

Toby had never been impetuous—until she escaped to Berkeley to marry a man whose words won her heart, but whose true nature she'd never seen.

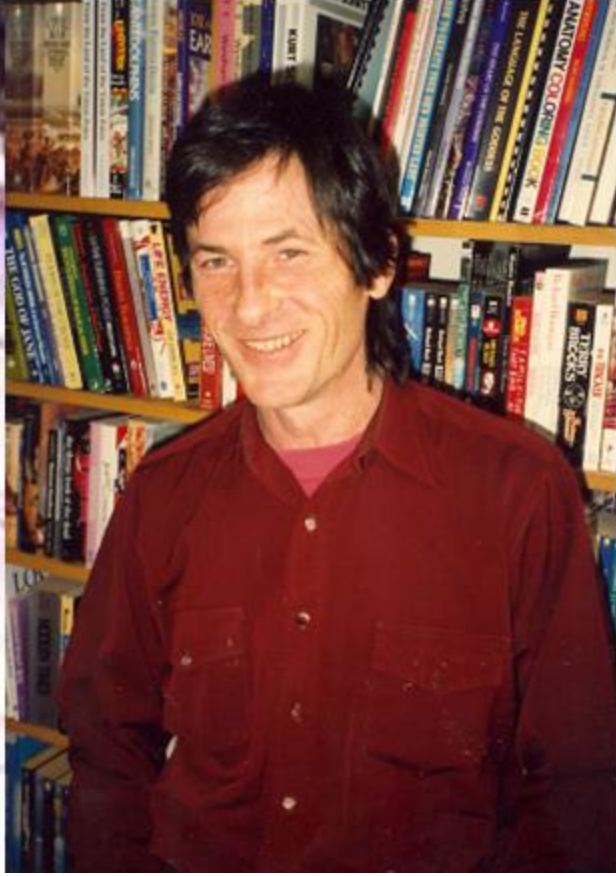
LOVE IN BERKELEY

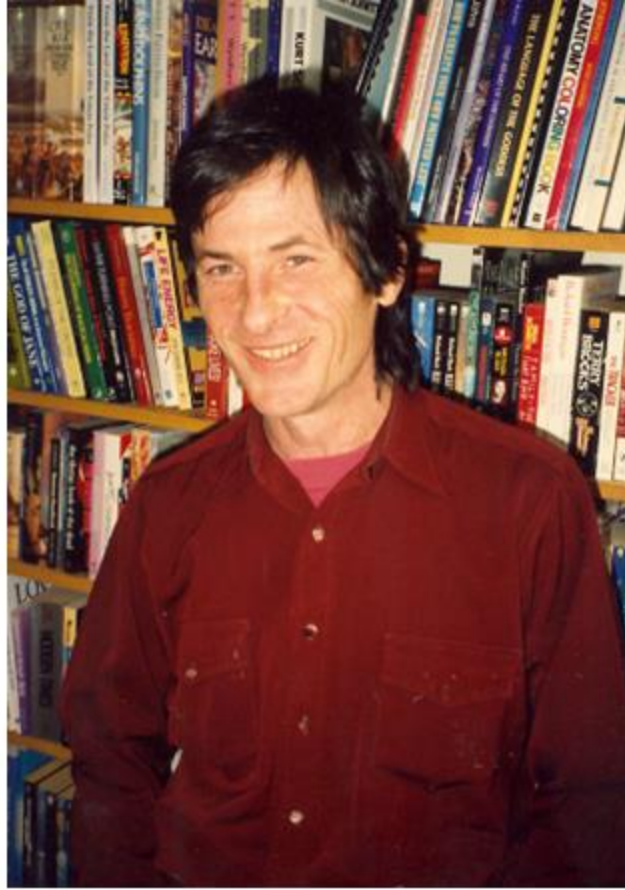
Scorpion



Romance

Bouvard Pécuchet
TOBY'S JUBAL





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TOO MUCH INFORMATION

Three times this week he'd been called Michael. He's introduced, or he introduces himself, as Jubal, but the next thing they call him is Michael, so he's developed this rejoinder—"It's Jubal. Michael is an Archangel. Jubal was a gunfighter." There's more than a little sarcasm in his tone. He tries to keep his voice flat, so the irony will be apparent, but it's hard to punish a Buddhist monk for his absentmindedness.

They're in the Berkeley hills, at The Children's Garden, a lodge-pole-constructed building that is both a kindergarten and a Zendo. Energy radiates from the children's drawings on the walls. The toilet is kid sized. The moon's light shines through the skylights. The monk, Yeshe, is about to give his "Doing a Three-year Retreat" talk & slideshow.

Jubal has set a zafu and zabuton near the wood stove because this monk still gets cold, even after living in a leaky yurt in the Arizona desert for three years, doing mantras in the sagebrush among longhorn steers, coyotes. and rattlesnakes.

One monk in the group got bit and had to break his retreat and leave the set boundaries, a yurt encircled by a six-foot fence. He was bit on the ankle in his garden, a rock garden looks harmless, nice even rows of sand, not looking at that curled configuration on the rock, carried to the emergency room after hobbling forty yards to the main house, lucky he was on the perimeter of the compound, not supposed to be walking with a leg full of poison, but he didn't want to disturb the other monks and break their retreat.

Yeshe only found out about his brother during the next month of group study, still in silence, he got a note which explained the whole episode, maybe too much information, but the details altered his perception of being contained in a sphere of natural mind, to the reality of the jungle, referred to in the texts as samsara.

Illusion takes on new meaning when you are in pain and fear death's fang. Yeshe did thank a painting, made sand mandalas and worked at his translation of *The Heart Sutra*, along with doing the practice of Nyondro—one hundred thousand recitations of Vajrasattva's hundred syllable mantra, one hundred thousand mandala offerings, one hundred thousand raisings of bodhicitta, mantra and study, for three years, three months, three weeks, three days, three hours to finish his retreat and come to Mendocino and be here, sitting like a mountain, like he's taken the king's throne, a lot of information processed and now focused.

"Do you consider meditation to be the most important part of Buddhism?"

"Finally, there is no meditation, only virtue and purification," he replies.

"In what context do you consider your morality?"

"In the context of the six perfections. Meditation can only be accomplished with virtue, with that and purification, allowing compassion to arise unhindered. Purity is skillful means."

Another log is added to the fire. Old friends sit in a circle in a kindergarten listening to a teacher tell a tale that has been told since the first fire was built, how to be patient, how to keep focus, to relax, how to handle bliss when it arises, to understand the reptilian impulse and the surreal flickering of images on the cave wall which portend the light outside the cave, the intensity of clear vision in our mind-stream, that all accomplishments and possessions are illusory and how

karmic conditions hold us in the grip of existence, our sense of mortality being the first realization along the path towards liberation.

Jubal tells Yeshe about his auto accident. "But maybe that's too much information," he says.

"No," Yeshe says, "there are sixty-four thousand things going on in a single thought. Believe me, that is what I consider a lot of information, Michael.

FIGHTING FOR THE PHONE

Jubal could have sworn it was her. She said she'd phone. There was a pause on the line. She always sucks in her breath before she speaks. It gives her a flustered air. Like she's just stepped out of the shower, and you've walked in on her. She draws in her breath, and then she speaks in a rush of syllables.

Only after this pause, there was a little click before the voice began, and right away, he knew he would have to fight for his phone.

"Good morning, Sir," said a woman's voice. "This is C.D.F.C...something," he's not sure what.

"Good morning," he said. "I don't understand what that is."

She started to explain about the Children's Division, but he interrupted her. "I understand you have permission to phone because you are a charity," he said, "but I would appreciate you taking me off your list."

"Alright, Sir," she said, "I will do that." And she hung up. No fuss. No anger. Politeness.

"I've found the secret formula, at last," he said to the empty room. He remembered one solicitor who was relentless. He couldn't believe so many words could come together in one sentence.

Back to waiting. She would phone before long. He wouldn't be driven mad and want to rip off roof. He went back to writing his poem, a poem he wants to teeter forever on the brink of revelation. There is a line that says "again" and then there is a line that is just a straight line, and then a third line that says, *here*, the line in the middle is like a grave, the poem like an epigram on a tombstone.

Again

here.

He decides to write a book that has "Again" on the first page, and then, page after page with nothing on it, and at the back of the book, it will say, "here." This is a poem that would teeter for a long time. Now, he's finished his poem, and she still hadn't phoned.

She's in Los Angeles, visiting her sister. She might think it's too late to phone.

Odd. He remembered the first sentence, he learned to read, "The dog digs in the dirt for a bone." Getting his "d" sounds together. Funny. His mind drifted. *It's the codes...the codes in Chaco Canyon...the codes know that I'll lay at her door like a homeless dog until she lets me in...I'll write pointed sonnets and hang outside her garret window until she is persuaded of my love...will she phone?*

He liked to think of himself as being a young artist and a young dog. Couldn't keep himself from pissing away the afternoon, like James Joyce on a bridge over the River Liffy, deliberating over the placement of a comma.

He liked to think of himself as a genius between his third and fourth scotch, and he envisioned himself scurrying along Blake Street, clutching a fat screenplay to his breast, exhilarated after visiting her room and copying copious amounts of confession from his unsuspecting mistress's diary.

He waited for her to phone. He knew she knew. He also knew he was in deep shit.

BIG GAMBLE

Twenty bucks to blow in Reno. Jubal's first-time gambling in a real casino. Money for gas, for food, and \$20 to gamble.

Patrick drove. Patrick loves to drive. He sang songs in a foreign language, maybe Persian, since he had spent time in Iran. Sounded like, *Baroom, baroom ne, gemina sharmish sa. Golnessena Juno, golnessena Juno*. He loved to sing and drive, and in no time, they were passing under the archway that claimed Reno was the biggest, little city in the world.

And, in no time, the \$20 was blown at a Blackjack table. With only a handful of change, Jubal concentrated on the nickel slots. Oh yes, Fortune was smiling, and a nickel hit a jackpot, and \$60 worth of nickels gushed from the machine, filled the tray, and spilled on the carpet. Jubal was jubilant.

He collected his winnings, and he collected his thoughts. Turn this \$60 into a fortune, the urge to gamble was pulling—take the money and run, the urge to retire was pushing.

Roulette is a wicked game, and the click of the ball was inescapable. While Patrick matched cards with a scantily dressed dealer, Jubal rubbed elbows with the Monte Carlo crowd.

Big imaginings and a small stakes betting system. Jubal's idea was to double up on the bets he lost to maintain his original capital. He played the outside with 25¢ chips placed on black or red. By this means Jubal increased his bankroll to \$300.

Patrick was impressed. Patrick was ahead by a few dollars, and the two gamblers decided to go upstairs to the casino's restaurant and have lunch, eat steaks, and drink a bottle of wine. So, they did that.

On the floor, after lunch, the tables turned against Jubal, and following his system with the daring-do of a drunken sea captain, he cast his fate upon the waters of chance and found himself wrecked by nine losing turns of the wheel. First, 25¢ doubled is 50¢; second, 50¢ doubled is \$1.00; 3) \$1 is 2; 4) 2 is 4; then, 4 is 8; 8 is 16; 16 is 32; 32 is 64; 64 is 128; and soon enough, the 9th turn, a lost \$128 bet requires \$256 to redeem it; and it also means that after eight doubled bets, Jubal had lost \$255.75, which, minus the cost of lunch was all he had. It had been a gamble—not a really big gamble—and it had also been a lesson in the vagaries of chance.

On the way out of the casino, Patrick said, "Well, we had a good lunch."

BLACK FRIDAY

Prefatory note—I have always told the following story as it is here presented, but recently Michael Rossman, author of *The Wedding in the War*, pointed out some historical inaccuracies. He wrote:

“Don Bratman says that the suicide did NOT happen while he was working there, but before that. As for your reference to Fred Moore, who was sitting-in alone on Sproul steps in ‘61 to protest compulsory ROTC, I can correct that from my own memory. Gosh, it’s hard looking back that far without documentary sources, isn’t it? Also, I believe you are referring to William J. Lederer, who co-authored The Ugly American with Eugene Burdick. Professor Lederer may well have been subpoenaed to appear before HUAC in their planned 1959 visit in San Francisco, as many people were, but that visit was cancelled; and it was not until May 1960 that HUAC actually did visit, to interrogate other dozens of subpoenaees, and to face the protest you speak of, in which we were hosed down the steps.”

Political Science lectures at U.C. Berkeley, 1959. Professor Learner was showing his students both sides to an ideological conflict, revealing positive and negative forces in two systems of economics and government, Marxism/Communism vs. Democracy/Capitalism. For this he was accused of corrupting youth and was subpoenaed by the House of un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

Black Friday. Jubal went to the county courthouse in San Francisco with his friend, Don. They’d been friends since grade school. They were on assignment for KPFA, the non-profit, listener-sponsored radio, to record for posterity hundreds of agitators protesting Congressman Willis and his committee. In the afternoon, the demonstrators gained admittance to the courtroom, which had been packed with American Legionnaires and Daughters of the American Revolution. The city police, fearing they were losing control of the crowd, turned on the building’s fire hoses and washed the protestors down the steps of the courthouse.

The first edition of the San Francisco Chronicle reported: POLICE ATTACK STUDENTS, but the next edition quickly reversed this headline to read STUDENTS ATTACK POLICE. This had been the first use of force by municipal authorities on the public since the San Francisco General Strike during the Great Depression.

A protest movement was arising, and Jubal felt exhilaration. It was the formation of a hive, what is now called the Birth of the New Left. It was the buzzing of mindful bees.

Don had been working as a watchman in the bell tower of the Campanile, until a man jumped off, while Don was sorting out the pattern of alliterative “s” sounds in Robert Frost’s “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening.” The guy climbed up on the guardrail, tossed his briefcase over, yelled “Look out below,” and followed it down.

Glass partitions were installed to make it more difficult to jump. There was speculation that the Campanile had phallic content, and that being located across the bay from the Golden Gate Bridge—which was designated a maternal symbol, since the span has the shape of breasts—that the combination of male and female symbolism created a vortex of energy that worked on the unstable psyches of people prone to suicide. Interesting. Nothing about both structures being tall and accessible, and that falling from them would kill you.

Jubal was fired up by all these issues, and he was about to barge into the Dean’s office and hand-deliver a diatribe he had written, but Don had a cooler head. He convinced Jubal it would be better to first correct the misspellings.

They walked back across the Sproul Plaza towards their dorm. A young man sat just inside the campus boundary with a sign on his chest, indicating he was on a hunger strike until the U.S. Military withdrew its advisors from someplace called Vietnam.

America was asleep, while a war machine was slowly slouching its way towards Saigon. Jubal watched this son of an Air Force officer sit in his hunger strike for several days. Finally, at the

prompting of the university administrators, the boy's father flew out from Washington D.C. and talked his son into having himself committed to a mental institution. This was the beginning of the Litany of the Dead.

The next morning, Jubal's father sat down at the kitchen table and opened his newspaper. Jubal asks, "What's the matter, Dad?" when his father begins to choke. He's sputtering. "What...what is this?" The newspaper is being wildly waved in Jubal's face, but it is clear to Jubal—his picture is on the front page. He had climbed up on the cement portico with a hand-held microphone, and someone from the Oakland Tribune had taken a profile shot of him with his hand held up against a backdrop of placards and protesters giving the *seig heil* salute.

THE INTERVIEW

The application asks his age. If he puts down nineteen, they will never hire him. If he puts down twenty-one they'll never believe him. Jubal is nineteen and looks it. A hick from the west coast in the Big Apple looking for work at IBM. Jubal was impressed by the typewriters in front of the building. Frank O'Hara had likely written a poem on one of these typewriters on his way back to work as curator of MOMA, and now Jubal was applying for a position in the same building.

He's sure that filling out this application is a big waste of time. He won't even get an interview, let alone be hired to train as a salesman like his friend, Bradford.

Bradford was back from his training session, but he wasn't going to sell typewriters. Instead, he was going to get a master's in mathematics.

Jubal, on the other hand, needs a job. So, he puts down 24, that he has a BA in English and lists his job experience: Retail clerk at Norsco in Pinole. Jubal thinks, "The first thing they're going to ask is 'Where's Pinole?'"

HEAD BENDING DEAD END

"My memory is coming back," Jubal said. "I must've bumped my head on the dash board or the roof of the car.

"You were flying from the looks of what is left of your car. You must have been doing seventy when you hit the crest of that hill," said the officer. "It's lucky we were not both killed. My wife would have been very upset, if I failed to come home from work, tonight."

Jubal looked at the wreckage. It made him sad. He was on probation, too. This was going to land him in serious trouble. Plus he still had an outstanding ticket for running a red light, and now he had run six stop signs and driven his car into a city duck pond at the bottom of a steep hill.

The officer seemed chipper enough, even though his patrol car had suffered. Euphoria, Jubal supposed. The flight to the bottom of the hill had been exhilarating, the free-fall, when the steering vanished. He remembered the sensation of turning to the right and back to the left and the unease of being out of control. At the same time, he needed to make a split-second decision whether to go between the pillars with the chain or avoid them by making a sharp left turn, while traveling seventy miles per hour through the air. He turned, but the move came to naught—he was airborne.

Having the wheel turned must have helped the car turn over when it hit the ground, because now it was upside down in a pool of water. What he couldn't remember was how he got from the car to sitting on his ass in the middle of the street.

“You were damned lucky, you silly son-of-a-bitch,” the officer said. “When that car flipped, you fell out, and the car rolled on. Shit, you might’ve drowned if you didn’t get crushed in that wreckage.” Jubal looked at the headlights, still on, one pointed up and one down.

Another memory returned. The officer pointing a gun at him, saying, “You stay right there. Don’t move.” Then, the officer pulled himself out of the back window of his cruiser. He had been more cautious in his pursuit. He had not raced hell bent to Hollywood after the fugitive. When he reached the place where the road stepped off, he hit his brakes and skidded. And he continued to skid in a circular motion, catching the car’s rear bumper on a Cyclone fence and wrapping it around the entire car, which pinned the door shut.

The patrol car had made a complete turn and come to an abrupt halt at the bottom of the hill when the front axle hit a cement block designed to divert rainwater. Jubal remembered the finality of the sound the axle made when it stopped the vehicle and the strange harmonic sound of the wire fence stretched to breaking point.

None of this was music to his ears, but he was amazed at the amount of information flooding back to him. “You’re alive,” the officer was saying. “You’ve got that to be thankful for. It could have been a head-bending dead end.”

L’ IDÉE DU DÉLUGE

Oh! les pierres précieuses qui se cachaiient,—les fleurs qui regardaient déjà.

Jubal finished reading Rimbaud’s *The Drunken Boat* and ingested eight capsules of peyote. August, 1964, he awaited what *Time* claimed would be the strangest experience of his life. His patience wavered, so he took another eight caps, lit up a joint, and drank a beer. Then, he walked to the corner druggist and signed for two bottles of codeine cough syrup, knocking them off at the end of the alleyway. A door slammed.

Streaks of purple light, raw as butchered beef, flood in on a high tide of effulgent hallucination as one solitary child stands upon the brink of knowing the Meaning of the Universe, partially seeing—furry clouds modulating in confusing colors—the essence as if always known, what does *essence* mean?—the primary substance emerging in eclamptic convulsions, granted by Divine Sophia *a priori* understanding, a fateful step into the opaque transparency of contradiction, where each generation is relative to absolute birth, an aftermath of rhythm and sound contrasting with shades of fuming gray, curling, covering, uncovering the piano of Armageddon.

Jubal leaned against the alley wall. Currents of mist began to form and play in and out between the fence slats—a child’s first sight of unrecognizable twinkles of bronze light, a partial appearance in one dusty corner of desolate shapes of undulating turmoil, fluctuating figments of remorse and fear, a paraphrase of past captured, held in wonder, accepted as the fragrant blossom of fragmented eternal fruition—an epiphany of my mortal nature draped in flowing lavender—but as he looked closer, his clothes wrinkled, his hands wrinkled, and as that synapse fired, an abundance of wrinkled lines became saturated in green and then dripped from gashes in his fingertips. He reached the street, the sidewalk snaking, people moving in ectoplasmic quivers—and he wondered, *Can they see the ecstasy and nightmare of tremulous trepidation on my face?*—the street a sulfurous plane of carrion, the sky, yellow, and at his feet there was an abyss of weird delight and grizzly horror, butterflies of gas and putrid phantoms nourishing on tortured prayers.

Jubal’s heart twisted like a bucking bronco, ice-blue blood in his nerves, animal blood cursed and

coursing, translucent blood trapped in a fiery alchemical casement, and this alchemy converting each moment to the next, fashioning freeways in his body.

Something to distract him, or maybe as an act of renunciation, Jubal decided to get a haircut and entered a barbershop and later emerged with a new style of haircut, the barber not pleased about his work, but Jubal couldn't stop jabbering, and he kept craning his neck to see around the corner in the double mirror reflection, his life in seaward ruin lay, retreads bare, a mummy cloth stuffed in his bloodclot soul, as he

Jabal sat in the Mediterranean Café drinking double espressos, listening to ethereal angel voices. Later, he floated to the Garden Spot for a pack of *Gualoises*. And then he decided to take in *Battleship Potemkin* at the Cinema Guild, but when Mother Russia came down the Steps of Odessa, he freaked-out and headed down Dwight Way to the Steppenwolf where he could drink and blaspheme in peace.

He sat at a table strobed by candles in the deepening shadows—Scorpio, Scorpio rising—and he could feel gladness linked to madness, as the wood grains formed hieroglyphs, the characters moving in rhythms syncopated to his breathing, waves of color—flowers whispering that he was a special guest in a sad dream—knowing when the moth flew out of his eye, the Dead would teach him to dance.

A biker appeared—his guru, Michael—and Jubal tried to concentrate on what Michael was saying, but his words came out like they were in slow motion—something about efficient work starts from idle not from toil, or perhaps his motorcycle was idling, and he wanted Jubal to pay the toll, nothing to do but project himself frame by frame through the flames onto an accelerating explosion of leather and chrome. *Oh, God, he thought, I will keep on until I reach your blessed Paradise!*

BALLAD OF MYSTERY & DEATH

Singing arias. Nancy was singing an aria, while she was dancing a waltz to a Brahms string quartet with Jubal. A busty contralto in a long blue dress. Her mouth quivered. She could see humor in the antics he performed to seduce her. She had come to the party with a cherubic, blushing tenor. She agreed to drive Jubal home, and the tenor tagged along. Jubal was living in a converted coalbin in a large Victorian on Blake Street. *The moon is a flower—moon moves into fragment—visitation comes—wordless, shapeless.*

Jubal lit a candle and some incense. He proffered his hashish pipe, brimful, and after the pipe returned, he exhaled in bliss. *It is sweet, the taste of the tree, children running, guns clicking, the shaking of my head.* It seems to him these children would like to be alone, so while they were talking, he went out the door and down the hall of fading portraits, his face in the mirror above a broken vase.

He felt as though something shadowy was following him—a dark bird with large wings. He spun quickly and jumped out of his black sport coat. *There is a cemetery in the mind—tombstoned, we find it.* He sat in the foyer of an apartment building waiting for an old girlfriend to return. He decided to make an offering of his naked body. He took off his clothes and sat with the fixed intent of attaining the Ego-death through his embodiment of the creative energy of the cosmos. He was expecting a yab-yum goddess to appear.

A heavy blow to his back. Probably the door to the foyer. He heard, “Hold it, or I’ll shoot!” He streaked up the stairs to hide on the roof, but another cop had come up the back stairs. *I’m an*

angel. I can fly. He walked to the window and climbed onto the sill. The window was open, the pavement two flights below. The cop's face became ashen, and his hand with the gun shook. Jubal screamed, "Eli Eli Lama Sabathana," as loud as he could and fell on his back. He kept his eyes closed. Soon, there was the cooing voice. He opened his eyes expecting his Belovéd—but, no, it was her roommate. The cops lifted him by his arms and dumped him in the backseat of their cruiser. They collected his clothes, and he dressed as they drove to the station, stopping once to cajole a streetwalker.

He stripped and was given blue coveralls to wear, while the cops pawed over his motley black suit for drugs. "Hey, kid, looky here." A rookie examed something in his hand. Two seeds of marijuana—one for analysis, one for evidence. [Note: currently in California, any amount of possession of the marijuana is a felony. Also, the state recognizes three classes of asocial behavior—criminal behavior, insane behavior, and criminally insane behavior. This combination of evidence can lead to Jubal's conviction as criminally insane.]

Jubal is put in a cell after being booked for indecent exposure and possession of the killerweed. Relieved to be out of handcuffs, he finds a copy of the Gideon Bible and begins to read, first to himself, then softly to the shadows, then loudly to the drunks in the next cell, who begin to moan and cry out, "Yeah, right on." "Stop it, no, no, stop it." "That will be enough, Mac, knock it off."

Jubal's Christ-complex receded to that of John the Baptist. "Be purified in the holy toilet water of jail, you sinners!" Jubal dunked his head in a toilet bowl full of turds and pulled the lever just as the guards entered, grabbed him by the ankles and drug him to a padded cell, where he bounced about until he was weakened by bruises and abrasions.

Early the next morning, Jubal was led back to his original cell, and he found the Bible, torn in the struggle across this verse in Isaiah:

We cried out because of oppression when thy chastening was upon us. Like a woman with child, as she draws near to give birth, as she writhes and cries out in her pangs, so were we in thy presence, O Lord; we were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth only to wind; no deliverance did we achieve...

He kept the Bible hidden away. His plan was to heave it at the judge when he got to court, but when the time came, and Jubal's lawyer asked some routine questions, he replied with babblings about Cervantes being imprisoned in the Castle of Chillon for not paying his taxes and Henry David Thoreau claiming "One man in the right is a majority of one."

Jubal was ushered into the courtroom, and it seemed to him that he walked through a revolving mirror, where he pleaded insane at the suggestion of a consulting psychiatrist. This led him to be transferred to Herrick Hospital for ten days of psychiatric observation. It was an opportunity for him to talk in tongues to the Queen of Hearts and her minions. The doctors' reports recommended he be held as an insane person, so he was taken to a holding tank in the Alameda County Jail.

After an asshole inspection and delicing, Jubal was introduced to his cell mate, Homer Gideon. Homer spent his time drawing on photos of Black people in the newspaper with colored pencils. Homer hips Jubal that his behavior would bring the bulls down on their necks. Jubal insisted he was trying to organize a sit-in. When it came time for head count, Jubal refused to stand up, engrossed in his reading of *Job*. He still had his Bible. But for all his religious fervor, all he got was a blow to the solar plexus and a dazed bumpbumpbump down the alley to The Hole. He found himself in a 4 X 5 foot room with a steel door, a 60-watt light bulb behind a grate, a vent, and a hole in which to relieve himself.

On the second night he was given a plastic mat, and it seemed like he was floating in an elevator-cloud, hearing creaks, booms, and cackles from those that operated the celestial machine that transports him to his morning cup of diluted coffee. He imagined himself to be the statue of David being transported in the hold of an ocean liner from one museum to another.

On the third day, he was offered release from The Hole to come out and shave, but he flipped the guard the finger and went without dinner. His cell was later opened by a trustee, who told him no harm will come to him if he would only 'shave off that ridiculous red beard.' Cautiously, Jubal entered a cell, and an inmate named Pluto handed him an electric razor. Pluto smiled and motioned Jubal to sit down. He sat, and Pluto sat down very close to him on the bunk. Jubal wrapped the cord of the razor around his hand and attempted to swing it like a bolo, but the razor came unplugged and fell to the floor. Pluto laughed and said he was free to go back to wherever he came from, so he climbed out of the corner of Pluto's cell and went back to The Hole.

When Jubal next saw the guard, it was Monday, his day in court, and he decided maybe it was best to get a haircut so as not to get a stiffer sentence. He sat in the chair, and just as the barber was about to cut his hair, the mail was delivered. The barber stopped to read a letter, and to Jubal's surprise, tears welled in the barber's eyes. Apparently, his mother had died and his wife was asking for a divorce. Jubal said he needn't cut his hair, but the barber insisted, and there are a few tense moments while Jubal is transformed from a Mohawk into Mr. Organizationman.

It appearing to the Court on this day the above named defendant appeared to answer a charge of violating the Health and Safety Code. It appearing a doubt arose as to the sanity of the said defendant, the judge dismissed criminal proceedings and certified the above named to be committed and confined as an insane person until such time as he shall become sane. Done in open court.

SEASON IN PURGATORY

"Do you see any visions? Do you hear any voices?" From D Tank in the Alameda County Jail to D Ward at Napa State Mental Facility. There, Jubal was interviewed by the admitting psychiatrist. Her prescription was, "Just take these pills at pill call and be good for ninety days." Stelazine and something to knock out the side effects.

Napa State Hospital, in the town of Imola, had decorative, painted walls. Landscapes with fauns. Jubal decided to be a hermit on one of the mountains with fabulous beasts for companions. He settled in. Friends wrote letters; family visited; doctors changed; books from the Red Cross arrived; he was given permission to freshen things up. Like marionettes the patients left their cells to scrub and mop and scrape sperm, spit, shit, piss, blood and vomit from the halls and walls, every ceiling-crack-crevice-hole-spot-place.

Jubal now realized he was living in a very extravagant society, elastic in its tolerance. The patients planted periwinkles and sat beneath shade trees manufactured by Dame Kindness' computer, while behind these very walls—lobotomy and shock treatments were performed, psychotropic drugs were administered, there were strait jackets, and hydrotherapy and ping pong.

September 10th, 4:30 p.m. Jubal is the name of the Mongoloid idiot in the chair next to our hero. This monster is a classic case of bad manners at the table, stuffing oranges and bananas, peel and pulp, into his maw with delicate hands that have a bluish hue. After eating everything on his tray,

he goes back to rocking in a stationary chair in the dayroom. He looks out the window or at the TV. He varies this routine by hitting himself with his fists. This leads the orderlies to outfit him with a football helmet and shoulder pads, and if he begins his “bear dance” and tries to spar. Then, he is put in his cell. Everyone is warned that his bite is poisonous. Jubal was here when Jubal arrived, and he was there when Jubal left. Jubal couldn’t help but wonder, *Is he my doppleganger?*

Bob arrived in a Rolls Royce and underwent his sixth series of shock treatments. A Seventh Day Adventist, he was convinced he was Jesus-The-Word-Incarnate-Daddyoson&HolyO. His mission on the ward was to get the monster Jubal to talk. X-rays revealed there were gaps in Jubal’s brain, but Bob didn’t believe this mattered. Our Jubal’s last glimpse of Bob was of him standing in his cell with his hands outstretched, the front of his skull red and swollen from blasts of electrical shock, crucified in the midst of his misery.

Smitty had been transferred from San Quentin because he was stir crazy. His most prized possession was a blanket made of stitched-together *Bull Durham* bags. This was a gift for his daughter. “If I can just get my hands on her,” he hissed. D Ward will be his permanent home. Spirits in his heart wanted vengeance.

Lewis was big. And he was unconscious when they wheeled him into his cell. Upon regaining consciousness, he broke the straps holding him to the bed, broke off the bolts holding the bed to the floor, crunched the bedframe into a ball, and smashed it into the door. Four orderlies came with needle guns, and after a bit of scuffling, all was again quiet. Later, Lewis came through the barred doors to the garden and began crawling along the path, nuzzling the flowers and meowing like a housecat. Every day there’s a new pattern in the tapestry.

Wayne, a logger, took one too many rides down the high lead. Now, he was setting choker in the backwoods of his mind. The theory with shock treatment is that a patient gets better, or he gets worse. But Wayne’s condition remained unchanged. Tiiiiiiiiimmmmmber.

Mike was undergoing a series of brain scans. He shot his wife and daughter with a .22 and then put three slugs into his right temple. The bumps were still visible. The women were lucky to receive only superficial wounds. And so, the family survived, and they visited and seem concerned about Mike’s condition. Trepined by his own hand, Mike shimmered in a hell of his own making.

Peter was a cocksman. Tall and dark with curly hair, he played jazz on a tenor sax. But, after a couple of days on D Ward, he was transferred to an open ward. Soon, he returned. He’d been busted for making the beast with two backs with a female patient in the women’s lavatory. He tried to blow his anger through his horn. The orderlies took away his sax and put him in solitary to make him quiet down. One afternoon, his parents visit. Jubal was sitting at a table inside the dayroom, and Peter entered from the garden. “Do you want to see me make a break?” he said. Then, he went into the john, and when the doctor and his parents walked down the hall, Peter was out the door and into the garden and over the wall. Jubal continued with his game of solitary Scrabble. E1S1C3A1P3E1S1. Eleven points—eleven is a cosmic number. Peter was not detected AWOL until suppertime. By then, he’d test-driven a used car and driven it to Oakland and wrecked it and had again been busted. Wild energy. Jubal thought, *Let that dog bark!*

Tom was a tender lad, who had cut his wrists. Jubal found that they had a mutual acquaintance, Daniel Moore, and this breaks the ice. They trade books. Confused and disorientated, Tom stared into Jubal’s copy of Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and Jubal perused his copy of *Dawn Visions*:

sing(s) like a clear— visionary.
The Silent Yes that doesn’t fall
a writhing bleeding warrior from our lips

but flutters
poised on their curved edges,
a dry / precise drum-tap!

NO-PLACE

Marie-Claire, a nurse, interested in the philosophy of Alan Watts and a par Scrabble player, was an angel of mercy on the night shift. Jubal had had a toothache for a couple of days and needed to go to the dentist. The dentist drilled the tooth and filled it, but when the Novocain wore off, he was in severe pain, and he started climbing the walls. One of the orderlies on the day shift, who didn't want a scene, shot him full of Sparine, a muscle relaxant, and strapped him to his bed. Jubal couldn't move his lips to moan, let alone move his limbs. When Marie-Claire came on her shift, she checked the charts. By then, he could moan that his tooth was killing him, but she said she couldn't give him anything for the pain—just something to knock him out. Energy follows consciousness.

Where am I? At the end of the asylum ward in my cell in this bed by the wall imagining Marie-Claire's breast, her features composed as an organ—a tit with a blue eye, a kind, calm nurse for me—I begin to drift down a river with Marie-Claire to guide me. Everyone else has been shot by yelping Indians.

And Marie-Claire? She gave succor.

THE DIARY

The diary was on the kitchen table. This was unusual. Jubal knew that Toby kept a diary. He had seen her writing in it at her desk by the window in the bedroom. He remembered her writing in it a couple of nights ago, how beautiful she looked in the light that fell across her shoulders.

She always snapped the clasp shut when she was finished. There was a little key, she kept on her key ring. She would ferret the diary away when she was done.

Sure, he was curious about what she wrote. Her hidden thoughts. Her tortured soul. What were her revelations? Her observations? Her epiphanies? But no matter how much he wondered, his curiosity didn't get the better of him. A diary is private. Secret. He would sooner open her mail than read a page of her most intimate thoughts.

But here was the diary on the kitchen table. Open. And he could not help but see the entry. It was dated three days ago. At the top of the page were bold letters: "3 I's OF SPY." (1) Identify the target; (2) Initiate the contact; (3) Infiltrate the network. $1+1=1$, and following this cryptic formula, a schedule: Newark to arrivals platform. Ramps. Terminal C. Inside building. Penn Station, Newark to Penn Station New York. Scissors, paper, rock.

Jubal wondered, *what is this about...is she meeting someone?* He had to admit he had felt his relationship with Toby was suffering. She was more than distant. Lately, she was absent. Jubal was intrigued by her behavior and, at the same time, confused. He was unsure how to proceed.

Ask her what was up. Would she feel this was an attack? Should he keep quiet? He could feel anger mixed with desire. Desolate and despairing, lost in murky ignorance, wishing he was past caring, feeling a dream was dying with love and trust fading. His thought reminded him of a poem

written by an over-literate teenager, but it was a verse written in his heart, and he wished he had never peaked at the open diary.

It's not a thought lost in mist. It's more like a December wind. Jubal knew he was jumping to conclusions about the implications of what he had seen written. He flipped the diary open to another page and read: "Finally, I got to go to Chicago. I got some money, so I didn't have to work for a living. I was staying with a friend, when Malcolm showed up. I had met him in Stockholm, and we had sworn eternal love, but it was three years since I had seen him. Like an eternity. Malcolm hadn't written. I had no idea what had become of him. It was morning. We went to the corner, to The Poet's Café, for coffee, and he asked me if I still loved him. I told him I was in love with someone else. I said, 'Do you hear that motorcycle running up and down the street?' He said he did, and he seemed frightened. He left, saying he was going to Seattle."

On another page: "I had a dream. I was in a big city, maybe New York, and I was moving like on roller skates or like Beauty in Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*. Then, I was on a big ball with the roller skates underneath. I could move around, and as I moved around, I could strike attitudes. It was very quiet. I was wearing robes, white, ruffled. I couldn't tell where they began or left off. I could move through this city, but no one seemed to notice me, and I thought, *this is what it is like when you're dead*. It seems like this is happening more and more while I'm alive. It's strange not to be noticed. I'm glad when a stranger acknowledges me."

Another note: "Jubal can go on forever. Malcolm got it over in a jiffy, and I think I preferred that." Jubal could remember riding the motor bike up and down the street. He thought, *a "jiffy" can be a very important moment for some.*

THE SPARK

If he thought back, Jubal didn't know Bruno and Sandy were a couple until the night Sandy phoned him and asked if he could help her rescue Bruno.

"He's stranded on the highway outside of Pinole. He told me to bring some large plastic garbage bags and some duct tape. Do you have any?"

He told her he did.

She said, "I'll pick you up at your place."

He had his digs in a barn on a small horse ranch near Tilden Park. The barn had stalls and a hayloft and a workshop and housed an antique ski museum. There were 200 pairs of skis dating from the 19th century to the 1940s. They belonged to his landlord, who exhibited and rented the skis along with period costumes. Jubal especially liked a WW II commando outfit. He was looking around the workshop for some duct tape when Sandy pulled up in her Carmen Ghia.

"What's with the garbage bags and masking tape?" Jubal asked her.

"He didn't say, but he told me it was important."

"Kind of spooky if you ask me. Maybe we're going to dispose of a body."

"Oh, Jubal, don't be silly."

They drove down the gravel road to the highway. There wasn't any moon, and no stars were visible because of the cloud cover. It was winter, and there was winter stillness.

"So, what's up with Bruno? Why do we have to pick him up in Pinole? Where's Pinole?"

"Not in Pinole, a mile outside, on the road to Richmond, at a gas station. He was stopped for a defective taillight, and the cop told him his driver's license had expired and he was warned not to proceed by himself."

They found Bruno at The Pit Stop. He looked miffed. Said Jubal would have to drive his van for him. Wanted to talk to him, private like. He seemed embarrassed about something. Walked him out by the pumps, while Sandy went to the ladies' room. He told Jubal that he had been living in his van and had developed a case of body lice, and that if Jubal was going to drive his van, he would need protection.

"This is what the garbage bags are for?" Jubal asked.

"Yeah, it'll be ok; you'll see. We'll wrap your arms and legs and tape you up, so nothing can get on you."

"Ah, this is nuts," Jubal exclaimed. "This will give me the willies, driving along wrapped in plastic, thinking, what if I get pulled over for the same faulty tail light, and the cop sees me in this outfit, taped in black plastic with a beat-up cowboy hat on my head, and what about these lice, just what I need is a case of body lice, right when I've started a new relationship."

Jubal had met Toby. She was from Idaho, and she was a waitress at The International House of Pancakes. Toby and Jubal's feelings began to run both ways from the first time she served him a waffle.

"So, you're seeing someone?" asked Bruno.

"Yes, a lady, named Toby."

"You sleeping with her?"

"Well...not yet...how about you, you and Sandy a number?"

"We might be, if I could find a place to live, and if I ever get deloused. I'll have to take all this stuff to the Laundromat and bathe in creosote," he said.

"Good luck," Jubal told him, but it came as a surprise the following week, when he got a call at his bookstore from Toby saying she saw Sandy looking at white dresses in a boutique.

"Weird," he told her, "Because Bruno was here in the head shop, and he wanted to borrow a couple of rings, those cheap silver ones with the Tibetan mantras on them."

"Borrow?"

"I told you, I thought it was weird, but you know Bruno, so I said sure, take them on a trial basis, bring them back if they don't fit, but what was strange is he took one that fit himself and a smaller one. They must be getting married, right?"

"I'm at the Med, at the pay phone, and they are coming through the door right now, and Sandy has flowers in her hair. I'll phone you back."

In twenty minutes, Jubal got a call telling him to meet her at the courthouse. He put the Closed sign on the door and walked downtown. By the time he arrived at the courthouse, a few friends had gathered for a civil ceremony in one of the judge's chambers. He stood next to Toby, and he could see that ancient spark in her eye.

Spring soon. Still winter. Still winter stillness, but the brown ground moves. Jubal could feel a river cascading down a mountain slope into his lifestyle. The excitement, the adventure, and the turmoil of seduction is one thing, but marriage is something else. He couldn't miss that look in Toby's eyes, but he was having a hard time seeing beyond the honeymoon.

He wondered if his change in perception occurred after Toby told him she had a nose job. He had thought her nose was a touch too perfect. And now, whenever he looked at her, new noses began to appear, a beak, a snout, a proboscis. Maybe his change in perception came after they had gone back to the clinic to get the results of their blood tests, and he got the impression the nurse was giving their relationship a benediction

"Jubal," he told himself aloud, "you just don't want to get hitched."

All the same, they spent time together, and everything seemed to be flowing smoothly, until one

night he said he felt too tired to make love, and she told him she thought she was pregnant. Up until that moment, he felt they had a special deal on Love, nothing down and 0% financing. Now, there looked to be an imminent balloon payment coming due.

As it turned out, she wasn't pregnant, but she said she wanted to take a small vacation alone.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm going to L.A. to visit my sister," she said. "I need some time away from here to think things out."

"Well, I was thinking about taking a retreat with John Big Elk, so I guess we can both do some thinking," he replied.

Jubal hitched up to Ukiah to John's land and camped beneath a stand of old growth Ponderosa pines. He sat in meditation and asked, "What am I doing here? Am I here because I need to prove something to myself? Do I need affirmation that what I am doing is right? Where is my inner teacher?" He was a nest of questions.

That night, at the fire circle, John Big Elk moved his feather fan through the flames and spoke to the group from his heart. He told one girl she had an important decision to make right away, and Jubal knew she had to make up her mind whether to stay in retreat or leave for Colorado to enroll in school.

He nodded toward Jubal and said, "You are always standing back, watching. Are you a teacher?"

Jubal answered, "No."

"Don't be so quick to answer; you have more to offer than you know. You need to come to the front and be acknowledged, but you must learn to give yourself credit for who you are." To Jubal, these words were like thunder.

John kept a few horses on his spread, and Jubal was invited to take his pick. He took a liking to a little chestnut Missouri Foxtrotter, a horse that was sure-footed in the rugged hills and had an interesting extra gait, a sort of sashay between the walk and the fast trot. He took a long ride, but it did not help him make up his mind about staying with Toby.

When the weekend was over, he went back to Berkeley, and when he got home, he found Rhonda there. He asked her what she was doing, and she told him she was shortly to leave on a road trip and didn't have a place to stay. She had expected him back before long and figured she would hang out until he returned.

She was wearing his bathrobe and sitting on the edge of his bed. The covers were pulled back and the sheets mussed up, and as he looked the scene over, the robe fell open and her marvelous breasts made a grand debut.

Jubal had met Rhonda at a poetry reading. He knew he had better make the right decision. Rhonda didn't make any move to close the robe, and as he was standing close enough to touch, she put her hand on his jeans where the bulge was most pressing, and then...

Then, what followed revealed that some people are incapable of being loyal to a relationship.

SWIFT ONE

Toby, thou art
that immortal Wine—
no timid hart—
a wild Skywalker

Crossing the street in wonder about the angle of the earth's shadow on your soul's wanderings, the crescent moon within hand's reach, Toby, you are the path serene, I bathe in your light, you've been painting details on a batik of Tantric deities in yab yum while ants march across the counter and your snake raises its head, your cats cruise among colorful candles and burning incense, you have made yogi tea and we have gone beyond the fuss and dust of the day into a room warm in the flow of our words and gestures, our glances and grazes.

You are a star near and far, a guide in my meditation, you are like a hart moving through my garden, swiftly leaping, fragile yet fearless, able to put lions to flight, skillful and wise with a power over spirits, grant my wish, my boon to dwell in your presence in bliss and emptiness, you are the teaching, serving in the East West Café, present and aware, giving your customers food and care.

Finding smashed glass from a robbed car your heart goes out to someone who has sustained loss, walking through the plaza we find a shopping cart and you hop in but don't let me take you too far so as not to put the clerk to more work, we eat dinner and you read my fortune which says I have natural grace and consideration for others but this really applies to you who give the waitress a 50% tip and say, "Why not?" in praise, I am blown away sitting eating walking with you.

You emanate into all realms and in your presence, I find solace with all objects and all subjects, empty, you are elegance, no stain no blame no blemish, full-breasted warm heart cool brain, carry me away.

FLOWERS AT NIGHT

The house is small, blue, with a shingled roof. There is a sun porch off the kitchen, a bedroom and a bath off the living room.

Turn of the century, the bathroom had probably been a sitting room or study. Strawberry Creek runs through the property, and the creek is a buffer to the playground adjacent to the City Housing Project next door. Sunflowers grow by the door of the little house. Toby has on a Guatemalan tunic and jeans. Her feet are bare. She rolls some loose tobacco in a rice paper and lights it with a kitchen match. Jubal sits in his chair like a champagne cork, ready to pop. "Would it be ok if I made some tea," he asked.

"Sure." Toby blows a puff of smoke, and says, "My parents wonder why I'm spending so much time with a long-haired commie freak."

"And what do you tell them?" Jubal asks.

"I tell them we are friends and that we are working on a movie together."

"How do you really feel? Are you interested in me as a lover?"

"I don't know what to feel about my feelings," she says.

The teapot on the stove hisses, and Jubal gets up to prepare tea. He pours hot water into two cups with sunflower patterns at the table with a sunflower print tablecloth.

"Black or herb?"

"Herb."

"Peppermint, ok?"

"I'm always curious," she says, "but I'm trying to get over this sex thing. I've had way too much for someone my age."

"Peppermint?"

"Oh, sure, peppermint. How about you, do you feel there is something more between us?"

Jubal pauses, dipping the teabags, and says, “There’s something, no denying it, some primal instinct, something wild. I’m trying to curb this, too.”

“I agree,” she says, “I have the same feeling. I know I’ve sent out signals, but I’m trying to get it under control.”

Jubal sets a cup and saucer in front of Toby. “Hot,” he says, “be careful.”

Toby stubs out her cigarette in a copper ashtray, shaped like a cowboy hat. She runs her hands through her short, blonde hair. “Like that hug you gave me,” she says, “it was loaded with sexual energy. We can’t touch without it being sexy. It’s like saying one thing and doing something else.”

Jubal sets his cup back in the saucer with a click. “It’s hard to keep my desire for you under control. There are forces at work here. Love is like the electro-magnetic force. Opposites attract. Current is running between us. Hunger is like gravity; it’s everywhere and affects everything. Curiosity is the strong force; we must learn to survive. And craziness, craziness is the weak force. I want to be clear about my intentions. I want my relationship with you to be grounded in respect.”

Toby says, “I respect you, Jubal, I really do, but I think it’s harder for you. I’m comfortable just talking. Just having sex is no accomplishment for me. I can feel your crush.”

“My crush?”

“Like when you hold me and caress my arm. I’m scared of falling in love. I’m sure if I have a crush, too. Sex is confusing.”

Jubal moves his teacup around in the saucer, while he speaks. “Toby, I sense confusion. At any rate, I feel something awakening between us. We share ideas. You’re talented. I totally admire you. I want to transmute or transform this vortex of sex energy into something creative, so we can accomplish something and not just sleep together and that be that. Something real, not just uninhibited lust.”

“Yes, I can relate to that,” she replies, softly. Her gaze moves over his face. She noticed the dimple on his chin. “I just need space right now from this sex thing because I’m feeling shitty about myself and want more of a spiritual life. You seem to understand this, but…”

“But?”

“But there is still worry, tension, sex tension. I feel uncomfortable. There’s a difference between sexy and sexually active.” Toby looks at her lap, but then she looks up and trails the backs of her fingers along the side of Jubal’s cheek. “I’m tired, tired of losing people.”

Jubal takes her fingers in his. Holding them, he kisses each fingertip. Then, he leans forward and kisses her gently on the lips. He kisses her again. Harder. She feels his hands tighten on her arms. She reaches towards him, putting her hand on his chest, a purely reflexive act of defense. This slows him for an instant, just enough for her to get to her feet and move beyond his reach.

“I need to learn to trust again,” she says. “I’ve been hurt so often. It’s going to take some time.” “What do you want, Toby?”

She shrugs. “I don’t know, to hide. It seems like I’ve spent most of my life in hiding. My feelings are closed up like flowers at night.”

“Very poetic.”

“Just a figure of speech. It’s hard to explain how I feel. I try, but there is always something I am afraid to reveal, something I want to censor, some betrayal or lie that I stumble on that is embarrassing. There are hundreds of things I want to tell you, but when I start to open up, everything gets watery around the edges.”

Jubal stands there, taking deliberate care not to touch her. “A dramatic soul, I’d say, with a touch of the poet,” he remarks.

“I love being with you, Jubal, because you can push all my buttons.”

“I haven’t been near a woman who responded to me like you do for quite a while. It’s flattering and amazing and intriguing all at the same time.”

“It’s very real. My body is reacting very much here.”

“Can I talk a little without everything I say being taken totally as definitive. Will you let me explore a little bit? It frightens me some.”

“Sure, Jubal. You mean you are not sure what frightens you?”

“Yes, if I free-associate, I may say something you don’t want to hear, or I don’t want to say.”

“Go on, Jubal, explore.”

“I’m going off in a lot of directions along the paths of my fears. Some of this has to do with my fear of being possessed by a woman. I’m always afraid of being smothered or mothered or even loved. I’ve always fled from bonds of matrimony and relationship. I don’t want to be like my dad. He thinks he’s so smart. I know I have responsibilities, but I won’t abide by the rules. I have the spirit of a sprite or a satyr. I’ve been like this since I was a child tunneling under the house. I found a secret room once, but later, when I went back, I had grown bigger and couldn’t get in there. I was married, once, and she totally zapped my energy for love. And since I haven’t been able to figure out how relationships should work, I’ve sworn off having lovers. There are gaping holes in my psychic armor, and someone like you is very likely to find your way through, and you have, and we have become close. Can you dig this?”

Her smile is warm and totally unexpected.

“All I’m asking for, Toby, is to find out if we can make it work.”

“Yes,” she says, realizing she wants this as much as he does. The sunflowers appear to nod in agreement.

JUBAL HAD BEEN SEARCHING

Jubal had been searching for the right location. He needed a pub for the set in his movie based on William Butler Yeats’s story of Red Hanrahan.

The story begins with Red Hanrahan playing cards with his friends in a local pub, and he does a card trick where the cards turn into a rabbit being chased by a pack of dogs. He follows the dogs out of the bar and across green fields (this is Ireland) to the high ground where he’s hit over the head by a magician and tumbles into a strange dimension.

Jubal needed a place with the right atmosphere, but he also needed a place near Telegraph Avenue, because he was going to use this area as the high ground of the original story and follow Jubal up the street to the Mediterranean Café.

Kip’s was a hamburger joint, and it would have to do. Sounded vaguely Irish. It was in the right spot, too. He could set up his camera on the corner and catch Red coming out and crossing the street. He’d use the hand-held camera inside Kip’s. The place had a pool room, and this would make for a good background. He still needed a bar. But then, why not change the drug from alcohol to coffee. The Med was an espresso bar, and Kip’s serves coffee. The décor of both places couldn’t be any further apart, Kip’s low-ceilinged with wood paneling and booths and the Med, high-ceilinged, marble tables, with a mezzanine overlooking a large mural of the Greek Pantheon.

Somehow cards and coffee don’t seem to go together, he thought. Too jittery. Change the game. Maybe the rabbit jumps out of a book, or maybe it just appears at the table, like Harvey in the Jimmy Stewart movie. Combining the rabbit with the magician saves one character. Good. Rabbit hits Red Hanrahan on the head. Right. And they go through the Green Door.

That song, ‘What’s Behind the Green Door?’ had been six weeks on the charts, with a bullet. *Green Door, what’s that secret you’re keeping? Stay closed until the others are sleeping.* Jubal dug it.

The green door referred to in the song was between Moe’s Books and the Print Mint. Behind the door, a staircase which climbed to apartments over the storefronts. Funky little pads up there. Joel Beck had a studio. Did a lot of Dexedrine and drew cartoons. Did the logo for the Berkeley Barb—drew campanile as the spear point of the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse.

John Fehey lived down the hall. He had recently cut an album with Tacoma Records, *Blind Joe Death and Other Ballads*. The front apartment overlooking the street could have been the apartment Art Linkletter’s daughter jumped out of on an acid trip, or it could have been where Patty Hearst was held captive. Or where Mario Savio drank brown beer at a brown Formica table. This could well be the hotel in Jean Cocteau’s *The Blood of the Poet*—a series of rooms off a long hallway, where the main character crouches at key holes and observes tableaux scenes behind each door.

Jubal wanted to make his film so he could cast the most beautiful woman in the world. Red Hanrahan encounters a series of women in Jubal’s movie. Each woman represents a force of nature. The Queen of Wands is ambitious, inspirational, enthusiastic, and adventurous. The Queen of Swords is cool, in the jazz sense of cool, perceptive, versatile, smart, penetrating. The Queen of Worlds is sensual, introverted, serious, worrisome. The Queen of Cups is imaginative, compassionate, maternal, and receptive. Each woman challenges Red Hanrahan’s resolve, his discipline, his sense of generosity, his wit and his wisdom.

Yet, no matter how far Red goes, all he finds is dog shit on the bike path. I mean this, specifically, squished excrement with a bike track immersed with oak leaves, and he steps in it, and while trying to get it off his shoe, he notices that it wipes off as specks of gold, and he knows he is on the right track of the Holy Grail, that this is an indicator. He is close to the place where atoms are alchemically transformed. It all boils down to virtue and purification, which, in turn, produce devotion. Just what Red Hanrahan lacks.

Red doesn’t fight reality. He creates a new model. And Jubal wants to capture this invention on film. 16 mm film. Set pieces in series. Surrealistic. Magic. Mythic.

Berkeley is a city of buds and flowers. For Jubal, it’s a warm spring day on the outside, and a black tar day on the inside. Like Cocteau’s artist, Jubal draws a head with charcoal, and its mouth begins to move. The artist wipes the mouth off the drawing, but the mouth transfers itself to the artist’s hand. A surprising thing to have a mouth in the palm of your hand. Something to listen to. Use your imagination with. Only, rather than listen to the language as a referent of the Divine, the hand becomes a direct object.

AWAKE

Toby said that even though others might see her as energetic and full of charm, but inside, with a heart full of hate and pain, she felt selfish and afraid to commit to anything, to a person, to a cause or even to pushing herself in a more relentless way towards self-discovery.

Toby liked Jubal very much. They very seldom disagreed. She could tell him her most secret thoughts. They seemed to be made of the same stuff. Seeing her in a slump, Jubal asked her how she felt. Toby said she felt blue, that nothing seemed to make sense. She wished something would make her come alive and dry out her soggy soul. Jubal said he was hungry, and if she would walk

with him to the Garden Spot Market, he would tell her a story.

They walked along a residential street with trees. Jubal lightly held Toby's hand, and he spoke of a time before they were together, of a previous love affair, of a time when he was often drunk and rowdy. After the breakup of this romance, he said his drinking increased dramatically and that he dove into a cesspool of self-pity. He remembered being invited to a friend's birthday party, and at the party he drank red wine in the kitchen with his buddies, one of whom made a wisecrack about Jewel, the woman with whom he had broken up. The guy's name was Jerry, and Jubal said he punched him, but it was a sloppy blow, and the fight quickly turned into a wrestling match on the kitchen floor. He said they were pulled apart, and in the process, his shirt was ripped, and he felt humiliated standing there in tatters and being asked to leave.

The street Jubal and Toby were walking on was poorly lit and the passing lights reflected off cars parked along the curb. Coming into the business district, they stopped briefly in front of a shop window of a pet store displaying an aquarium that contained exotic fish.

Thrown out of the party, Jubal said he and Jerry had gone their separate ways. His way led to a ramshackle house that slanted in every direction from the center. He had hung an old army blanket over the window in his bedroom to keep out the light from a street lamp, and with the door shut, the room was pitch black. In the early hours he was awakened by an attack.

Toby's hand tightened on Jubal's.

Jubal said he had read about a yogi who spent many years in a dark retreat. Sealed off from sunlight, he had developed the ability to experience *clear light*, which is not only the ability to see in the dark but is the clarity and lucidity of pure space, of emptiness, the direct, intuitive understanding of events.

Jubal didn't know what had awakened him; he only knew that he stretched out his hand to stop a blow from an ax handle that was descending. Thwarted by his hand, the ax handle cracked from end to end, and Jubal said he felt the reverberation from his soles to his soul. Jerry dropped the ax handle and ran from the house, and Jubal lay back on the bed and fell asleep until dawn. Then, Jubal got up and dressed, picked up the ax handle he found on the bedroom floor and began to search for his assailant.

There was a long silence. Then, Jubal returned to his story.

The streets were deserted, as he searched for Jerry. Passing an alleyway, Jubal saw the guy on the next block, so he hurried up the street to the next alley and hid behind a telephone pole. When Jerry passed, Jubal tapped him on the shoulder. Jerry was startled, and Jubal told him that they could go on playing tag like that forever, but it would be better to bury the ax and move on. He said he was aware of something in Jerry that was suffering and that it evoked his own pain.

He said he also understood in this moment that he could not go back to the way he was living, to the anger and drunkenness and confusion and turmoil he had been creating and perpetuating. He wanted calm, health, and clear understanding. He felt the relief that comes from no longer feeling the pain he had been inflicting on himself. He was awake in a way he had never been before and realized this precious condition is a continual process rather than a final accomplishment. Not everyone is going to be hit on the head. This might work for certain hard cases. But everyone is going to awake at some point, if not in this lifetime, in another.

Toby asked why awakening had to be so difficult? And Jubal told her it's because it's hard to have a sense that the effort will be worthwhile. Hard to get an *if* to become an *it*, to have an idea of what the success will be like until you have tasted it. Jubal said he had looked at his faults and that he didn't trust himself. He couldn't be calm or give and receive love or trust life or find the right way to live. He was stuck because he knew if he thought he couldn't change, he simply wouldn't

change. It followed, then, that if something was wrong, and he felt he deserved the blame because he was flawed or at fault, it would require an entirely new perspective to get out of this thought loop.

He remembered an axiom in logic: if you begin with a false premise, anything can be proved to be true. This means a chain of ideas can lead you into despair. If you begin with the thought of being flawed, you will prove this to yourself over and over. The trick is to see that at your source you are indestructible love and kindness and that you must be your own infallible guide along the path of self-discovery. Maintaining a state of calm and having confidence in this push and shove life we live, then, is the work.

Crossing a parking lot, Jubal paused to look at a newspaper on the stand. He shook his head, put his arm around Toby, and walked into the Garden Spot. The headline he had contemplated read: *President promises to protect environment; more lies ahead.*

OLD BOOT

Nothing as sad as an old boot lying in the middle of the road. Like someone left a piece of a their costume on the stage. Jubal cut diagonally across the street and retrieved it, wondering how it got there. Maybe fell out of a car. Maybe.

Old boot in the middle of the road. One bare foot, limping along. A boot falls from a car. A boot falls from the sky. Someone tosses a pair of boots out, and they get separated. One boot in the middle of the road and another boot in a box. A missing boot. A missing foot. A boot looking for a foot. A foot looking for a boot.

A woman screams at her husband, "You are a stupid son-of-bitch!" and throws a boot at him. He ducks, and the boot sails through the window and lands in the yard by a clump of four o' clocks. The neighbor's dog, Ronny, picks up the boot and carries it down Willow Street, where Tiger meets him. Tiger tries to get the boot away from Ronny, and in their tug-of-war, they are nearly hit by a car. They drop the boot in the street and head down a trail to Strawberry Creek.

Max is sleeping off a drunk by the railroad tracks. His sleep is troubled. Memories of earlier days. He falls off a ladder and is partially paralyzed. His wife leaves him for his business partner. He goes bankrupt. When he finally recovers from his fall, he's alone. He awakes this morning to find he has only one boot. Two dogs rush by.

Jubal looks at the boot. A useless thing, one boot. By the alleyway near the bus stop, there is a pile of boxes. In one of the boxes there are a few books. Jubal scans the titles: *Saint Joan* by George Bernard Shaw, an anthology of Black writers, a collection of critical essays on J.D. Salinger, and a monograph, *Shelly, Keats and Rome*. He can smell mildew, but the engravings in this book on Shelly and Keats interest him. His girlfriend, Toby, would like this book. He takes it and sets the boot down by the box. A boot for a book.

Max, still groggy, searches for his boot. He gives up and starts trekking towards town. Passing the bus stop, he notices a boot by a box. It is not his boot, but it is the right fit. It is not the right style, but the man is not fashion conscious. He laces the boot and wears it for a couple of days, until he finds his own boot under a bush. He leaves the other boot on the bank by the creek.

When the man has moved on, the boot becomes despondent and demands a change of situation. From within and from all sides and in every direction, it emanates an occult vibration. I do not know how it is changed, but it is no longer gravitationally held down. It pronounces the sacred word, "Zut," and transforms itself into an over-starched shirt worn by Vincent Van Gogh.

COITUS INTERRUPTUS

There's a party going on upstairs, but Jubal is enjoying the company of friends in his new apartment downstairs. Don is staring out the window at a large oak tree in the middle of the street. Patrick, who sits across from Don on the same window seat is passing him a joint when the phone rings.

"Jubal, here."

"Hi, it's Toby."

"Hello, sweetheart."

"I'm longing for you, despite my push against it."

Don passes the joint to Jubal who takes a toke and holds the smoke until he feels the pressure in his lungs start to burn; then he exhales and passes the joint to Patrick, saying, "I can sense I'm being called to a different plane."

Toby says, "I have a precarious hold on things at the moment."

Jubal: "I can tell you are in a very tender state of mind, tonight."

Toby: "Your heart rays pierce me."

Don takes a few short tokes on what is left of the joint, touches the burning end on his tongue to put out the ember and eats the roach. He points out the window, "That tree is called 'Annie's oak,'" he says. "The city wanted to remove it so they could straighten the road, which was probably just a dirt road then, but Annie Maybeck, the wife of the architect, Bernard Maybeck, and some of her friends got in a wagon and drove down to the city hall and protested. And the tree is still there."

Jubal, who has been slouching in a wicker chair, stands up, whipping the cord to the phone behind him, and walks through an open set of French doors onto a small balcony. "I can feel you trembling," he says.

Don and Patrick leave the apartment.

Toby: "Lets dance, Jubal." This is Toby's code for talking about love.

Jubal: "I dance with you between marble pillars under an effulgent sky. You are very light on your feet."

Toby: "Oh, take me, whilst I faint."

Jubal: "I have a bottle of ether."

Toby laughs. Art and Dan get up from the window seat and leave the apartment.

Jubal: "I mean ammonia. I whiffed it to be sure."

Toby laughs.

Jubal: "Another whiff, just to be doubly sure."

Toby: "I want you in my chair."

Jubal: "This dance leads to a chair?"

Toby: "Oh, yes, sit."

"I'm seated," Jubal says, leaning against the balcony wall.

Toby: "I bend to you...in this chair...I bend over you... across from this chair...we twist around this chair...our bodies surrounding this chair..."

Patrick comes into the apartment with a fire hose, and he stands with his legs apart, pointing the fire hose into the middle of the room. "Watch this," he shouts, no doubt expecting water to gush out, but he looks defeated when only a trickle appears. A small puddle is forming at his feet, when

Don rushes onto the balcony and says, “We gotta problem.”

“Hang on,” Jubal tells Toby, “I’ve got to check something out. Be right back. Don’t move a muscle.”

Jubal steps into the hallway and into a wall of water pouring down the stairwell. He climbs the stairs three at a time, following the hose past the lady who lives in the apartment above standing in her doorway wearing rubber boots and a bicycle helmet.

“Burning down the house?” she asks snidely, as Jubal bounds for the faucet. The hose is ripped open, and the carpet runners are afloat from the gallons of water guzzling along the corridor.

Jubal has just turned the faucet to off when he is handcuffed and marched downstairs by a police officer. The arresting officer doesn’t want to hear a story or take the time to sort things out. Jubal asks him, “Officer, would you allow me to finish a conversation with my girlfriend?” and the officer obliges.

Jubal: “Toby, I don’t have time to explain, but Patrick and Don and I are being arrested. Please, come down to the police station and bail us out.”

Toby: “What’s happening? Jubal, are you alright?”

Jubal: “I’m fine. Just help us if you can. Bye.”

Patrick, Don and Jubal are escorted to the squad car outside and are driven downtown. Damp and irritable, they are booked on charges of malicious mischief & destruction of state property. It’s state property because the building belongs to the University of California.

Heavy charge, destruction of state property. Toby is there in a short while, and after bailing them out, she drives them back to Jubal’s apartment.

Comes their day in court, neither Patrick nor Don has an attorney. Jubal’s attorney advises him to plead not guilty to the charges. Dan, wanting to avoid a return to court, pleads guilty, and Art, indecisive, says he doesn’t know. The judge looks at them sternly and says they need to enter one unified plea, so Jubal convinces Art and Dan to ride his coat tails and plead not guilty.

The attorney calls the head of the housing office from the University to the stand, but he does not really want to press charges because of the fire hose being rotten and the building falling apart. The lady from the flooded apartment comes off vindictive and shrill. The officer who made the arrest admits he acted hastily because he had been called back to the same building twice that night for disturbances. The judge lectures the officer about correct procedure and dismisses the case. In the general elation that surrounds their acquittal, an apology to the lady for flooding her apartment is entirely forgotten.

Back at the apartment, there is a small celebration. Everyone is on the balcony toasting Toby for her timely rescue. Toby is sitting in a chair, and Jubal is standing in front of her. He leans forward to kiss her, setting his wineglass on the parapet, and the whole wall crumbles and falls into the garden.

ACCEPTANCE OF REJECTION

Toby and Jubal are still unsure of where they stand. Toby is rejecting Jubal. Jubal is accepting Toby’s rejection, stoically, but he doesn’t like it. He is battle-hardened. Cut off at the knees. Battle-hardened.

Toby felt relieved Jubal was accepting his situation. Now, she could start reeling him in. He hadn’t suffered enough, but she did not want him to become embittered. Might drive him away all together.

Jubal knew he was getting stiffed. He knew he had it coming. And he knew he could take it.

Made him feel better about his night with Lola. He had enjoyed himself. The Mongoloid kid of hers was a bit much, though. The sheets smelled of urine. The girl would have crawled into bed with mom and gotten too comfortable.

The love making in the Botanical Garden had been powerful medicine. Getting naked. She had stripped first. And after their coupling, she was the first to stir. “We need to get back to the party.”

He didn’t complain. Followed her car to the party house. Entered from a separate entrance. Music. Food. Drinks. Lots of kids squealing and running about. Festive laughter.

Toby was not laughing. Her head was tilted at a menacing angle, and she had the expression of an inquisitor intent on burning her man at the stake. Out the door he had walked. Over to Shattuck Avenue and down University to San Pablo. A good, long walk. Time to think. Maybe head for the Steppenwolf. Sure enough, the place was hopping.

A sign above the door read, “For Madmen Only!” Tonight, the big table was occupied by members of the Hells Angels. A biker party showing their colors. At other tables, politicians in blue work shirts. Professor types and artist types. Beatniks. Candles in wine bottles for decor. Tables scarred with knife carvings. The bathroom floor covered with refuse.

Two guys at the trough, so Jubal head for a stall. On the wall above the toilet was a poem: “Illusive Joy—found only in the upland plain/flows down from the Apennines to the Po Valley—sacred joy!” Jubal was amazed at how one can travel from hell to heaven on a few words.

The din of the Wolf increased by the millisecond. A symphony of Mauler’s was blaring from the speakers. Wine bottles and glasses clinked in sync. Max was behind the bar, his frizzy hair electrified in the half-light. All very heady. Jubal thought it best to split. Catch a bus. But an angry Toby awaited him at home.

A hand clutched his sleeve—Price Montgomery, professor of aesthetics, who taught Croce. Price was an Epicurean. Read Anthony Powell for pleasure. Sitting down with Price was tempting. He was polite and gay. Bob, Price’s roommate, was nowhere in sight. Christmas past, Price and Bob had gotten in a tiff, right here in the Steppenwolf, and Bob had stomped out of the place and gotten run over by a car. Broke both legs. Probably at home, now, sitting by the fire, eating the delicacies his mother sends from Petaluma.

But if Jubal sat down, he was sure it would lead to a long dialogue about the nature of friendship and end with Socratic ambiguity. “Well, we don’t know what friendship is, exactly, but we know we are friends,” Price would conclude, and they would leave together.

Not tonight. His dance card was full. He smiled and made a swift exit. Lola didn’t live far. Going to The Steppenwolf was only an excuse. Got him closer to her place. His libido was cooking with coal, and his muse was working the billows. *His fantasy was lost where reason fades/ in the twilight of Platonic shades.*

Keats coming through. Lisa was his Lamia. Snake goddess and siren of forbidden pleasure. The smell of wine and smoke was fainter now. Car lights flashed. There was the smell of rain. The old dilemma: should I, can I, will I. The road to perdition in measured steps. The road of bliss, too. The animal in him overcame all obstacles. He stepped on pavement cracks, counting to 5 on each hand, left, right, left, right, right to her doorstep.

From the street he could see the glow of a small lamp behind the curtains. A dog barked down the block. Set the hair on his neck up. He tapped on her bedroom window, and the curtain parted. She motioned to the door, and soon he heard the deadbolt turn. The formula for his immediate happiness was made from very simple elements.

TOBY COULDN'T SLEEP

Toby couldn't sleep. Her nightgown itched, and the sheets smelled stale. She threw the covers back and sat on the edge of the bed in a funk. Maybe a bowl of cold cereal would help. Maybe a sleeping pill. *I should be asleep. I usually fall right to sleep a few minutes after I review my day and say my prayers.*

The neighbor's door slammed, and a car started and shot up the block. *On his way to school or work, I don't care.* She needed to sleep or she would be fried all the next day. So, she lay back and tried to order her thoughts. *The grocery list nearly complete. Still need paper products. Do something about that. Go to Lucky's. Cut over to the bank, and then to the post office. Stop by Farrel's and look for a used copy of Ulysses for Sandy for her birthday. One of those new pedestrian crossings for the handicapped. Lunch at the Robbie's, I could almost be there, except I'm in my bed, angry at Jubal. I can't sleep without Jubal.*

Jubal. Maybe she had lost him. She wanted to give him some line before she reeled him in, but she may have overplayed it. Confusing, that's what.

What am I thinking? I feel I'm living in an emotional bog. Neither water nor land, neither this nor that, like I'm entering a netherworld, while I'm still awake.

And she dreamed she was walking fast, flying a few feet off the ground. That's it, she discovered, fast walking is really a form of flying. The trick is to keep your feet close enough to the ground that you appear to be walking.

Then, she sat down and tried to act like everyone else. *But I'm not innocent. I worship Jubal. I would love it if he put his toes in my mouth. Shit, am I asleep?*

These were the thoughts of a girl on the edge, a girl falling for a stranger—the blues.

SHE SHOT A HOLE IN HIS SHOE

She shot a hole in his shoe. They'd fought over everything and nothing, and she had slammed the bedroom door shut. Then, very methodically, Toby took out her handgun and shot a neat hole in one of his new shoes. In two seconds, he was busting through the door to look, frantically around, at her, at the gun in her hand, at the smoke still visible in the air, at the shoe on the floor, and back at her.

"Oh, baby, you scared me."

"I meant to, you bastard."

"Oh, honey, I didn't know what you'd done."

"Shot your shoe. Should shoot you." She stared at him.

"Oh, muffin, you know I didn't mean to hurt you. Here, let me have the gun...you'll feel better if you rest. Here, lay back..."

"I'm not laying down for you, you dick. Shoot yourself with that gun. I don't have the strength to pull the trigger. I don't have the strength to go on." Hot tears of frustration and fear shot from her eyes. She gripped her stomach and rocked back and forth.

"My condition is colored by my anger and my love of you, you dope. I know you, Jubal, you bloody Irishman. You're alright, until you get irritable. Then, you have a tendency to break things, like my poor heart." And she sobbed and was inconsolable.

It was here Jubal made his exit. When she quit sobbing, she realized he was gone. *Gone to one of his haunts—The Steppenwolf, no doubt—while I'm here wide awake and unable to sleep,* she

thought.

TOBY HAD REELED HIM IN

Toby had reeled him in. Her metaphor. He called it survival. Between shame and survival, he chose survival. But the recriminations had not abated. And, as much as he loved her, he wasn't sure he could endure the chill.

Whenever they were on the verge of an argument, while they were driving, she would change the subject by reading road signs. "Buckle up," she'd say. "No right turns on red." Just now, at the table, she had said, "It's unseasonably warm, today." And they'd sat there amicably enough, but his melancholy did not lift.

He liked to think in maps. *Barbados, what's it like on a beach in Barbados?* And he painted a lovely picture. Lola in a bikini. A TV with a cord going someplace where there's electricity. He's sitting on a towel and drinking beer—no, brandy—watching Steve Allen. Lola moves her toes through the sand in a slow dance to the setting sun.

"And I got the...and groceries...and book at..." (That's Toby in the background.) Harmony is what he wants. Domestic peace. Phoning Lola wouldn't bring peace. Still, he can't get her out of his mind.

They had met in a doctor's office. He had made the appointment because of a returning rash. She was seated on a burgundy cushion. Venetian blinds created horizontal lines on the floor. An architecture of string music came from a speaker box. On its top sat a sculpture of cat. They both leaned forward to read the small brass plaque: "She was fun. She was also a mystery. We miss her." Their heads bumped.

Very little time to make a solid connection in the waiting room of a doctor's office. When she returned from her appointment, he gave her a smile. She smiled back, and then she was out the door into a larger space.

Later, he spotted her at the Med. He asked if he could sit at her table. She liked him. He could tell, but once he got to talking, he couldn't help tearing down everything, all the old, tired horses—God, government, the institution of marriage. What he was after was the corruption, the superficiality, the mindlessness of life, of our souls, our view of the cosmos. Lola loved it.

He told her love would be possible if he could only quit being such a shit, used all the old clichés, turned it all around, puffed it up to pull it apart. It was a Requiem for America. He was sweating prayers.

"Are you listening or not?!" shouts Toby.

"Unhuh, what'ya say?"

"I said that the suicide rate is on the increase."

"You are so beautiful," he said. And he reached across the table and took Toby's hand. He didn't deliberate. He took her hand and squeezed it. She noticed the dimple in his chin. It always made her love him.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

What happened next was to defy anything Jubal had ever expected, and as usual, he was completely unprepared. Fat chance Jubal was going to lie in bed, cuddling with Toby, listening to *The Little*

Prince on KPFA. The kitchen was buzzing with flies, and there was a stench, which he recognized as something decomposing.

A touch of awareness kicked in as Jubal entered the room. This was not the kitchen as he remembered it. *What are these flies doing here?* he wondered. *How did they get in the house?* The door to the back porch was open, and it was dark there. Louder fly noise from that direction.

He walked over and flipped on the light. Nada. Flies. Lots of them, coming through a tear in the screen door. *Must be something dead under the porch.*

Flashlight. One in the car. Better get that before I go any further. Toby called from the front room, “Jubal, what are you doing?”

“I’m going out to the garage.”

“Bring in a bottle of wine, if you’re going out there,” she said.

“Right-O,” he signaled back, but the wine would have to wait.

Jubal’s curiosity was working overtime. Even his tabby’s curiosity had peaked. He rubbed his body against Jubal’s leg, his trusty sidekick. Jubal got his light, and the two followed their noses and the buzzing.

The house was built over a hundred years ago, built of redwood. Many of the old houses in Berkeley were built to celebrate the resurrection of the town after the 1906 fire and earthquake. The town grew out of its ashes like a Phoenix. Mythical bird. Jubal didn’t expect to find one rotting under his porch.

He spoke to the tabby. “Scratch, is that the rotting corpse of a mythical bird or not?” Scratch looked and sniffed. “It’s not a peacock or an ostrich or a dodo—those are real birds, although the dodo is now extinct—no, this is not a real bird, this is a Phoenix, and a Phoenix is a mythical bird. A bird of the imagination. A bird in the dimension of pure qualities. It’s a bird that arises once in an eon, and is supposed to rise from its own ashes. Only, this bird is rotting.”

Scratch looked at Jubal and back at the Phoenix, seeming to say, “Yes, I have a nose, and this thing is rank.”

Jubal went on. “It’s fouling up my house. What goes here?” There was a wooden chair by the step, and he used that to prop open the screen door. Then, he turned on the ceiling fan in the kitchen and waved his arms at the flies. “Out, out,” he said, excitedly.

He had been looking for his fourth mystical beast in the game *Five Great Karmas*. He had Psyche’s Anthill in the garden, and he had a Griffin in the garage. Toby had slain all but the last Basilisk. And now, a Phoenix! Rare. Not easily encountered. Harder to contain, but possible—there were ways. High-test asbestosteel lining inside a porcelain sarcophagus. Three months in the making once it’s ordered from McHammermil. Jubal had always expected to get a sighting before he would order one. This was different. A body in the summer heat would turn to compost fast. *So, now what?* he wondered. *And how did a Phoenix become mortal?*

The flies seemed to understand his gesticulations. Only a couple remained, buzzing by the sink. Jubal was totally buzzed himself, projecting his next move. Thrown off balance. Expecting new activity ahead.

“Jubal,” Toby called, “don’t forget the wine!”

JUBAL

The house Jubal he approached was the house he had left months earlier. He had walked from this house without saying a word of goodbye. He had walked down the blinding block to the corner

and caught a bus. He had wandered in a wilderness of his own making. He claimed he had seen a carrion highway. He said he heard angels singing and God whistling through his teeth. They took him to the county mental hospital.

As he neared his house, he smelled eucalyptus, and it reminded him of his life here. Still, the antiseptic smells of the hospital lingered in his brain. He remembered sitting in the dayroom and shivered in the cooling air. The effulgence of the setting sun cast long shadows, and he could feel the nearness of some ominous presence. It was the Peyote that had driven him insane. Jubal felt his life was like bleached earth, and in the merciless intensity of his affairs, his soul had become singed.

Through the bars of his window in his cell he could see the moon. Round. Very round, sharp-edged, and much too close. He heard a crow caw in the heavy silence beyond the hospital wall. The wind pressed sensuously against the window with the turmoil of a demon. The TV din from the dayroom mixed in cacophony with the music piped into the long, sterile hallways. He was tough; he knew he could handle it.

He listened to Smitty in the next bed tell about riding boxcars in the 30s. "Man, I started riding boxcars when I was fourteen. From New Orleans to New York to Chicago to Dallas to Frisco and back. And you meet some weird people. Got to be careful, too. Lots of ways to get hurt. Rode into a jerkwater town in New Mexico and walked into a restaurant to get myself some grub before my freight hooked up, and the guy behind the bar yelled bad words at me. No, it's better to stay on the car. Still, some mean railroad bull might also take a hankering after your skin."

And now, it was like Smitty was tagging along behind him, commenting on the weather, "Windy, isn't it?" His present life now and his other parallel life right beside him. Lines drifting into infinity.

Jubal opened and shut the gate to the picket fence and climbed the steps to his door. He had seen a freshly cut flower he couldn't name placed near the latch of the gate. Beyond the door, he could hear the faint cry of an infant.

He started to knock on the door of the little blue cottage, as though it was the Temple of Wisdom. He whispered, in despair, "*When will the mayhem in my mind cease?*" And an invisible chorus sang, "*Soon, very soon, or never.*"

He turned on his heel and walked back the way he had come.