now cats like Rob would have to introduce him in clubs - "Folks, there's a swingin veteran in the house I'd like for you all to meet. Let's have a big hand...!"

"Hi-ya! Ain't it a bitch of a day? Guess I'm just a fair-weather friend. On days like today, I gotta come see my buddies." He pointed to a couple of imminently craning snowy forms and smiled. "Look how much class they got, eh?"

Whitey looked as if he wasn't eating enough. Monroe knew that he hadn't worked for a hell of a long time, that he had actually stopped looking for gigs.

"Whitey, what the hell are you doing here feeding the motherflippin ducks?"
"Lookit, man." He smiled and pointed again, "Jest look how much class they got."

Whitey's a sweet old cat, but he's such a schmuck y can't even feel sorry for him. He's still got his horn, he got his lip and a bit o that old wind. But instead of hustlin for gigs, he's gotta sit out here and starve with the ducks.

"How bout joining me, kid?" Whitey was on his knees before the edge of the pond, and one super-daring swan was eating out of his hand.

"Sorry, Whitey, I got better things to do. Take care."

Whitey turned reluctantly from his charge, and the sad strange eyes followed the youth as he started towards the street. Monroe was bobbing his head slightly and swinging his horn with peculiar vehemence.

Can't nobody bullshit you today sweety gonna blow with Rob today and maybe he'll set you up turn you on to a gig and then yr groovin high and you'll hold on tight mm-hmm.

Before the door of the office in the decaying brownstone building, confused noises from inside -- squeaks, and a deep rich voice muttering softly, and now and then, brief cascading phrases from a trumpet.

All the cats say he's pretty weird. Maybe he's forgotten all about you, sweety. Maybe he'll say he hasn't got time or something. Naw! Rob wouldn do that.

"C'mon in," the voice responded to Monroe's knock, and he opened the door on Rob sitting upright but not stiffly in the center of the room holding his horn, the top of his head completely shaven, except for a smooth high ridge down the center like the Iroquois, with an open cage suspended from the light fixture above his head and three or four multicoloured budgies and canaries hovering about. Rob watched Monroe with small dark eyes set deep in his round black face, and when he spoke, his lips formed a compact pucker pulling on his
wispy goatee.

Rob motioned towards a chair and Monroe dropped down on the edge, keeping a wary eye on the birds, which had settled on Rob's shoulders to contemplate the visitor. (Jesus, what a weird scene! Damn you if ya don break up in a minute, sweety!) For an uncomfortable eternity, he tried to avoid Rob's sage grin.

"'Rob' is for 'Robin'," the older musician said finally, and at this they both broke up. "I love to have birds around me," he continued gravely. "They give me a sense of freedom, they make me wanta groove high. Y' know? And they're a good audience. They have more acute hearing than humans." Rob's voice dropped several decibels, took wing and echoed through moist caverns, pausing now and then before radiant apertures leading to the surface. "I don know bout you, son, but I feel that I gotta have an audience all the time. Y' know? I can't play just for myself. I have to know that someone is diggin. So I blow for the birds."

Rob smiled at Monroe's confusion. "Well, get out your horn, boy, and let's see how the birds dig you!"

How the birds!..Jesus, if someone here ain't off his nut!

"It's like I was tellin you. The birds catch the higher frequencies, the wild, way-out sound vibrations a horn makes when the musician gets excited. Usually, they start to sing along, and then you know shore nuff that you're blowin with the real soul that gets across. Y'know? Well, go ahead son. Play somethin."

Monroe brought the horn to his lips nervously. He blew a few scales and exercises to warm up, and then he eased into the tune he had written that morning, called Groovin With Rob. He tried to blow it the way he heard it in his head, the way he had been scatting it all day.
The birds remained silent and motionless. Rob raised his hand to stop Monroe.

"Now, c'mon son, let's try it once again. For the birds this time, huh?"

For the birds! Christ, man, I don't care who you are. You got some god-damn chutzpah to put those motherflippin' stoolies in judgment over me!

There were beads of perspiration on Monroe's forehead and his eyelids were taut over pressure of tears and a flare of prismatic sun-rays. He blew out his anger in a flaming fluid torrent. He blew until his torso rocked back and forth and the tears began to escape his eyes. The twitters of the birds and the fluttering of their wings filled his ears, and Rob chuckled, "Yeah!" He opened his eyes to let the liquid bathe his hot cheeks and for the first time he grooved really grooved high with Rob.

Monroe found himself heading downtown along Park Avenue towards Ralph's pad, where he could count on having a close approximation to a saints' feast celebration Fourth-of-July night (or, as a matter of fact, any holiday that gave an excuse) and where he could also find safety from the Black Nat still on his tail, because Ralph himself was an official on the Nats' executive almost since its formation shortly after his arrival from Montreal, where he had tried to make it as a drummer in the Air Force marching band and had decided to cut out when the band was stoned by militant séparatistes for playing "Britania Rules the Waves in the Ste. Jean Baptiste Day Parade. (Nevertheless, Ralph had total empathy, as he explained on the way to a Black Nats meeting two months ago in the basement on 125th Street, where Monroe got hung with this albatross....

"Shit, man! You know what I did?" Ralph's Cheshire cat smile flashed neon behind a confusion of giggly clipped syllables and gestures like the darting
adjustment of his glasses on the broad bridge of his nose that Monroe remembered from camp, where Ralph had been stable-boy and occasional drummer with Monroe for the shows. "Why, I put my fist through that motherfuckin RCAF shield and left the bass drum there in the middle of the street and I be fucked if I didn jus run right into that hailstorm and throw my arms around those beautiful separatistes cats! Because, I tell ya baby, I under-stood! I talked to those cats and I found out that here is where I belong, fightin for my people same as they are fightin for theirs. So I came home as their ambassador, as representative from the French-speakin people seekin their separate North American state to the merican Negro seekin his separate state. Now here I am takin you to see a meetin where plans are bein discussed for the Alliance pour l'Indépendence to join with the Black Nats in blowin up the Statue of Liberty, that glorified pat on the back for two centuries of White Anglo-Saxon mericans. And what was I when you knew me, huh?" - inquiringly jerking his head back a couple of times - "a fuckin sad-ass nigger-boy stable-hand for spoiled-rotten kids of Jewish millionaires, up to my ears in horse-shit and sayin Yassuh Boss to fuckin twelve-year-olds! Now I tell ya, baby, there is fuckin progress, n'est-ce pas?"

Monroe remained silent, still somewhat paranoid in the inner city of the Blacks, gripping his trumpet case more firmly as if this were his only defense against faces that might be reproving (Yeah!...Musician, see?...Jazz -- you better believe it, baby!...Almost a soul brother, huh?)

Inside, the chairs were all taken and Monroe and Ralph had to stand at the back, in front of the sign saying FREEDOM MEANS SEPARATION and the row of stone-faced Black Nat Enforcers (also known as "the Boppers", from the name given to the old fighting gangs which gave them their training, in some cases interrupted by Riverside or "zip five" -- five years maximum -- at the state correctional institution at Comstock), in their black capes and berets emblematic of the Nats'
strong-arm corps; they all seemed uniquely unbothered by the choking heat which, Ralph knew, would grow worse once the speeches started.

While they were waiting, Ralph sketched for Monroe the history of the Nats' organization: In the fifties, as the Saints, one of the East Harlem bopping gangs, the members got caught up in the national wave of social protest around the time the law was out to squash them and took an oath (by dipping their hands in black paint mixed with blood) to quit dope and petty violence in the interest of the cause of their people, which demanded the strongest possible shows of force.

The speech by Duke Doleful, so called and elected president because of his reputation for being at once the most sober and the most sophisticated of the Nats (He wore a bow-tie at all times and sported a Dali moustache, enough in itself to set him apart from most Negroes) commenced:

"BROTHER NATS, THE WHITE ESTABLISHMENT IN NORTH AMERICA HAS HAD ITS DAY!
WE KNOW THAT WHITEY IS A DEVIL AND A SERPENT, AN ANAEMIC DEGENERATION FROM THE ORIGINAL HOT-BLOODED TRULY MASCULINE NEGRO AND GALLIC MEN. WE KNOW THAT THROUGH HIS COWARDICE AND CUNNING WHITEY HAS GAINED AND MAINTAINED HIS POWER, AND WE KNOW NOW THAT HIS POWER STRUCTURE DUPED US GANGS INTO FIGHTING AMONG OURSELVES, MESSING WITH FRATRICIDE, WASTING AND LOSING PRECIOUS BLACK HUMANITY, BECAUSE WE COULD NOT IDENTIFY THE ENEMY. BUT WE ARE LEARNING ALL THE TIME THAT OUR ENEMY IS NOT OUR OWN BLACK BROTHERS, AND NOT THE COMMUNISTS -- THE VIET CONG NEVER CALLED ME A NIGGER, DID HE? -- AND THAT OUR REAL ENEMY HAS HAD HIS DAY! AND, I TELL YOU BROTHER NATS, OUR DAY HAS COME AGAIN! (Scattered shouts of "Make it plain, Brother Duke! Make it plain, Mr. Pres'dent!") THE WHITE DEVIL HAS NO PLACE IN A STATE SET UP FOR THE ORIGINAL AND TRUE MEN.
SO WE MUST BEGIN TO REDEEM OUR POWER BY ATTACKING AND GAINING CONTROL OF WHITEY'S SYMBOLS AND INSTITUTIONS...."

Monroe shifted his feet, closed his eyes, felt the tightening fist of congested air baptizing him stale and soggy, and behind him the unmoving Nat Enforcers, each like Leila's life-sized dolls or Emil's voodoo dolls that he whittled unceasingly in the bunk at Camp Hatikvoh as he purveyed anti-Fascist indoctrination to the kids and drilled them in undercover investigation of Nazi leaders in hiding.

Finally, the period of questions and comments from the floor (questions like "When exactly will our day come, Duke Doleful?" and "Will French be an official language in the new state, Monsieur?"); Monroe muttered "FUCKAROUND!" and jumped to his feet: "Hey! I've been listening to these speeches, and frankly I think that you're adopting the methods of the group you're putting down. I don't think you want to eliminate Whitey's corruption as much as you want a piece of the action for yourselves! That's what gaining and maintaining the power means, for chrissake: by the time you've gained it, you don't have anything worth maintaining: Don't you see that basing your state on superiority of race means you've sold to this power sickness even before you start?..."

"Hey! Wait a minute!" Duke Doleful and the other speakers rose. The Enforcers twitched with anticipation, and a couple of them made moves for Monroe.

"C'mon, you dumb mother! We're splittin!" Ralph grasped Monroe's arm and steered him towards the door.

Within sight of the Park Avenue tunnel now, and hardly anyone walking except the two of them. A sporadic drizzle making his perspiring body shudder: even the weather an aspect of the betrayal by this city which was, more than the others, the city of betrayal, ever since (said the Canadian high school history
book-) the Dutch West India Company director-general for the province of New Netherlands purchased Manhattan Island from Algonkian Indians with pieces of bright cloth, beads, and other trinkets to the value of 10 guldens or about 24 dollars. And later, intermittent but savage warfare with the Algonkians, because William Kieft finked on his promise to protect them from the Iroquois after levying a tax for this presumed purpose, and Peter Stuyvesant, through strict supervision and resistance to his own company and colonists, succeeded in making the city a present (ideal for the man who has everything and doesn't smoke) to the English. And (said the American college text-) Jacob Leisler, first popular governor, hanged as a traitor in 1691 by William and Mary's new governor (named Sloughter) and exonerated by parliament four years later. Then the Sons of Liberty, screwed up the ass by the Stamp Act, and (over there to the West, up the Hudson) Benedict Arnold planning to surrender his fort to the English, and (to the East, down 45th Street at the corner of 1st Avenue) Nathan Hale hanged. And Boss rule\textsuperscript{in} Tammany Hall -- the Tweed ring stealing between 75 million and 200 million.

City of betrayal for us both (Monroe comprehended in his thought the nameless Nat Enforcer, now sounding behind him loud enough to make him quicken his step.) For you too: you who sailed to this land a slave aboard The Good Ship Jesus, whose captain conducted prayer service twice a day, then retired to write hymns like "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear, it quells the sorrow, drowns his fears, and drives away his tears;" you who heard tell of the Old Testament Jews in bondage and swung low with "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?" and "Jordan's river is chilly and cold none can cross but the true and bold"; you who plotted revolution in Pointe Coupée Parish, La., got arrested, tried, and placed aboard a boat which drifted slowly down the river, stopping at every parish church until New Orleans, where you and your cohorts were hanged one at a time from trees; you who believed firmly, during the early days of
steamboat travel on the Mississippi, that the fires were fueled with well-fattened slaves and that at a crucial moment in the race a steamboat captain did not hesitate to give the command, "Throw in another nigger!"; you who were alleged to have conspired to burn this city and consequently were burned at the stake.

The drizzle became rain: Monroe was thankful, and, recalling the fire hydrant, took these as signs that the party at Ralph's pad tonight would be the *fiesta* for the water spirits, the wildest of the saints' feast celebrations, and that somehow tonight the Nat Enforcer would be his salvation.

*   *   *

*   *   *
SOLO 3: Saints' Feast
Ralph's pad was actually the home of his mistress, wife of a wealthy gourmet who was away in Europe collecting new recipes: it was one of those perennials of Old World architecture replanted in New York, a red-brick mini-mansion with wrought iron railing along the steps leading up from the cobblestones of Washington Mews, the tiny street just before Washington Square Park that is off-bounds to the traffic of Fifth Avenue, so much an oasis -- more than the park or in fact any outdoor spot in Manhattan -- that Monroe would often travel all the way from Harlem just to enjoy a secluded stroll there, and Ralph would do a bit of a tap-dance on the cobblestones whenever he was entering or leaving his pad. "Useta be a nice quiet street before I made the scene," Ralph once explained with a grin. "No niggers, no kikes, no commies, no beatniks. You know: useta be a forest."

Voices filtered out of the candle-lit front room to be drawn into the vortex of traffic sounds, as Monroe watched the Black Nat glide past without a glance at him towards the July Fourth pinwheels and purple dragons over Washington Square arch, before opening the door on the hallway collage of Vishnu-Krishna Dylan and the Stones in drag bare-breasted movie queens of the twenties Fight of the Month colour shot of world light-heavyweight title match between Jose Torres and Chic Calderwood at San Juan (TORRES THE WINNER: BY A KNOCKOUT AND STILL CHAMPION) The Assault on Mount Rushmore Victory at Iwo Jima Discovery of Electricity (explosive spark between wires held by three men in turn-of-century dress with inscription LOOK! I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW) the Archbishop of Canterbury with lusty eyes and open mouth and outstretched hand juxtaposed with reclining nude plum-like nipple upturned pin-ups of Marvel Comics super-heroes (Fantastic Four Spider-Man Thor Incredible Hulk Sub-Mariner Doctor Strange) the orange-juice advertisement of the girl sucking a huge orange up and down a straw colour monograph of Aztec Calendar Stone napkin from Mother Blues (Old Town
Chicago) bullfight tickets parking tickets from Montreal New York Washington New Orleans Mexico City San Francisco posters of Jazz in the Garden (Museum of Modern Art New York) Trips Festival San Francisco rock groups The Greatful Dead The Jefferson Airplane Country Joe and the Fish The Thirteenth Floor Elevator Big Brother and the Holding Company Fun-in-the-Sun Club (Affiliated with the American Sunbathing Association/Family participation is invited but single men and women of good character are acceptable too/ 'A Clean Mind in a Healthy Body') Vote Republican and Make New York SAFE Again (girl lying in a pool of blood on the sidewalk several black-jacketed hoodlums standing over her) Another Wrecking Job by Jay Demolition Corporation Only Clean Living Can Curb the MENACE of V.D. (girl in seductive pose with cigarette in holder and 1940's-style low-cut dress with slit hip) The C.I.A. Wants YOU Legalize POT L.S.D. for the U.S.A. Mary Poppins is a Junky headlines A Middle-Aged Mother Visits the Teen Scene Carnivorous Westerners Offend Sensitive Asians news stories of research reports on psychedelics ("In many instances formerly productive individuals have adopted the attitude that one should live merely for subjective experiences and not play the various 'games' -- like work -- that society demands") oppy swirls about scrawled graffiti She closed her knees/ I'm sad to say/ I lost my nose upon that day Where is that Jesus?/ Lost that Jesus/ Jesus was here/ Where is that Jesus?/ Must be in an outhouse/ Never could hold that Jesus cover of Weird Terror comic (man in tattered clothing standing in abject fright against dripping stone wall facing ring of green-skinned ghouls chortling You are trapped...Heh, Heh! Trapped in the DUNGEON OF THE DOOMED!) pages of the Sunday Comics Dick Tracy Crimestopper Advice to Young Rookies: Wanted criminals are known to hole up in Skid Row areas and "THE COUNTRY THAT CONTROLS MAGNETISM CONTROLS THE UNIVERSE" Tarzan's chase after Stryker who is accidentally devoured by crocodiles as he attempts to escape the jungle with a boat-load of opium (Tarzan: "That's not quite the end I had in
mind for Stryker!...But any way of stopping a dope peddler is a good one!"

Monroe zeroed in on a brown Reijlander photo entitled *Spiritistical Photographic* done in 1860 with double exposures for the spiritual presences: a bearded man seated on the edge of a bed where his wife lay holding their baby, with the spirits of an ancient face in the air between them, a boy seated on the floor next to the man's cane, and a woman's profile set in the side of the man's face. According to Ralph -- himself somewhat of a photographer and painter, as well as a musician -- the kind of thing that is now again being attempted after a century. This fact of the revival of a technique belonged with the photograph's stirring or ghosts for Monroe, its reiteration of a transcendental flash at camp just before the end of the summer, when he had noticed that the mist hovering over the mountains his first morning there had drifted across the lake and now reposed over the mountains on the other side: things happen not in a straight line or a circle, but in waves, patterns of recurrence. He knew that once inside that door he would find Ralph's water spirits celebration not simply another turn-on session but actually the revoicing of a specific happening -- perhaps his initiation into psychedelics at camp, just as the *Spiritistical Photograph* was in a sense the revoicing of Ralph's painting done that day in the arts-and-crafts room....

*Cyclops* kneeling on Miami Beach laughing and toothless, wearing party hat and pointed beard, cornets and fifes emerging from his leathery face, offering a basket of candy canes, balloons and polka-dotted ice cream to a child writhing on a bed of nails, as his frantic bloated mother attempts to block the alien with beach umbrellas, fur coats, and a shield bearing the Star of David.

"Kein Ayinn Horne, or Beware the Bogey Man, My Son." Ralph painted a round, bobbing cloud in the otherwise clear blue sky of his painting with the ease of
dotting an i, and bowed as far as his waist to the explosions of laughter from Monroe, Emil and Myra. He scrutinized them with his narrow, bloodshot eyes, while he stroked his goatee with one hand and ran the other through his greying hair ("Guess how old he is," Emil had challenged Monroe after Ralph had introduced them, "and you can divide that in half"; "You see, he's more than un peu dissipé," Ralph's girlfriend Myra had chimed in mysteriously.) "Your people-") his voice stopped their laughter with its strange quality of having instantaneously dematerialized a large chunk of itself, travelled with the aid of a subliminal time-machine and returned to fill the void with centuries of abject suffering - "they have such fully developed bourgeois indulgences. Sado-masochism, gluttony, avarice. They must turn on to pain."

"He means, the Jews must get high on persecution and that's why they're so nasty and possessive," Myra interpreted Ralph again, solicitously dipping her cigarette holder, a duplicate of the one carried by her mother, Mrs. Lerner, the widowed camp owner. Monroe noticed other resemblances as well -- the raised eyebrows, the icy smile -- but none of the arrogance of the middle-aged woman in this girl's clear, wide eyes that seemed to strain for total comprehension. She spoke, like Ralph, in nervous spurts, but without the sense of joyful overflowing of his expression.

"I could reply to Ralph's charge", Emil said quietly, "but he might find it too obvious. Or too true."

"Or too sentimental," Ralph murmured, without looking away from his work. An agitated silence: Emil looked down, Myra appeared to be blowing smoke rings over Ralph's head, and Monroe turned away from the small table in a corner of the arts-and-crafts room to look more closely at his surroundings.

Slices of limestone embracing discreetly in the other corners; suspended, bee-hive Oriental lanterns threatening aerial bombardment; landscape poster art
crying out for propagandistic messages to dignify it. Dim lighting from curtained windows (except for the skylight over Ralph's painting), and a pervasive new odour, like the smell of ocean and burnt almonds and perfume whose fragrance is good enough to eat and swath the body in its warmth. Exposed to the single patch of sunlight in the room and working intensely, Ralph appeared indeed to have swallowed this energy-producing aroma.

"Hey, baby, get out the matchbox and we'll entertain our guests."

Myra, reluctant at first, without a word walked to a low cabinet at the side of the room and took from one of the drawers a small pinewood chest, a souvenir object from a New England town.

"'Fragrance of the Pines
Brings Memories of Good Times'"

-Ralph read the inscription on the box and a thin, machine-gun chuckle issued from deep in his throat. He opened the lid, sniffed, closed his eyes and licked his lower lip; his forehead expanded like a flower opening to sunlight.

"Do you turn on?" he asked Monroe. "You're a musician, aren't you?"

"I never tried it. Wouldn't mind though."

Ralph hummed softly, as he lovingly tapped the supple dark green grains onto cigarette paper, rolled up the joint and tightened the ends:

"'Tea in the evening, tea at sunrise
Make a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

As he lit up, Myra put out her cigarette and dispassionately commented to the silent onlookers: "Ralph is usually more serious about the ritual, but he just picked up a couple of kilos in Mexico before camp, and he's starting to take the stuff for granted."

Ralph balanced the cigarette on his lip, sucking interminably into that centuries-deep hollow, passed it to Myra, and motioned for all of them to join him in sitting crossed-legged on the floor.

"Do you take sitting for granted, Myra? Or breathing?" Ralph asked, his
voice a taut grunt from the necessity of holding the air in his stomach.

Myra drew with deliberation, and passed the cigarette to Monroe without looking at him. He shivered at the searing pain in his throat. Emil shook his head, but Ralph motioned for him to try it; when he did, the taste made him cough until he had to get up for a drink of water. Ralph smiled and closed his eyes.

When the buoyancy put him into the swim with the things around him in a supple current of thisness, Monroe too closed his eyes, all sounds clear as reveille living alternately at the centre and periphery of sound jungle while low throbbing monotone sighs and surges everywhere sucking into its waves children’s cries. Hey Bobby we’re going to the beach race you there last one in the water is a whooo-aah whooo-aah of wind in the rafters or people breathing who know which and the pervasive familiar rhythmic hum of river through the gorge perhaps what he was listening for that day in the recreation hall but no sound matters enough now to listen long isn't it enough isn't it beautiful just to hear fully and then to extinguish fully what was heard with another sound since to dwell jealously on one sound would certainly put an end to all this.

"Hey, Monroe!" Ralph’s voice was like a cool, sweet fluid being poured into his ear. "Too much! Huh?" He laughed, and Monroe giggled in reply.

"Got something to eat, Myra?" Ralph’s question reminded Monroe of his own sudden hunger.

Myra looked for the first time very alive and beautiful: all her features were coloured with the same clear straining and surrender spoken by her eyes. She floated to the side and came back with a large block of dark chocolate. Then the three of them sat in a circle beneath the skylight and savoured a charge of sunlight through their bodies with each swallow of the precious sweet substance. Emil sat apart, pale and still, and when Monroe looked upon him with
blackened, protruding eyes, he turned away, as if he had seen blood at the sides of Monroe's mouth.

"Nervous! Je suis nervous!" Ralph, dressed in a glistening red robe with gold embroidered stars and crescents, burst into the hall singing a Montmartre ditty about Manhattan. He had his mistress, a dark intense woman in black silk gown and veil, named Consuela, discovered by her American husband on a trip to Santo Domingo at the same time as a native paella for which only she knew the recipe (With this slim bond, their marriage had persisted for years, she preventing herself from practising fatal brujeria on him only by her clandestine outlet of the saints' feast celebrations, at which she officiated as medium during his absences.) While Ralph slapped Monroe's hand in paroxysmic greeting, Consuela remained in the doorway, her orange-scarved head framed by loops of candle-light and recorded music of a West Indian steel band, and she fixed Monroe with proud, testing eyes, that could not help but bring back to him -- now with his thoughts tending to the ghosts -- Mrs. Lerner, standing in the doorway of the bleached pine house dominating the Hatikvoh camp-grounds his first day there, her eyebrows perennially raised almost to the line of peroxide shiny, laboriously combed hair, inviting him into the thickly carpeted den with liquor cabinet, fireplace, couch and aged photographs of "my young men" (all smiling and mustachioed and from a former time, "my Saul" singled out as more sagacious than the rest, drawing almost inaudible sobs from her) and offering him wine -- dark red sweetness through the lips making hot all inside -- telling wryly of her "new ones" and how "smart" she is and letting him pull closer on the couch to look beyond her metallic hair sunlight playing over "White Silver Sand to relaxed curves heaving gently to guide the rhythm of her conversation
Honeycomb warmth of low rumble rising and spreading all over power long dormant
surging like volcanic lava that ignores boundaries of vascular mountain paths
power never known so well, so that it was quite natural really to lift his
arm to the level of the top of the seat and rest it just touching against her
hair and "Nice" she said yes nice that she understood him nice that they under-
stood each other so very very-

a door opening, Mrs. Lerner started, Monroe
withdrew his arm, and both listened motionless to Emil's voice calling "Mrs.
Lerner!" and his steps approaching until he appeared in the den: "Mrs. Lerner.
I've been looking for you," and she answered, tight-lipped, running her hand
quickly over her hair, "Well, now you've found me, Emil!," and Monroe rose to
leave, momentarily looking back in confusion at the unsmiling eyes.

Ralph sent Consuela back into the room to prepare for the ceremony and he
spoke to Monroe in a confidential tone:

"They're after ya, baby. I guess you know already, huh?"

"I've been tailed for the last hour. He's out there now, waiting for me."

"Listen, man. I don't know what they have in mind for you. Because they
know you're my friend, they wouldn't let me in on their plans. But I can tell
ya it's hot, baby, very hot. You'd best hide out here till it cools down. Here
they won't touch you."

"You're right, man, and I'd like to stay here. But- " Monroe looked down
and sighed. I've got something in my head, Ralph, and now I just feel I have
to get to the gig."

Ralph clapped his arm on Monroe's shoulder and led him out of the hall.
"Right you are, my man! But you'll stay and dig the proceedings for a while,
eh? Black man's medicine most magical trip!"

Monroe nodded and smiled. "Wouldn't mind. For a while."

With the tape recorder off, a few low voices could be heard speaking various
mixtures of spic, jive, canuck and Village hippy jargon. Huge round home-made multicoloured candles, with lumps all over them suggesting faces on a monstrous Mount Rushmore, illuminated on the walls the Muslim emblem of white crescent and star on red background; a quilt with letters woven to spell out DEATH TO COPS; a bleeding, nail-studded hand of Christ; a photo of city devastation clipped from *Muhammed Speaks*, with the title TRACKS OF THE TORNADO and the caption,

"There is no refuge from the storm when the wrath of Allah descends, as the Messenger Elijah Muhammed has often warned. The sign on the side of the building in the background in this Topeka, Kan. scene could offer no shelter. The sign reads 'a refuge in time of storm.' The tornado which swept through the area claimed 12 lives, injured more than 400, and left 4,500 homeless;"

a clipping from *Mainliner*, the United Airlines magazine: "By Papal dispensation, Roman Catholic passengers on United Airlines flights are not obliged to the Church law of abstinence"; and, in a velvet frame, the edict issued by the Bishop of San Juan, condemning spirits' feast celebrations and saint cults: "We reiterate the prohibition against assistance at sessions, against consultation of media and curers, even when they clothe themselves in a pious air, due to the great danger which spiritualist practices... hold for the faith."

Ralph motioned Monroe to an empty folding chair between a long-haired French-Canadian with sailor cap and a black moustache like those of the nautilo emblematic of Zig-Zag cigarette papers, who was leafing through a Civil Liberties Union pamphlet giving advice on criminal arrest, and a sallow-faced Puerto Rican youth in a black-and-white striped *pancho* studying a book entitled *Los Derechos del Hombre* and singing *sotto voce* a familiar *El Barrio* lyric to the tune of a song from *Carmen*:

> My mother gave me a quarter
> to buy some soda water
> I don like soda water
> so I bought some *marijuana*
As Ralph called for silence and turned on a tape of "Ava Maria", Monroe considered how the religious mish-mash of the room and of the ceremony just commencing reflected Ralph's eclecticism in religion (as in his arts, chicks, jobs, etc.), progressing from Baptist at birth; to Pentecostal by persuasion (literally) of Harlem evangelists like Rev. Goodfellow; to Roman Catholic through association with Boricua and Canadiens gangs; to Jews (after being convinced that he was the Messiah by a Chasidic student of Talmud working as a councillor at Camp Hatikvoh); to Muslim under the influence of the Black Power movement back in the States; to psychedelics from his Village contacts; with bouts of Swedenborgianism, Rosicrucianism, Bahai, agnosticism and atheism along the way; and Boricua-style Spiritualism at all times. Ralph once claimed that he was above all a mental traveller, upon each conversion making a spiritual pilgrimage to Mecca, Jerusalem, and beyond to Asgard, home of Odin and Thor, and to the multi-dimensional universe of Doctor Strange.

Ralph disappeared into the kitchen and reappeared a few moments later wearing a red kerchief and bearing a tiny red-and-gold Buddha with incense on his lap burning a thick, sweet trail behind Consuela, who carried a pitcher of cloudy water across the room and lifted it three times towards the mangled hand of Christ above the locked door, then took the Buddha from Ralph and similarly lifted it three times. She banged the pitcher three times on a table laden with food and began pouring into paper cups, while Ralph marched majestically through the room, waving the incense before the faces of the guests, and deposited the Buddha before an electric fan that soon spread the choking rich odour throughout the room. He tempered this with selections from the mantlepiece, a veritable home Botánica with Lady Luck Room Spray (Rocio Dana de Suerte), Jinx-Removing Deodorant Air Spray (to combat brujería), Holy Spirit Bath, Crusader Religious Candles, Magnetic St. Christopher's Statue, and various aphrodisiacs,
herbs, quack medicines, magic formulae and Oriental mysteries. Consuela pirouetted back along the fragrant trails, offering the cups on a Mexican silver tray with embossed calendar stone, that her husband reserved for his gourmet banquets. Monroe took the cup mechanically, his gaze fixed on TRACKS OF THE TORNADO through the aromatic swirl of Consuela's half-dancing form, and it was only after he had swallowed that the tornado churned out of time and distance through Consuela's deathly-sweet snake motion to confront him with the realization that the liquid was cloudy because in each cup was dissolved 300 milligrams of L.S.D.

He could feel the eyes around him already spinning into themselves and forming variegated dot-plane visions out of the trembling shadows cast by the candle on the Muslim emblem and the hand of Christ. Ralph was tugging at Consuela's kerchief and whispering in her ear the piropo he had written during his trip to Mexico:

Ojalá (Wa Sha Allah!)
that you were the olive-skinned daughter
of that noble Visigoth governor
over Ceuta and jewel-like water
of Hercules' pillars that he guarded
for all Spain till he sent his daughter
to Toledo the court of the king
to learn but not such knowledge
as the king would bring to her loveliness...

Consuela motioned him away, as she sat down in the room's only easy chair and attempted to compose herself into the medium's trance by closing her eyes and placing her hands over her ears. But Ralph persisted, pulling her hand away and reciting in a gentle singing whisper:
Ofla (Wa Sha Allah!)

that you were she

whose father then opened the gates

of his fortress to Allah's black sons

and the Reconquistida raged

for seven centuries at rates

of blood to regain the mountain

so freely blindly taken

for Allah given for her...

Consuela rocked her head in Ralph's arms and began a low ecstatic wail that unwound like a ribbon through the dense euphony of the Ava Maria.

Monroe was seeing images as images through the half-open curtains the soft brilliance of Washington Mews emanations of the gaslit era and beyond it the vortex of white and blue fireworks bubbling out over Washington Square images of the outside like images of the past faces of the altes floating about Emil's lifeless form and Leila's Storyville of the Blue Book sporting women implanted like the hand of Christ and the Muslim emblem in the shell of this present inner world a shell that revolves on the axis of the present and manifests the crucial images in waves patterns of recurrence and at certain of these crucial apices he had actually broken through the image shell and truly know what was outside and past and in so doing he had of course betrayed an aspect of himself for at every moment we must betray one world in order to know the other.

Consuela's wail faded with the conclusion of the Ava Maria, and now she was listening earnestly to a more confidential message from Ralph. When he had finished, she held her head tightly and arose, transported, to impart to the guests information from the spirit that possessed her. She went first to Monroe, extended her hands to his and crossed his arms twice. Then she placed her hands on his head and stared at their wild flexings. Finally, she leaned over and
told him in a husky, accented undertone the message from Ralph:

"You got it now. Couldn't stop if you wanted to."

She moved on to cross someone else, and Monroe's eyes met Ralph's, silently acknowledging the familiar message from a spirit of the past that possessed them both. In the dim silence, with the incense still thick and sweet, a flood of retrospective high closed Monroe's eyes on the gem-like apparition of city lights and transformed them into jewelled clasps of daylight on the mountain peaks across from the beach of Camp Hatikvoh, where he had waited with Ralph for dawn and his first acid trip....

Rush of water from the waterfalls around the bend of the gorge, and Ralph's lined face in the gathering light as yet not returned from time travels, his own personal preparation being Zen exercises, affording him purification through distance, he claimed, as he locked himself into the lotus position, a creature of night, looking fearful of the sun's emergence from the lake, a time traveller with a taste for eighteenth-century clothing -- this morning, a short black coat and breeches from the Salvation Army Thrift Store, topped off by a large blue tuque pulled down over long hair pulled to fan out wildly as far as thick black eyebrows above deep-set eyes, drooping at the corners.

Before that first time, Ralph was saying, all those rules about putting your house in order, setting up the right conditions -- all so much bullshit the moment the great hunger has taken hold of you. Comes a time when you say, let the world happen. And when the cover is lifted off the plate enough to show you more than the aroma of gossip you have so long sniffed with the nameless pangs, then you say Fuck all that, fuck all the rules, just do it. And all that is supposed to be true of the experience also is nothing beside the actual experience of the happening of this world. At the beginning, true, just that
The sun rolled over the mountains like a yellow glass ball to shatter in the water and spread its luminous solution as far as the opposite shore. Ralph took the lid off a paper cup filled with warm water. He unwrapped the sugar cube, broke it up with a pencil, made a cloudy solution in the water, and marked the one-third and two-third way points on the side of the cup. The sun, now a frigid fluorescence, coated the scene with an antiseptic silence, that reminded Monroe of a public washroom, with its tiled floor, mirror and gleaming ivory, flowing urinals.

"Why wait for the sun, Ralph?"

"Consciousness of an extra-terrestrial presence. Dig? Here, drink to just below this mark."

"How much in there?" - taking the cup from him.

"Bout two hundred milligrams in each section."

Monroe drank about one quarter and passed the cup back.

"No, no." Ralph grasped Monroe's wrist. "A little bit is no good, man."

Monroe drank to just below the pencil mark and Ralph smiled.

"You got it now, baby. You couldn't stop it now if you wanted to." He went to re-dissolve the residue in lake water.

Couldn't stop now if you wanted to. This is the beginning of the consciousness. Why stop, now or ever? What is there to stop and who is there to do the stopping? The progress of total awareness, the recognition of the happening of this world can be stopped no more than the sound of water in the gorge or the pale glow of the sun, the sense of breathing or thinking or sitting down. Perhaps you don't even start doing it, perhaps you are doing it all the time. And perhaps, true, you couldn't start doing it now if you wanted to either, because it is always already being done.
Fear was sucked from him in a flaming, fluid torrent of red and gold fragments and swallowed by a sunspot. Seeking the sun's metallic embrace and satisfied to watch forever the kaleidoscope of exploding red and blue stars in that leaf over there ... fiery aquadeliria.

Low throbbing monotone everywhere many sounds but no sound worth dwelling on since all the sounds are in each one.... Dangling arms and legs as if they belonged to someone else bouncing crazily on topless heights founded upon bottomless depths moving but not progressing on the sponge-earth not going anywhere since things around in same relation unchanged.... Home the first dawning of the first home and everything trees mountains sun lush and huge.... A comic book wonderland of everyone's soul extended in relaxation Ralph is Ralph and yet is also Mickey Mouse and a rowboat too has much character.... Being thinking doing all things standing up walking around lying down all at once from light-speed fever of being.... Couldn't stop couldn't start death is not to be feared the terror is rather the moment which creeps up on the testimony of its denial and shows its brutal naked strength.

At the start of the come-down period, a time of inter-modal daze, the residual shadow of heightened awareness, they climbed up the hill to the recreation hall, and in the stillness of afternoon rest period they had a musical happening, for awhile just playing silent music, which seemed the most natural medium for grooving with the new consciousness they shared. Monroe was running his fingers over the keyboard as if playing normally -- but without sounding the notes, except occasionally by accident, or else he blew air lightly into his trumpet and tapped the pistons, but not hard enough to push them down. And with an Eastern song flute, Ralph strained to work himself up to the point of getting sound and then to stop at that point.
Deep whoo-ooh of breath through the hollows of the horns and sounds coming so freely you never know when one sometimes following another quickly or two at the same time or widely separated harmonies dissonances intervals beautiful accidents Mozart accidents Charlie Parker accidents and all the time as if someone else making those sounds the horns there but the head somewhere so far away pumped by the breath higher and higher to who can say? what to say? who? what?...

Zen meditation music had succeeded the *Ava Maria* on the tape recorder and Consuela had replaced the orange kerchief with a purple one, a colour signifying the spirit of Le Docteur Beforg, a French vineyard-keeper turned voodoo doctor after his immigration to Santo Domingo, where he had channeled his talents exclusively into the concoction of progressively more potent artificial wines, until his very skin assumed the colour of his obsession. As the vehicle for Beforg's spirit, Consuela sampled a variety of aged wines which her husband had brought back from the four corners of the world, and spiralled over the carpet, as Ralph dauntlessly continued his intimate recital:

*Ojala (Wa Sha Allah!)*

that you were she

Would I then be the father
traitor to his own bravery
visionary of black fires of hate
or would I be the royal seducer
last of his line for taking
what was his right or any man's
that could recognize such sweetness?

Consuela stopped dancing and interrupted Ralph to consult with him on the matter
of Anna Martinez' pregnancy. Ralph replied, chuckling, and Consuela walked over to Anna, crossed her arms, felt her head and whispered loudly, "Beforg says the only solution to your problem is to fuck it to death!" (Which Anna proceeded to do, after grabbing the man sitting next to her and pulling him towards the bedroom.)

Consuela lurched, broke into a frenzied cry and tore away her purple kerchief. Ralph, grinning, cupped his hands over her ear and tried to move with her, chanting:

_ofala (Wa Sha Allah!)_

that I were neither

nor even the fine Castilian
descendent of the honey-tongued Moors
who so easily speaks with a sigh
such praises as this _piropo_
but only the dull southern _hombre_
who with fingers opens wide one eye
in tribute to your olive-skinned beauty.

Consuela began to rip off the rest of her clothes. Again, Monroe caught Ralph's eye, and he understood that Ralph was speaking the _piropo_ really to Myra, who, as they both knew, had made the death trip without acid, without anything except sorrow and confusion and dread; Myra, who was their true spirit of the past, linking their acid-vision memories tonight....

_Exercise in bed with Myra, carried out beneath the notice of her mother Mrs. Lerner, and scandalous mixtures of pipe tobacco and horse manure "to smoke out all the shit 'round here!" were Ralph's ways of coming down, "wasting." Monroe would spend long hours at the piano, melting away the cobwebs of bop-style charts,
all the habits dictated by written expression that got in the way of his discovery of his own voice. For both of them, coming down meant feeling at once humbled by the magnitude of a religious experience and, in the presence of others, finely fortified in the knowledge that the others would act and speak differently if they had only seen; it was inevitably a period of thin air and ringing in the ears and a numbing consciousness of the images everywhere about one that cancelled any effect their realities might have on the feelings; it was, in part, that hygenic stillness Monroe had noticed on the beach, that made any expression of energy a farce, a travesty of the overwhelming demands that beauty can make; it was, above all, a time of listless self-examination and a sickening sense of helplessness.

One night, Ralph turned Monroe on to some Moroccan hasheesh, chased by swallows of rum and dexadrine tablets. It was a brutal desperate nails-and-pin-cushion high that drove them immediately from each other's presence into the night to stumble off in different directions. Monroe was dimly aware that he was heading through the woods to the patch of clearing at the point where the shorelines came together to form the mountain gorge, a favourite spot for lovers or for the initiations of novice junior counsellors, who might be led there blindfolded and left alone to find their way back to camp in the dark, or set adrift on the lake in the middle of the night after being solicitously borne there asleep upon their mattresses. (Thus, the point had been variously dubbed "Ball Point", "Devil's Tail" and "Schlemiel's Curse"). Tonight was his mistress, its favours the mist, heaviest over the point, and nature's jug band — rhythmic harmony of trees breathing, river through the gorge, crickets — and fragrance of the pines, jabbing at the skin in a thousand places, reviving that diffusion of lovely loose warmth.

In the trees faces of old men (used to think once that faces of dead relatives
could be recognized in clouds and trees and lakes) nodding over the hollow of the path and whispering Pirke Aboth Sayings of the Fathers the book that mother bought for the Bar-Mitzvah that never was Yisrael averim zeh bazeh shoeshine boys on Broadway whores of Yisrael-

A girl standing naked and moonlit in the clearing at Devil's Tail looking out over the lake. She grips her dress coiled and looped over the branch of a tree. The sun in the treetops no longer is seen the moon broken red and gold among the branches Come gather to welcome the Sabbath Our Queen crickets answer the trees and waves kissing the rock and the low hum the throbbing monotonous the fiery tingling of the thighs-

It was Myra. Monroe strained to perceive through the throbbing in his head but didn't move. She tightened the loop with a quick motion, climbed up on a stump, and remained there with her head bowed and her body swaying enough so that the moonlight played over her full white breasts and buttocks. Monroe moved.

"Myra!"

She turned, uttered a quick whimper, and fell from the stump to a kneeling position on the ground, crying steadily a little girl's bawling cry. Monroe bent down beside her and smoothed her hair and ran his fingers down her back, ending up at the small crook at its base.

"She's found out about me and Ralph, and about the grass and everything!" Myra sobbed. "She calls Ralph a bum and a schwarzer, and she slaps me around and calls me a little bitch! The only reason I didn't run away is that I wanted to stay near Ralph. But- He doesn't care! He just says, Don't bring me down -- it's her hang-up! He doesn't want to take me away. Fucked-up scene! So much bad vibrations. Just nowhere. I don't want it anymore! You've got to let me finish!"
He had been caressing her neck and now he stopped her cries with a kiss that made scarlet flashes in violaceous caverns a filigree dance of pain in the head. Oh please please Love Me Tender as if the cat pursued in the dream at the beach so long ago had finally been caught and rode furry and sleek over the rumble rising to a roar of grey-green bending to burrow between her breasts while she pulls closer and with her fingers tightly curved scratches up and down the back like slow-moving electricity smell and taste of Honeycomb Honeycomb eyes tightly closed hot burst of scarlet in the murky grey-green then hard breathing and gentle floating and soft kisses infinitely liquid.

They walked back through the woods quickly and silently, Myra not wearing her dress but clutching it to her. The grass on the deserted common before the Lerner house was thick and moist, so Monroe took off his sandals and walked barefoot.

The mist brushed past them in cool spurts while the new sun burned away at it. Myra said she felt as if they were in the path of a stampede of people fleeing from a fire.

"But it's more like being kissed than like being trampled," Monroe protested. "No, really it's like being invisible while things just happen around you."

He hesitated before the familiar black oaken door, startled at a recognition in himself of the same feeling of slight resignation he had noticed in Mrs. Lerner's voice that first day. When Myra opened the door, he glanced into the den where everything -- all the furniture and the photographs of Saul and the other young men -- remained unchanged, only darkened, as if to cloak the stasis to which common need had been reduced there, and he listened in the dimness for the echo of Mrs. Lerner's laugh, issuing from the mouth drooping beneath cancelled eyes and arrogantly arched brows framed by uncombed grey hair, her laugh oozing down the walls to form a hard mirror-like film over the carpets the couch
the photographs, her laugh that long ago froze the youthful smiling faces forever within their gilded frames.

Monroe kissed Myra and whispered, "Good luck."

"Thanks" - smiling, hoarse from crying, her eyes already somewhere else.

Early morning air so much more cold and raw than that first morning and the sun like a dull spotlight over the septic water in the gorge. The mist now over the mountains almost escapes notice. Just a deep throbbing in the head with every leaden step: There is no silence, no silence, no silence. Only for old men.

Monroe was playing Schoen Vi Di Levona at the piano in the recreation hall. Music only an overspilling: first to groove with the waves of silence, then to leave them inviolate by gathering up all else -- this would be enough.

"Hey, man! Maintaining your cool?" Ralph entered, looking as if he had just tripped in the shower, dropped himself heavily onto one of the benches near the front of the hall, watched the floor like a dormant beast, and spoke out of a cavern of sleeplessness: "I must be up tight, baby. Just can't make the scene any more, 'less I got some of that evil juice in me!"

"You didn't get a good high from that stuff last night, did you? That cock-tail was an H-bomb of the mind!"

Ralph attempted a sickly grin, but his huge black eyes remained in orbit in a personal psychedelic stratosphere, refusing to pinpoint their expression. He broke the silence with, "Myra's a cute piece, ain't she, Monroe?"

Monroe reddened and absently played a few bars of silent movie melodrama music. "She's really flipped over you, Ralph. I hope you know it."

"I know it, man." - grinning sardonically and studying Monroe with mysterious
penetration. "But sometimes Myra's not very cool. You know? Anyway, she
wouldn't be happy sticking with me. After we cut out today, if she doesn't
completely blow her cool, she'll forget about me in a week." To Monroe's look
of surprise, he continued: "Yeah! Almost forgot to tell you that Mrs. L. sack-
ed both of us today -- probably on Emil's advice."

"Emil?" Monroe had to hold on to the edge of the piano to stop himself
from falling off his stool.

"Mais, certainement! I b'lieve ol' Emil has gained a prominent place in
the boss-lady's affection by balling her regular as clock-work and filling her
ear with tasty news of our mind-blowing researches. See, he feels -- quite
rightly, I'm sure -- that we would be unhealthy to have around while he's busy
revolutionizing the camp, getting the support of the Zionist heavies for his
Back-to-Israel power thing -- Zionist work-camp scene, dig? So, in short, we
have blown the gig and it's time to split, baby!" -slapping his knee and cocking
his head matter-of-factly.

Monroe closed his eyes and shivered at the spectacle of Emil's neatly carved
voodoo dolls metamorphosing to the old men wrapped up in their dark frocks,
fixing him with the Avinn Horre, pushing him inexorably closer to the deep black
pit of the lions and the fiery furnace, and mumbling through their beards, "We
play the game with you for just so long, boychik, then comes your turn too.
Yisrael averim zeh bazeh. The Lord knows that we have suffered and denied our-
selves, but you- You must pioneer also. You are so different? If not this
way, boychick, then what? Well, if you have a way, show us!"

"Hey, Monroe. Guess you know that if you take that scholarship to the
music school in New York, you won't be getting away from ol' Emil: he plans to
make it to the same school, as soon as his restitution money comes through this
fall. Sorta like your shadow, huh? But that school is the right thing for
you, baby. You know: do some wood-shedding, get into your own thing."
"Mm-hmm....Yeah!" Show you. Now we'll see. Now I'll show....

Anna Martinez and her gentleman, finished doing the bidding of Beforg, returned with trays of beer, cheese and bologna for the guests who felt it was time for a recess from the spirits, while Ralph and Consuela -- beyond poetry and Spiritualism -- wrestled their clothes off behind a couch. Monroe looked about frantically and fled the saints' feast without a word to anyone.

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CODA: Blue Book in Steel
Fingers and tongues of automatic passion propelled cigarette smoke out of the windows of the Salle Sappho, which Monroe recognized, without looking up from the sidewalk, by the recorded Gospel rock 'n' roll and the aroma from the Chinese restaurant downstairs, mixed with booze and the same burnt smell he had noticed in Leila's tenement.

Upstairs, through the diamond-shaped window in the door, gaping cracks in the wall plaster and silk kerchief manipulations by Bea (for Beatitude), the topless go-go dancer-singer, were broken into spot frames by the high-powered strobe-light. Inside, "Coo-coo" Kirby, a thoroughly wired Cockney who worked as a prison guard, shuffled a two-step through the tables, inflicted his barnyard imitations on chicks he had invited to dance with him and repeatedly stopped at the musicians' table, extending his violin case hopefully to Professor, the leader, and chuckling nervously at his predictable refusal. (Coo-coo often boasted he could play seven different instruments and imitate any voice or sound made by human or animal, but unfortunately he wasn't satisfied just to monopolize the stage on amateur night.)

"Hey, you! Psycho-didlic! You're late!" Professor called, as Monroe approached the table. He mumbled a blanket excuse and dropped down heavily into the chair between Reg, the drummer and white-haired Negro patriarch of the band, and Aaron, who rarely stopped blowing through his Fu Manchu moustache into a squeaking saxophone mouthpiece long enough to sip milk or talk about his reeds, his key action, his range and his tone, until someone finally got pissed off and asked him if he took the horn to bed with him too. Professor sat with one hand on his glass of beer and the other stroking alternately his goatee and the pearl tie-pin visible in the opening of his tattered tuxedo beside a handkerchief spilling out of his chest pocket and above a bloated belly that was making
it harder for him all the time to play his bass. As Professor downed half his
drink and spread his palms in elaborate preparation to speak, Monroe recalled
that he was currently running for president of the Union.

"So who you sons-of-bitches gonna vote for?" Professor inquired with a burp.

"Well now, P'fessor," Reg began in his musing, amiable way, "matter o fact,
I figure I bin losin entirely too much sleep over that very problem. P'rhaps
you could hip us to exackly what you plan to do for us if you was elected, huh?"

Monroe turned a mock scowl on Reg and steeled himself for the harangue.

"Well now." Professor cleared his throat, raised himself on his seat and
pushed aside his glass. "I would first urge clubowners to increase and improve
their advertising, so that the music could be heard by a greater number and a
better quality of clientele." -glancing contemptuously at the handful of middle-
aged men, slick kids and hostesses at the bar. "See, when we're up there on
the stand blowin, we're not there just to talk to ourselves; we can do that
right here. We play soulful and swingin so we can get to all the people--"

"No, no, Professor!" Monroe was shaking his head vehemently. "Soul is not
where it's at, man! And swing is not where it's at. And I'd rather have my
dues money spent on promoting concerts for cats who want to get into a new
thing. Let's face it: jazz cat musicians have been playing the kind of music people
expect to hear for too fucking long already. It's time we stop and look at
where music is going, look at the world around us, and make pure sound, free
individual music that's with the way things are, without bothering about chord
changes and steady rhythms and funky riffs, and all the other artificial conven-
tions. Shit, you blow tenth-rate Horace Silver and you call that soul?"

As was usually the case when the discussion moved into this quandary, only
Professor's uncomfortable consciousness of his own nickname stopped him from
calling Monroe a punk student.
But Reg intoned sternly, placing his hand over his heart: "Monroe, now cut your jivin', boy! All I know is, you gotta play it from here" -- tapping his heart -- "and that's what soul is."

Professor burped again, and Aaron removed his mouthpiece to have a drink of milk. "It's like- in every group, the rhythm section is a whore and the horn is a pimp," Aaron muttered dreamily, his eyes merging the strobed wall cracks with his saxophone bell and completely overlooking Bea. "The rhythm section sets up, leaves spaces, makes advances. It smiles real pretty and rustles its dress and whispers, Come on lover, try me! And the horn -- if he's a good horn -- picks up every smile, every rustle, every whisper; he cooks it up good and gives it back strong and clear, and he makes those rhythm men his bloody slaves!"

Reg shook his head and chuckled, "Jesus, sometimes you young cats bout scandalize me with your talk!"

Monroe was no longer listening. Aaron's remarks had plunged him into a Blue Book revery of ads for Storyville cat-houses....one of the quiestest establishments in the city, where beautiful women, good wine and sweet music reign supreme....and voodoo carvings crying Why is the jass music?and his answer Now we'll see Now I'll show The horn is a pimp so fuck the world-

"Here's your club sandwich, saxyl" While Aaron was speaking, Irma the waitress had moved to his side from her place behind the burner in the open, bottle-strewn kitchen beside the stage. A lesbian, like the other waitresses of the Salle Sappho, Irma was in her 30's, had close-cropped hair and wore jeans.

"Irma, you queer hen, you burnt my sandwich!"

"Cool it, Aaron," Professor cautioned. "Meat's bad for you anyway. Uses up too much energy in the eating and digestion. And you are what you eat, y know. You eat right and you feel right for a performance, when you gotta use
all the emotional projection at your disposal."

Irma shrugged. "Hope you starve, you buncha dead-ass finks!" She blew an unacknowledged kiss to Bea on her way back to the kitchen.

Monroe got up and took a seat at the show performers' table. Georgina and Elfinella, the female impersonators, were discussing Oriental attitudes towards sex with the novelty team of Sha-boom and Sha-zam (Sha-zam a fire-eater who could do a 20-foot kerosene blast, and Sha-boom his mug-faced accompanist, who would play on his guitar a medley of torch songs like "Fever" and "Kiss of Fire" and finally actually make the instrument talk, with enough precision to speak such phrases as "Thank you very much.... you dumb motherfuckers!")

"Because the men come so fast, they have a totally different thing for sex there in the East," said Georgina, a dancing impersonator who was constantly fluttering her eyelashes and primping her brunette wig and shiny scarlet dress. "See, here a whole gang of us can jump into bed an sixty-nine and roun-the-world an suck off an eat out angang-bang, an then booze for a bit, an then jump back into bed an fuck aroun some more. But a Chinese couple will jus kiss for a bit, an go to bed, an he humps her an one-two-three he comes, an that's it."

"Mmm. Sounds like a drag," sighed Elfinella, a huge Negro impersonator, a hustler, who was fond of saying, "Don't fight boys, there's plenty o me to go aroun!" and "Ah'm so-o-o cuh-loured! Ah mus be th cuh-louredes broad in the world!" "They's strange people all right. They can come their jollies jus dancin roun the May-pole." He yawned and caressed the floral patterns around his falsies.

Bea finished her number and joined the table, twirling the gold-plated screw on her necklace (given to her by a boy-friend who had presented the gift with the comment, "To a good housewife you give pots and pans...."), and immediately
began to tell of an interview she had that afternoon with a minister who wanted her to perform at a psychedelic Church happening, with strobe-light and visual projections on the wall and poetry readings:

"I'm telling you, this idea really turned me on. I told him I could put together a Bride-of-Christ number that would be just perfect for this kind of presentation. I would wear this bridal veil, see, over a diamond-studded G-string and a bra made of swans' down, and I'd stand in front of the altar -- pure and sweet -- waiting for the Saviour to come down out of heaven and make me. And then I'd go into the audience and do that piece I do here with the band sometimes -- you know, where my body gyrates all over and I sing, 'Goin in-out-in-out-any-way ya want it baby!...' And the Reverend was a good-lookin cat, so I said to him, Why don't we go over to my place and talk about it some more. But all he did was sorta look down and fumble with his crucifix and say something about the bishop and that he'd be getting in touch. So maybe he didn't dig the act too much. I don't know."

"Say, Torchy!" Elfinella nudged Sha-zam, a tall blond youth whose shy manner belied his years of carny and con. "How's about you n me makin the church scene? You could dress up in black satin tights and that sequinned shirt that makes all your muscles bulge out. O-o-o-oh!" -swooning and pitching his voice steadily higher. "Ah would be the humble sinner, minglin with the multitude, peddlin my ass. An you would be the wrathful God, shootin your big fiery blast over the heads of the congregation exposin me. Then ah would commence to leapin aroun with a flamin dick, yellin, "O Lordy, O Lord! I done seen the light!' A-men!"

Everyone broke up, and the explosion of laughter was at once a fabulous trick turned by Bea with her strobed gold-plated screw, a benediction over Shabat candles, Bon Homme bathed in the school auditorium spotlights, Haut Homme
lurching over the trickle of piss reflecting the flashing neon before Buttercup's *La Boheme*, Leila's Voodoo Whip blossoming forth from the circle of torches in Congo Square, and the tie pin gleaming in the duck pond on the way to Rob's -- all filtered through the river gorge by the early-morning sunlight that danced over the oaken benches at the camp recreation hall to concentrate on the jewelled cigarette holder that Emil drew on reflectively as he studied the script of *My Fair Lady* through smoked glasses, while crouched on the side of the stage before the patched olive curtains, wearing tight white slacks and a curious dark brown vest with nothing underneath it to hide his hairy chest, and lamenting in an ironically appropriate tone of sighing and strained precision-

"I must coach the brats on arm-waving, diction and the difference between upstage and downstage. And you think you've got problems chust to be the piano-player?" He slapped his forehead in mock despair.

Monroe had just finished playing accompaniment to "The Rain in Spain" for the fifth consecutive time, in a different key and a different tempo than the other four times. Most of the kids were following instructions beautifully today, and one could almost be charmed by their attempts at Cockney accents and costumes. But the husky-voiced eleven-year-old girl named Rosalie, who was playing the feature role of the flower girl, was making trouble over the music. Monroe had added some jazz riffs on transitional bars the last time around, and Rosalie insisted that the additions were confusing her.

Emil was now pacing among the kids on the stage and running his hands through his long, dry hair. He stopped in front of petite, petulant Rosalie and uttered a mock scream: "Confused? I'm not surprised you're confused, Rosalie dear. I'm confused! And do you know why, dah-link? It's because you're confusing me.
Vith your temperamental behaviour. You see, Rosalie? You're not only confused, you're also a very confusing little dah-link. Ve thought you wanted to help put on the show, but instead you're making like Maria Callas. Well, let me tell you, Rosalie dear, Broadway you'll never make!" Emil was making extravagant motions with his arms. "Okay! Okay! Take ten, cast. Milk break."

Monroe lit up a cigarette, stepped out to the balcony, and wondered if the Sabbath Queen could be discovered lurking beneath such a diffident sun in the ethereal cloak that hung about the rocks, or between the buxom shoulders of the mountain, or somewhere in the columns of towering pines regimenting themselves into infinity.

Among the trees beside the balcony, a couple of familiar figures: it was Emil, kneeling and holding little Herbie (the bunk mascot -- "The Gopher", The Toothless Wonder", "The Hyena" they called him) by the wrist and speaking earnestly to him. Herbie, gripped by panic, began to cry and tried to escape, but Emil wouldn't let him.

"Hey!" Monroe ran down the steps and pushed Emil away.

Emil leaned back on the ground and curled his lips in a gesture of childish amazement turning to disdain for the intruder, while Herbie clutched Monroe's arm and tried to hide behind him.

"This doesn't concern you, Monroe" -- Emil's mannered tone straining to stem a well of pain. "Now, why don't you chust--"

"Monroe!" Monroe recognized in Herbie's voice real alarm and not the usual pampered whining. "He wanted me to--"

"Be quiet, Herbie! Be a good boy and--" raising himself from the ground with one hand and reaching for Herbie with the other, but sent back down again by a foot in the stomach from Monroe.

"Leave the kid alone, Emil!"
"Listen, Monroe!" — suddenly affable, but still panting from the shock of the kick, as he got up slowly and brushed himself off. "Stop trying to be a big man, chust relax, and listen. My interest in Herbie is, I assure you, purely sentimental. He reminded me of a friend of mine, a little boy I used to know when I was his age. I haven't had many real friends since then, God knows. Sure, I've been around and I've got to know a lot of types. But they didn't mean anything to me, they were merely stepping-stones. And so, I've been very alone in the world, very much in need of—"

"Get the fuck out of here, Emil, before I puke all over you!" Monroe had turned his back on Emil, keeping a protective arm around Herbie.

"Oh, so that's the way it is, eh Monroe?" he pouted furiously. "You think you're without hang-ups, Mister Jazz-man? Baby, you're no better! Just because you turn on and sleep around—" breaking off on a crescendo and holding hands up before his face, as Monroe swings around with burning eyes. "Okay, okay, Defender of Justice! I'm going."

Monroe and Herbie watched his self-conscious swing of his hips and proud carriage of his head as he walked off, and Monroe wondered why neither he nor Herbie felt like laughing.

The laughter spread as far as the musicians' table and the bar, where Coo-coo heard it and decided to move his anti-temperance crusade to the show table. But his squeaks and quacks were a bring-down after Elfinella, and he addressed himself obliquely to Monroe, as the potential listener who appeared to him the least hostile:

"It's disgustin' -- all this. Sickenin', I mean, isn't it guv'nor? Reminds
me of the scandal up at the prison over the experimental Joy Crimes Laboratory. They wuz all in there I tell ya all the Sex Fiends an the Dope Queens an the Drag Maniacs they wuz runnin aroun wearin berets an dark glasses an white coats an leather gloves an sandals pullin themselves off with hydraulic French ticklers an incandescent fur-lined pistons set to switch off automatic when they come an then catch the come in measurin attachments an smokin the evil weed through ten-foot-long motorized suction tubes with lectronic timers strapped over their faces to record the breathin intervals an number of drags an afterwards feedin the data into one big mother of a lectronic computer waitin till their cards are processed an standin there with em quiet as mice I tell ya I never see such goins on in all my years workin at the prison then in comes the social worker with a big smile an says 'Well boys how many points did we score towards rehabilitation today?''"

"Here's that pic you wanted, Coo-coo." Irma handed Coo-coo a glamour photo of Georgina, inscribed "To Coo-coo Kirby, My Barnyard Baby." Coo-coo grabbed it with gleeful chirping and waved it around as he paid Irma and mumbled a question. "No, Coo-coo," Irma answered like a scolding mother,"I'm afraid you can't have your picture taken with Georgina." He shrugged, waved her away, and beamed at the photograph, unconscious of Monroe's presence.

Monroe leaned over and asked him in a low voice, "Would you like to meet Georgina, Coo-coo?"

"Aw shut up!" Coo-coo recoiled indignantly. "I jus collect pictures o stars, ats all!" He fingered his beer glass and stared glumly at the photograph, his eyes suddenly without their usual gleam of madness. "You're jus a kid," he muttered. "What do you know anyway? Nothin! Ats what. Kids don even blimey know what they want out o this ere life."

"I know what I want, Coo-coo," Monroe asserted with enough firmness to shock
Coo-coo out of his rambling self-stupor to look up from the beer glass with a surprised, "Eh? Wha?"

"I'll tell you what I want." Monroe was poised dimensions outside himself on a moment of perfect acid-vision clarity, conscious of the strobe-light flashing over his face, freezing each of the vicissitudes of his expression into Coo-coo's dark, swimming eyes, and Georgina's and Elfinella's perfume, over the beer and smoke and burnt food smells, like the incense at the saints' feast. "When I was a little boy, I had a good friend, an orthodox rabbi named Cantor Grossman -- with the pais and black frock and yarmicah -- who gave me lessons to prepare me for my Bar-Mitzvah. And when I decided not to have my Bar-Mitzvah, I didn't care what my parents or anyone else thought -- except Cantor Grossman. Because, even though I haven't thought about him much all these years, I've just now realized that he taught me some of the most important things I know. He told me that people who talk about things don't really talk to each other. And he told me the meaning of Shavuoth, a Jewish holy day to celebrate God's gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses. He said that if you pay your dues -- study Torah for the whole evening of Shavuoth -- and then look up at the sky exactly on the stroke of midnight, the sky opens up to you and you see God and all his angels in heaven. And if you look up a second too soon or a second too late, or if you blink at the crucial instant, you miss it. And you know, once, just after he told me, I thought it happened, the sky opened up for me; it happened the first time that I ever heard live jazz -- in a club just like this one. And now that I've been paying dues for awhile, I'd like that to happen again. I want the sky and the whole world to open up to me. That's what I want, Coo-coo."

Coo-coo remained mesmerized by Monroe's mounting rhetoric of desperation, until finally he shook his head and chuckled, "I b'lieve, guv'nor, that you're really turnin me aroun, you are. Tryin to make a r'ligious man outa me or
somethin. But I can bloody nearly see what yr gettin to. Want the world to open to ya? Then, blimey, you've got to open yourself to the world, tell the things that're hardest to tell. Like these blokes -" -waving at the female impersonators and the other performers. "I have done it myself, y know." He warmed to his subject with an air of comfortable confession that was undisturbed by Monroe's regard of nervous anticipation. "Yes, indeed. I've taken a steady look at my long life and preserved my experiences for the world in a book printed in steel. Yes, I said steel! Christ, you b'lieve enough in somethin you've written to consider it worthy to be etched eternally in steel and you can be bloody well certain the rest o the world will give it some importance too! Listen, guv'nor, d you know that throughout the whole hist'ry of mankind, no book has been esteemed enough, worshipped enough to be printed in steel -- not the Holy Bible, the Torah, the Koran, or the Kama Sutra. But I can tell ya one book that's gonna be printed in steel for bloody certain -- and that's the book that tells the Secret of Life. When that Secret is discovered, you can bet your last bob people will think it's important enough to preserve for the future generations!..."

Monroe was glad to get the Professor's signal and head for the stage finally. He said nothing to Coo-coo. His head was throbbing with the spectre of retarded time and blown-up spatial dimensions. Already Coo-coo's fantasies were the sour karma of a previous incarnation, and the stage miraged before him absolutely demanding of some Shakespearean effusion.

The Professor's voice, calling the tune, "Body and Soul", issuing brief instructions, and counting off, "1...2...1,2,3,4-" came to Monroe as through a vast metallic hollow. He picked up his horn and blew to break through the band's tight ring of sound with a molten wail of sound-colour jags -

Emil's Isla Encatada Suite: For those who don't do but simply are. For
those who are invisible while things just happen around them. For those who
talk about things and not to each other. For those who make their hell in
others and also their heaven. For those who must betray themselves. For those
who reach for something that is not there....

"Hey! What the fuck-" muttered the Professor. "Cool it, Monroe! You're
drowning us out with that wild shit." -- his voice pitched to a booming urgency.
"You're blowing the gig, you dumb-ass kid!" The office swingers on the dance-
floor stopped to gape and conversation at the tables faded as all the people
began to rise and move towards the stage. Professor moved to grab the horn out
of Monroe's mouth, but Monroe turned his back for a moment of grace.

A choir of horns echoed from the rafters a New Orleans street funeral hymn
to Annie Christmas and Marie Leveau and a Kaddish to Rabbi Rothstein and his
followers and burial vaults of steel forged in fiery furnaces shuddered from
the pressure of Emil and the other ghosts drawn by a long piercing tone-

The manager ran to switch on the juke-box, and the tinkling of glass at the
window beside the stage and a thud on top of the piano produced an aura of still-
ness about Monroe's sustained C above high C... For Cantor Grossman for Haut
Homme for Whitey For Rob For the Black Nats For Coo-coo For Emil and the faces
in the water one middle-aged smiling painfully... a crash like ocean waves and
lion's roar cracking the roof-beams and caving in the wall behind the stage.

You pay the dues for so long and the hunger takes hold of you and you sniff
so long with the nameless pangs until finally you say fuck all the rules let
the world happen fuck all that and just do it.... And there is no other way
every moment enforces telling the things that are hardest to tell the betrayal
of one world in order to know the other so only the moment cannot be betrayed...

Monroe feeling silent could discern 'Please Help Me I'm Fall-in!' through the
screaming stampede as he raised his head above the debris to look through the
aperture in the roof which was like an inverted pit and through the split in
the wall where the caped figure of the nameless Black Nat Enforcer was retreat-
ing down the alleyway minus his burden of vengeance looking out for the Man who
was not merely the fuzz but every white-skinned unbelieving motherfucker and
Monroe knew he couldn't stop now if he wanted to neither of them could and death
is not to be feared...

Death is only the final dues. Coo-coo, his deep wrinkles turned to rivulets
of blood that glistened in the rhythm of the strobe still flashing, crawled
over the smoking rubble to clutch at Monroe's shoulder, "You ain't bout to leave
us now, are ya guv'nor?" he cried hoarsely. "Not without readin my book o
steel. And s'posin I don pull through, then who's gonna bring my book to th
bloomin world? Eh, guv'nor? Eh?"

Death is only freedom, death is only laughable -- if indeed Coo-coo would
die and his book of steel remain.

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