

Catherine

Leaving Port
TIME ACCELERATES

Setting Sail

Parse Two



William on the Island.

Catherine had written him a letter, apparently before he left, so that it might be waiting for him when he arrived.

Wonderful girl, he thought.

He started fires in two of the three stoves, the kitchen cook stove and the Franklin, next to the Lazy Boy where he sat down to open and read Catherine's letter.

"My Love" it began.

"A little surprise and welcome for you. I will be wondering about all the thoughts you have had on your trip, and now, that you are there, reading this.

"I want you to feel everything, the love, the loss of me, the desire for my presence, all the other desires attendant to me.

"I want to be near your every thought, I want you to anticipate my responses to them.

"I want you to come to me, embrace me, hold me, kiss me, nestle your face in, and smell my hair, and glide your hands over my body, to feel its fullness, firmness, its contours, and its warmth; and its eagerness for you.

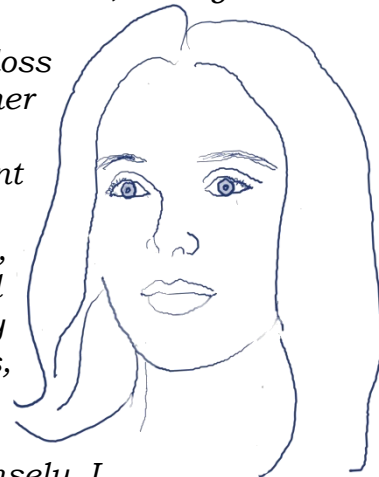
"I want you to know that by the time you are there, I will already be missing you so intensely. I have already had a taste of the pangs while you were here, waiting for the time to pass when I might see you again.

"I want to tell you how much you mean to me, but I feel like a bashful school girl when it comes to finding the right words, when I want to lavish upon you a language that does not exist. You deserve so much more than the paucity of these dwarfed and muted symbols that cannot hope to convey what I feel.

"Even if I was there, in your arms, responding to every part of you, and you to me, I still would feel I had not said enough.

"I imagine that you are thinking, 'Maybe now that I am gone, she will see the light, she will begin to realize her mistake.' You will be relieved.

"But that will not be true, let me assure you. Still you may be relieved, somehow able to catch your breath, in your solitude, reviewing all that has happened in such a short time. Maybe somehow feeling 'A narrow escape.' Maybe even worried that I



might be pregnant. About this last, if you will recall the day and the events surrounding it, and your comments with regard to my preparedness for such an event, you will know I had intended to be thorough; let me reassure you, once again.

“‘Ah!, the schemer’, you might think.

“Don’t think of me that way. If I have realized anything, It had become evident by the day we were alone together. It is very possible you might have flatly refused my suggestive behavior, as simply inappropriate. Then what avail my ‘scheming’? That day! That Day!, Mr. D., That Day!! Your tender willingness was truly wonderful. Very touching, I might add.”

William flushed at this last.

“I’ll not protract this missive. I love you.

My fondest wishes, Your Catherine

Phone Me!, E-mail Me!, Write Me! LOVE ME”

Well, there it was, or there she was. The die are cast. Her words moved him, probably beyond Catherine’s wildest hopes.

Loving her was the easiest part. Now began the horror of separateness. He would miss her, long for her presence.

William could not be near her without wanting to be with her. At least, on the island, the temptation was removed. It was a familiar place where he had lived alone with his feelings for some time. The water, with its magic, the storms, the wind, the clouds, the light, and the wildlife, all filled his hours when everything else in the world had betrayed him, and had lost its appeal.

But, suddenly, unmistakably, there was someone out there in the world, someone whom he wanted to protect. He feared for her very life, so precious she had become to him. His fears arose because of her vision, if pursued, would run headlong and counter to those ruling the world. They would try to discredit her, perhaps to harm her.

Any knowledge they might discover or obtain, especially about her relationship to him, he knew would bring great harm to her. He recalled her levity with regard to her undies.

Trouble lies ahead. The scandal mongers would not appreciate the lifting of her skirt to reveal hearts and flowers.

He found himself thinking like the president when he said there should be a limit on freedoms. He was referring to freedom of the press. For quite different reasons. William realized the dangers of the mucking media. What the press might say or question with regard to the president, he most likely invited by his actions. Catherine was another matter. Whatever she has done did not involve others. If she should become a public figure, it has been customary for the press to be granted leniency when it freely

associates, and imagines itself exposing the integrity, the purity, the exemplariness of the public figure. Under the guise of the people's right to know, and the media's right to tell it like it is. The self-appointed guardians of public morality. The public's generalized interest in smut, especially with a prurient gourmet tinge. The great levelers. Play by our rules, or get smeared. What rules? Play to your audience. Sell Copy! The price of freedom! If Jesus Christ was to appear today, the First Amendment would raise havoc with his appearance, his dirty feet, and his BO, and his association with the harlot.

For Catherine, ever to face one word of such calumny, would represent criminal assault. One does wonder why any of it. Why Catherine should feel the compulsion to write about social inequities, about fairness, about compassion for the less fortunate, when she already suspects the futility of such an endeavor. What she will say will be a call to conscience, invoking the most fervent appeals to our humanity. A challenge, even a gauntlet, to those who imagine the world as their very own oyster. Crucify her! Burn her! Flog her! Humiliate her!

William felt he ought to end the relationship now, in order to do his part to protect her. Only her sisters were aware of the facts; they were secure with them..

But he could not answer such a letter with silence. 'Phone me, e-mail me, write me, love me'.

He wondered what he could say or write that would not offend or hurt her. He wanted most of all to continue with the relationship, to answer her letter with all the heart that was within him. How could he deny this most wonderful creature? Then he began to sense the truth was his greatest ally. He could tell of his love, he could tell of his concerns for her future.

"Most precious one. Catherine.

"Your letter filled me with such joy. You are indeed way ahead of me; the most astute practitioner; with such nonchalance.

"However, I feel so very selfish. Partaking of something that is not rightfully assigned to me; a thief in the night. Even as I know there is probably not a person of your age who is more aware of her self than you, I shed my cautions, encouraging you in your flight of fancy. You, who might even be sufficiently aware of the world's meaner side. Assuredly they will grant no quarter; fair game!

"For you to suffer exposure to any of the malice that exists in the world would hurt me more than I can say. It might be to avoid that kind of wound I would advise that we cease our relationship.

“While my heart could not, in truth, support such a severance, it seems to me the only alternative. One of us must assume the responsibility; castigating the selfish heart.

“You are destined for a public career, the most meaningful public career. You will be criticized often enough for what you advocate. Your armor must be impregnable, without chinks, in order to survive ‘the slings and arrows’.

“I know you will chide me in my concerns. But, believe me, most precious one, these are real concerns.

“The only other alternative is for us to go away somewhere, tear up our roots. Be off to the nether regions where you still might feel your life worthwhile, acting in some capacity, aiding, succoring the underprivileged, those cast aside by ignorance, poverty and indifference.

“How then would I spend my remaining years? Following your lead? Or simply observing you waste your wonderful life in a hopeless cause?

“I argue, but do not persuade.

“I pine after you.

“Hinged to this love, to know not what fate. To await what lurks in the wings, in every shadow. The waylayers will seek to fulfill their own mission. The arm of the world will strike through its sycophants, the phony upholders, the envious, the salacious, the jealous, the egomania of the vain, who revel in the ordure to be found in the dungheap, to heap it upon us again and again, upon you.

“Again you will dismiss my concerns.

“Oh! such lovely trappings are you. You write: ‘I want you to come to me, embrace me, hold me, kiss me, nestle your face in, and smell my hair, and slide your hands over my body, to feel its fullness, firmness, its contours, and its warmth; and its eagerness for you’. You know how this will arouse me, as you arouse yourself as you write such things.

“No I cannot deny what is most in need of denying. We are wedded thus to that fate that awaits us, you agleam and aglow, with your craggy suitor following shamefacedly behind. The mud, the ordure, will be heaped upon us.

“Already I can hear your disarming words. ‘Love will triumph over all’. While the ‘all’ I can hear from the crowd is its derisive laughter. I even laugh at myself.

“I know you will use my arguments against me, telling me that the indifferent world, of which I so often speak, could care less about us two.

“Catherine, are you prepared to go away, or do you imagine yourself standing up to the blows, while I look on?”

“Catherine, while it may seem a private matter, and somewhat unethical, I cannot but quote the words of a young woman who fell under the suasions of my father’s hunger for the female. He was twice her age, she was married to a young man, a friend in word only, severely crippled by polio. In his lusting, father depicted the husband as a skeleton fornicating with that beautiful body; father was a compassionate man, No!?:

‘Maybe you’ve lost your respect for me because of what I’ve done. And you would be justified. If I can be false to my husband - why not to you - that’s true. But I’m not sorry for what we did. I don’t regret it. I shall cherish it always - I know in my own mind, I was being true to myself - completely honest - I love you - so how could it be wrong?’

‘And you said ‘When you sleep with another man - take off my earrings’ ‘.

‘I’d like to shake you until your bones rattle! You don’t trust me. When I say it isn’t just man, or sex, or romance, but YOU, it doesn’t sink in. For some reason you don’t have a very high opinion of me. Don’t judge my feelings by yours.

‘The pity is we must live by the laws of man - not the laws of nature. And if we break loose for a while, they make us pay.’

“After all is said and done with good intent or no, I am yours, your captive, so much do I love you. What is right or wrong does not matter, because I am hopelessly smitten, and could not be otherwise. So much do I love you. So much do I love you.

Truly Yours.

William read over what he had written, feeling so much more at a loss for words, words which should assume a living shape, and palpably breath their import to Catherine, as hers had to him. But he suspected she, like he, could only do as she does. But he also suspected she had more command of those feelings, more intimate knowledge of them within herself, so new and uncomplicated, and desirous were they within her young ebullient life. While he knew however wonderful this feeling, this passion, it was destined to wane, even in its perseverance, losing its intensity, as do all other states of being; and sadly too, for how much happier the world, if one should always love love, as to never yield to other temptations, pretending to fill the void by its absence.

Upon receipt of his letter, she sent immediately an e-mail reassuring him that if need be she would leave immediately to fly to him. She urged him not to torture himself with imaginary things before they happened. That his most important task was to believe in her love; their love. Their deep attachment, in this night of life.

“In the writing of the young woman I feel echoes within myself. But I realize you are also comparing yourself to your father, whom you view as an unconscionable monster, a predator. A person who said all the right things, but did all the wrong things. Since I suspect you knew the young woman, you most likely saw her differently than he. I would be tempted to defend him as I would defend you, but realize also that your delicacy of feeling would be deeply offended. It is because you view woman as a special creature. But dearest one, we are human, even as high as you might place us on a pedestal. When I declare we are human, I do not mean animal. But, in reality, we cannot live up to such expectations as you place upon us.

“Perhaps your father was a user, and a predator; slaking his thirst. Perhaps he slaked hers for a moment in time; each serving their own ends, however professed. I understand her words to my core. She gave voice to something that lived deeply within her.

“However I do not suffer with qualms about your respect for me. I know you would never, or could never think of me as a fallen creature, an unworthy, a soiled creature, a seduced creature, prey. Her words about YOU, it is you who resonate within me, not just man, or sex, or romance. I am not slaking a thirst. I do not believe you are slaking a thirst.

“Anyway love, know that I love you, and believe in that love”.

Would peace ever come to them? Would this almost wild and nearly demented phase of their coming together pass into a more comfortable zone? Would it simply end through some kind of attrition; a withering away? Withering On The Heights?

William e-mailed a response, once again feeling he left something unsaid.

“In response to your response regarding the young woman. I did not tell the whole story. The young woman did have a conscience, because she also wrote of wanting to be good, to do the right thing, making a decent life for her husband.

“Yes! she was jealous of my mother’s presence in my father’s life.

“Father could support her in her concern for doing the good thing. He was getting in too deep. He was trying to extricate himself before the whole thing blew up in his face. His longtime psychiatrist friend opined that it was like ‘taking candy from a baby’ for my father to be playing around with her.

“Dear dad, being who he was, compassionate and all, tried to palm her off on me; that is, maybe get her interested in the son. Dad’s symmetry. All the young woman’s great love being trashed.

“I liked the young woman, she was pretty, long haired, very blond, pale skinned, tall, slim, buxom; soft spoken, sensitive. Yes, perhaps a child (like you). But she was hardly interested in me. What thoughts had I? Hah!

“Father conned her, used her; then, tried to use me.”

The Author Muses

The author would like to believe anything is possible. Things like War are possible; they happen, no matter how much disbelief we express concerning them. Tens, hundreds, thousands, millions of lives are lost, countless others maimed physically and spiritually, countless other lives disrupted, or destroyed; unaccountable destruction and irretrievable waste strews the landscape. Yet man contemplates this venue as a means to an end, generation after generation, even as much as he claims to abhor it. What any generation might learn of anything cannot be passed on to the next; the horrors of war cannot be imagined; they must be lived.

The author would like to believe that every individual in a position of public trust is an individual with unvarying integrity, one who would resist all lobbying, influence peddling, all aggrandizing associations, would never contravene the public trust for gain, or out of fear. An individual who would heed the highest principles in all his dealings as a public official. However, he knows rare enough are such individuals; that the lesser, in varying degrees, are to be found throughout the ranks. ‘Trust’ is a word easily transformed into ‘distrust’. Double dealing, equivocation, dissembling, disingenuousness, collusiveness, bald-faced deception, circumvention, bamboozling, misrepresenting, hidden agendas, vested interests; to mention a few; perhaps the predominant strain. When the public official places his vested interest above the people, we can expect the worst; and often that is what we get, the horrors of war, notwithstanding.

This little dalliance of Catherine and William, while perhaps not probable, however possible in an ‘anything goes’ world, at least

does not stir horror, perhaps a little tacky squeamishness; because we think of 'old' as being not beautiful, as being withered, shrunken, impuissant. Catherine said it all when she told William at the very beginning of their relationship '*Suppose on. Suppose on. We are both fortunate in who we are then. Yes, Mr. D. I think of myself as beautiful; I am comfortable with what I feel about that aspect of who I am or might be. I am pleased that it pleases you. I will not speculate about 'beauty being skin deep' because I suspect it has every right and possibility to become deeper.*

Do you believe such equanimity possible? Are beautiful young women intended to strut their wares, indulge in the seductive projection of coquetry, made too cumbersome with intelligence? More suited to adorning themselves, alluringly tantalizing; vacant? Like Catherine uttered: '*Suppose on, Suppose on*'.

He doth protest too loudly. Move on.

Catherine Arrives

Catherine made plans to steal off to the island, only telling Ms. Watson, whose indulgence she needed, to pull it off. She booked air passage, leaving midday Friday, to arrive at an airfield three miles distant from the ferry serving the island, and in time to catch the last ferry of the day. She had requested a taxi to meet the third plane it would require to get her there. She had also arranged for the only taxi on the island to meet the ferry. She scheduled her return for the last ferry leaving the island on Sunday afternoon, to reverse her course, and her flights, to arrive late Sunday night, returning to the place from which she had eagerly and anxiously departed.

All her plans getting there materialized with only minor glitches, late arrivals, misplaced luggage, a long customs/immigration line. Somehow it all happened with the help of some earnest people working for the airlines, and immigration officials not completely immune to people's needs. The taxis were waiting, motors running; their promptness, and readiness made everything seem more reasonable, happening as planned, enabling Catherine to relax. The last of the taxi rides was full of wonder and excitement.

She had asked the driver to let her out somewhere the vehicle could not be seen or heard. She wanted to walk up to the entrance unannounced.

She followed the roadway which traversed a rise which concealed the view of the sea, and the location of the house near the water. As she passed over rise the water came into view.

Following the roadway she passed a small building, then one that might have served as a green house, before sighting the barn red roofs of what appeared to be woodsheds, and as she moved a little further, the same colored roof of the house, with all the skylights, and then she saw the log structure below. She observed two doors, one with a rickety stair, seemingly unfinished, or unused. The other was a pair of 'French' doors improvised into place, serving as a wind and weather break, these doors being approached by a planked walkway covered with some mineral roofing as a non-slip surface. She deduced this to be the proper entrance.

Thus she found herself on a mostly enclosed, with glass, narrow porch, at the very end of which, almost concealed by its angle, an entrance way with a screen door, with a fully glazed door behind it.

She hesitated momentarily, debating whether to knock, or to be the complete dare-devil by opening the doors to let herself in; the most complete surprise she could imagine. Well not the most complete; but surely a surprise, unequivocally.

She set down her luggage, opened the inner door, nonchalantly making her presence known with a "Hellooooo, Mr. D".

William setting at his computer, with earphones in place, listening to some music while he labored over the keyboard, didn't hear the door open, but did hear the greeting. Of course, surprised by a voice, he experienced mild apprehension at the boldness and closeness of the intrusion. He had recognized through it all a woman's voice, but only the sonority of a woman's voice, with only a small recognition of familiarity which he could not place. Let it be understood this all took place within seconds.

He looked up, looking over the computer, removing the earphones as he did so.

There she was! **"CATHERINE!!!!"**

He slowly moved from behind his work place out into the room where Catherine was rushing to embrace him, with flushed face and a huge smile. William awaited her approach with complete amazement and disbelief. Wordlessly they met and embraced.

Holding her with such desire and all-encompassing love, "Oh Catherine, you wonder, you wonder!"

Catherine offered her lips to his, William seeking hers. They lingered long, and passionately in their affectionate reunification.

After some unaccountable time William spoke again, "I am truly speechless. Such a wonder are you; you overwhelm me."

"I like that, Mr. D., especially right now. I wanted so much to be here, to be with you, close, as close as life will permit.



“In my mind I could think of no reason whatever to discuss my decision to come here. I was determined to come.

“Now I am completely convinced it was the thing to do.

“I love you, Mr. D.; I want to tell you this to your face; I want you to see the expression on my face as I say these tiny little words to you. I want you to hear my voice in all its modulation as I say them. Little though they may be, they tell all.

“Here we are, in these incredible environs, as we might have imagined; even as you might have imagined. So wonderfully real are we to each other at this moment in this night of life, as to illumine the whole world, our world.”

William was still 'at a loss for words'. There were so many things in this life to believe or not to believe as real or unreal. One might desire something so much that the tempering of experience will not allow one any hope of realization. One accepts these thwarted desires as part of the strange awkwardness and fruitless incomprehensibility of life. One sets his sails to account them, as one might account the squall. They appear, one responds to them, they liven, sharpen the wits, then they pass.

But this, unprepared, carrying too much sail, pleasantly overwhelmed and capsized; and drowning in a sea of emotion. Thinking not to call for Help, only to succumb. Now for a different life, dallying with Davy Jones, and all the creatures of the deeper deep.

There, swimming alongside, Catherine, she pointing to the light, drawing one up to the ether above. We were not meant to drown in metaphors, our destiny is to walk the earth.

“Mr. D., I did not mean to strike you dumb.”

“But I am, I am struck.”

“Allow me to translate and interpret your silence.

“You did speak, speak of wonder.

“Wonder Woman. Not so, Mr. D. But I will acknowledge your utter amazement at my very abrupt appearance here. My costume is plain enough. I am as you remember; no different.

“You will soon enough find your tongue to gush such nonsense of this stuff of our union, as to quite confound reality. Awaiting thus, I will listen with swoonings amidst busy limbs and hands, and searching, telling lips, and have still failed to communicate all the 'wonder' I am, all the wonder I feel.

“My mute companion, I will yet draw you out.

“I will quiz you in small draughts; I will eke it out of you in dribbles, until I strike the main stream which will be unleashed in a torrent. No!?”

“The first inquiry Mr. D., 'Do you want to see me happy'?”

“Is there such happiness as to make you truly happy?”

“You have answered a question with yet another.

“I will indulge my taciturn adversarial lover. By challenge to find your self, and declare it. Announce it to me. What happiness will you grant me?”

“All, Catherine, all. There is none more deserving. But I feel I can only fail to provide all you deserve.”

“Ah!, a loosening to which I may respond.

“All I want I may not deserve, but it is you whom I desire, deservedly or not.

“But to inquire further?”

“Please tell how this event has affected you, I want to know.”

“Catherine I think you are asking the impossible. As you already know, I cannot find any words. Even as you have intimated, all we might be to each other might not tell of what it is that lives within, partly from lack of the language to spell it out, and partly because one cannot even know what it is that might be spelled out.

“If I say I am a sailor caught in a squall, what does that conjure? If I tell you. Yes!, I am caught unaware, unprepared, my defenses down, utterly vulnerable, without armor.....”

Catherine interrupts him. “Mr. D., all that is required is amour; and the profession thereof; from which you cannot be shielded in any case; yield to it, Mr. D., Yield! Set your sails; hold onto the tiller.”

“I cannot do otherwise., I have not done otherwise.”

“I think it will be unnecessary to make any further inquiries. You are already recalling and accustoming yourself to the ways of your paramour. As I live and breath, and as I am truly here, and as I desire to be here, and you desire me to be thus, we are thus compatible and growing comfortable in this weather, as we might have any other, but this!, this! This! is this!

“When I snap my fingers, you will awake, and before you, will be this very pliable creature who will yield to your whims.”

Again William embraced her fervently, and with abandon, crossing, once again, the proverbial Rubicon.

“Yes! Catherine, it is true, I am hopelessly smitten, I am waylaid by Cupid and his arsenal of arrows that have pierced to the very pulse of me. I can only blurt out ‘I love you, I love you, I love you; how I love you my Catherine; my very own Catherine.

“You are the most welcome guest. Welcome! Welcome! Welcome!”

“Now you have found some sound and some ease. I have come so sudden, but now it is all becoming apparent, and palpable, and warm, and smiling at you, yearning for you. You do now believe I

am here with you. Touch, touch me, again and again until the whole of the reality will have persuaded you.”

To those who read with anticipation of what led up to the moment, and what might have happened next, you are unmercifully abandoned to your own imaginings. There would be no description, though one labored over it for years upon years, that would fulfill the expectation; certainly no celluloid reality would improve upon your imaginings.

Let it be said they conspired to fulfill their destiny as any might who walk upon this earth. The one does not overshadow the other; let it be said theirs was as replete as any other; as perhaps the reader's, who will understand it thus, and thereby measure it; his or her own substance aroused by the imaginings. There can be no more. The author would not presume to describe. Let it be known he had tried, and failed. He has excerpted these trials, to cast them in to the trash where they might embarrass some other.

Later then, these two sat up in their bed to watch the setting sun, all aglow themselves. Catherine was leaning against William, he, with his arm about her shoulder.

“Are you happy, Catherine”

“Mr. D., such a question. To which you already know the answer.”

“Despite what you say Catherine, I cannot know, what you feel.”

“Yes!, you can. My dearest, it is what you yourself feel. Our expressions speak volumes. Are you not radiant to me and I to you? Of course we are to each other.

“Does one seek to measure, on the happiness meter, the amount and intensity of happiness, to finalize the moments in the record books?”

“Why would one?”

“Mr. D., I am not a measurable quantity; there it will have to remain; an unknown.”

“As always, you weave a fabric of similitude. You do it with such eloquence, elegance and grace that I am charmed, swayed, and dissuaded from any further elucidation. Such are you, my wondrous Faerie Queen.”

Catherine snuggled her cheek against his, then kissed him tenderly for a moment, and fell to looking upon the sunset once again.

“Mr. D., I must confess to being very mundanely famished.”

“Well, Catherine, you are in luck. I took some chicken from the freezer this morning to thaw. So we can prepare a substantial meal

as befits your appetite. Do you prefer rice or potatoes? We can make a salad, of course, following it all with fresh or canned fruit. We can begin with some kind of wine. There is also fresh rolls and bread. It so happens I went to town yesterday”

“It all sounds workable to me, Mr. D., with rice, I think.

“What can I do?

“I’ll get the chicken started, and fetch the salad ingredients. We can work on that together, along with the rice, at the appropriate time.

“As soon as the bird is begun, we can share a glass.”

“Just like home Mr. D.”

“Not a chance, Catherine. Ms. Watson is five hundred miles away.”

“Hmn! Now, my love, you banter with me of old.”

“Catherine, what do hear from your sisters?”

“Lydia was home last weekend, so she and Tess called, and we had a long long phone conversation; about lots of stuff; only allusions to you and I. because mother and father were in the house. We had a lengthy discussion about the latest brouhaha involving Terri Schiavo, and the president falling on his face over the whole affair; then trying to recoup with his media yak when the pope died; then doing the Presidential photo-op stuff by awarding a Medal Of Honor for Iraq. We expressed our pleasure when learning the fickle Supreme Court opted out of the Schiavo matter.”

“What was yours and your sisters take on Schiavo?”

“I wouldn’t characterize it as a ‘take’; more like ‘give and take; not to upbraid, or disapprove of your assessment.

“I think we three came away with the feeling that our country has truly lost its direction, if ever it had one. While it may seem that the reverence for ‘life’ was at issue, it was clear to us it was something else at issue.

“We three agreed that the administration and the compassionate conservatives were not concerned with the ‘quality’ of life. We noted that they were at least consistent in that context. ‘Family values’, like motherhood, apple pie, and the flag, were things one heard about during election campaigns, but when it got down to the nitty gritty, quality of life was never a consideration.

“So the reverence for life thing was a sham thing, a way to broach other ‘right to life’ issues. A back door to the abortion issue. Its all so hypocritical. So base. So narrow. So controlling. The fat cats, the guys on the marquee, doing their thing.

“As I say, we came away with the feeling that our country was lacking something. We felt it sought the low road, very low. A conspiracy between the media and a bunch of Yahoos.

“Such a disappointing state of affairs.”

“You are faced with a huge undertaking to try to improve things, Catherine; the three of you.

“I wouldn’t know where to begin.

“Thinking pragmatically, razing the whole edifice seems the only sensible solution. However, realistically speaking, this has always been the case, that mankind cannot seem to get beyond a certain point. That the apparent ‘calling’ to a higher plain becomes but a whisper in the void of eternity.”

“Mr. D. perhaps, as you might say, there is no point.”

“I scanned Bruegel’s Tower Of Babel the other day, being suddenly taken with that symbol of mankind’s failures. I humored myself with thinking about images of men and women jumping off the weirdly shaped construction.

“But there it is, reaching into the clouds, purportedly attempting to gain the threshold of heaven; that most selfish of Utopian dreams. Now they are into the Freedom Tower, as though such an erection might assure its desperate fulfillment, if ever there was an uglier cruder phallic symbol. The Twin Towers in themselves might have been some piece of cereal packaging.”

Catherine suddenly interrupted their conversation, facing him, putting her arms around his neck, looking intently at him, “Mr. D., I’m sorry, but I can’t get enough of you.” Squeezing him, begging for a kiss, she placed her face unavoidably close to what she sought. William, again, confronted with the utter reality of her, encircled her with a powerful ‘masculine’ hug, then kissed her ‘femininity’ with such tenderness.

Catherine, her cup so full of with love for him, overcome with emotion, burst into tears, so suddenly and with such force water droplets literally sprayed from her eyes. William felt the mist of their upwelling. Catherine squeezed William with all her strength.

“There you go, being all so wonderful again.”

“Yum, yum, Mr. D.

“But something tells me, I have created a potentially ruinous distraction; not so wonderful.”

“Its OK, as long as we stop here.”

Teasingly, “But, Mr. D., the moment may never return.”

Art In America

Mr. D., I hadn’t noticed at first, so distracted was I by you and you only, the sculptures, and wood carvings. I am sure I saw them, but only now do I truly see them. Are they yours?”

“From yesteryear; trappings of my youth.”

“Mr. D. they are lovely; you ARE, without a doubt, a poet.”

“The result of father’s curse. I mostly stopped such activity after I met my wife.

“Mr. D. I am impressed, and moved ever more to wonder about you. I doubt a ‘curse’ would produce such results.”

“Its like this house, which bears the touch of my past, having constructed it in another time, but it is truly part of my past; the person who did these things is somewhere else now. I do not think of myself as that person. Oh! yes I am glad I did these things; I felt many things as I was doing them. One moves on, as I did from the carving in my earlier days.”

“As one does with his loves?”

“Perhaps! The house thing was at least not constructed as a result of a curse. I was fitting into the landscape, making a place for my wife and I. For myself, I would not have done such.”

“Without sounding a sour note or a jealous note, I am beginning to think I would like to meet your wife.”

“May I steer a course away from that subject. I would prefer to indulge a safer subject.

“I do have more than a curious interest in the world of art. After all, I was exposed to it from my earliest years. I have formed many opinions about the arts as a result. In this day and age, serious art, that is, art, as a ‘product’ of all of an individual, guided by only the highest standards, is very rare. Nowadays it’s a gimmicky thing, a way to gain notoriety quickly; anything goes. I judge this by what is put out there on display. Obviously I am guided by a different standard.

“To change the drift, my dearest one, mindful of Art as it were, In America, with the erection of a Tower To Freedom, as one might have erected the Tower Of Babel, I will tell you a tale of a family I once knew long ago in my younger roaming days.

“I think there is a point to the tale, but perhaps there is no point but the telling of a tale; perhaps to act as a diversion to your reconnaissance troops. (Catherine brushingly kisses him again).

“Nonetheless it was brought to mind, and lest I forget it, I shall tell it now, as we focus on matters at hand; that is, somehow providing for your other hungers. (Catherine tugs at him).

Only barely ignoring her, “Way back when, then, as a roamer, during my ‘beatnik’ phase, in this very big world of ours, or so it seemed then, I met, through other acquaintances, all somehow connected to the artistic thing, a family, a family that had converted to ‘Catholicism’. She had converted from being a *laizzez-faire* Christian, in her late teens; following that, became a college student, eventually earning a Master of Fine Arts; from what I

could observe, a very fine painter. While in school she met another student, enrolled in the music school, a violinist. They fell in love, he so in love with her that he abandoned his music thing, leapt into painting, and became a Catholic, all from the raw materials of a dubious self. Not too dissimilar from someone's enamored of you.

"They eventually married. When I met them they had had a daughter, perhaps two years old. They were living in poverty on the offerings of Providence. The wife had taken to the streets, hawking her paintings. At that time she was trying to do original works, but was already yielding to potential customers requests, lawyers, doctors, others with money to fritter. All the while, he stayed in their lair with his head in the clouds, divining the perfect method for producing a painting, akin to the composition of music; now and again trying to transpose Bach's Chaconne onto the guitar. A perfect painting, by the way, was accomplished in the 'classical' mode, as generally carried forth by Nicolas Poussin, but with some of the structural considerations of cubism thrown in; adding in a motif, like the beginning of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, to recur, and ultimately regulate the deposition of paint, colors unknown or unspecified; classical poses of the satyrs, centaurs, vessels of water tipped over to begin the flow of streams, and a bunch of other well-recognized classical props and paraphernalia, such as statues cast with draped togas, atop Greek buildings, all arranged in a stilted landscape. Beethoven became a chopped up thing into cubes underlying the canvas, organized through cubistic hocus pocus, never seen by the viewer.

"To continue, I learned he came from a sheepherder's family, his father a sometime drunk, but his mother a dreamer of great things for her children. Her oldest son she willed to become an architect, and her youngest son to become a famous musician. Their only daughter died when she was twenty-nine. The older son did in fact become an architect, who married another architect. Oddly both men married women who dominated their lives, as perhaps their mother dominated their earlier lives. The wife in turn came from a Montana family of similar origin, born with a twin brother. I actually met her mother, living in a small community, Gobel by name, a beautiful bastardization of Global and Gobble, located on the big river, not too far from where the Trojan Nuclear Plant was eventually built.

"Straying only somewhat further off the subject, I include these things.

"From his brother, who lived in the same town, I purchased an automobile that he had been souping up during his youth, before he married into a more controlled and purposeful existence. In that

vehicle, a '41 Chevrolet Coupe, we found ourselves traveling across the US in mid September on the way to New York City, stopping briefly here and there. The four of us, carrying most of our worldly goods, all their paintings rolled into a bundle, somehow sleeping, and stopping to cook meals alongside the road, and manage the diapering of the child. Eventually we arrived in New York at my parents place. My father, the artist, about whom I had told them, informed the husband that he was full of shit regarding all his theories about art, and that his paintings were hokum.

"My father was not pleased to see me, as usual, and as usual proffered his usual unkind advice to me. He urged the quickest departure of this band of no-accounts. We arrived in New York City to camp out at a lady friend of theirs, with whom they had gone to school. The husband had thought to unfurl his art work in Greenwich Village in the annual 'clothesline' show. Not so easy, it was learned; all the available spaces had been rented for some time, all were occupied, many with very accomplished painting.

"So much for 'pushing New York into the sea' with 'great art'. Not a soul was interested. The wife meanwhile was on the phone hoping to obtain an audience with Cardinal Spellman, with a view to obtaining a commission as a Vatican painter.

"Needless to say, Providence did not smile upon their ambitions.

"Meanwhile I needed to find a job, which took me away somewhere else in that big city. I continued that life in the car until I got my first paycheck. They, meanwhile, in their abject poverty, were sent back to the west on a bus with the help of 'Traveler's Aid'. Oddly they had left their roll of canvases with the young blond lady friend of my father's.

"Eventually, almost two years later, after I burned out in the city, with too much work, too much arting, and a fruitless tormented romantic life, with a different automobile, I took off for a circuitous roam across country through Appalachia to Mexico City, to return to the Northwest.

"I did not seek out these now, more or less, forgotten acquaintances. But eventually I learned of their whereabouts, still living in poverty in the same town, in a house provided by the good offices of their former landlady. When I finally reconnected with them, a second child was in the wailing. They had continued with the providential scheme, she still doing the hawking of their wares. They had taken to painting, in various styles, some resembling a cubistic venue, others more representational, post card scenes of Europe, and other kinds of paintings that potential customers had requested to match their interior decors.

"Their approach to art had changed to meet their hand to mouth existence, but the theories were ever more dire and

constrained. The husband now played the guitar a lot of the time, still working on the Chaconne.

“One day while visiting them, in midday, the husband had been preparing a meal, which, in this case, included hamburger. The cooking verily accomplished, it occurred to the wife, only generally cognizant of the which of the which day of the week it was, suddenly announced it was Friday. The husband, his famished shepherder’s appetite whetted for this foray into juicy hamburger registered the greatest dismay, and finally an anger mounting into a rage.

“He picked up the frying pan with the meat, made for the door of the house, pan in hand; when outside, he heaved the pan, full of his morsels, as far he could into the outside world, an absolutely wild gesture of impotence, daring the Lord to strike him dead.

“There is more to tell of these two, with the eventual begetting of six children, always living, hand to mouth, a near gypsy vagabond existence, going on and off welfare, having their utilities turned off and on. The same routine of peddling, the decline in their creativity; the same old bull about God, Providence, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton, Poussin, Picasso, the hope of becoming a Vatican painter fading into the slop and slosh of a wearisome faith, enforced by her through the wearing of a bandana at all times, ankle length skirts, as though a humble novitiate in the service of the Almighty, still imbued with the faith. The same old bull about how to create the perfect masterpiece.


“All this tale to tell of the heaving of the frying pan. All brought about through this concern for your hunger. Such a mad man am I with my ‘free associations’.”

“Writer’s prerogatives, writer’s license, Mr. D., but a tale for all that. I’m sure you could add much to it.

“I do not know whether to think of it as sad. How else might they have led their life to assure their art became something that would find a place in the world? Maybe if he had become a provider in the more ordinary sense, she might have produced some nice original paintings with her own evolved technique. Perhaps he never would have produced anything but bullshit, whether given the opportunity or not.

“Question is, did she ever have any regrets?”

“One of their sons married a divorcee with money, who set up his parents with a gallery in town, where the father spent most his time during the week selling their work and others as well; while she beat the old paths as much as her worn out body, and varicose veins would permit, somehow now a familiar sight in her bandana, and long skirts, carrying a painting under her arm.

"I had given up on them by then, visiting the gallery once during its five year tenure, to find him old, still full of the old yak, a business man in smock and beret. Somehow a survivor, like the rest of us. One kind of Art in America. Before I met my wife she had acquired one of these 'artworks', an orangey brown cubistic/motified  25 x 35 canvas with a dark sand texture, interspersed with subtle sparkly granules. \$ 5.00. Antique Road Show. So it hangs."

"Mr. D., an unkind cut. Your father coming out in you."

"Hmn. Yes, likely. Oddly though, the ego involved in either enterprise; theirs or my father's. The art thing; where does it get one? My investment is something borrowed."

"Better that than a bank robber."

"I don't really know about these things. It seems the older a thing gets, the more valuable it becomes, even if its a piece of shit. So, if one lives long enough, he might realize a gain on his early misadventures. Its one good reason to cotton to the notions of immortality, or reincarnation. Then one realizes that the whole world is vast clutter of precious rubbish, and that his former life was frittered in/on contributing to the demise of the planet."

"Mr. D., I feel your artist acquaintances, being catholic, will be looked after."

"I suppose that to be a kinder cut than mine. He died not long ago. She had been interviewed by the local rag. I cannot recall what was said or written. I mailed her a few extant photos of him, along with a photo of a dog they had palmed off on me."

Continuing With Their Wor(0)ds

"Time for the rice, and making the salad. More wine?"

"Hmn! Yes. More of you too. So you will know, I plan to leave on the four o'clock on Sunday.

"Its truly lovely here. It is easy enough to see why you want to be here, and why you wouldn't want to remain in town, even where I might be found.

"Are you sorry I came along to complicate your life?"

"Such a question, such a question.

"You have enriched my life, Catherine. But I do not wish to misrepresent things here. I do need my space, even as much as I love and adore you, my princess, as much as I feel I need and desire you, and derive such pleasure and stimulation in your company. Don't ask me to elaborate on that."

“Mr. D., as selfish as I might be inclined to be, I do know what you are saying. I know this from my own life, and what is required in order to achieve anything. We are achievers, are we not? Are we not good little protestants, trying hard to make ourselves obtrusively dull to the rest of humanity?”

“Sweet life, what were you hoping to achieve by coming here?”

“Besides what must be obvious to you by now, everybody needs a respite from his labors, in order to recognize how dull they are when compared to the real thing.

“It’s a disease, Mr. D., this impulsion to do something with one self. When lollygagging seems far more natural to us.”

“Artful lollygaggers, are we?”

“Mr. D. I could never be a lollygagger, artful or otherwise. It is best I find some way, in my labors, to enrich them with something more than the dull routine required to bring them to fruition. One must tap his own originality, his fresh view of life, even amidst all the noise, and clamor, and tumult of humanity, mostly foundering in the throes. We are meant to keep our heads above the melee, as sentinels, still, believing that something better is in the offing over the next horizon. The haphazard agglomeration of humanity seems so dire, so overdone, unproven in its explosion of redundancy. We cannot succumb to its stolid pervasive influence. We must provide vision; that is our task. Something to offset the Terry Schiavo brouhaha, while Rome burns.”

“Fine speech, beautiful young lady. Truly. Very perceptive, I would say. In keeping with your earlier allusion to the Schiavo case, it demonstrates how much we have lost our way.

“While listening to and reflecting upon some of what you were saying, I was recalling Alfred North Whitehead’s speculations with regard to a missed opportunity. The USA, the founding of this nation upon a certain set of ideals, the eventual wealth it yielded, the energy, all represented something that might be turned into a great civilization; which in Whitehead’s opinion did not happen. Frank Lloyd Wright beamed upon us with his, ‘Imitators of Imitation of Imitation’. It is so true that we have achieved very little, barely fulfilling the ideals, which are under constant pressure by the Yahoos to become something else; and the idea of ‘great’ civilization never became a conscious thing, a national purpose. The nation as a whole was incapable of thinking in such terms, so imbued was it with another thing, a Philistine thing.

“Since 9/11 I have wondered what Frank Lloyd Wright might have had to say concerning the twin towers, whether they received a justly deserved razing; present company excepted.

“In short, a ‘missed opportunity’?”

“I believe you are right Mr. D., in recalling that question.

“After all is said and done, it seems impossible to make something of something that could not make something of itself when it had the chance. Does that mean the chance has passed? If we believe, or I so believe, it has passed, what do I do? Go somewhere else, where hopefully I could feel my energies were not wasted on a hopeless prospect?”

“Maybe so, Catherine. What you have asked of our country might also apply to the human race; a missed opportunity?”

“I have stuck it out this long, out of habit. It was still easier to survive in that rotting world, than to try to make way and survive in another. But I am here, on leave, so to speak, relying upon the good graces of this mostly hospitable nation. When I return to the USA, I am ill at ease, afraid somehow they will find a way to shove me off the cliff. Whereas here, I relax, even with the knowledge I can be expelled at any time for any reason, and that it could be a final thing, where I landed in a heap in the US again, forever consigned to its rotting hell.”

“Gee, Mr. D., until I met you, I would only allow inklings of these thoughts to develop to this degree. Now, I am forced to admit to the underlying doubts, which are very real. It is your fatalism, not your cynicism, which I might recognize when I quote, the ‘fatefully inevitable’ in another context. It is also seems inevitable that this civilization will crumble, and in fact, as it is indeed crumbling. All the good will go with it.

“Let it be said the Declaration and the Document represent the finest achievement. Time has found opportunity to soil its beautiful trappings with the duplicitous and undeserving humanity it serves. Ass Ben speculated to the lady, “A republic, madam, if you can keep it,”

“It is legitimate to question my place in all of it. But I must not be dissuaded from finishing something I have begun. Not dissuaded by you or what you say, but in terms of how I might begin to perceive my future. I need to obtain a certain credential which says who I am and what I have done. Laying a groundwork that would be recognized anywhere, as a sign of dedication and achievement.

“Yes, but I am eager to help build something that means something.”

“You will have to put all that aside now; rice is done, salad is done, chicken is done. I’ll get some cranberry sauce from the fridge. We are ready to replenish what needs replenishing, in order to continue with our good works.”

“Mr. D., are you trying to change the subject?”

“Your tummy is changing the subject for me.

“Do you not recall your declaration of ‘mundane hunger?’”

“There are all kinds of hunger, Mr. D.. Its possible they are all mundane, a tempest in a teapot; and perhaps, it is madness for us to imagine otherwise.”

They sat down to the table with a view of the water only a short distance away. The water cast its spell over William, a pondering spell. “You know, Catherine, every now and then I am startled, I am caught unawares in my staring abandonment, suddenly apprised of my ignorance, an apprehension that is almost frightening. A very schizophrenic thing happens. What I had assumed to be reality, and my knowledge of it, is suddenly turned into an enormous doubt, an enormous fabrication.

“In thinking of the chicken and the egg conundrum, I am confronted with something that can not be easily explained unless one goes Biblical; on the sixth day all the creepy little things creeping upon the earth were created by ‘what’s his face’ or ‘you know who’. We are not meant to understand anything beyond that, except we better humble ourselves. Then the other persuasion takes over. The concept of evolution. If we lean in that direction, we cannot know anymore than the other, which began in 4004 BC (not British Columbia). We do strongly suspect that the date of 4004 BC could not provide near enough time as we understand and envision the evolutionary prospect.

“It would be easy enough to speculate that, on the sixth day, the chicken was conceived complete to creep as it creeps, and to take over the job of seeing to it that chickens would survive in perpetuity by laboriously producing an egg which required fertilization from another chicken and so on and so forth, all very cleverly thought out, so that it worked. We could assume the same thing would have happened through an evolutionary aegis; requiring an almost infinitely longer time, also very cleverly permutated.

“On the sixth day in 4004 BC the dinosaur had already been conceived in another time and had perished for want of a perfect model. ‘You know who’ was beginning to learn how to fashion the beasts. 4004 BC was the inception of a new model.”

“Mr. D., where is this going?”

“Sorry Catherine, I’m beginning to act like ‘you know who’ in finding a model for his creation. What I want to do is arrive at some assumptions we have made, given what we have learned in the laboratory. That we are able to, Godlike pokes that we are, take an evolved product, manipulate it, and clone it, even assume we know how to improve the model made in 4004 BC, or even as a result of the more arduous evolutionary journey of eons.

“The Biblical fiat is displaced, replaced by a language that speaks of natural selection, even ‘designoids’ caused by accident (naturally occurring screw-ups), by adaptation to fortuitous screw-ups, and adaptation to environment.

“The chicken is one amongst many. The avian line seems to favor hatching the egg externally, as a means to furthering its aims, of continuity, of assuring for something that can still ‘evolve’ as described to what unknown end, perhaps a birdie with an eye in the back of its head, or even more improbable, develop the ability to communicate with all other species, to tell them ‘where its at’.”

“Yes!, Mr. D. I follow; I am still waiting for the clarification of the schizophrenic allusion.”

“I’m heading in that direction, at least I think I am, although I am beginning to sense the fright again as I try to imagine what it is I am attempting to describe.

“Allow me to continue as I was, maybe I shall arrive somewhere near your fretting inquiry.

“Evolution is a plausible thing, somewhat demonstrable in the laboratory. But it is something that embraces such time as we are unable to conceive, and cannot duplicate in the lab, where we necessarily (publish or perish) short circuit the process. We do use fossil records, carbon dating, and comparative bone anatomy, all in conjunction with a geological time we have assigned, to try to get a handle on one aspect of that kind of reality, that plausible, yet unknown thing.

“The limitations to the powers of our imagination become more and more apparent, along with all of the assumptions we have made to somehow give shape and direction to that imagination.

“We make quantum leaps with what we learn in the laboratory, hence the Jurassic Park nonsense. Without foundation we turn ‘natural selection’ and adaptation to environment into something with a little more Biblical flavor by speaking of ‘intelligent design’, or even ‘designoids’, that is, something a little more purposefully evolved; less haphazardly evolved, to satisfy some conceit.”

“Mr. D.!!??”

“Patience, my sweet one.

“This Exposition requires an indirect route

“When I confront my assumptions about any of this whole scheme of things, I am forced to confess my ignorance.

“I can each day, repeat to myself, ‘God Said’; I can repeat to myself, ‘Evolution Works’, and, through one repetition or another, I can hang on to a construction of reality. Even if I repeat one of these, perhaps out of desperation, I might still feel the chill of doubt. If I stop thinking about it all together, I find I become exposed to sudden awakenings which, because of the uncertainty

of their origin, and the uncertainty of the thoughts arising from them, causes me to feel fear and abysmal ignorance simultaneously; the darkness of knowledge about the universe in which we live, about which we can know so little. We have evolved to become this thing that does not know anything, cannot explain anything, and asks dumb questions concerning the chicken and the egg, as though we were seeking and divining some great truth.

“Schizophrenia, assuming that to mean separate realities living along side each other in one individual, each imagining its reality to be the real one, seems naturally enough an adaptive behavior to ignorance of reality, and the uncertainty we feel in all the bullshit that has been propounded to explain any aspect of a reality we cannot know.”

“Mr. D., I have a sense of what you are trying to say. Yes!, I have felt more than sudden awakenings, sudden doubts about what I think I know.

“I seem to evade these doubts by simply continuing to observe, or examining my thoughts, continuing with what I believe to be a rational process; questioning my assumptions, constructing a rational answer, putting to rest, perhaps only temporarily, those doubts about which you speak. I am not unsatisfied with this arrangement. I do not feel any fear that my assumptions are incorrect, because I feel I am always willing to acknowledge another ‘truth’ or ‘revelation’.

“Only recently, in the dorm, as implausible as we know it to be, we kicked around the theory of ‘wobble’ as being the source of tides, rather than the gravitational pull of our moon. The slosh of the oceans, so to speak. One or the other, does it matter? But which is true? Even if the one were dominant; let’s say the effect of the moon; does the precession of the planet also have an effect, a calculable effect? There are so many pluses that we attribute to the moon as part of the balance in our little world. Even though the moon is said to be escaping from our world at the rate of 1.5 inches per year; does this information cause us to fear something so distant in time that what part it would play in planetary stability may have become moot as far as man is concerned; man, who might already be exposed to so many dangers of his own making as to preclude any effects of the other.

“‘Reality’, in one instance, is not frightening; but ‘reality’ in another instance, can be very frightening. When we leave off being rational, and, by rational, I do not mean ‘rhetorical’ (propagandistic), but ‘logical’, we break a very necessary thread that ties our sensations to our thought processes. As we observe something outside of ourselves, a la Gasset, with his study of the monkey, lets say, something moving, perhaps an animal that we

recognize, we are sampling the immediate observed reality in terms of danger to our protoplasmic selves, or as matter for our sustenance, and/or most often relating to living entities in the landscape which we may merely observe as confirmation of our own existence, as a familiar, whose presence cheers us, in our aloneness. Then another motion gets our attention; a figure of a man with a pistol or a rifle, or a RPG. Abject fear takes hold of us, whether 'God Said' or 'Evolution Works', or wobble or not to wobble, loses all relevance. The acuity with which we feel the possibility of our own demise floods our thoughts, turning us into this scurrying creature, a full realization of Gasset's observations with regard to the monkey.

"In short, we can satisfactorily rationalize the one, but not the other; at least not to the degree that we feel safe and secure."

"Very credible statement and analysis, Sweet Love."

"Whether God, Evolution or wobble, we do not often see that man in the landscape; but we know he is out there, nonetheless. We become aware of the monstrosity of man when we see the policeman with the pistol, making us aware, not only of him in a fearful way, but also of his reason-to-be. Although we recognize his reason to be, and support that in essence, although desiring some other social condition, we also know nothing about him (or her), how arbitrary he or she might be, whether something about our manner, our gait, our attire is set to trigger in him or her some challenge to our presence.

"Civilization does become 'civilized violence'.

"The concept of violence forces upon us a reality that causes both fear and despair."

"I have written an essay on the subject titled, not inappropriately '*Schizophrenia*' where I juxtapose the object and the mirror; what one is (the object), and what one is told and expected to reflect (the mirror) of the exterior world.

"By the way, I think of Schizophrenia as one of the most natural of illnesses, if not states of mind, given what we feel, and what we are expected to feel"

"Not to dismiss your essay in he least, Mr. D.. May I say, for now, the horse, for me, if beaten any harder may not rise again.

"Shall we give it a rest; and speak of yummy things?!"

"You're yummy!"

"I do love you Mr. D. Too much!"

"Now, there's a subject that embarrasses me."

"Mr. D., its all because your father was very unkind to you. Have you by any chance read John Le Carré's, 'In Ronnie's Court?'"

"Yes!, and I get your drift."

“Imagine Mr. D., if only you had had a different beginning.”

“I can, but I can’t.”

“Mr. D., maybe I should make it plainer; your father was an ass.”

“As was I, sweet love!”

“I’m not inclined to accept that assessment.”

“Catherine, it is well to speak of ‘yummy things’, because that is what we desire most of all; in the best of all possible worlds.

“We are in the position of having to accept this as the best of all possible worlds. We may yammer at length about its deficiencies, but what are we prepared to do to rectify them; yammer, or take to the streets?”

“Do we do both, Mr. D.?”

“Perhaps neither, Catherine.

“An intelligence comes to us, somehow filtered through all the muck and mayhem, that we are better off living our own lives as best we can. Our best may only be a conscientious thing that somehow accounts for what we know or suspect is the leading of a conscionable existence. But what can we actually know?”

“In saying that, I imagine an agrarian existence; necessarily then, one of toil. But even then we cannot live in isolation doing our thing. There are others, amongst them, the tax man.

“So, let’s say we don’t care about the tax man; we allow our meager holding, assuming we are able to freehold one, to become a lien against itself; what do we care when we are gone?”

“Do we produce progeny, even if that was possible, and then become slaves to their welfare? That is, produce more wherewithall, so they can have a potentially better life? When we know it is not possible.

“Why have we come together, you and I? You, this bright hope of the future, and I, this worn out cynic.”

“Mr. D., all very important considerations. I do not make light of them. I feel I must listen to your voice. I do not feel what you feel. First of all, I come from a privileged environment, perhaps from a better time, fast eroding, somehow intended as part of making the world a better place for me and my sisters. Yes!, rationally, I admit to what you say; the track record is pretty grim, and, Yes!, what are we prepared to do?”

“I must concur that there is little we can do, but yammer, or take to the streets.

“My mother imagines she tries to work from the inside; she imagines herself an insider, being a doctor’s wife, a reputable member of the community. But in order to do this she must take some things almost blindly on faith; one, that we are always

motivated to do the good, our nation is motivated by the highest principles; doing 'good' being amongst them. She does not question what is good in the 'good'.

"My father does nothing; he writes out checks for the charitable causes; putting his 'money where his mouth is', so to speak; even though he seldom espouses causes, or gets involved in righting the wrongs. He deals with sick people all day; that is what he does. He is a healer and a father confessor.

"My sisters and I are smart asses, full of bright ideas, and a kind of naïve idealism. When the three of us get together we feel in spirit that we can lick the world. Of course that is not so; at least we better not try. I have come to appreciate that fact more acutely in coming to know you.

"I do not dismiss your 'wisdom' in this matter. I sense something in what you are saying, easily supported through observation. If the 'good' was so apparent, and such an assumed goal, why is the world in such a state? Are we to assume it is only too obvious the 'good' is not 'where it's at'.

"It is hard for me to regard mankind as a monster. One is naturally ambivalent, because he is, I am, one of them. Am I a monster? No, I am not a monster."

"Best kind, if so."

"Mr. D., don't, not now."

"I'm on your side, Ms. Tellerman. Sometimes all a person wants is a crust of bread and a place to put his head, hungry, and weary through toil, perhaps; or not through toil, hungry and weary all the same. The 'good' is not even part of the equation. There is simple satisfaction in appeasing the hunger, and in resting from one's labors, whatever they might be. We cannot do without either; and so many are forever at the mercy of the fates, if not mankind, even in these simple requirements.

"We often are more than that; we have evolved into this manifold being, reaching in all directions; we have 'descended' and become modified through a series of adaptations, furthered by a blind process of selecting traits, that we presumptuously imagine, favor continuance.

"But, what is our objective? It seems we are destined not to know. We have arrived blindly; we are presumptuous in assuming that we can know where we came from, why we are here and where we are going. We simply cannot know.

"The question before us, before you and I, at this moment, is, what can we do, what are we to do."

"Mr. D. love each other. Don't address me as Ms. Tellerman, ever again."

“My apology, Catherine. To continue. Much of what we might reason and acknowledge becomes somewhat circular; or is as you say, ambivalent? We know things are bad, but we say this only because we have made unrealistic assumptions, reflecting more our expectations. Perhaps they are not bad at all, but only as they are, very plain, blind, stupid, blundering their way to this unknown end. Yes!, if it was a rational thing, we might already be there, wherever it is we are going, or are intended to go.

“We are smarter than that. We argue that almost all of mankind makes similar assumptions, or has similar expectations, as the case may be. Perhaps the more realistic are more ruthless and unscrupulous, and make other kinds of assumptions, like discovering a way of advancing oneself; through the reading of obituaries, for example, that is, seeking opportunities for gain, at every opportunity, a la Uriah Heap. To put it another way, maximizing the favorable toward more assured continuance (survival). Yet, that kind of individual is never loved, most always hated. That individual seems to know where its at, whereas we claim not to know. Why don't we follow his lead? Would we find it hard to live like that?”

“Of course, Mr. D. You exaggerate; to make a point.

“I'm following you Mr. D. I realize the 'good' is mostly a hypothetical thing; as something we can imagine ourselves doing, yes, even in this 'worst of all possible worlds'. Perhaps living a simple life as you try to suggest, partaking of the crust of bread, and finding a place to lie down, is where its at. But is that fortuitous for the advancement, and continuance of the species? Its not how we imagine we have arrived here. More drive, more motivation, even more intelligence, if not ruthlessness, seems the venue. Even though we appear to have stumbled here through adventitious means, what indeed was the operative selection mechanism; which blind eye was opened?”

“I like to characterize each step as a 'holding action'; a series of holding actions, steps forward, and steps backward; we hold our ground until forced to abandon it, or move forward to a larger occupancy. We are perhaps all alike, in that regard; all forms of life.

“We can argue that we were not born into this world by choice, we might even resent it as an unconscionable imposition placed upon us by a couple of dumb screwing parents. Born into this effing chaos. The only scenario that makes sense is the 'holding action'. We are here solely for that purpose. A repository for something totally indistinct. We can take our clue from the dinosaurs, No!? Extinct, an overfilled and dubious niche for life to have filled. Should we not assume the same for ourselves? Would

that not be an object lesson? Would that not accord our system of logical deduction? Are we a more deserving species to occupy a niche; and one that wastes the planet? Is not the biblical admonition to multiply and subdue something that would occur naturally?

“Occupancy and Consumption are the natural outcomes of process.

“But there is a ‘fly in the ointment’; a consequence. Hunger, Malnutrition, Inadequate Shelter; and Disease, the evil pestilence, like us, that will invade the host; ‘thy will be done’ will reverberate throughout Armageddon and After Rapture; the unimagined imagined end. Then desolation. All that one had assumed about God, and the Benevolent One, will become A Stark False Reality, before the dread of it all will force one to lose consciousness; the Benevolent One does not give a shit; the Benevolent One is in reality the Indifferent One; sour milk and rotten fruit instead of peaches and ice cream. Let the poets sing of the eternal verities.

“Black enough for you, sweet one?”

“True enough, I suspect.

“I also suspect that you and the author are using me for some kind of foil, not sure of where you are going with it all. My own substantiality is made up of some unseemly improbability, simply because you cannot devise anything remotely resembling a real person.”

“Am I then more probable than you? Are my arguments any more cogent than yours? Are we not compliments within the argument? Necessary parts of the dialogue?”

“Would it aid the author to praise himself after every paragraph, without us to do his work for him? I mean, instead of you propping me, or I propping you in our search for truth, imagine the author making one declarative statement or judgment after the other, driving the reader into utter, screaming boredom, perhaps to an early exit?”

“I like what we were discussing before, even though it wasn’t going anywhere. Dinosaurs and the like. How about the American Indian, Mr. D., where does he fit in the scheme of things?. Another niche to be bumped off.”

“Indubitably, Ms... oops!, Catherine.”

“You play a little too close to edge, Mr. D.; Its tempting to push you over into the abyss. You could think of me all the way down.”

“Not down, swept up. Yes! regrets would accompany my flight. I had it all, and threw it away. I could not believe in love, any more than I had ever believed in anything.”

“Mr. D. I do not like the drift of this conversation. Could we simply end it now!?”

“I know I am being obtuse, unwarrantedly so. It is true I am tempted to throw away something, only to prove to myself it is real, and that it is possible to lose something. Don’t ask me why. I cannot provide an answer that makes any sense to me. Always testing, always disbelieving in happiness, I presume. Not fair to you, not at all. You are an innocent being slaughtered by my lifetime of horror; the horror of not knowing who I am or what I deserve, if I deserve anything; or have any right to expect anything; feeling inadequate in so many ways, that you repeatedly deny, as though a voice I could never hope to conjure within myself; so warped in my self.”

“Mr. D. I am here, I am who I am, nothing more.

“Yes!, you are afraid that if you yield to your happiness you will fall from a great height. She did that to you way back when. Not intentionally, even though she was aware of teasing you. She could not know how far you would fall. She didn’t care. But Mr. D., with all my heart, I care.”

“As I care for you, Catherine.”

“Now that we have reassured each other, can we return to the ‘bumping off’ of niches? Or should I phrase things differently?”

“Pursuant to that, often one hears about how the American Indians treated each other, that is, their tribal wars and attempts at domination; that they were not a, or the, ‘noble savage’ (not noble, like us, of course). So what’s all the fuss?”

“The annihilation of the innocent, the massacre of the innocent; that is the fuss. We seem to be horrified by what happened as a result of the Nazi’s rise to power in Europe. It is estimated when Columbus and his followers arrived in the western hemisphere, there were an estimated 100,000,000 occupants. Most of these were decimated by ‘Acts of God’, so we palliate. As if our benign forefathers, the palefaces, would have allowed them a life, another kind of pestilence did not. They were not idlers; they had ‘built civilizations’, perhaps equal, or superior, to ours.

“We cannot go back, we will not give back. That is ‘fatefully inevitable’. There are some amongst us who wear the mantle of guilt; who feel the weight of the injustice. My wife is one of those. However, we can do nothing. The remnant is different kind of ‘noble savage’. Occasionally one hears of an individual deeding a small piece of ‘traditional lands’ to a tribe; as a matter of conscience and principle. This is more possible for those who have not worked the land; who have only been mere possessors, or occupiers; and above all, for truly conscionable, however unrealistic, people.

“What might be more significant is what lesson we might extract from what has happened. How horrified are we, I mean, as a

species, concerning what we have done? We argue that we are not like that anymore. That the lesson has arrived in its full import.

“I’m not forgetting those who hypothetically, daringly, think there is no error, as in the ‘error of our ways’. Shit happens!

“However, we have enough evidence that any lesson is not all that effective, even for modern man. That mankind can easily choose to ignore that which interferes with his desires for riches, and dominance. He uses language like ‘preemption’ to justify his conquest, as he has used ‘eminent domain’. ‘Might makes right’ still applies in the affairs of men. ‘Collateral Damage’ an expected sacrifice. Risk/benefit, the truer lesson; the ‘fatefully inevitable’ conclusion is that our day will come, when we will be invaded; or wiped out by an ‘Act Of God’, perhaps the ‘yellow peril’, or the yellow pestilence.

“Catherine, I hope that happens after you have put in your time trying to use what you know to rectify the ills of the planet.”

“Most likely an Act Of God will arrive before an invader.

“There is hope Mr. D.; parody Pandora all you like; but there are conscionable people out there, those who are possessed by a natural empathy for all things living, who envision the planet as a unique place, worth every effort expended to preserve and protect it.”

“Granted, Catherine; and they need our support, however futile the endeavor; how ever much a tea party, however many parlor liberals. One must realize they are in the minority. The instinct to survive is not a matter of intelligence, that is, it is not a rational thing; it is an innate, inbred force that makes its own rules.

“You and I, and some others, have the luxury to sit back in our already surviving mode to imagine the advantages of a reasoned approach to the whole act of surviving. But we are powerless to arrest the momentum of the forces already in place, and at work, in action, in a series of self-serving moves, or caroms, that utilize another kind of rationale than living in a kind of benign harmony, and preserving and protecting our home.”

“I realize that, Mr. D. But we can not do otherwise than combat these narrower views with a barrage of information, that will make obvious the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.”

“What about the ‘risk benefit’ people; the scientists and pseudo scientist propagandists who argue there is nothing to worry about, that the earth is a resilient planet, barely affected by the activities of man; who will claim the ‘environmental movement’ is using scare tactics not consonant with the facts.”

“I guess the lines are drawn, David versus Goliath. Quality of Life versus Quantity of ... of what, Mr. D.? Quantity of exploitable resources?”

“A precept, Mr. D. Reduce, Recycle, Reuse.”

“Recycling environmentalists by feeding them to the cannibals has been suggested.”

“Mr. D.!!!”

“Oops!

“I know that was an obtuse statement, but not original with me.

“I believe as you do Catherine. But, each side of the argument will use information favorable to their point of view; quoting so called and self appointed and self congratulatory experts. The Tower of Babel once again. The Battle of the Books. The issue will not be resolved in our lifetime. Only something catastrophic will have any effect; and by then it might be too late for humanity, as well as all those it will drag into the pit with him. Since the species is so egomaniacal, it would matter not at all. We are proud of our architecture, our museums, our clever inventions, our ability to convert the planet into a ‘standard of living’. However, we fail to ask often enough, ‘What is sustainable?’. We are more prone to hunt over the planet for one more tankfull, one more panacea to get us through the day or the week. Habit is not epitomized by intelligence; our habits are rapacious and ruinous. Our shots into outer space have verified that the universe is a pretty inhospitable place. Take Heed!

”It is seldom a matter of pride that we have sought and found another way; perhaps a different way, a more costly way, in terms of labor, and personal restraint, for ourselves, but less costly to the planet. There are too few corporate interests dedicated to anything but the profit margin. There isn’t much profit to be found in saving the planet; ‘No gain’ provides no incentive, so the argument goes.

“You have heard me use the short term rationale. ‘Don’t think of it as less later, but more now’. Does it ever occur to them that a sustained profit over the long term will yield more, without counting the costs to the planet (there will always be the hidden cost to the planet. The consumption of any finite resource results in a net loss). If the whole prospect is ruined by the short term think, then there will be no profit beyond X. Is that truly what is in the offing?

“If only one interest would do it right. Let’s say ‘Agribusiness’ ADM perhaps, as a matter of principle, even as an experiment; and even as hateful as we are toward ‘another industry’, something that operates through exploitation; if only that industry would produce enough, and distribute enough to feed the hungry, lets say; to prove that it could be done, efficiently and equitably, even without herbicides and pesticides. Is that outside of our human experience, characteristic of a say another higher animal, an

animal with natural empathy that takes precedent over gain and profit?

“Other ‘industries’ could follow, more disparate industries, that would require more dedication to principle, that would, lets say, assure for shelter and health care. We know that these industries have become profit making ventures; the insurance industry, the drug industry, the whole health complex involving hospitals, physicians, administrators; a hoard of portfolios.

“The grumblers complain of taking away incentive when you deprive a man of what he construes as legitimate gain. Like saving the planet, there isn’t any profit in looking after one’s fellow man.”

“Still black Mr. D.! But I like the idea of conducting an experiment; to see if it could be done. Could Agribusiness feed the masses without destroying the planet? I mean all the Agribusiness’ together, for the sake of distribution, efficiency, taking into account local dietary needs, wheat, corn, rice, potatoes, staple food products meeting local needs? Or would that be too inefficient? Would Agribusiness be more interested in changing the diets of the world in order to make even larger profits?

“However it would work, it should be tried. Imagine how mankind would feel about itself, having accomplished such a thing. Do you suppose? Is it possible? Of course, its possible.”

“Allow me, sweet one, to continue to be the devil’s advocate. Besides encouraging humanitarianism, the most demonic suggestion designed to erode profit making schemes, would not the alleviation of hunger encourage laziness, encourage dependency, living on the dole; and would not that also encourage an increase in population, thus increasing the demand. Doesn’t our system require a natural die off of the starving and the ailing? Is that not more commensurate with nature’s blind scheme of things?

“Would we not be forced into social planning? The harbinger of ‘socialism’, that greatest of incentive destroyers. Limit number, limit production, limit limit limit, wage and price controls, and so on. What about quality!? We are not ready. Will we ever be ready?”

“We are indeed ready, the need is there. If we do not respond to the need; we cannot truly make a claim of being ‘intelligent animals’, as opposed to some more unaware indifferent species. Pikers!

“Don’t ask me, ‘Who cares?’ I have the conviction that nearly every human being worthy of claiming that epithet will be moved by shame, if nothing else.”

“Nice move, sweet life. But you gotta horse collar them. If they see you coming, they, those sub-humans will be on the run. Those God Bless types, all show and no substance.”

“We are already on the run Mr. D., running in circles, rising and falling, as forces dictate; but not as we dictate. We could alter the course of our proclivities; become responsible for others as well as our selves. If it is true we cannot live as an island, then how do we relate to others? To other forms of life? Purely whimsically and randomly? Arbitrarily? Wantonly? Indifferently?”

“Can we demonstrate that it is more practical to do things in an environmentally ‘friendly’ way; and a more humanitarian way? The three R’s seem obvious as a practical *modus operandi*. It is implicit that we reduce consumption, that the ‘standard of living’ be changed. Yes! short term gain is sacrificed, but in only one sense; profit making. How much of a sacrifice is that for those who already have more than they need? I know the planners will argue that there would be labor layoffs; but need there be layoffs, if there was the different kind of commitment? Sharing!?”

“I realize there are the Ayn Rands in the background urging the more non-altruistic self under the guise of an individuality that presupposes fences capped with razor wire and paroled by guard dogs; with a sign posted, reading: God helps those who help themselves.

“It’s the long term we are after, as well as some of the other stated short term goals, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering those exposed to the elements; and taking care of their health needs. It goes without saying, these are in need of immediate attention. The long term is something that we must believe in as a practical matter. ‘Reduction’ characterizes it best. ‘Conservation’ is its cousin; ‘Preservation’ a close relative. Worn out bywords?”

“I was reading that during the days of an imminent disaster, a nuclear holocaust; that the ‘nuclear clock’, as it approached midnight, the ‘experts’ were calculating the number of people that could survive on what was left, the so-called ‘carrying capacity’ of the planet; something like one percent of the extant population at the time; approximately 40,000,000, (one percent of the extant population) all things being equal; if radiation had not killed everything else in the process, or completely destroyed the atmosphere, or water supplies, with one kind of contamination or another. One percent seemed very optimistic. We have to assume a lot to come up with any kind of number.

“In the spirit of inquiry, what is the ‘carrying capacity’ of a planet that lives as a well-regulated place, which includes industry, or must include industry, balancing production with ‘need’, to differentiate from ‘demand’. A sustainable system? Given that we allow for poor crop years, somewhat accounted by adequate storage facilities. What we might anticipate in the way of disease? What margins to allow in our calculations? Then what do

we do, given what we calculate. Suppose our calculations reveal there are too many; that it is not sustainable until we reduce our number?

“Tough question? Perhaps already in need of an answer. Should one suggest the obvious?”

William Pushes Too Hard

“Wow! Catherine, you are thinking ‘tough’. The Regent, Catherine, lays down the law. Total Abstinence for the next generation. No Life Support. All pregnancies to be terminated. All irremediable sickness to be abandoned, with a shove! All social retards taken off the dole. All drones to get the knife.”

Angrily, Catherine retorts, “Speak for yourself!”

“Suggesting the obvious. Modern day Sparta.”

“Catherine, its all too random, and untimely what we do, or what we attempt to do. There is no plan.”

“It is ours to do with, and we do that; we do, use it up, then expire; become extinct; that is our fate.”

“Something will come along to end it all. Perhaps smother and bury it all, if we don’t do it to ourselves. Think upon what is happening in Beijing and New Delhi; smothered in smog, millions of vehicles puking it out, along with coal-fired industrial power plants. Think upon it.”

“What would be the niche of the future? Would some species come along only somewhat aware of a solar system, only somewhat aware of a primitive geology? After how long? How long is long? How many times can one planet, this planet, be the fortuitous ground for an evolutionary prospect? Will the memory of this failure be somehow preserved? Inadvertently?”

“It has been opined that cockroaches are ideally designed to survive a nuclear holocaust. Imagine the love life of a cockroach if you will. They also serve?!”

“Mr. D., we have reached an impasse. What you imagine leaves me cold.”

“Dear sweet, dear palpable life. Dear highest evolutionary prospect, you cherish something that is slipping through your grasp; despite all your will to hang on.”

“You are, we are, the tragic figures in the landscape, looking on, our worst fears confirmed. Our awareness damns us to this misery. It has been our fate to realize something fateful. But we only interpolate with our gut. Our head is full of information, pros and cons, produced by experts, other humans claiming first this, then that, Yes!, Babbling. One day asserting, the next modifying or

retracting. Everyone is hesitating before the abyss, the one obscured in the darkness, and the one we have created; we can be heard mumbling something about the 'fatefully inevitable'; about all roads leading thus; Yes! it was predictable; as the Cassandras, the prescient ones, foretold.

"We persist in hoping for forgiveness, and salvation, and some kind of eternal life for having fucked up paradise. We expect, we expect, we expect; the humble servant expects his due from God. Such an arrogant bastard, fornicated into existence by some harridan and another thing that creeps along on all fours. Talk about demons, satyrs, centaurs, evil beasts of all kinds; they fill our imaginations, but do not apply to ourselves; we, the saintly ones; prey to them all; they are all after our sweet tender, holy asses."

"Mr. D., you are doubtlessly amusing yourself with this little rant."

"Cynical!, remember, cynical. I warned you! I warned you! You have come to my lair. I love you for your bold gesture. But, the fellow who lives here is a bit off. His judgment is faulty. Sometimes he crawls about on all fours, at other times he becomes transformed into a hairy beast, with hooves, and big gnashing teeth, an all purpose creature, ugly, with an ugly disposition; Mr. Hyde, if you please. Suffering from 'schizoaffective disorder'. I have forgotten to take my medication. The demons are surrounding me, wrestling me for the spoils."

Overwhelmed by a feeling of betrayal, Catherine wept; deeply hurt by this performance. She had begun to sense a tremendous mistake in judgment. She thought he was worse than his own estimate of himself; a somewhat malicious monster. How could she have been lured into this horribly disillusioning situation? How could she regain her equanimity?

She had given herself to him; how horrible! How humiliating!

No, it was the hopelessness of his words. The bitter denial of any reasonable expectation. The staring into the abyss. How could he be speaking to me like this? Mel? Who professes only love for him? Is he enlightening me, or deliberately sadistically torturing me? How can I defend myself against these awful truths? Is that what they are, truths; is that why I am so dismayed?

No, it is the assassination of Hope. But why do this to me, of all people? Yes! perhaps he had done the same to his wife; she had to leave to save herself. She could not live with such blackness. Well, neither can I. I too must leave, to never return.

He lured me thus with love; with his fascination at my youth and beauty, a ruthless, and calculating Don Juan. He has stolen

much with his suave rhetoric; all a show to get something he wanted.

He dared tell of his father, the roué.

OH!, how can I think these things? I am tired, Yes!, tired.

William realized he had pushed too far. It was not necessary to be so brutal with his caustic cynicism, his dark clairvoyant expostulations. This wonderful girl/child does not deserve this hardness of heart. She is so full of desire to do the right thing, the very best with herself. What right does he have? None whatsoever.

“Catherine, I have gone beyond; I have insisted too much.

“Your tears move me to remorse. To great sorrow.

“I am truly sorry.

“I cannot justify what I have done.

“Yes!, I stare at the abyss, often without hope.

“Yes!, I want my predictions to come true, because of my own personal bitterness at the kind of life I have led, and have been forced to lead. I can do nothing to remedy what I believe to be true.

“I haven’t any right to plague you with any of it.

“Catherine, you are so utterly precious to me. I could, I do, worship you, for all you are; the very best there is. The very best I will ever know.

“I cannot trifle with your expectations from this life; your life; not mine, but yours. I have lived mine; I have failed to fulfill any expectations I might have had, perhaps false expectations, ones generated from so many conflicting sources.

“I should be offering only encouragement, not this dismal denial of everything that motivates you.

“Do I want you to succeed? Of course, I want you to succeed. I could ask for nothing more. I could wish, in my aching heart, from the depths of my failures, that you, whom I love so, to succeed beyond your wildest expectations. Yes!, my love deems it so.”

Catherine listened intently, wanting his words to sooth her own aching heart. Her tears ceased to flow, her eyes brightened; his words were having some effect. But she realized she was truly exhausted.

“Mr. D. I had some awful thoughts now, before you spoke these last words, while I was feeling emotionally distraught, and drained. I cannot, nor do I want to reveal them.

“I am mollified by your somewhat remorseful self.

“I cannot deal with your sense of failure; I cannot deal with your loss of hope; even as much as I am able to rationalize where you

are coming from; and even as much as I realize the legitimacy of your position. There has to be more, Mr. D., there has to be more! For me, there has to be more.

“I could leave here now, but I would be heavily burdened for the rest of my life by this encounter with you. Not because we had made love, consummating something between us. There is so much credibility to your words. They are not idle words. However, they are provocative words, harboring provocative thoughts, searching words, not finding their mark. I find they are too much for me; they short circuit who I am, and what I feel, what I want to feel, what I want to believe.

“I cannot wither on the vine, as the searing heat of these words would lead me, as a foregone conclusion to my life. I must fight this tendency, I must not yield to your pessimism. Say what you will about love; but this love asks too much.”

“Catherine, I do not ask it. No, not idle words, perhaps only the product of an idle mind. The woodshed is full, the larder is full, the books are read and not read. I stare into the abyss, because that is where I have found myself. You have come here.

“An ingrate, I fall down before you, now, beseeching you to forgive me.”

“Mr. D., Enough!”

“But Catherine, I am in earnest. I do care, care, care.”

“Alright then. Forgiveness is not the problem. I trust your sincerity. You push the envelop, then have regrets, only because I weep. Then you know. But now, I am telling you, do not push the envelop. Do not think of me as another of your selves, because I am not, and I promise I will resist becoming one of them; and we might need to part for that to happen.

“Don’t do that worship stuff with me. On the one hand you worship me, and on the other you devour me. Where’s your self awareness, your couth, Mr. D.?”

“I’m trying not to be critical. I don’t want to go there. Again, I would rather part now than go there. I have marveled at your delving into life, in the way you do so, with a terrible honesty. It seems so rare; not so rare to delve; we all have some natural curiosity, but you, with such uncompromising integrity; the truth must prevail.

“Mr. D., should not the truth of things stand as they are, without destroying itself? Can it not be? Is not the knowledge of something sufficient? Must it become so dire? So crucial?”

“To you, the use of the term ‘humanity’ precipitates a credibility problem. To you there is no such creature. Am I not human? Are there not others who are human, my sisters, for example; your wife?”

“What do you envision for those of us who are human; are we to be lumped in with all your scathing judgments?”

“Catherine, your question pushes the envelop.”

“Is that to become a cop out now, an avoidance?”

“No!, and Yes!. I would risk answering the question in my usual manner, and for the very reasons you acknowledge, the uncompromising truth.

“For Christ sake, I want your arms around me again, full of desire and love. Already you wish to withdraw far enough away to avoid being devoured.”

“Answer, Mr. D., arms or no arms.”

“Catherine, I see great tragedy ahead for all who are worthy of the epithet ‘human’. Because it is the other element of the beast that will prevail, simply because it has not the scruples, the hesitancy, the sensitivity, the rationality, of the ‘human’.

“One does not warm to the idea of having descended from the apes (even Charles Darwin depicted as a baboon); one wants to be thought of as human, even though being human is no guarantor of not being an ape, whether descended from one or not.

“The glorious ‘human’ is destined for disappointment and unending unhappiness. Yes! You Catherine!”

“All the apes will be happy?”

“The ape will have gorged himself, certain appetites will have been appeased, perhaps sated, for a time. Am I pushing the envelop?”

“You do seem stuck in one place, bogged down, Mr. D.”

“Catherine, you already know there is much left to be desired, you knew this before ever meeting me; the essay you gave me to read reveals that much. You want to build and live in an equitable society, a world peopled with civilized entities. We already have a civilization of apes, entrenched, reluctant to let your kind interfere. They see you as duplicitous, more envious than visionary, too cowardly to live in the real world.

“Still pushing?”

“Yes! Mr. D., but I have had my shock for the day.

“I want to go on loving you; I believe you to be different than you project yourself to be. You seem to have lapses. You want to stare down your antagonist. You do battle with what you suspect to be a cruelly indifferent reality; you come away battered, but wiser. Wisdom is what you sought, but it embitters you, because you must accept wisdom as a defeat; you suddenly realize you would rather not know. You cannot submit to what you suspect to be true. Mr. D., neither can I. From a different place than you. My life must amount to something more than a denial of my birthright, truth or no truth. The holy unsulliable truth will have to go

begging. If you are to become the defender and protector of this black truth; if you insist, then we must part.”

“My kingdom for your arms.”

“If I am so silly as to remain your friend, Mr. D., I imagine, over time, I might begin to understand you enough to anticipate some of what you might say next. But I will not become subsumed in your whimsical nonsense. You have a quick devious mind, given to freely associating very diverse points of view, ones that seem apparent to you, but are not apparent to others.

“I do appreciate humor, Mr. D., even sardonic humor, and satire, even an occasional cynical revelation; I even like the free associations and the interplay of ideas, but I want you to play it straight with me. I need that in this relationship, simply because I am vulnerable. I must know that you are seeing me as that special person at all times. I do not want to become a sounding board, or a plaything. We place each other on equal footing, and all that implies, or we part.

“There are times you come at me mercilessly, with a battering ram. As though I can be nothing for you. As though I can say nothing right. Believe me, it hurts.”

“Catherine, I’ve lived so long in my head, soliloquizing the while, caring not for what I have thought or said.

“You have entered my life. I must recognize something here. I must not do as I have done. You deserve a whole lot more. I know that; because you are so very special to me. I cannot afford the luxury of irresponsibility. If I do not recognize who and what you are, I will be lost forever. I recognize this to be my chance to be something else besides this thing I have been.”

“Mr. D., I need to retire now; I am all done in.”

“I should imagine you are; how thoughtless of me to belabor you with my tirades.”

“No more today, Mr. D.; sleep, guess what? Side by side; I’m going to brush and crash!

“Good Night, Love you!”, as she put her arms around him, quickly brushing him a kiss, and departing.

Wanting so much to hold her, feeling a sharp pang as she pulled away, “I love you Catherine. Sweet Dreams!”

Catherine made a quick exit to locate her carry-on to obtain her flashlight, her toiletries and her nightwear.

“Catherine, the light switch in the bath is above your head, to the left, on the inside of the door.”

“Thanks, Love.”

William saw the light go on, heard the door close, and could hear Catherine doing her thing. He tried not to listen, however unavoidable; the bathroom had no ceiling, it was open to the roof and the skylight above.

He soon heard Catherine leaving, saw the light go out, and heard her getting into bed, and thought he heard a long sigh as she nestled in.

Catherine was soon asleep, her breathing heavy, and sonorous.

William thought, Ah Yes!, CAT, the animal, snores. She would be embarrassed. However, she would remind him about putting sweet young things on pedestals.

William Takes Stock Of Himself

Still stymied and troubled by her reaction and tears, William suddenly felt the urge to rouse her; to tell her how sorry he was that he had pushed her so hard. He truly regretted his behavior; it was unwarranted. He truly did not want to harm their relationship. He had already sacrificed one person to his dark all consuming uncompromising world. He vowed to apologize first thing in the morning. Fortunately she would be there for him to do so.

He thought a row in the boat, now setting upon the rocks below, would be a good thing; how she might enjoy the gliding through the water.

He recalled what she had said regarding the girl in the city. *"Yes!, you are afraid that if you yield to your happiness you will fall from a great height. She did that to you way back when. Not intentionally, even though she was aware of teasing you. She could not know how far you would fall. She didn't care. But Mr. D., with all my heart I care."*

Sonja. To even recall that name. On the pedestal. Father mocked him with, 'Art and Wimen don't mix', later bragging to his first partner that he had fornicated with Sonja. A sordid life!

'A state of mind' he thought. But more. He was smitten. Although, in this distant objectivity, he cannot recall much of her, no memory of smell, of touch. He remembered her voice melodious, or soft. A tall girl, almost as tall as he, and as he had observed on the Provincetown beach, revealing a big boned girl, hairy, stout legs. Only somewhat aware of her small bust, but feminine for all that, as she sat beside him in the big city, in his '52 Nash Rambler Town and Country wagon, wearing a soft tight-fitting sweater, appearing much more feminine, and petite, than on the beach, where she might have been an Amazon of different proportions.

It was her face, her beautiful smile and her blond hair. Why her, for cripes sake? He recalled how she had tried to shake loose of him with her girl friend, Sylvia, a tiny Jewish girl, whom he had actually taken to a movie. Sylvia was a very pretty girl, dark, quiet, also doing artistic things. Ordinarily he might have found her of interest, but it was Sonja that had gripped his entrails. Besides Sylvia lived in a nice house with a close family, very much adored by her parents, her father, a doctor, very much expecting her to marry a Jewish boy.

He thought now how Sonja might have placed him deliberately, in this awkward situation, knowing absolutely nothing could come of such a meeting.

A very different Sonja than Raskolnikov's.

It should have been different, but it wasn't. He took the fall alright, without a parachute. Was Catherine right in thinking she had not intended for me to fall so hard? But that she didn't care?

At least he was spared her snoring, her farts; could he have made love to her? He felt sure of his own awkwardness and felt sure he would have bungled such an event; maybe she would have smelled bad.

Alas!, the luxury of time, to forget the heartache, to heal, and be granted the opportunity to reflect so coolly, somehow finding ways to dislodge her from the pedestal. Like Dickens and his Maria.

No, Catherine, objectively speaking there is no comparison between she and you. You deserve to be on the pedestal, because you care. In reality, you are far more enticing; eager and yielding as well. A very plastic creation in the hand of this creator. It doesn't matter that she was real, and you are but a figment. That question of fiction raises it ugly head. The whole involvement with Sonja might have better been a fiction, although always a painful reminder of the potential for cruel realizations of tangible realities.

He also reflected upon others he had known, whom he might have slighted, upon whose hearts he might have infringed. What is to become of us?

The author was heard chuckling to himself. There goes that sap believing that Catherine is real. He has lost his rhumb in his old age, the globe hast become a paradise without demarcation. He floats above terra firma in his schizoineffective madness.

Has not the author already plagued the reader with vagueness, who is who. Has he not justified his escapade with the taunt to write, to fill the hours with some kind of venue that would provide a framework to unload his troubled mind before he; yes!, before he was obliged to leave.

Are not William and the author one and the same? Is it not true, Catherine a figment; a tenuous creature, made of straw? That it were not so. Not a scarecrow.

As he has had Catherine herself protest this condition, claiming that once unleashed upon the page, she is forever given life, whether she ever drew a breath or not.

Is there some kind of believable fiction? Why do we gravitate to these unrealities? Is the answer self-evident? Beguiling fiction, perhaps. A fiction that one chooses to believe. Are not all those great dramas, fictions, where we lose ourselves in the holy catharsis? Was that too not intended that we should, an expectation of the dramatist, and the expectation of the spectator. Each needing and requiring the other. How many of these dramas skirted the probity of reality?

For that aging heart that will so soon be gone for ever, the author has conjured a presence, to stir him, to keep him from yielding to the wielder of the blade honed to sever the withering stalks. Faust. Foisted upon our wilder imaginings.

Whether or not Catherine is credible, any more than the conjuration of the great Don, imagining the bucolic Dulcinea to be some wondrous princess whose scarf he could wear into battle, and indeed whose honor he would serve as he sought righteous battle after righteous battle, ridding mankind of the bedlamites.

Will Catherine turn out to be a dumpy milkmaid, a Cunegunde, when all the battles are won, but the last, when he lay dying, and the earth is laid bare in its true essentials, when it is the time when all must know the truth, the cold insouciant truth?

No, because this is a fiction, no more nor less than Quixote, filled with real things and figments interwoven, wild as Wild Strawberries, full of yearning, yearning beyond what cold reality is prepared to grant us. This drab hurtful reality that must end with such desperate irresolution. That indeed must end with our mouths agape, somewhat horrified at our death, and at having been cheated out of the knowledge we have sought, after all the sacrifice, of having endured to the very last, hoping for a clue.

Not the luxury of a game of chess with death, yet another figment, but something even more dire, absolute, and with total indifference. We should have so desired, loved and pined for this little bit of information, sacrificed our lives for this tidbit of truth; who are we, why are we here, where are we going?

So Yes! believe in something, believe in Catherine. Does it matter that you think you can distinguish between her non-reality, and what you cannot know about another reality? Such small comforts for sentience, awareness, and sureness of doom.

We will come back to Catherine again, allowing her to speak for herself. She will declare her reality, what she means, who she is, why she is here, and where she is going.

The author is congratulating himself that he had the courage and the motivation to rise from his easy chair to write this last. He was imagining something a whole lot less as he sat down to the keyboard. The author does not waive humility when he congratulates himself on the poignancy of his words. Whether they strike the reader as such does not matter, because for the moment they have said what the author wanted to say, in as much as he is able to say anything.

William eventually retired to lie next to Catherine, a most wondrous and satisfying resolution to all the worldly strife. He wanted to touch her, to glide his hand over her body. He knew he must not. Let sleep claim her for now. He listened for some time to her breathing, watching the blanket rise and fall against the dim night light coming through the large window next to the bed. He swooned, a delicious magical heart rending sigh.

In the morning she had awakened to find him sleeping. She too now felt the swoon, then fell to studying him in his unconcern of slumber. Yes!, Mr. D. you have the mark of years upon you. The lines are many; perhaps telling untold things, and meaningful. Which were borne by the girl who caused you such anguish? Which fashioned by the first liaison, the troubles with progeny, and which from the incessant battles of he that must survive in a 'civilized' world. The firm almost resolute set of his mouth, with a downward turn on one side, the bitter cynical half. The folds of his eyes, now closed; his most arresting physical attribute, concealed from view. A very tame old fellow as he lie prone, respiring. She took note of the weathering of the skin on his face, but more notable upon the hands that rested upon his chest, that one hand that caressed with such finesse, and the other somewhat crippled by a progressive hardening of the collagen. How had she come to love him? This one aged person, whom the world would disdain for his association with her?

An Apology

William stirred, turning in her direction, somehow aware of the scrutiny, opening his eyes to see her raised upon an elbow looking at him intently.

"Oh!, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. You are still here. Here!"

“Yes!, my love”

“Oh!, Catherine, I promised myself I would apologize for berating you so, unremittingly. Your tears, your tears, Catherine.”

“Think no more about it Mr. D.. I was very very tired. I am refreshed now. Say what you like, and I’ll probably rise to the occasion”

“It looks like a nice day. I had thought a row would be a pleasant adventure. We could discuss the world’s problems from a different perspective.”

“I’d like that. But Mr. D., I suspect we had better rise from this lair lest we be diverted by inclinations that you yourself might caution against.”

“I am determined to hold you in my arms nonetheless. As I came to bed last night, I wanted so much to touch you. So close, so close. But instead I listened to you breath and watched against dim light coming from the window, the rising and falling of the blanket that covered you.”

Catherine snuggled up to him pushing her arms around him as he put his around her. They embraced a delicious embrace, that only the Gods (Who, What?) might enjoy.

“Mr. D., Oatmeal! Tea! Are we allowed to be sensible? Or do we yield to temptation and desire?”

“Catherine, I will follow your lead.”

“Then, UP!, Mr. D.” Catherine rising as she said this word, with William reaching after her, grabbing and clutching the edge of her pajama top; but she gently removed his hand, moving quickly into a standing position, tossing her head back, brushing her hair aside, stretching, and arching that beautiful body, walking away from the proximity of the bed.

William also rose, without stretching, to attend the tea making and get the oatmeal started. Catherine followed him briefly, putting her arms around him from behind, placing her cheek between his shoulders.

“I do believe I will get dressed. I shall await the tea, Mr. D.”

For a moment William recalled his wife. When he tried to fathom her nature, the female nature, he felt she would always remain an elusive mystery. Waves of those same feelings came over him with Catherine; woman as an elusive mystery. The mystery that seemed unapproachable, that seemed always out of reach. If he somehow framed the question, there would be a denial of any mystery whatever. Perhaps it was the closeness that only seemed close. At any moment, through some perverse nature, the closeness could be severed, not bound as one might have imagined. A simple matter of rising from the bed at will, and then, as willfully hugging him from behind. A mobile thing that moved

around independently, how close in reality, and afar in another reality. The separateness of two beings even in close proximity. Yet somehow bound together in so many ways.

Suppose she decided to run, and run and run, and run, not to any particular place, but away; as she had come. One moment talking of oatmeal and tea, and the next; to take her independent person away somewhere to never be found again? Yillah?

Isn't that what his wife had done? The freedom. The Fear. Would Catherine run? Had his wife run because she could no longer be hampered by this person whose pervasiveness controlled her existence to such an unbearable degree? The same thing that bothered Catherine? All those years of negativity, even negating the people with whom she associated, her coworkers, her mentors, her family, her friends. Had she not endured all that? What, for love?

A remarkable mystery?

Catherine's' 'speech', As Promised.

"The author has allowed me some latitude here, even though what I have to say cannot be any more than his own very best summation of what I represent, or what he represents.

"I want to address the reader. What I will have to say will not serve as a justification or an apology for who I am or what I am.



"It is I who have claimed a place in the reader's mind, as any individual who has found his or her name in print. Such are the whims of our fortune, to be and not to be, as figments, whether real or not. If I had lived on the other side of the hill, or whether I have lived in this tome, it is you who have imagined me, and given me life beyond the word, as you might have, if your neighbor had told you of this girl who lived on the other side of the hill, or had handed you this book with the tale of this improbable girl as its heroine.

"It is mine to tell of the who I am, why I am here, and where I am going. Both a simple and not so simple task. The simple part is my own self-declaration. The not so simple part is to reach beyond what is possible for any creature such as you and I to know, or to describe. We may elicit something from a certain kind of question that will not admit of any clear answer.

"As I have said to William, 'Suppose on, Suppose on'.

"Suppose on. Suppose on. We are both fortunate in who we are then. Yes, Mr. D. I think of myself as beautiful; I am comfortable with what I feel about that aspect of who I am or might be. I am pleased that it pleases you. I will not speculate about 'beauty being skin deep' because I suspect it has every right

and possibility to become deeper. I hope that for myself. Mr. D., I wonder and seem to hope, that after you have finished your work here, that we will be able to get together, even perhaps regularly, 'to compare notes' – to continue what has begun here. I am at the beginning of a road that I can hope is rewarded with discovery, true insights, true knowledge, and that I will be able to set them down, as you say, coherently, and with clarity, and with art; with the added hope again, however ambitious or grandiose, that mankind, humanity will benefit, will be uplifted, inspired to take the high road always. What I am thinking and feeling as I speak to you is ultimately meaningful; how much more meaningful is yet to be determined. I don't know how to say it exactly, but 'it simply stated, feels right'.

"This might give you some inkling of who I am, why I am here, and even where I am going. The simpler perception.

"Yes! I imagine I am at the apex of something, aware of a long struggle to get here, not my struggle, but the struggle of my ancestors. While I say this, I realize the fine line between what represents that apex, and how easy it would be to revert to something much more primitive. It has been shown that much of what we have become biologically, adaptively, has been preserved in our DNA, periodically expressing itself in ways that hearken back to beginnings. The development of the embryo, mimicking a process, nearly takes us through our concept of the whole process of evolution, nature reluctant, or unwilling to abandon something that she has labored so hard to perfect, and that has worked so successfully, all philosophical speculations aside. So when I say who I am, I am aware of something beyond this self you see, this only skin deep self, but what also is within that skin.

"Why I am here. As it has developed in my conversations with William, Mr. D., who now often anticipates me in my thought, I am apt to agree with his notions of 'holding action', 'it is ours to do with', and that the burden of our life is to assign it a purpose. These are very real assessments that find accord with my sentiments.

"I do not believe we wish to slip backward, hence the 'holding action'. Yes! we are here to live, that has been the imperative from the very beginning of time. What living we have done has always come with the caveat that 'it is ours to do with'; its all here, we have evolved within it, because of it, and adapted to it because there was something here to which to adapt that would, in turn, shape us and favor us. Mutable, yet the fortuitous happenstance, all somehow symbiotically arranged. The purpose I imagine I have assigned to this life is to transform my awareness of all that has happened, and all that is, into something that is so absolutely marvelous, actually beyond description, unique as a 'creation', whether by a 'GOD', or through fortuitous happenstance; transform the who I am into the why I am here. In short, I want to preserve and

protect what is here. That will also become the where I am going. That is little enough to say; and a lot as well.

"The difficult part interposes itself upon me now. I am an ambition, an occupier of something so utterly unfathomably precious. It is not only in homage, to repay my debt to life, but to acknowledge something, within the limits of my knowledge and understanding.

"I cannot envision myself submerging what I feel in the grandiose gesture. Any attempt to save what is here might seem grandiose, because it is also bound in its mutability, leading toward an eventual destination which I cannot know.

"Do I simply become an aware bystander, an observer, a poet singing praises of paradise, and lamenting the foul cruel deeds of the rapacious, the marauders, the filchers, and last, but not least, the occupiers and survivors? Not entirely a bystander. As my paper, that has appeared in this opus, will attest.

"Only somewhat of a duty to respond; more, awakened to something that begs for my participation, and dedication. I cannot only occupy, I cannot only take, or take for granted. I must more than give back; I must make sure others do as well; I cannot, you cannot, live in the vacuum of unconcerned self and selfhood, although nature would seem to have unwisely designed us so.

"Our kind, man kind, is capable of willing something that other creatures cannot, or do not. We are able to decide upon an action because our observations, and reason inform us that it is in our best interest to find accord with what we perceive as some kind of 'natural' balance; that it is pragmatic to, for example, 'reduce, recycle, reuse', to 'conserve', to 'preserve', perhaps even more than to 'consume'. Do we do more than 'pay lip service' to such acknowledgement? We differentiate between 'need' and 'greed'. Our wills become the force behind the pragmatic, even imperative, recognition, of maintaining that 'natural' balance; even without knowing the specifics, of what that balance consists. We will it thus, that if we are to 'err', we must err on the side of caution. Multiplying and subduing is not a viable alternative; it never has been.

"In an attempt to give 'reality' its due, that is, recognizing the actuality of what is now the established way of mankind, Mr. D. and I have debated the plausible, the possible; the implausible and the impossible. We have come away from the debate not agreeing upon what action should be taken. Mr. D. feels things must run their course, that reason is only a weak intervener in the affairs of men; that reason is a splendid attribute, but a useless adornment, an ineffectual agent of man's most inmost desires.

"I am inclined to disagree, simply because I do not feel we can or ought cede or surrender anything to those forces that, for the lack of awareness, destroy something that could, with awareness, and the will to some other kind of

venue, be saved. What possible argument can I propose to preserve something about which I cannot know anything certain, given my acceptance of mutability? Instinctively, I so propose, but more, a reverence and attachment to things living, forces this attitude upon me.

"Mr. D. does not believe in the plausibility of what I propose, because he does not believe man is capable of anything so discrete as the control of his impulses for the sake of something that asks him to consider the dark unknown future. He feels that parents are not concerned with the future for their progeny, at least, in the abstract. In principle, Yes! But who will be the first?, asks Mr. D. I answer him; 'Again, it is a matter of will. Each of us simultaneously'.

"Not possible' he asserts. He feels man, as a socially cohesive whole, has to proceed over the brink before he will do anything. Then it is too late. Mr. D. asserts man is, by nature, selfish; self interest, serving the Now, the 'I want'; that visceral self, is most preeminent; it cannot be otherwise.

"Fatalistically he argues, and trips me up on my use of 'fatefully inevitable'. Do I agree that some things are 'fatefully inevitable'? The term was used by Sigmund Freud in his work titled, Civilization And Its Discontents, from which we have previously extracted it.

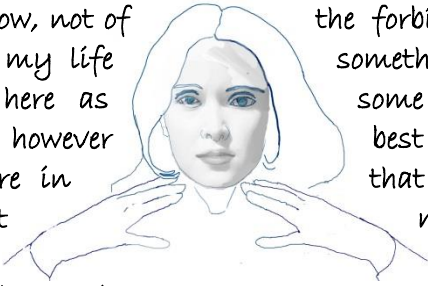
'We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less fatefully inevitable than the suffering which comes from elsewhere.'

"In that context, I feel I must agree. But not without qualms. I want desperately for things to be different. Can we do better? I know I can do better; and I will do better, simply because I cannot do otherwise; that is also 'fatefully inevitable'.

"I know Mr. D. will support me, because he loves me. Love parlays its own arguments, however unrelated to common sense. He will use reason as the arbiter even though he does not believe in its effectuality. In short, I believe in Mr. D. He believes in me. He argues, he even persuades, and realistically speaking I might intuitively agree concerning the outside; it is my inside and his inside that matter. It is possible we might inspire others, as we ourselves have been inspired to do something other than acquiesce, other than knuckle under to the status quo, even though our methods would be different.

"Have I convinced you of who I am, why I am here, and where I am going? Do you accept what I have declared about myself? Am I a credible presence?

"Last, but not the least, I want to thank the reader for persisting with his or her reading, despite what has seemed improbable. There is much about me that is not improbable. Most of all, I represent something that cries out in all of us. I want to know, not of things that make of my life have been deposited here as meant only to survive, however crook. I hope we share in knowledge of that more than another some redundant occupier. We become more than a 'holding action', doing with imagination, foresight, and love, what 'it is ours to do with'. Yes!, we become the person who exemplifies these things, thereby assigning a purpose to our sojourn here; not necessarily because we benefit personally, but because we believe in something that exists beyond the self, something special, something beautiful, something however inexplicable and miraculous, that has favored us, for which we are forever, and humbly, grateful; and which we revere. All this; Yes! without invoking the deities."



The Author Takes The Helm

You haven't heard from the scribbler in a while.

After that excellent speech from his protagonist; although a 'tough act to follow', the author presumes further upon the reader.

You may not find any of what he writes credible. You must realize that he does necessarily reflect upon the reader from time to time. More loyal to the reader than the president is to his constituency. He is doubtful of his enterprise, no matter how much of it he might bolster his scribbles with a recognition of a jumbled reality. The president is never doubtful.

If every word was true, was there ever a scribbler could narrate the details sufficient to liven and hold your interest? As improbable as some aspects may appear, therein is contained an awareness of finiteness and finality. These last are not remotely improbable; they have become the mainstay, the chief prod to all our conceptualizings and our doings, however absurd they may seem.

Catherine is some piece of work, no? For a figment?

Could she not inspire you?

If you cannot be moved by her, you will never be moved, though the sky is falling.

'What!?' You frown. The author has shown such utter disregard for conventional behavior, for mores, for taboos, even for common decency?

Would you heave out the baby with the proverbial bathwater? Is that too not an Oops!, a disregard for something; too simple?

You shrug, and say, 'Screw you!'

'Free choice' is a wonderful right. Move on, if it suits you. Do your very best to do your very best; I will laud you, regardless of how you feel about me.

If you deny something you ought not, I will condemn you; that is my right.

'What!?' you exclaim, 'He reneges'.

Not at all, this is a partnership between author and reader. I believe your time has been well spent if you have read this far. I believe Catherine lives in all of us, whether drawn out in these words, or whether unspoken in her entirety. You give what is best in you some shape and some hope. Unearthed in you is a person that has lain dormant that now lives with meaning and with desire, and hope.

Perhaps Catherine is my anima, the yang of my being.

Cheers!

Is there a last refrain? Did these two remain together? What became of their lives beyond this point in time? Are you eager to know? Will the author leave this question unresolved? Does he break the spell by appearing in this last bit of reading to quash the moods he has created?

Yes!, their relationship continued. Catherine returned to her studies as planned. When the last quarter of her junior year ended she first visited her family, informing only her father of her relationship with William. She spent most of that following summer with William. Her sisters came to visit them there.

The Sisters Visit The Island.

The girls arrived on a stormy morning, both thrilled and exhilarated by the ferry plowing through, and rolling, and tossing in the waves. On the island's dock it had begun to rain, but they were out of the wind. The taxi was there to meet them. The relationship between William and Catherine was still unknown to the islanders. It was summer time, unfamiliar faces appeared with some regularity, so the sister's arrival, though noticed, stirred only a mild curiosity, some of the males taking exceptional notice; some of their companions miffed; but they were a bit agog without a clue. The taxi driver was discreet when it came to answering questions about his passengers. He might even take a wrong turn if he felt he was being followed.

A most enthusiastic welcome awaited the girls, William standing in the background observing these wonderful specimens of young womanhood.

It was Theresa who sought out Mr.D, greeting him warmly with a huge smile and an enthusiastic hug.

Mr. D. was pleased. Even Lydia greeted him, without any trace of disdain.

Theresa suddenly exclaimed “Look!, pointing to the water in front of the house, Porpoises! Or are they dolphins? Dolphins!” The fins of several of them passed by, rising and disappearing. It seemed like a parade, there was such a line of them, strung out for a quarter mile; rising and falling like waves in themselves.



“Wow!” exclaimed Catherine, “That’s a first!”

All four of them went outside to stand on the bluff overlooking the water some 30 feet below.

“They are going to a convention of sea mammals.” William uttered.

“Mr. D., don’t be silly”

“Well. Don’t you wonder where they are going Catherine? Of course you do. Are they not regarded as intelligent mammals?”

“Yes!, Mr. D., they are going to a convention.” As Catherine said this, she put her arm through his, snuggling to him.

“Not any old convention; sea mammals!

“Being intelligent creatures (mostly because man thinks the beasts understand him); they suspect something is up, something is wrong in the oceans. The recurrence of El Nino has not been ignored by them. The intrusion of warm water species into what have been believed by man to be colder waters. The zooplankton blooms in the upper latitudes. The Belugas have told them of the shrinking polar ice. The food chain is becoming depleted. Many aquatic species are disappearing. Man, that other intelligent animal is isolating species, raising them in captivity, to the exclusion of others, for the 'filthy lucre', dispassionately causing great stress upon indigenous species. Your dolphins notice these things. Something is wrong for sure.

“We know what is going on, when one species becomes depleted we re-rig our boats to plunder another. The whales are gone, the salmon are gone, the red snapper are gone, the Pacific cods are nearly gone, the sea urchins are gone, the abalone is gone, the goeey duck is going, now the halibut is under pressure, the prawns, and shrimp are under pressure, crab species are under pressure, black cod is under pressure, albacore tuna is under

pressure, and the herring are under pressure, as once were the olachens, the mackerel, the Atlantic cod, the salmon; and all those sporty fish like marlin, swordfish, yellow tuna; name a species that is not done in or is not under pressure – drag the bottom - bon appétit!”

“Yes!, Mr. D., while we sleep.”

Theresa chimes in, “Hey! you two, I had hoped we could relax for a few before we launch into our heavies.”

William responded immediately, “Yes! you are right Theresa, Yes!, by all means.”

Lydia sat down upon the edge of the bluff, pulling her knees up, clasping her lower limbs with her hands locked about her ankles, to look out over the water. William sat beside her, remarking, “Lydia has the right idea.”

Lydia turned her head to face him with a friendly enough expression. But said nothing. Catherine was pleased by William’s gesture, and by Lydia’s response. It was a good beginning. The bold Theresa hugging William pleased her almost to tears.



Catherine wondered what her sisters had said to their parents about where they were going. Theresa was as honest as she could be, musing that Catherine had found a neat semi-primitive place to relax, on an island, off the beaten track, in Canada.

Catherine had not told her sisters that she had informed their father of her relationship to William. Her father might have assumed the Island was the place of their summertime tryst. He didn’t want to interfere, hoping everything would resolve itself to his liking. He appreciated the camaraderie between his daughters; and their loyalty to each other.

Catherine sat on the other side of her sister; and Theresa sat on the other side of William.

Looking earnestly at William, “Mr. D., what brought you here” Theresa inquired.

“It’s a long story Theresa. In order to spare you the tedium of the nuances, I will briefly narrate. I think my New England upbringing might have something to do with it; my mother’s parents sailed the seas from Ireland to arrive there; and my father sailed the seas from Czechoslovakia, via France and England to arrive there. For some reason, although, born by that sea, I did not grow up by the sea. I did eventually become interested in sea stories, many of them originating in New England. Coming here was a slow process of a single destiny becoming an eventuality. Even though I have a natural fear of the water, it became

important to me. It is important to me. This is where it happened. The circumstances grow upon you, become you, and you find you cannot live without them. The surround becomes a vital part of one's equanimity in the face of so many other things that would make living a miserable experience. Since one must live in this day and age, in this time and place, and since one must make his peace with that happenstance, or languish in anxiety, fear and trembling, it is good for me to have alighted here. It might have been some other place by the water, which might have grown upon me as well. There are many places on this long coast, amongst all these islands that a person might have found succor."

"Sounds mysteriously wonderful, Mr. D.. Now we can share in it, and Kitty can immerse herself in it, day after day.

"I think all three of us are partial to the sea; we did grow up near the ocean and spent many hours walking there, along with many others of course. Long wide sandy beaches; very different from here, but here you have such privacy. One can feel quite expansive; free to disrobe, so to speak."

"Don't let your imagination run away with you, Tess. Mr. D. is still adjusting to your sister and her pranks. You might scare him off."

"I doubt I'll scare him off Kitt; I am my sister's sister; and I suspect he will love me for that."

"I suspect you are right, Theresa."

"Listen to you guys. I am my sister's sister too. For my part, time will tell."

In saying this Lydia turned toward William to study his reaction. William had already turned his head as she was speaking, and in a flash he thought he caught a glimpse of Catherine; they might have been the same person. Her face revealed nothing more than a slight challenge to him; again something he might have seen in Catherine's expressions. How much alike they seemed.

"Lydia, I appreciate your honesty, however it may strike me."

"Mr. D., it does not strike one way or the other. I have given yours and Catherine's relationship a fair amount of consideration. I have thought of many other things as well, that might bear upon human relationships. I realize there are no rules; only assumed rules, perhaps impositions upon all of us, our thought processes, like so many other perceptions we have adopted.

"One of the things we are taught in pre-law is to question all assumptions; and disregard all hearsay. Its kind of like wiping the slate clean, so our minds can function with first principles, with truth, and not dubious inferences. One can and does apply that operative, that discipline outside the classroom.

“One ought not prejudge, at least intellectually; one might do so from a learned reflexive behavior. I assume I have prejudged the relationship between you and my sister, but it was in my context, not yours. If I am to assume the posture of judge, then I must weigh every aspect of what I am setting myself up to judge. If I observe a radiant sister, should it trouble me that she is made happy by a two-headed monster; or an elephant? What if she was smitten by a young handsome rotter who would simply dump her after he has his fill?”

“I have to sit in judgment upon my own prejudices. At least I should try to know what they are.”

“Mr. D. I do not lay it on one way or the other. I might even be envious of Kate’s happiness.”

“I marvel at the three of you.”

Lydia put her hand on his momentarily, a reassuring gesture. Again, Catherine observed the gesture; secretly pleased. This gathering had wonderful promise.

“I appreciate what is happening here. I know it is because you love your sister so, that you would reflect more critically upon her choice of friend, and yes!, lover. Naturally enough, as conscionable people, we have had many discussions about propriety, ‘til we decided, usually Catherine decides, it is fruitless to pursue. So we give it up to smile at each other.”

“I am content not to discuss your relationship, however it affects or does not affect me. I realize how constrained we are in our thought; and how little we question some things.”

“I know I haven’t any right to suggest to other people what to do.”

“Additionally Mr. D., I realized that I was cutting myself off from someone I might benefit in knowing; you Mr. D.. I have been challenged by your very existence, and what I have heard you say, and what my sisters have to say about you, and to you. It would be foolish of me to stubbornly insist upon something I have every reason to doubt. With a caveat of course, I could not envision such a relationship for myself, even without knowing what kind of relationship I might prefer. I suspect this constitutes a prejudice with which I must live.”

“Well put Lydia. It is somewhat of a relief to me that you say these things as you do; and it only reinforces my appreciation of the three of you, almost as one.”

Theresa could not refrain from leaning against William affectionately. He responded with a little leaning of his own. Catherine observed the interplay, cautiously pleased. She wanted to say something, reflecting some unknown insecurity, but thought better of it. She implicitly trusted both of them. She imagined the

day and the place raising the spirits to congeniality, natural enough to both of them; and to her and Lydia as well. It was best to leave it alone. Instead she rose to kneel between the two of them, putting her arms around them, drawing them close to her.

Lydia was not about to lean into William, even to get a hug from her sister, but her sister did at once, kneel between them, drawing them close to her, in a like manner.

The visit continued on an even keel the remainder of their time together. Theresa and William bantered continually, leaving Catherine somewhat in amazement, and Lydia somewhat contemplative.

The God Bless America writing and the symbolism of Toni Smith arose often enough during the banter. Theresa was quite subtle in her choice of symbols. She had hoped that Toni would not yield her principles for any cause great or small. Was it a fearless gesture, hers? Has she thought about it since, only to become fearful? Have others attempted to intimidate her? Or was her gesture, a matter of fact thing, simply attesting to her beliefs? Did she have a right to believe, that, in her country, such expression was to be assuredly found in our beginnings, 'Give me liberty or give me death', and would she choose death?

However sincere her sister, Lydia was more skeptical about the symbolism. She was aware of Toni's self statement; maybe her press release. Maybe it seemed a little too strident; a little too pat.

"For some time now, the inequalities that are embedded into the American system have bothered me. As they are becoming progressively worse and it is clear that the government's priorities are not bettering the quality of life for all of its people, but rather on expanding its own power, I can no longer, in good conscience, salute the flag.

The war America will soon be entering in has reinforced my beliefs, while further angering me. I am aware that this is a time of fear for many Americans, and the media has done a fine job of maintaining that fear and riling up people's emotions. However, amidst this fear people have lost sight of the fact that Bush's plan for "maintaining our safety" will cause many innocent people, women and children, mothers and babies, to die overseas. Furthermore, going to war will likely provoke more violence in this country.

It does not bother me that so many Americans oppose me. If anyone looked deeper than the headlines they would find that my arguments are true. Besides, whether or not people agree with me is irrelevant. It is my right as an American to stand for my beliefs the way others have done against me. Being patriotic cannot simply

be an empty slogan. Patriotism can be shown in many ways, but those who choose to do so by saluting the flag should recognize that the American flag stands for individuality and freedom. Therefore, any true patriot must acknowledge and respect my right to be different."

But was it any different than 'Give me Liberty, or give me Death'? Was Patrick Henry any more than a parlor liberal? Theresa would argue that Toni was more real, in a more real setting, than Patrick of olde, with olde mother England an ocean away, while Toni was in the thick of it.

Catherine, for her part, believed in Toni. In her possibility, her probability; important distinctions need to be made. Does one have the right to deduce there is some hope because they did not arraign her, and summarily execute her? William would interject; 'they're workin' on it'; you have to assume, 'they're workin' on it'.

The three sisters were more idealistic than William, although they were willing to acknowledge all the forces that conspired to frustrate their idealism. William believed that the erosion of the norms of democracy as they had been taught concerning them, is a natural enough occurrence, simply from neglect, from acquiescence, from taking things for granted. There is now a different breed of cat vying for power. Most of them lack integrity, most of them don't actually know the meaning of Liberty, because they have lived in a system, a white man's system, Old Boys Club, a male dominated system of prerogatives that came as a birthright, that barely required imagination, and did not have to be earned.

All four of them were aware of the great numbers who have been left out of the equation. Of the exploitation of a system of privileges accruing to the privileged, all happening behind closed gates paced and patrolled by snarling dogs. Man's eventual (inevitable?) inhumanity to man? Or is it man's long-standing inhumanity to man? Is it not the truth that all the daily hoopla is simply a deliberate attempt to gloss over and conceal the truth.

While the discussions often turned on the dire, both Theresa and Catherine infused the gathering with humor and warmth. Catherine's easy flow and demonstrative affection for William deeply influenced Theresa. She was ready to defend them without qualm. Lydia was not being a holdout, to be different. She simply felt differently. She imagined her older sister being as happy with a younger man. But in order to be fair she tried to imagine, for herself, a younger man with all of William's attributes. The idea was not unappealing. Although Lydia, like both of her sister's, was not looking especially for any kind of companion or mate. She was willing to imagine the inevitableness of a man in her life, she could

not envision Catherine's choice. She wondered if Theresa might also be susceptible to such whims as Catherine.

A younger man might still be put to the test by Lydia's finickyness. But such a beautiful lady, enough to break anyone's heart, young or old, perhaps someone to be endured, as well as loved.

William for his part, ever the obtuse realist, seeing himself for the old geezur he was, could not refrain from the contemplation of the fuller dimensions to reality, all those associated with the corpus, whether in its earliest bloom, or in its oldest decay. Man, woman, were animals. He thought of Melville's description of Fayaway, always grooming herself. He loved watching Catherine doing the same, although she did so more perfunctorily, and less frequently than Fayaway. He pondered the potential differences between Fayaway and Catherine, as he had done with Fayaway and Yillah. Hmn?! Catherine and Yillah. Catherine as woman. The female form; in her, so perfect. He had imagined Fayaway rounder, not so tall, not so white. Yillah, ethereal, perhaps thinner, and paler than Catherine. Himself, a bit of a wreck, hardly an aesthetic experience for a young woman's eyes. He could not imagine himself young with an elderly woman; almost unthinkable. A double standard being promoted by the scribe?! The ruin of us all, these feeble imaginings. Catherine with her pronouncement concerning the depth of beauty. Alas! It is so.

All four of them debated the possible longevity of a system they had all supposed was now in decline. So much speculation with regard to China; a nation, an empire, on the move. The sheer number; one billion more than their own nation, burgeoning. What do we know of their aspirations? Like Japan? Korea? Join the fray? Best the West at their own game? And what of that other sleeping giant, India? Do India and China believe in possibilities that have long turned sour in the West, a West that hangs on to the old self-serving aegis, self-interested *modus operandi*; not yet suffering the ills of a surfeit of cheap shoddy goods, impermanent, by design, meant to be consumed; and quickly materializing into waste; and what to do with the waste? Are they too doomed, as doom does? The pall of human doom. Well, that was mostly William's take on it. The girls argued that their country could stand the W's; that if it could endure a Nixon that it could endure W. William argued, that even the thought of a Nixon as president was indicative of some gross failure in the system. That W. was a sure sign of a further, more devastating erosion, perhaps inevitable failure of the system. William thought of China, willing to forego all the precautions, to attain the same dubious goal? Take Heed!

It was Lydia's turn to pose a question to William. "Mr. D., have you ever belonged to a Labor Union."

"When I was growing up it was more or less expected that one would join a Union; most places of employment were unionized."

"Do you think unionism is a good thing?"

"I suspect this is a loaded question; I feel certain you know about the labor movement, even world wide; probably more thoroughly than I do.

"I can give you an opinion; probably not an improvement upon your own."

"Mr. D., you need not try to second guess me. I do have more than a curious interest in the labor movement. I have been studying it at the U. Labor relations have become a part of the American way. But organized labor seems to be losing its vitality."

"I shouldn't be second guessing you, Lydia.

"I have not studied the labor movement in great detail. I am aware of the reasons for its formation. I am aware of some of the grosser conflicts, inhuman conflicts, some of which were responsible for inception of Socialistic and Communistic thinking. Exploitation and Slavery is not a new concept in the affairs of men.

"To answer your question, I am of two minds on the subject. As I have said, I belonged to some form of organized labor in practically all the places I worked. However, most small establishments did not have unions. I worked in three factories, i.e., three manufacturing plants. While I worked in them there was no mention of strikes, and no mention of scab labor. Even at the University where I worked for twenty years, there was a weak union representing 'classified' employees; student labor was not represented (only minimum wage laws afforded them some protection); and the faculty seemed to have better bargaining power than the 'classified' employees. When professors walk off the job, the whole place has to shut down. At the University there was an occasional mention of strike, but any vote was usually overwhelmingly negative. A rather quiescent labor involvement where the worker was unwilling to jeopardize what marginal security he imagined he had. As a consequence, other unions, even good, more aggressive unions, tried to get a foothold in the State System, but were never able to get the kind of support they needed; although better represented, fearful of change.

"My experience is very limited. However, at one very large manufacturing plant on Long Island, Sperry Rand, that had mostly government contracts for manufacturing war materiel, I did feel most acutely the effect of unionism. Both company supervisors and shop stewards from the Union were very visible. Those who

had been employed for some time knew the ropes, running a tight ship, and used their power, on a daily basis, to their advantage.

“For example, no employee was allowed to perform any task outside his or her job description, enforced by the shop stewards. The entrenched employees worked the system with slow downs, or self-imposed quotas, mostly to get overtime. Overtime was almost a certainty because of contract commitments with the military. Any new employee who did not go along with the game would receive threats to get with the program. Very patriotic outfit (Love It or leave It comes to mind); not something that would succeed during wartime.

“I resented their control, and felt it was a natural outgrowth of what happens with all status quo organizations. I did not feel I could overtly challenge them, but did enough work beyond the quota to have them get on my case. The shop steward could say nothing because he could not be seen as encouraging slow downs, and, the ever alert company men were encouraging me to keep up the good work. I was not interested in any battles, but I was not going to put in eight hours of slow work to accomplish the work I could get done in two hours at my normal working pace. The company sensed my dilemma, but could do nothing that showed favoritism. Eventually they found me a room where I could work alone on some specialized equipment. They even offered me position with the company in another city. By that time I had switched from day shift to night shift, my life was complicated with study and a serious love affair. I left the factory, and New York after a little over a year of employment. I did not belong to a union again until the weak thing that passed as an employee’s union at the University.”

“So it sounds like you are moderately unenthusiastic about trade unions.”

“Quite the contrary. I simply related my experiences. As I have indicated, I am of two minds. I was never party to any bargaining, or took any meaningful part in any vote. I believe I benefited from the labor movement.

“At the University I was my own boss and could work at my own pace. The work slow downs at Sperry were a bad thing; short-sighted, as is self-interest and greed, wherever, whenever and however it occurs.

“Philosophically, I can only support the labor movement, because I know the beast who works the other side. This reflects upon our society as a whole. We, our corporations, that is, can actually think in terms of exploitation of labor (slavery), which somehow seems inevitable, in the affairs of men. Industrialization has somewhat failed its promise. It was never a human institution;

that is, it was not designed to afford the average citizen more leisure time as claimed, escaping the drudge of using his back for long hours, as a machine. So-called 'free enterprise', survived and flourished on the backs of labor. We know what has happened, it has been obvious and it has been flagrant. An ugly chapter in human relations; a gross failure in human relations. Very dehumanizing.

"Nowadays our self-proclaimed benefactors have gone abroad to find a cheap source of labor, essentially returning to the days before unions. Any attempt to unionize abroad is met with reprisal as it was in the beginning of our labor movement. There are so many bodies available in the chosen foreign nations that the word 'scab' has been unable to acquire any meaning. A continuation of the dehumanization of man, for huge profits."

"You view the inhuman treatment of labor as a systemic disease?"

"That might be a fair assessment of what I think.

"The Corporations have been successful in influencing government in so many ways, all to the disadvantage of about anyone or anything you can imagine.

"I think 'exploitation' like 'slavery' is a word that has found disfavor, so Corporate PR people are always trying to find ways around its implications, by creating the image of themselves as benefactors."

"Why do think socialism failed to make a foothold in the USA?"

"That is not exactly the case. When FDR was president, and the country was in such a shambles during the Depression, he instituted programs that put people to work for the government. There was a crying need, people out of work as a result of plant closures, and others displaced with the farm foreclosures, lost through the misfortune of collapsed markets and unfavorable weather conditions. A great number of people lost their wherewithal in the Crash. Social Security was instituted, Unemployment Insurance was invented, and various welfare programs were set up. Then the war came; everybody was put to work in one way or another. After the war, because the nation was a-bustle, needing to switch from a wartime to a peacetime economy, unions became more a part of the scene. Capitalists had not yet started to form big monopolies, mergers, and the stock market had not become the thing it is today, a gameboard for the wealthy with expendable capital, expanding the greedy grubbing for money, gems and precious metals; one huge gambling casino for those with means. Again, all built on the backs of labor; now, cheap, non-unionized labor abroad. Somehow, after the war, socialism didn't seem to be called for. The argument was always for

incentives; gotta give the capitalists incentives. The imperatives for sharing the social burden that began after the depression seemed to fade away. I say 'seemed'. There was still the welfare concept, there was 'trickle down'; conscience tokens for helping the needy; that were available because the country was booming. There were also gains made in 'safety in the work place', issues like 'equal opportunity', 'affirmative action', but worker gains have eroded since then, because of the cost. We had a brief spate of wage and price controls when inflation became rampant. The welfare concept is all but purged (of social retards, and the 'trickle down' provided by the 'private sector' is a euphemism for government neglect. Mostly pushed by Republican administrations, who have not been averse to union busting.

"We need to return to some more humanitarian accounting.

"Labor continues to have its problems with its employers, it still finds it necessary to threaten to strike, and when it does, it is usually forced into arbitration. The union that bargains too hard results in plant closures. Lose lose seems to be the way of the future for labor; perhaps that is to say lose lose for humanity. So much of what our 'great' nation does these days seems to result in backward steps."

"Is there a remedy, Mr. D.?"

"I suspect all four of us know the answer to that question.

"I know your sister is making this sort of social accounting her highest priority. From what I gather Theresa seems to be in the same camp; and since the three of you share in the same influences and the same sympathies, I suspect you are also concerned. What I might think does not count."

"You are dead wrong Mr. D.", Catherine interjected, "what you think is every bit as important as what we think."

"Catherine, I appreciate your vote of confidence, but what I think is not particularly constructive. As I have said I am ambivalent regarding the application of the idea of unionism. I feel something else is needed. Even when I was younger, I was only a compulsory joiner. I remained mostly on the outside, looking out for number one."

"I don't happen to believe that Mr. D.. Everything you have told me about yourself, and the way you think does not support that contention."

"Sure Catherine, I commiserate with the down trodden, because I see myself as the natural inheritor of their condition. But intrinsically I am selfish, self-indulgent, a loner, an outsider, regardless of the system of government under which I am obliged to live and function.

"I am disturbed by man's inhumanity to man, perhaps for the same reasons."

"Mr. D., I suspect this attempt at 'true confessions' is not appropriate; besides, I find you differently than you find yourself."

"Catherine, some people talk a good game; maybe I'm one of those."

Theresa, not liking the direction of the conversation, chimed in, "Words! words! words!. You two are on the same side, undeniably. We are all on the same side, whether as hypothetical social planners, or as sensitive people responding to inequity, unfairness and injustice. There can be no equivocation of our position in these matters.

"Mr. D., you are old enough to know better. You should make the attempt to answer Lydia's question concerning a remedy. I do not believe she is asking anything untoward, it is an earnest question, a sincere question, not intended to trip you up, not as a polemic; I feel it deserves an answer; a good answer; and I too would like to hear it."

"You are insisting on something to which I feel I cannot give a constructive answer. Or at least what you would like to hear.

"If I say there is no remedy, you will take me to task; but that is what I believe. Yes, there is a theoretical remedy; there has always been a theoretical remedy. Catherine and I have been at each other on this score in all of our conversations.

"She is believer in reason, and in the basic altruistic impulses of man. That these should and will triumph over perceived and actual adversity, or perversity.

"Who am I to discourage her? I love her; but I would not want to see her sacrifice her beautiful life in a futile endeavor; an endeavor she seems destined to pursue. I bring this jaded person of myself into her equation. She defends her position eloquently; she does it with reason, and she does it with grace. I cannot but support her basic motivation. But I fear for her, her life, and her disappointment at the end of the road. I impose my disappointments upon her; I try to force my experience into her considerations, so she will be spared. That all of you will be spared, for that matter.

"I am the one who warns of the Ides, like the guy on the bridge in Paris, Texas exclaiming, 'I Warned You, I Warned You.' I am the Cassandra, the prophet, warning of the perils, not to trust anyone; I am the chorus, intoning the knell of fate. What do you want of me?"

Theresa, ever the maker of peace, "Mr. D., no need to defend us, at this juncture. We are friends here, discussing something of importance to us upon this hill of yours at Parnassus. A lovely

place and a lovely day it is. We need to succumb to the ambience. So let us only conjecture upon things that give us hope; that do not argue for premature despair; for, as of now, we are not despairing. Let us conjecture upon Utopian themes for a few; as an exercise.”

“As with your sister; I cannot refuse you. I do not discriminate against Lydia. I took off in the wrong direction, Lydia.”

“Mr. D. I am not uninterested in your fatalistic thought. I feel a streak of that kind of thought in myself. Perhaps a natural enough apprehensiveness, and caution within me. But I am willing enough to go along with Theresa’s suggestion.

“Perhaps Tess could lead us in this discussion.”

“Fair enough.” Responds Theresa.

“Hmn, where to begin, where to begin? Will the reader be able to bear with us?”

“I suppose we could begin safely with something that resembles the auspices under which our own form of government was conceived. Our forefathers wanted freedom from something that they thought demanded too much of them. They conceived of a form of self-government that observed the tenets of a democracy.

“Several adjustments have occurred over the years, many of these with the consent of the governed, and many not with that consent. Government has instituted prerogatives for itself that it denies to the people, many times covertly, using several pretexts. Not everybody has been happy with the legislative process.

“We have seen a successful beginning yield to a gradual erosion, into something that now does not resemble the beginning. We imagine our documents assure for some constancy of guidance and a framework of decency. While some of this is effected, there have been some wild excursions in actuality. Take prohibition for example, or the equal rights amendment, or the abortion issue, or if you can truly imagine it, 'creationism' and/or, prayer in the schools; these are more than mere whims on part of 'we the people'; they are dire hard-line narrow-minded, almost fascist, excursions.

“How do we get that good something back?”

“Theresa, if I may say so again, in the negative, we cannot get it back. What we now have must run its course, exhaust itself. Then perhaps a chance exists for something different; more humane, once again.

“It will require a revolution, a sustained revolution. By the likes of the three of you, and many more like you, womanning, and manning the trenches and the ramparts.”

“What kind of revolt Mr. D.?” Catherine asks.

“Besides what it means to reconstitute a democracy, which is greatly in need, we need to reassess other things as well. We need to define what it means to be a human being. The revolt would necessarily come from the most disenfranchised segment of the population, but would also be augmented by those who knew enough about democracy, about your equity, fairness and justice, to support them; and perhaps to lead them. It would need to be a concerted effort, a sustained effort. Not a violent uprising of an angry mob.

“Maybe every single participant would perish in the ensuing confrontation. The army, the militia, the police would all be in there upholding the status quo, protecting property, protecting the fat cats; and the reeking stench of decay. Bloodshed has been the normal course of these affairs. Yours, and theirs. Perhaps without any gains.

“I don’t want to believe the walls need to come down, the whole edifice needs to be razed; but that is what I do believe. This assessment has absolutely nothing to do with terrorism, sedition, treason, socialism, communism; it has to do with what is right; or, let us say, what is wrong.

“I speak of the internal affairs of our state, the wrongs found therein. As I speak I may sound ‘socialistic’. So be it. I refuse to wear any label other than ‘humanitarian’; even that, advisedly, but without reservation. As I speak, I will also sound like an ‘environmentalist’, when I am concerned about everyone’s love for his home, the planet, his finite home, and the general feeling and reverence for all forms of life.

“What I say then, what is wrong, is the lack of emphasis in the recognition, and the addressing in absolute terms, and in terms of commitment, to our human needs, even as juxtaposed to animal needs. Our lack of emphasis in the perception of our home as a sacred place. We have failed our promise, and stand as the most hypocritical nation on this earth. We are founded and abased in greed. We are foundering, and faltering in our greed. It does nothing for us, and earns us the rebuke and derision of everyone, justly so. We find our great wealth squandered on petty things; baubles, trinkets, the bric-a-brac of a shoddy civilization, and a gaudy deadly arsenal to ensure it; while so so many are needy within our own borders, not even to think of the vast number beyond our borders. We are not an exemplary nation; we are a model of failure.

“We know these things; but righteously, selfishly, we will not be deprived of our just deserts, ‘our way of life’; we will not share, beyond some token amount; that is how we are made. We claim it as our right.

“Catherine and I have chewed over these things enough, and to the point where she becomes upset. She does not want to believe that things are so terrible. We cannot agree to disagree. But we leave off, because we love each other, a totally different part of the equation. It might be obvious why I might love her; but why does she love me? Is it because of my cynicism, my pessimism, is it because I am a good lover?”

“Mr. D., leave it alone. Stick to the issue. Although not as happy a subject as Theresa might have sought, you were doing fine without speculating on our relationship, which I might not mind discussing in another context.

“Yes! I do become upset; simply because I want to believe that it is possible for reason to tap some vital chord within man.

“We do not agree to disagree, simply because we want the other to agree. I’m still not sure what to do about this. I feel one of us will eventually succeed in persuading the other. It is more natural for me to succumb because I am the female, the submissive one, by training, and maybe by nature.”

“Kitty, I do not feel Mr. D. thinks that way.”

“Neither do I sis.”

“Its unlike Catherine to use the passive ploy. However, she has let herself in for a lot with me. As she herself has said, she is at the beginning of a road to somewhere. She had not encountered the almost deliberately obtuse until she met me; perhaps I am a challenge to her, a test case. Only she might know what it all means.

“Perhaps my take on reality is the sobering thing the flight of fancy needs to keep it from soaring too high, too fast. Perhaps I am a welcome check to grandiosity. As beautiful Catherine is a check to my overweening cynicism.”

As she began to rise to her feet, Catherine said, “I’ve got to get out of this sun”, moving into the shade to sit beneath and lean with her back resting against the trunk of the husky aged overhanging arbutus.

William rose to join her, lying upon the ground with his head upon her lap. Theresa rose to join them, lying also, boldly resting her head on William’s abdomen, facing her sister. Not to be left behind Lydia also lay down with her head resting on Theresa’s abdomen, facing away from Catherine.

“What a lovely bunch of coconuts” Catherine mused.

“I am honored, Theresa.” William offered.

“Your due, Mr. D.” Catherine followed.

“Certainly not after that awful monologue I delivered.”

“I wouldn’t be too sure about the awfulness. Something for us to ponder. It is true the ‘status quo’ is a huge monolithic dominating thing with which to deal; almost an immovable object. It would seem that only a coordinated revolt could have any effect. But even if we were to see it move, the tendency of man is to morph into another immovable object. ‘Vigilance’ seems to wane; acquiescing, taking things for granted, seems more natural. Even after terrorist things, man seems to lapse into a kind of dulled inattention; and ironically it seems he has cause to fear his own government more than the terrorists. Is he allowed to distinguish between them?”

Lydia followed with, “There is a lot of fear out there, and paranoia; Yes!, ironically it is not the terrorist that is feared; but fear of the power and indiscretion of government, the super patriots; and paranoia concerning one’s neighbors. 1984 come full circle; the troops are restive beneath the banner. It seems not an opportune time for revolt.”

“That supports my argument for letting things run their course. Which is the lesser of the two evils? The active or the passive? Revolt, or let things run their course?”

“Are we into an either/or situation?” asks Theresa. “Is there no third alternative?”

“You mean like the ‘passive aggression? The Mahatma Ghandi thing, the Martin Luther King thing?”

“Maybe something like that.”

“What about Lydia’s suspicions about timing? Are not protesters and dissenters, no matter how they conduct themselves, now met with very rough treatment? Our government is narrow minded, vindictive, and mean. They shoot from the hip. They are a dangerous entity. Do we test them, their limits? Are the enforcers human? Can they see beyond their sworn duty? Do we want to find out? Like Randy Weaver, John Singer, David Koresh?”

“There is another alternative; leave the country.”

“Like, come to Canada.”

“Sure, I could will this place to the three of you. Three beautiful very bright healthy wholesome girls would be an asset to any Country. You could lob shots over the wall, so to speak.”

“Is not Canada very vulnerable to a takeover?”

“Only if International Law loses all credibility.”

“But suppose Canada became a hiding place for all the dissenters, dissenters who did lob stuff across the border. Harboring ‘terrorists’; the ‘Leave Its’. If they have left, should they not leave it alone; and pour their constructive energies to their new country?”

“That would be better, of course. The best, actually, in the best of all possible worlds. However, many of them hide away, licking their wounds; maybe doing drugs.”

“What you suggest would work for us, assuming we want to work for the furtherance and betterment of human institutions; Canada has enjoyed a reputation as a ‘humanitarian’ state; maybe Canada would welcome us.”

“Initially they might welcome you for the reasons stated, not as escapist agitators, but possibly as people potentially requiring political asylum. I think Canada might welcome an infusion of brains. But I think she also would expect industrious hands. I don’t think she needs breeding stock. I don’t know how many humanitarians it could stomach, but if you did your thing now! Don’t wait.

“It takes time.”

Turning her head to face William, and glancing at Catherine, “That’s a big step, Mr. D.”, Theresa remarks.

Looking fondly at her, “Admittedly so, fair princess!”

“It all seems so dire.

“Where have we gone wrong? Am I so easily deceived by appearances? Are these deceptions the natural order of things? I mean does it follow that any attempt homo sapiens make order out of chaos is destined to reversion?”

“All those things we have been taught; all those assumptions we have been making. It can’t only be the ‘terrorists’; the seeds had to be planted before them. Fortuitous for those who want ultimate control. They want sheep, easily frightened, easily herded and controlled. Can this really be happening?”

“Yes!, unspeakably lovely child, it is so. On many levels.

“We have weathered some pretty stupid administrations, but there has always been the other side of the isle that had a voice. Now that voice is gone. It feels it must wave the flag, although what that flag represents is in tatters. God Bless America comes from both sides of the aisle.

“So stupid and petty is this administration that it wants to hang people who sully the rag. You know there is an ossification setting in, a hardening; a rigidification. An ugly obdurate thing.”

Catherine speaks, “Maybe the nominations for new Supremes will bring out the opposition again. Maybe the gambling casino will collapse, totally. Maybe a scandal will develop. We can hope the agenda will be frustrated by something unplanned that the enforcers cannot uphold. Somehow to avoid the damage that can be done in the remainder of their tenure. Maybe the review of the Patriot Act will get more people involved. Will the sun set on the

Patriot Act? Then maybe the attack on Social Security will lose steam.”

“It has been opined that the US, with its basic institutions, is able to withstand the likes of an occasional self-serving administration; even corrupt administration, or colossally stupid one. This one, however, along with these host of ills, has brought fascism into our lives for the first time.”

The author moderately apologizes for dealing in current events. He realizes he must be careful in dealing with them; for so soon what is current loses its meaning for all, but scholars, and political analysts. By the time this opus is published, if ever, new events will have overshadowed the olde.

“Did you hear what the author said? What does he know that we do not?”, asks Theresa.

“He cannot know.”, opines William.

Suddenly William became acutely aware of the ambience, the moment, the three young women and himself. Obviously he was dreaming. He did not caution himself concerning reality. Instead, emotions welled up in him, his eyes began to moisten, he could not hold back the tears. He turned his head aside, but soon Catherine’s fingers silently brushed beneath his eyes. This act caused even more emotion to overwhelm him; he began to shed even more tears. Catherine stroked his brow soothingly.

Noticing Catherine’s indulgence and William’s dampened face, Theresa inquired, “Is something wrong?”

“I’m sorry Theresa, there are times when the reality of a situation simply gets to me.

“I’m moved in this gathering, by this gathering, as I was moved by Catherine when she first spoke to me.

“I’m inclined to think of myself as dreaming; nothing even remotely resembling this experience has ever happened to me; and probably to few others.

“It would seem I have succumbed to the author’s persuasions.”

Catherine Weathering The Storms

At the end of summer Catherine returned once again to her studies. It was a sad parting, but one full of reassurances of love, and promises of visits at convenient times. The summer had been good. They had begun to learn how to relax in each other’s company, away from the immediacy of the prying world; although, by the end of the summer, the people on the island were

occasionally abuzz with the novel relationship of the 'old geezur' and the nymph. Some nymph, Catherine, with a brain, and with sensitivity, not easily dismissed as some casual thing upon this planet, lol, upon the island.

Catherine was very careful concerning the intervals between their sexual encounters. She wanted to enjoy her own sexuality, to share her deepest feelings, and passions, but realized she must always respect his capacities as a desirous, caring, and fully involved lover. There were times she felt she ought steer William away from too much sexuality, somewhat complicated because she realized he did possess a great desire for her, but could sense some relief in him, perhaps, when she nimbly avoided arousing him too often. She had to be careful not to arouse something in herself that would leave her restless, and unresolved. Mostly she did not want anything that happened or did not happen in the bed to jeopardize their relationship, to weigh upon them. She encouraged complete openness in discussing all aspects of their most intimate physical relationship.

Perhaps to William it was with mixed emotions he watched her departure, with sensations of both loss and relief.

Once again, she secreted a letter where she knew he would find it. She had tucked it in the oatmeal bag. He did not find it for two days because, as was his habit, he was using the remainder of the milk with packaged cereal for the first of those days after her departure. But finding it as he had on the third day, a timely find indeed. The letter was so full of Catherine, so full of love, of yearning, of reassurance, actually a declaration of betrothal. Ever thoughtful, ever giving, ever loving, Catherine. William began to feel such shame for doubting any aspect of this wonderful person. Ambivalently, also a great relief; such fondness, such fondness.

Catherine had come to visit him in the second month of her new school year, again only for a weekend. While it was a wonderful visit, it was all too short, awakening in both of them such longing after her departure, she beginning to wonder if it was wise to attempt these visits. The decision for the Thanksgiving holiday had already been made to visit her family, a visit that promised to be traumatic, but one which Catherine felt obliged to make. Her father, suspecting where and why the girls had traveled during the past summer, had recently inquired of her sister Theresa if she had known about Catherine's love affair. Theresa was taken by surprise, and realized she could answer with only the truth. While she and her father were discussing the relationship, her mother overheard part of the conversation, deducing the import of their words. She listened with more interest, thus confirming her first suspicions and apprehensions. With such shock and anger at

learning of the relationship, of having been excluded, and subjected to this conspiracy of secrecy, she burst in upon them with, "What is the meaning of this?"

Theresa was only somewhat prepared for what she might have anticipated when her mother was eventually bound to learn, fielded the question. "Mother, I am sorry you have had to learn of something this way. It was Catherine's to tell you. I could not. Father had asked me if I knew anything of Kate's love life. It was a direct question to which I felt I could not offer denial."

Catherine's mother exploded, "And me, was I ever to be told."

"Mother, you had not asked any questions of me."

"Smart, are you not. Do I deserve betrayal in this matter?"

The father answered the question. "Not your daughter, do not accuse your daughter of such impropriety."

"AH! The league of you; I suppose Lydia knows as well."

"Yes! mother, she knows."

"Utter betrayal."

When Catherine learned of the episode, she knew it was her duty to go home for what promised to be the 'confrontation'. She needed to relieve her father and her sisters from any culpability. Theresa had called her to tell her that she lied to her mother about her father's knowledge of William, saying that he had learned of it through her. It would be grim time for her, as she suspected the depth of her mother's wrath.

The summer with William had clarified and solidified their relationship; she felt secure in her feelings, and in William's feelings; in their 'betrothal'.

It would be a difficult, perhaps permanently damaging, time with her mother, but she felt strong and basically unassailable. Her whole emphasis would be on getting her sisters and her father out of 'hot water', and taking upon herself the wrath of her mother which, for herself, she could not hope to appease.

She had informed William of the developments. He had offered to travel with her, but she adamantly refused, claiming her mother's vituperation would only be doubly aggravated by the appearance of the 'villain'. She reassured him of her feelings and her love, telling him it was something she will endure, then it will be over. Perhaps four days of hell, but hopefully her sisters and her father would come out of it, 'unscathed', as they say. Catherine would become the culprit, if at all possible, and even William would be spared, though hated. Not by her sisters, she knew already. She had already seen the expression on her father's face, when she had informed him. The initial shock was of disappointment, followed by dismay, then love for his child, a paternal gesture of affection no matter what; all in a rather flash of the moment. But she was

confident her father would defend her against any unfair judgments.

She knew her mother would try to engineer a family council to sit in judgment upon her. But she felt confident, as developed in the Toni Smith kafuffle, that the purpose of the council would fail.

As it happened, the council did fail, leaving her mother in a very deeply wounded state, which could not be alleviated while she was there. However, both her sisters and her father reassured Catherine of their undying love, and support, and trust in her judgment. Her father thought it would come out alright; and that he appreciated Theresa's quick thinking in the matter; that was an important moment. Her father reassured her that he did not think less of her; and that he was equally proud of his daughters.

As soon as Catherine returned to the sorority, she called William with the news which she summarized as still unresolved for the family, but turned out mostly as expected. The concern was her mother's recovery from the humiliation, with which she had burdened Theresa and her father. If any two could revive her, it would be them. Both seemed to have an infinite capacity for patience. They would need to be careful only about seemingly patronizing her, especially seeming to be in league patronizing her. She also reassured William that nothing had changed between them, that soon enough the Xmas holidays would be upon them and that she planned to spend some portion of that time with him, but perhaps the time before, Xmas eve, Xmas day, and the day after, with her family, after which time she would make for the island. She needed to return to the University by the 4th of January.

By Christmas time her mother had recovered somewhat, but still very hurt and angry; she tried to suppress her anger, realizing it only made things worse. She knew she could not reap a pound of her daughter's flesh, even if she tried. Such a strong determined girl, so formidable with her sisters in the background.

On the day after Xmas, she and Catherine talked. She confessed to her daughter that she had already quizzed Theresa and Lydia about William, a fact of which Catherine had been informed by her sisters. The discussion was tense, but amicable. The mother wanted her daughter to know how she felt, as much about the family secrecy in the matter, as the facts concerning the relationship between Catherine and this man. Catherine was sorry to have involved her sisters in a conspiracy of silence; but she assumed entirely the blame for that happening. But she did not in any way yield to her mother's dissatisfaction with her choice of liaisons. She held her ground, preferring not to discuss William in his absence. She trusted that her sisters spoke frankly concerning

William, and that they were true to their previous assurances of withholding judgment, and that they spoke positively concerning William. They parted, at least having spoken to each other civilly, however estranged for the now.

When Catherine appeared on the 28th of December they would have six days together in the winter dark, with the woodstoves crackling, some hibernation time ahead.

It was a happy time for them, touching base, reassurances all around; even some heavy discussions, somehow unavoidable when these two came together, their intellectual ferment demanding its audience, its hearing. Its airing?

Time doesn't necessarily heal all wounds, and if it perchance should, the scars still remain. Mother and daughter did not come to a happy resolution of their differences. Mother and the other two daughters, particularly with Theresa, things went well enough, that sweet child having proved herself to love her mother enough to endure all her fretful doubts and bouts of rage at betrayal. Lydia, the cool one, comforting her mother with admissions of having left her out of something that was of obvious concern to her. Lydia didn't want to reveal her own doubts about her older sister's choices, but let her mother know that time would sort it all out, and that Catherine would have to be the best judge of her situation, that it was not hers, that is, Lydia's prerogative to interfere with what might be her assessments of such a relationship, one she could not envision for herself. The father escaped any direct connection to a conspiracy, managing to stay in the good graces of his spouse.

Catherine and William spent time with each other on the island twice more that year, before her graduation. He did not attend her graduation since he knew her mother would be there. Theresa also graduated from high school, her next year to begin college, away from home. The house would be empty. With a only somewhat distraught mother, and burdened father.

Catherine spent the summer after graduation with William on the island, again with a visit from her sisters who were now becoming comfortable with, and tolerant of, Catherine and William. Catherine had been accepted at Stanford for her advanced studies in the Humanities and Creative Writing, and she planned to leave at the end of the summer to attend. She would now be further away, entering a new scholastic life in a new scholastic environment. She would be meeting some of the best minds in the

country, and/or the world, perhaps another welcome challenge to her burgeoning, exploding, intellect.

Plying The Seas Of Palo Alto A Triangulation Shipping Water

Catherine became even more serious in her studies, almost monastically. Her only indulgence was her long e-mails and occasional phone calls to William. Even her sisters had slipped from her mind temporarily, until they reminded her of her neglect, and, with remorse, she would reply. She visited William for a week during the Xmas recess, this time a mostly trying visit for them. The length of time apart was telling on William, however much he might want to conceal that fact in order to spare her. Finally realizing this, Catherine apologized profusely, but without much consolation for William. She did her best to assuage his pain through her professions of love, and desire for him which continued unabated. She suggested he come to Palo Alto for some part of the spring, a notion he had begun to seriously consider. She had fully intended to spend the summer again on the island.

As soon as Catherine had departed, William composed an e-mail for her to be found when she arrived at Palo Alto.

Dearest Heart:

I know not from whence thou camest, or wither thou goest.

You arrived one day; we held hands; then we parted.

Again we found each other, only to go our separate ways. It seems we continue thus.

Upon each going away, a great hollowness sets in where you have dwelled, a place which feels completely forsaken.

But I feel you have hidden something somewhere for me to find, so that I will remember you, that will call forth your soothing espousals of love.

But I have searched and searched without avail; there is none of you here; not even a fragrance. There is no movement of aught that suggests your presence.

I am bereft.

That I should love the phantom of you that lives within me, as I try to envision your substance, wanting to capture you long enough to fall under your spell into a deep swoon.

*How I love thee, How I love thee. Pine I do, and languish as well.
I ask you to imagine me thus, so ensnared and entwined, bound by
you.*

*I know soon I must leave this place that knows no respite from
the longing. I soon must speed to your den, that you may assuage
the hunger that besets me.*

*As much as you have professed your love, everyday seems to cry
out for a reaffirmation of something I cannot assume, but must know
through the telling afresh. I need to hear your voice telling over and
over; and over.*

William glumly pondered their long times apart. He tried to project some kind of perspective by comparing their perception of time/absence to what might have occurred only a couple hundred years earlier. Where in the home country, perhaps England, a young man, newly betrothed, would depart into the 'new' world to seek his fortune. The gaps between their communications would often be in months; telling of their love and their missing of one another upon one day, the message of those dire moments read three months later. To remain loyal and faithful for years although they had not seen each other throughout that duration; the fortune long in coming, finally to be rejoined and wed in that remote place.

William did indeed go to Palo Alto for a month, but did not see as much of Catherine as he had anticipated, so absorbed in her studies and seminars. Also she had found a new friend, a graduate student in literature, in whose company she could often be found before William's arrival, which she had encouraged, and still claimed to desire.

When Catherine informed William of her new 'friend', she also tried to reassure him that it was not a touchy feely friendship. Of course, the thought of it caused pangs of doubt in William, even though he was in no position to object. It had been an expectation of his. He had wanted to leave, that is, to leave the field open for the new friendship to mature, to sort itself out, but Catherine, ever herself, was not about to hurt William by seeing him leave under such circumstances. She would stop all activity until she had reassured him of her loyalty and her continuing love. She introduced her new 'friend' to William, whom he thought a credible person, a serious and ardent student, who had few friends of his own, obviously greatly taken with Catherine. She had informed her new 'friend' of the nature of her relationship to William, which he seemed to accept with only some equanimity. Perhaps with more equanimity than William was able to accept of him in turn.

A sticky situation for Catherine, but one she felt was not out of hand, and not without expectation. She enjoyed her new 'friend', his fund of information, the quickness and perceptiveness of his mind, and its mostly unprejudiced nature. He too was searching for the same things as both William and she. He was a tall attractive fellow, not at all athletic, almost effete in his manner. But a male for all that, probably full of desire for this beautiful young woman. A bad situation for all concerned; that inevitable 'triangle' shaping into something we all might avoid.

Catherine remained hopeful she could have both, although she sensed there was potential for trouble.

Then she suddenly dove into her studies, avoiding them both. William suspected her deepening involvement with 'friend' while 'friend' was losing sleep over William.

William decided to return to the island, when, before leaving, Catherine called to apologize for her absence. He informed Catherine of his intent, that he was, literally speaking, on his way out the door. She pleaded with him not to leave without seeing her. He granted her wish. She came to see him, feeling her own pangs, of guilt. She confessed to avoiding both William and her 'friend' because it was all getting sticky. That she sensed his feelings in the matter, felt she had handled this happening very indiscreetly. That she did not in any way want to give him cause for concern, that it would greatly trouble her if she had caused him any pain. William was convinced of the sincerity of her words. She asked for his trust. She would emphasize to her 'friend' that hers and William's relationship was solid, in a betrothal state. However, at the same time she did want to continue with the new friendship.

William had been in this situation before. Catherine knew it was difficult for him, and noble, not to become openly jealous, and demanding, possessive of her. She knew of the girl long ago who had strung him along, he knew of his wife's statement about parting with the knowledge that she had at least given herself to him. She didn't want these seeming transparencies to apply to herself. It would not be fair. If she had any feelings for this new 'friend', best she out with them. But she did not feel it was so; she asked for trust. William did leave the next day, only moderately reassured. She had thanked him for coming, that it meant a great deal to her, even though she was remiss in her response. She did as always; immediately, while he was in transit; she had written a long e-mail full of her professions of love and a new ingredient, loyalty, and awareness of his potential for hurt. She assured him that she was as anxious for the summer to come once again for their time by the water.

Catherine continued with her e-mails and increased the number of phone calls. She told him she was still seeing her 'friend', that her 'friend' was beginning to make known his romantic feelings toward her, which she had to thwart the best way she could, by reminding him of her stated and ongoing relationship to William. Now she would be welcoming the summer away from Palo Alto. Life seemed complicated. 'Things' became even more complicated when her 'friend' attempted more boldly, and more frequently, to press his feelings upon her. She sensed he was suddenly beginning to get desperate. Catherine also suddenly realized she had a problem on her hands, one which left her with a feeling of ambivalence. In her honest assessment, she had surmised, ordinarily, she might not have been so adamantly put off by his advances. But her loyalty to William was sacred. She would not violate that trust. Never!, she told her self, that much was clear. She told her 'friend' of her resolve in the matter. He had turned into a wounded animal, seeking some kind of pity for his unrequited feelings. She told him she had not had many relationships with the opposite sex, that William was her first and only serious relationship. She regretted having allowed herself to be put in a position of actually being the cause of someone else's hurt. That 'fatefully inevitable' once again. She was learning the greater implications of this philosophical revelation. Her 'friend' did not take her declarations very well. To Catherine, it seemed hopeless, but fortunately summer was close by, and she began to ache for William's arms, and his less pressing agenda.

It had been a good first year of graduate studies. The ferment it stirred would last her for some time. She had written a great deal experimentally, and was pleased with the results. Oddly this urge to experiment was mostly attributable to William who had urged all devices known and unknown, to reveal her thoughts and feelings; and to probe the depths. Her teacher, himself an accomplished author, novelist, mostly formal, with his background of solid performance, responded to her work with enthusiasm, and encouragement, with only minor criticisms. He realized her blossoming potential, feeling, to give her head was the best at this point in her development. He found her manner of expression, her manner of inquiry most stimulating. The continuity of her theme, and development was mostly flawless. Her best form, the essay, her method, the dialectic, toward the goal of expressing her deeply felt humanity, and deep regard for the truth. But throughout, a great self-control, but with leaps of imagination, and free association to somehow throw off the too pat display of words, to announce their credulity as a legitimate means of communicating

the truth. Nice technique, he thought. Secretly she thought of William, perhaps her real mentor.

Yes!, she had shown two of her 'essays' to her 'friend', who was also impressed; impressed that a girl could write with such depth and perspicacity. But he was willing to believe anything about her by that time, whereas in the beginning he might have been more inclined to be critical; or pedantically knowledgeable. But, toward the end of the school year, all of his knowledge, his crowning achievement, appeared to have disserved him. He felt it was all for naught.

Catherine knew she must end the 'friendship' as it had evolved. She must do the honorable thing as tactfully as possible. She told him where she would be spending the summer, and with whom. She requested that if he and she returned in the fall, that she would prefer that he did not trouble her with his assuming presence; that if they were ever to have any future interaction that he would need to change his attitude toward, and his approach to, her. If he could not abide her wishes in that regard, there could be no interaction. These were painful things to say, and to hear.

Catherine wanted very much to return to the island. To touch base, to reaffirm something. It was a heady year, somewhat removed from her inner feelings, although as she wrote, she was always consulting her interiority. She needed to regroup, test herself with William once again, hoping he would be patient with her, and that he would not suspect her of something untoward. Before leaving she sent him a last e-mail, warning him that she was much in need of a calming perspective, which had nothing to do with a troubled love life. That she was anxiously looking forward to his arms.

Together Upon The Island Again *The Student Quickly Setting Sail*

Upon her return to the island, Catherine was brimming over with joy for the first while; forgetting, and setting aside all else but her contentment, reveling in her feelings of love; all warmly glowing within. William, too was noticeably silent, feeling little urge to expound on any part of the world. There was only Catherine sitting or lying nearby; his eyes feasting upon her wonder. Life is as it should be, for this while.

Those who would detract were too far away to be heard.

Catherine was not at rest for long before she wanted to engage William in some discussion regarding an assignment she had undertaken at the University.

“Mr. D., I was given a tough subject this past winter, one which I feel required a lot more than I had been able to give it; more study, and perhaps more understanding, also a subject in which I have little interest. There is so much we take for granted, even after we have enrolled in Home Ec. or Personal Finance. The subject, as it turned out was Capitalism, vis-à-vis Economics, or the Science of Economics, vis-à-vis the Creation of, and Distribution of Wealth. The study, it turns out, is not something one undertakes in isolation. Political systems also required study in order to understand how human beings are to interact without exploiting and dominating each other through the manipulation of capital. It all became very involved.

‘Neither a borrower or lender be’.

“As always, we are dealing with assumptions. Capitalism, per se, in our minds, has usually been associated with modern Western Democracies; but now not necessarily associated with democratic governments; and not so recently as we might imagine. The ‘profit incentive’ has been with us a long time. “Profit’ is the key word. Capitalism does not concern itself with ‘barter’ for example. One cannot assume that Capitalism, per se, is an inherently democratic practice. Capitalism, per se, can easily be described as a system that thrives on opportunity, quite independently, without any inherent responsibility or reciprocity within the political system in which it operates. The capitalistic system is intended to serve those who were there first, and who get there first. It begins with land, and exploitable resources.

“Capitalism includes a whole gamut of enterprises from Corporate, or State-Owned, essentially monopolistic, Systems, (including ‘Agribusiness’), Banking Systems, Stock Market Investment Systems, Currency Trading, ‘Futures’ trading (and manipulations) to Gambling, Loan Sharking, and ‘Organized Crime’; as well as Taxation, Social Security, Pensions, and ‘Nest Egging’; and opportunistic thinking along so many different pathways. These have become the hallmarks of our ‘western’ economic activity. ‘Supply and Demand’, Market Forces, as well as a plethora of terms that bring torment to the average citizen; terms like Inflation, Chronic Inflation, Interest Rates, Economic Down Turn, Chronic Unemployment; Foreclosure, Bankruptcy; and Pyramid Schemes, Insider Trading, Margins; Speculation; Profit and Loss, ‘whatever the market will bear’, ‘the low end of the

market', all operating under the guise of Adam Smith's economic liberalism; all falling under the umbrella of 'Capitalism'.

"Underneath all of this entrepreneurial and opportunistic activity, this flow and manipulation of capital, for profit, that is, purportedly exists a 'Science' of Economics; and Schools that specialize in Business Administration, and that amorphous discipline of Political Science, vis-à-vis, the art of lobbying for vested interests.

"Sounds almost dull."

"Before you say anything, allow me a few more words.

"As I was trying to ordinate all the information along with the assumptions regarding it, I suddenly had a 'revelation' that the 'Science' of Economics appeared as the Theoretical School of 'Making Something Out Of Nothing'. That the 'Science' of Economics, per se, could not exist without a system of incentives for profit making. Imagine for example, a Science of Bartering as its replacement. Or a System of Equities, or Fair Business Practices."

William made sign to speak, but Catherine raised her hand to signify silence.

"Allow me to finish, Mr. D.

"I came to the conclusion that all of our assumptions are inaccurate and misplaced. All of our assumptions regarding the linking of Capitalism and Democracy. It has been shown that in Dictatorships, Totalitarian regimes, heavily Bureaucratized regimes, such as certain Communistic regimes, Monarchies, Dictatorships, a system of gain and profiteering is easily instituted. All these systems, including the ones flourishing in Democracies, are dependent upon a seemingly vast repository of exploitable resources, and the 'utilization' of labor, on the backs of ones fellow man. As Leo Tolstoy observed in 'The Slavery Of Our Times', the emancipation of the slaves and the serfs resulted in another form of servitude. The incentive for profit, for making something out of nothing, with its monopolistic tendencies and policies, resulted in the Corporation, essentially the new monarch, becoming the new enslaver."

"Capitalism, per se, has had a long enduring history; Remember the Golden calf; and did not Jesus need to chase the money changers from the temple; the Church has become a fount of wealth anyway.

"Catherine, for someone who abhors the subject, I can see you have given it more than considerable thought. I think it calls into question our simpler precepts concerning how we perceive 'humanity'. If we view 'humanity' per se, as a vast repository of 'labor', we have opted for something crude, however functional;

and maybe, even essential. A system that works, however 'inhumanely'. Albeit 'we', not you and I, per se, but our look-alikes, have tried to invent a method of production of goods, mostly obsolescing consumables, as opposed to durable goods, in order to maximize profit, and to create a self-perpetuating scheme. The key to such a scheme is the achievement of gain; not the old perception that was used in the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, that of alleviating the toil of humanity. True to form, we have learned that man is still lacking in something, assumed to be altruistic.

"Perhaps the single most devastating 'scheme', as I am apt to perceive it, is the accretion of Agribusiness, where the production of food has become a monopolistic enterprise, often resulting in a 'vertical' empire, in complete control of the 'commodity'; that is, from the owning of the land, production of the seed, and the growing of the crop, to the packaging, distribution and marketing of the product, with all the inherent lack of choice in the method of production, often accomplished with fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, patented genetic engineering, brutalization of the soil, etc.; where ironically the expression 'organically grown' comes to us at the highest price. The object is gain; not the feeding of the masses, or the husbanding of the resource. The masses cannot feed themselves because they have been driven off the land, that is, through collusive practices in the marketing of produce, which force the small farmer into greater risk, slimmer operating margins, that a single crop failure, produces a negative result, the farmer making less than his outlays, resulting in foreclosures, or the averting of foreclosures by selling out to ready Agribusiness Gobblers. Collusion in the Market Place? 'Swindling' is another word for the practice. It is argued that 'Agribusiness' is more efficient at the movement of produce from the field to the market. While there may be some truth in this assessment, 'Agribusiness' would not exist if people were able to grow their own food, and raise their own animals at the subsistence level. 'Agribusiness' serves the great metropolitan maw, a ready-made hapless and helpless consumer; essentially a guaranteed market. 'Agribusiness' is given preferential treatment by banks, and by government, in the form of loans, of subsidies, soil banking, legislation favoring their practices, etc. But they have no obligation beyond the making of a profit."

"Mr. D., lets stick to the subject, that is, Capitalism. I know where you are headed; I can head in that direction as well. I want to concentrate on assessing the idea of 'making something out of nothing' as a proper human activity. How functional is it; is it a viable system of incentives, preferable to any other?"

“First of all, like you, I do quarrel with its basic premise. Capital as some kind of ‘seed money’ that will grow into a self-sustaining system of producing dividends, without any more than an investment, by an individual. of his excess capital, ‘venture capital’; purely for ‘gain’. Can this continue to function within any system of human cohesion that makes claim toward social legitimacy, social equity, that is, without any return to that system of equity?”

“We must ask what constitutes a socially acceptable legitimate economic system? Legitimate perhaps, but no less culpable in terms of what are its intentions. No less deserving of condemnation is the practice of collusion to create monopolies that control markets. The market is the other fellow, you and I.

“Currency trading only seems a legitimate enterprise. But the value placed in that currency is ruinous to the values assumed by the person who uses this as a medium of exchange. The value of his labor, the value of his goods are eroded by people who are buying and selling huge sums of money in fractions of seconds with the sole purpose of making something out of nothing, not to enhance the value of labor or goods, or even the currency itself. The ‘nothing’ becomes the trail head for the continued enforcement of poverty amongst the masses.

“The only hope for the masses in its long walk in search of the pot of gold, is the dole, welfare; and glory be, that great well of ‘charitable’ philanthropic activity fostered by tax writeoffs, and the grandiose impulse to put ones name in the limelight as a benefactor. A wasteland of negative opportunity.

“Oops!, Mr. D, getting off the subject again.

“What most disturbs me are the assumptions, and the promotion of the assumptions. That ‘capitalism’ is another name for democracy. That ‘capitalism’ equates with ‘our way of life’. That it is the best way because it is perceived as a system of incentives. Only one incentive, Mr. D., because there are other very important incentives that argue for a different system.

“You and I think, and feel, as human beings, assigning the highest meaning to that concept, in terms of social equity. At heart, as economists, if economists at all, we are socialists, but more importantly, people who ideally interact with our neighbors, trading skills and produce, mostly at the subsistence level; perhaps a narrow end in itself, but one involving only our labor, and our own abilities as resources. The land is a resource, and its trees are a resource for producing our shelter, even while stone and mud and straw also constitute a resource, also serving as place and home. Most importantly, it is the equitableness

contained within our precepts that dictate our assessment of what is.

“I recognize this may constitute a narrow end that does not pay the ‘taxes’ upon the land. Of course, we might imagine there ought not be taxes placed upon land. Perhaps land that stands idle as a speculative thing ought to be taxed, rather than soil-banked, but not a farm and a home. So we are forced into a practical decision, to prostitute some part of our selves to obtain some outside income; we form cooperatives to spread out and share the expenses, and that outside workload. We can also operate within a democracy without using profit or gain as an incentive; and without even making much of it as a humanistic democratic institution; we give it credence by operating within it.

“One of the narrower human institutions finds the collection of the indiscriminate tax more important than the ownership of the land. You own, you pay; you no pay, you no own land. Kind of primitive, a way to fund Bureaucracy, or the State Apparatus, which, in the last analysis, becomes a vested interest, more important than that which it serves. I should add, emphatically, that taxing subsistence level farming is criminal.

“Inherent to the ‘capitalistic’ system is the inevitable undermining of value of labor, and the medium of exchange. For all that is made out of nothing, the nothing has to come from somewhere, in the form of interest payments, in the form of dividends, and profit found in the ‘whatever-the-market-will-bear’ scheme of things (real value is inflated). Interest payments unavoidably inflate the value of the medium of exchange. Dividends fatten the coffers of the investors, on the back of labor, and result in the inflated sale price of commodities. None of this ‘fattening’ is passed on to labor. Labor is held to the lowest form of economic return, without any share in the system. Somebody has to pay for the gains, the making of something out of nothing.

“I want to examine ‘our way of life’ in other contexts, in light of other world problems; how much we may be exacerbating those problems by being what we are.

“We do not stay home; we venture afar both in search of raw materials, cheap labor, and markets. We gad about in baubles and finery while so many others languish in poverty in urban hellholes; perhaps our own included. We know these conditions for what they are; it doesn’t require much imagination to visualize the consequences of them. Large, vulnerable, captive, dependant populations being exploited by those who operate and control the market place. I see my fellow man in heap, as you have so aptly described them, without identity, without purpose, without

exposure to common human decency. A (Uriah) Heap It Is, rife with all the physical, psychical and social illnesses imaginable.

“In my mind I am challenged to imagine or devise another system, more idealistic, and all encompassing than Adam Smith’s, with different kinds of incentives, ones which are more humane, not so competitive, no holds barred man against man, albeit enslaved to ‘our way of life’. Some have characterized this as ‘getting off the grid’. A different way of life; one which chooses to do battle with the ‘capitalistic’ incentive, or Corporate incentive. By their very nature, these latter incentives require all the bodies they can get to maximize the opportunities for profit; even pennies add up. A group of individuals developing a self-sustaining system to serve their own needs is anathema to a more encamped status quo, call it what you will.”

“There it is again Catherine, ‘it is ours to do with’. But we must wrest a piece of the action from the big boys. Then it will be ours to do with, perhaps as a cooperative, a cooperative of like minds and like spirits, fully aware of the choice and its full meaning. There would be no other assumptions than doing our best within a system of equities. During the earlier ‘hippie’ days, several coops were formed, but many of them failed for the lack of commitment, or from internal conflicts, and perhaps from the over use of debilitating drugs.

“But still, perhaps the better choice (without the drug culture); not an impractical choice, with an added dividend, the immeasurable return in human currency.”

“Very nicely put Mr. D.

“I assume the system of equities includes all those human practices we have idealized throughout the centuries, but have rarely implemented.”

“To achieve what we are describing, on a very large scale; would it function, a bunch of cooperatives, perhaps almost tribal in nature. How much tolerance between cooperatives, and how much cooperation between cooperatives? How much competition for land and other resources? Would this lead to the same old human embroilments?

“Several things would have to happen simultaneously? One, be prepared for a standoff with entrenched vested interests, a standoff that that might last forever, and forever transform the status quo into the unpredictable, unknown, and unforeseen. Two, the world would need to be stopped in its tracks; all motion cease, all activity. Three, all economic activity following the stoppage would cease, implemented by a massive boycott, the cessation of the utilization of the medium of exchange for any goods circulating in

the market place. Fourth, live on an empty stomach for several days, weeks, months, or years. Fifth; Reduce number below Zero Population, Globally.

“A naïve proposition? The police, the militia, the army would be called out in huge numbers to force the masses to empty their pockets in the market place, to keep 'growing' and 'jump-starting' the economy; to 'stimulate' the economy, and if that failed, to simply remove their wherewithal in the form of currency, valuables, securities, chattel, and lands, turning them into slaves without any rights, freedoms, or rewards, whatsoever, and be bred as laboring consumerist cattle.

“Better off with Capitalism?”

“I suppose there is intended an obvious answer to that question. Remember, Mr. D., we are on the same side. Don't taunt me with the ridiculous. I see no room for levity in this discussion. While I was attempting to analyze the whole set of assumptions with which I was expected to deal, it became very clear that something was missing; the lack of social planning involved in our whole enterprise. Only the climate of excess has made possible what exists today.

“I struggled very hard with myself to limit my desire to change the emphasis to something more to my liking. 'Profit making', it goes without saying, is a very limited objective. It is, however, an objective that has become enshrined in our legislatures, easily lobbied, and influenced by what we have identified as 'vested interests'. The manufacturing industry, corporate entities, seek exceptions, and, often worded as 'risk benefits', and other exemptions, or delays in environmental compliance, or help through bankruptcy proceedings, where they can be absolved of certain social obligations like pensions, and write-offs for capital expenditures, and environmental cleanups. The 'health' industry wants to maximize its return on investment without the intervention of government; the drug companies follow suit, the medical practitioners follow suit; while insurance companies lobby against legislation. The dealers in armaments promote militarism, the consumable non-replaceable resource barons for depletion allowances, the agribusiness for soil banks, subsidies; government bailouts of certain 'essential', usually military, industries, as well as government insured saving and loans fiascos. A self aggrandizing and self-perpetuating system of profit making; bottom line, plus a sinister ingredient about which we know little, involving corruption. Adam Smith might be horrified at the footsy relationship of business with government; then again he might think it a novel approach to happiness. The government

intervention is all one-sided, so there is actually a smaller proportion of the happy. Something doesn't Addup, Mr. Smith

"The apparent collusion between government and corporate interests, in itself, dismays me. Even more dismaying is the unconcern shown for the average citizen, the plebe, the demos, the easily duped, and exploited, who is denied his basic humanity as a matter of course, as a purposeful design flaw, with a deadly result: Consumerism!. An unconcern that willingly and brazenly flaunts a credo, 'God Helps Those Who Help Themselves'. The Private Sector, Trickle Down. That is social planning at its lowest level, invoking God to boot.

"Like a loop of pre-recorded tape droning away? Yes! to me they are the most vital concerns for me. Mr. D., what am I missing?"

"Catherine, I cannot escape the interjection of some of my pessimistic assessment. I have unwisely believed in something that is fraught with peril, peril to my own feeling of equanimity. That something is mankind; my fellow human being; inclusively you, although you restore some of that belief. You are fraught with peril?

"Man will very often assent to 'pie in the sky', as one might characterize his response to ideals. I will narrow this down to his choices regarding living space. We all desire a magical view looking out from our 'picture window'. We want pretty surroundings, without noise, without distraction. We want all the services that will make our lives easy and comfortable. We want privacy. We want friendly, compatible neighbors, if any neighbors at all. All in the best of all possible worlds, however naïve. We want to be able to pay for these things that have origin both in our desires and in our externally whetted appetites.

"In order for all of this to work for all, we, all of us, of us Western American dreamers, and wanters, have to find common ground. We can agree to a set of ideals tacitly, or we can create covenants amongst ourselves that cannot be changed without common consent. That is precisely what we pretend to do. That's people living together in harmony. Until the monkey wrench comes along. There is an individual or there are individuals who do not like covenants, i.e. rules and regulations controlling the size and shape of his or their house, yard, what he does on his land, the amount of noise he makes, and so on. Can we exclude them from our tidy little community? We can try.

"One of the things that surfaces everywhere in all human interactions is the amount of space an individual feels he needs in order to feel comfortable. It isn't the same for everyone, but once a person feels space around himself, and sees an open vista before

him, he soon realizes that's where its at. Many of us get together to try to decide upon an optimum space for ourselves; we set limits to the numbers that can occupy a certain amount of space. We create enforceable ordinances to assure our common consent to this ideal. Of course the whole proposition comes with a price tag; and is not at all assured for everyone. There are too many people for all to set atop the hill, or by the ocean, surrounded by a forest with a beautiful vista unfolding before us. But as idealistic humans we can try to include everyone. What is our entitlement? Must we determine that ourselves, wresting it from the other?

"I have found myself being a neighborhood leader that dealt precisely with these goals, drafting proposal after proposal in order to find that common ground. I was not alone in this, there were several others who felt as I did, so it seemed feasible to be doing what we were doing in developing what we called a Comprehensive Growth Plan for our locale. It was not 'pie in the sky', unless you consider anything that humans do to assure for quality of life as 'pie in the sky'. We were only a locale within a framework of the larger community that had its own objectives. These had to be reconciled with our own. They were not reconcilable; so we had to fight for our own uniqueness. The pressure to conform to the objectives of the larger community were constantly at our doorsteps. One individual, who was a planner for the larger community was sympathetic to our yearning for the expression of our own individuality, warned us we would have to be 'eternally vigilant'; just like the early pioneers.. As it turned out, the forces that had originally given consent to the 'pie in the sky' began to erode from inside, as much or more than from the outside. The erosion from inside made the neighborhood vulnerable to the outside. Self-interest was the primary cause of the erosion. Once the fabric began to unravel, there wasn't any way to stop it from unraveling further. I withdrew from the leadership role, disillusioned, and bitter. I could not understand the failure in any terms that made sense to me. Self-interest had claimed the day.

"That was there in another time. Then I came here to this island to find 'pie in the sky' again, very much in favor. Again I was warned, but this time, if I wanted to enjoy 'paradise' not to become involved in local politics. Yes! words of wisdom that went unheeded. Once again I learned that self-interest took precedence over common interest. The erosion was at work again. Yes! again I fought to preserve pie in the sky against the forces that sought to devour the pie.

"Two such experiences do not make the case for pessimism. Added to those are the ones constantly falling upon our ears from the larger community of man; dealing with far greater perils, that

threaten our very existence. Again, self interest, 'national interest', some other interest than the 'common interest' takes precedence. What is the 'common interest'? We seem unable to prevent the erosion of something we all profess to cherish. Some will identify this phenomenon as 'human nature', and what we are commonly referring as the 'fatefully inevitable'.

"It is not my nature; or is it. Is my zeal to preserve and protect 'pie in the sky' not an unrealistic thing when there are so many people trying to find a place, and a way to make a living, where 'pie in the sky' is only the next meal?"

"Mr. D., your experience may warrant pessimism, but my feeling is that you are flawed in some way. You know man for what he is, but you still maintain high expectations from something you know to be ambivalent, treacherous, self-serving. Perhaps you are different from your antagonist, but that's where it ends. You do find others like yourself; that should allay some of your pessimism. Mr. D., there is me, my sisters. Perhaps we will yet give cause for optimism."

"Catherine, my pessimism sees you being led to the slaughter amidst the host of self-serving."

"It would seem so, Mr. D., but I am not ready for the garret; I must use these wings. If I cede to those who would be what they are, I will have not done as I am bid, for which I shall forever suffer with regret. We are doomed Mr. D., that my sweet, is 'fatefully inevitable'.

"But mistake me not, I will hold something in reserve; yes!, perhaps selfishly, because it is not entirely by giving ourselves to the last breath that we will accomplish that something; but also by the way we lead our own life; for which we must hold something in reserve. Yes! I am selfish about that. Call it self-preservation, if you will. Maybe I will not succeed in either enterprise. I hope at the end of the road that I will have felt I did my part, without bitterness; having had no other expectations than what I had of myself."

"You are one of the nobler beasts, Catherine. May you come to no harm. I wish that I might be around to counsel you, to protect you, and even to see you perform in the arena, all the while, with my heart in my throat."

"Lets not talk of that. You are here now, and that much I cherish; with your heart where it belongs."

The Author Is Wondering How

Is this the time and place where the reader leaps ahead to the ending, impatient, with words upon words? If so, the author apologizes at this juncture, he envisions no ending.

Shall we discuss options for an ending to this improbable tale; or shall we do a fade out with these two jabbering on into the sunset, followed by some of Horiuchi's cohorts, making sure they leave the planet.

The author had thought disappearing into the sunset idea was somewhat corny and unrealistic, however commonly resurrected as a terminal sequence. It was, however, a way to leave the audience, the reader, frowning with a feeling of irresolution. The whole denouement calls for something more; like a final judgment, or a sudden death. Because, despite all their yammer and assent to ideals, and common something or others, these two could never be allowed to trundle off as anything exemplary, or much less, as a tolerable union, even though fulfilling the legal description. Because it couldn't be so; and the audience could not be fooled into accepting any part of it. So the author might have them die in a plane crash, an automobile accident, or in some improbable explosion. Or William could simply expire from natural causes, having put in his time. Catherine might continue on into the sunset alone, but with child. Or she might so fade out with a sister on each arm. All three destined for some good thing. The three graces; one pregnant.

Or William and Catherine might continue with the improbables as they had begun, leaving the reader ticked off that such a perpetration ever got into print. The author thought the whole enterprise might be left as a 'write your own ending' proposition.

In the wings it could be heard, 'What if his wife should return to make a claim?' Now, there's a kink.

Realizing that most readers might have put the scrambled thing down many pages before in 'utter disgust', or worse yet, boredom, he felt it didn't matter how it ended.

Most readers would be antagonized by all the declamations against the inhuman human race, which of course included them, they would have thrown the book into the hopper. To be remaindered. Just desserts! Take That! Should call Horiuchi.

But No!, all cop outs. The author must proceed with an attempt at a consistently incredible performance, so that he can be roundly criticized in great detail, to make certain he had met his justifiable, and well earned, and well deserved, rejection, and

guaranteed consignment into oblivion. At least the author will not be thought a homosexual.

In the Number One Bestseller (1968; same year as Leggy Lemming won the Grenoble Gold, and when Texago seduced her under the five rings), Alfred A Knopf publishing, later a Fawcett Crest Book, selling for a buck twenty-five, it appeared thus that the Yahoos settled down in Laxingtown, where gradually they had been accepted like any other couple. Lets rumble! Absolutely wild ending. A paroxysm of formulated convention passed off as a triumph before death in the Great American Novel Tradition. $\Omega!$ He Upuked in the John. A reverse Laxative.

The author of the opus you are reading thought of asking each of the characters how they would like to see the work end. One could begin with Catherine's mother, which might shorten the whole episode, after a bout of apoplexy. It seems important for the two protagonists to speak.

William, for his part, already being the alter ego of the author, suspected his natural expiration would take care of the whole thing. No further need for concern. No need for the gunslinger, hitman Horiuchi. Bury it with him; or sink it with him.

Catherine might be another matter. She might not request forgiveness for her aberration; for her seeming contravention of the mores. She would argue that her message was far too important to be obscured by such petty concerns. That William was an essential part of who she was; he was her affirmation; and she was his. So there! reader, chew on that.

Back to the author again. The stage has been set. The audience has deferred to the empty seat. Tell it like it is, then.

Catherine and William went out to sea in a beautiful sea-green boat; they took some honey and plenty of money; (that rhymes, but doesn't make any sense [who would require money (green) at sea?]) Wrapped in a five pound note (you can see, can't you, the connection; boat; note?). William looked to the stars above, and sang to a small guitar, O lovely Catherine!, O Catherine my love, what a beautiful Catherine you are, you are you are! What a beautiful Catherine you are! Catherine said to William 'You elegant fowl! (some bird?) How charmingly sweet you sing! (What a hoot!) O let us be married! Too long we have tarried; but what shall we do for a ring? (some people have to do the conventional thing [hey! that rhymes]. They sailed away for a year and a day, to the land where the Bong (?) tree grows, and there in the wood a Piggy-wig stood, with a ring at the end of his nose (Ah Ha!) His nose, His nose, with a ring at the end of his nose.(Ah Ha! Ah Ha!) 'Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one dollar Your ring?' Said the Piggy, 'I

will'. So they took it away, and were married the next day by the Turkey (that's' what they are alright) who lives on the hill. They dined on mince, and slices of quince, which they ate with a runcible spoon (one of those hors d'oeuvres jobs) And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand, they danced by the light of the moon, the moon, the moon, they danced by the light of the moon. (A variation upon the heavenly bodies). Fairy!

Mockery will earn thee few credits.

Speaking of endings; that became beginnings. Speaking of the absurd being more unlike reality than had actually been the case, that what had happened was actually real. When William Burroughs, in a stupor, brandishing his pistol, had toyed with the fateful brush at death, and without intending it so, did so. Now there was a real ending to end all endings; thus began the haunt of the remainder Mr. Burroughs lengthy stay; and haunts us as well. That was the very beginning, the moment after the horrible realization, that she might have survived, if he had instead used a bow and arrow. Do Tell! William.

I cannot imagine doing the thing in the first place, without executing something deliberately to challenge all that we are; to squeeze the life out of something as a testimonial to love; how much can we squeeze from love; do we need to torment ourselves, and our companions to such a degree; pushing something to the brink? Will she still love me after I have killed her? No! but one could write of her, The End, Finis. The audience could empathize with Bill; how tragic; but how foolish; how could you even think it, you crazy madman; flaunting, staking all that had passed between you, and yet promised to pass? We believe it could not have happened, and he believed it could not have happened. But she no longer walked this earth, and she no longer spoke to him, and no longer held him in her arms. Gone, Poof!

We will not do that to Catherine. We'll slay Horiuchi!

No!, Catherine must live on to do good works, to rail at the Yahoos and bedlamites, Maybe a child will follow on after her. Her sisters will also crusade along with her for the good, for the awakening the best in mankind. For they envision a future where true equity, fairness and justice will prevail for all mankind. How's that for a happy ending? Whinney, whinney, Houyhnhnm, Houyhnhnm!

Still have not achieved satisfaction? Then, there can be none.

After all is said and done, 'it's a Bowwow eats Bowwow world'; 'fatefully inevitable'.

Before Catherine returned to her studies, she returned home to mend fences; and to cut the grass, in her snug shorts and halter, while the neighbor guy studied her through his powerful spotting scope from his bedroom window. He didn't know anything about William; the family secret. So he felt she was free, W, and not quite twenty-one, ready to be studied for her potential. Prurience had nothing to do with his interest. She was merely a remarkable specimen. A model grass mower. He knew she was attending Stanford, unimpressed. He thought, 'a girl with a brain is an oxymoron'.

From the corner of his study, Catherine's father caught a glimpse of the neighbor with his glass. He wanted to exorcise the neighbor; but instead phoned his house, his Mrs. answering. He suggested the Mrs. sojourn to their bedroom for a looksee, *quietly*, for fear of alarming the de(a)r (with the huge horns). Then he sat in the shadows of his own space to watch the watcher, when suddenly the neighbor lurched, seemingly dropping his spyware, then disappeared. All one could hear was the sound of the lawnmower.

Moments of levity dear reader, a respite from the need to stay on the river that ends at the sea.

In The Interim, More Sailing

"Henny Penny sounded the alarm; 'the sky is falling', the 'nuclear winter is coming', the 'global is warming'.

"Then came along the PR guy from one of the forest land barons who said, 'Don't think of it as less later, but more now'; then one of the ten most valuable intellectual assets of Canada said 'In fifty years nobody will know the dif'. Then came along the harbinger of the future, Michael Gritchton (Gritch for short) on the dole from Morebull/Exxoff, said 'Not to worry, this here planet can stomach man for many a year to come' and suggest that only his kind have a proper scientific grasp of reality, whereas all those environmentalists use flawed data, *junkscience*; then recommends feeding the environmentalist (ecoterrorist) to the cannibal. Gritch, the risk/benefit aficionado, is the guardian of the presumption of 'it is ours to do with'. As Far as I am concerned he is on the hit list, feed him to one end of a schnauzer, unmuzzled, or the muzzle of a rocket (where it doesn't take a 'rocket scientist' to know 'where its at'), along with that other occupant in our nation's capitol. If I was to bump into him, or he were to bump into me in Florida, I could shout, or, was it?, shoot first, on the presumption that he was about to shout, or, was it shoot me first. I would consider him a

threat at a great distance; so I might shoot, or shout anyway **'Toast!'**; only in Florida, where the most bizarre things have happened, not only to Ponce de Leon, The Seminoles, Alligators, Everglades; and Manuel Noriega, and the little kid from Cuba, and Terri Schivao, but to Al Gore."

"Mr. D., you do have a way with words"

"If I wasn't such a damned show-off, I might instead inform you quite plainly that 'I love you'."

"Whatever works, Mr. D.!"

"But on more sober reflection; while it might seem that the planet is enduring, and that hard evidence of wear and tear, only in the apparent, like the denudation of all unprotected forests, and the decimation of species, the various forms of pollution, both blatant and subtle, these are a drop in the bucket compared to what would be necessary to eradicate all life, and to transform the planet into a desert. Meanwhile, we gotta go on living."

"Surely, even I know you jest. Reflection!? Go on living!?"

"Catherine, its unlike you to even hint at cynicism."

"Mr. D., you misread me; I made a statement of fact. True enough it is, that 'gotta' seems flip, but it serves as a resigned imperative. 'We must go on living'."

"I don't know what we can do with people like Crichton, who, instead of 'erring on the side of caution', do a 'smart-ass' on us. He recommends waiting for the sky to fall. All the things we do to husband the planet are assessed as for naught, because they are done for the wrong reasons. His is not a false premise; ours is. It is he, and he only, who has a license to practice deceit, like the used car salesman, or the horse liniment or hair oil salesman. The car won't run, the liniment burns more than it salves, and the hair seems to fall out all the faster, and by the same token, mother earth gets used up. Its not the first time; there was Teller and Libby before him in the Nuclear Holocaust Days."

"Those scientists and pseudo scientists, are still trying to find a way to turn base metal into gold. Mother earth is a kind of base metal that requires smarts for the basic conversion. Those fuckers are workin' on it; leaving a trail of pilings behind. That ain't no hoax!"

"While I am in my groove, I want to attempt to describe reality, which is founded in the 'now', 'whereas now', in all its ramifications - the inescapable 'now', into which we are thrust - of which we must account, upon which we rely, and to which we react. Our life is unfolding as a page-turner novel. We are being mainstreamed; we gotta have our NOW (like the junkie who wants it NOW, will mainline it - like NOW is NOW!!) Are you convinced of NOW?"

“NOW is founded in many things, 1).The Now that could exist without homo sapiens, 2).The Now that could exist with homo sapiens, 3).The Now that does exist with the homo sapiens. All three are relevant to the description of this reality; there are other hypothetical combinations that could be applied as refinements of the basic three.”

“Mr. D., I’m not understanding the meaning and relevance of your words.”

“Since man has traipsed everywhere, fortunately not simultaneously everywhere all the time, because the whole damned planet would be trampled flat; for whatever reason - from wanderlust to greed; he has proclaimed 'it is his to do with'. He has proven faithful to that motto (proviso); the tense being applied 'it has been his to do with', 'he has done with it as has been his wont', 'he will do with it as is his wont' (more confidently since) 'he has been doing with it as has been his wont' (practice makes perfect). In the *now* he continues to do as 'it is his to do with' It is very difficult for me to walk away from (Leave Behind) his preeminence; because his is such a presence; an arrogant insinuation. The wrong guy is being fed to the cannibal.”

“Mr.D.!!??”

“I will not deny your basic premise of having to go on living. But, you can not rely upon the scientist, the self-appointed, so-called expert, to tell you what is right and wrong. The scientists are very often changing their minds, upon further study; printing retractions, revised estimates. We notice this particularly in the medical end of science where there is more exposure to scrutiny, but where lawyers argue that correlation is not the same as cause and effect. One year this is good for your health, the next year that proves questionable, or bogus. One year a medication, although ‘tested’, and approved by the FDA, even with its known side effects, causes irreversible cumulative damage; maybe leading to the ‘fatefully inevitable’; where we can’t go on living.

“Then comes along Gritch Guy, the Public Relations guy, the apologist guy, the paid lobbyist guy, with the risk/benefit argument, and the declamations against those who would put health and the environment before profit. Environmentalists are now made out to be terrorists, while the drug companies and the user-uppers (the rapists) are made out to be benefactors.”

“So, the Gritch, as you call him, should have stopped with Jurassic Park.

“Mr. D., don’t you think, despite it all, that mankind sees through it all? Of course mankind wants to be told it will last forever, that no harm will come to him. Like he wants to go to heaven and live on peaches and ice cream for eternity. As gullible

as he might seem, I know mankind has its doubts. Its that he grows weary hauling around his doubts; and seeks ways to avoid them; any panacea will do. But underneath it all, he knows he cannot escape them. Clutching at straws, Mr. D.

“There has to be another message. The con-man is not what we need.”

“There you have hit upon it Catherine, the Con.”

“Mr. D., Yes! ‘It is ours to do with.’ With Love, maybe. But, in the big picture, unlikely. The expedient gains the moment, the ‘now’, as you put it. We find ourselves on a fast-moving train, from which we imagine we cannot escape.

“We do find ourselves staring distractedly at the whizzing blur



of the landscape, disengaged from it. Is that when we ask, who we are, why we are here, and where are we going? What do we do then? Do we attempt to escape? Do we want to travel to Tahiti, into that Gauguin landscape of supine static brown figures? Is life meant to amount to static brown?”

“Are you conning me?”

“Damn you, I was never more serious.”

“I’m sorry Catherine. I know you are being serious. I recognize the significance and importance of what you are saying; you are doing it so well.

“Could you imagine yourself living here, doing nothing but trying to preserve and protect what is here, while the rest of the world goes to rat-shit, with the Pied Piper in the lead?

“Look!”, pointing through the window, toward the far shore, “Over there, they have it all, modernity, with all its consumption and noise; rapidly burning the wick, fulfilling the promise of More Today!, More Now!”

“Mr. D., its not so different here, you imagine yourself to be ‘off the grid’ here. In truth, how self-sufficient are you?

“You consume, you have your perks.”

“You’re my perk, sweet one.”

“Predictably, you jest, but this perk is part of the over there.” pointing again through the window at the far shore. “As much as I sense the meaning of what we are discussing, I cannot envision myself sitting here, grubbing for subsistence, as a matter of principle, while I have the wherewithal in the bank over there to do otherwise. Nor can Al Gore. We must not forget.

“I strongly suspect, unless you do literally grub, that is, go primitive entirely, you are cheating on the argument; in short, you are conning yourself.”

“Sweetheart, I am aware of the tenuous part of the argument. Yeah!, we cheat, we have to buy the most important ingredient, the seed (hopefully not from Monsanto); we put up fancy fences, we rototill the garden plot, not with an ox, but with dinosaur shit; we use dormant sprays, fertilizers, bug sprays; even environmentally safe ones, and when all else fails, we go the store; we do not starve for principle; and we wonder why we are making our lives so damned difficult when we could be doing it the easy way.

“Incidentally, there are people here on the island who do not have an easy time of it; they are worried about the necessary income, the subsistence level; they want to remain here, for the very same reasons I do.”

“Its only easy if you have the wherewithal. We do have our little wherewithal, so we do as we do. ‘Grapes of Wrath’ is not our lot in life; yet. Do we need to be prepared for such an eventuality? Are we made such that we could live such a life? Suppose all our wherewithal dries up?

“I would imagine that the fat cats would find a way of enslaving the rest of us to do their bidding, as they do in real life.”

“I suppose Gauguin’s colored tropical apes lived on coconuts, and kava root. But even then, they had to get up off’n their pretty brown little asses to do the yank. Not so in Ethiopia and the Sudan these days. Just imagine the repercussions if the truth was highly publicized that in the great US of A, with the Agribusiness’ granaries and the potato sheds full, awaiting the next turn in the Future’s Market, while there are many people who go hungry, who wonder where the next meal will come from. I would suppose, the mostly uninformed acquiescent masses are willing to be humiliated. They can still obtain food stamps from that government which colludes with Big Business, who inevitably deny them.

“Ah! Yes! What are you worth?

“Hmn!, That has a familiar ring! In my earlier life on the island, I had begun writing in a serious way. I had been writing off and on for years, feeling wholly inadequate to the task. But I felt I ought

discipline myself, at least, not to give up after the first inspiration passed, but to keep at it, drudge my way through. One of those early efforts involved a piece titled, of all things, Ha!, 'The Island'. I racked up a couple hundred pages before I lapsed into less disciplined stuff again. But I did get something from the effort, and the discipline, however disjointed the work itself.

"Actually the work should have been a collection of essays, but I was forcing my blather into some kind of palpably dubious/credible reality where a story might apply. One of those 'essays' separated from the whole as a chapter, was titled 'What are you worth?'

"The kernel of the essay addresses the material basis of worth, maybe in the same spirit as the Thumping teeny-bopper driving along in her fast little auto with the ghetto blaster jiving, setting the pace for the somebody who aint nobody unless they are somebody, and you aint somebody unless you do it like they do it."

"Sounds interesting, Mr. D."

"It may be interesting, if you are moderately cynical about mankind, searching for a feast of bile."

"Mr. D. I do not accept such characterization. I believe you are differently motivated than you portray; and whatever you write has those sad overtones lamenting the grosser manifestations of the animal we recognize as our selves. You have the belief that man cannot rise above himself; to you he is more monster, Mr. Hyde, than what he would profess to us. He barely conceals his seething opportunistic self, Uriah Heap, behind a facade of socially acceptable manners.

"I believe that man can rise above himself, not necessarily in any large way, that might satisfy you. But if we could somehow persuade him, convince him, that his worst enemy is himself, that he has very little to fear from any other form of life, that his eventual happiness lies in reducing conflict, in laying down his arms, in setting aside his urge to dominate; in terms of savings of the vast expenditure and waste that occurs because of his fratricidal behavior; that in the end gains him very little; where the balance sheet always comes out in the minus column; simply less of everything.

"I know 'pie in the sky' again; I can tell you are about to throw cold water on me."

"No, I do not want to get circular one more time. I happen to believe than man has become an expert at crapping in his own nest. Like you, I harbor hopes for something better; but, my sweet, as Sigmund also hoped for mankind, he would need to use his reason to better advantage, that it is an out for him, a possibility, something that would relieve the anxiety of the other, having to

deal with the other, and as fate would have it, his immortality. Somehow, a trick of the mind, a kind of realization that we are all in this together. But when Sigmund was so propounding, the globe was populated by five billion fewer souls. Our kind of redundant being 'all in this together' stretches the concept to the breaking point.

"An amplified condition that will not be resolved by mankind in my lifetime."

"Yes!, the number is very dismaying; not so much in terms of getting along, which aggravates a condition of long standing, but in terms of the strain on the planetary resources. It is mostly because of this thing we are doing, 'converting' the planet into a 'standard of living', which amounts to a consumption of the planet. There doesn't seem to be any way to attain a moderation, short of turning off the whole prospect. But with nations like China and India trying to come on line with the consumption aegis, with high expectations in 'raising' to a 'higher' 'standard of living', the planet will become exhausted. Its all so short term; and somehow very unlike the Chinese who in the past have been known to survive from generation to generation through a kind of patient endurance. No longer! Not a great civilization; but a huge dungheap;. no durable goods, meant to last a person's lifetime; useless, obsolescing, broken and failed throwaways."

"Hey!, you're pretty good when you turn on the charm!"

"Not amusing, Mr. D.

"I have come into this world with a 'social consciousness'; that is, what I am, and what I do has consequences, of which I should be aware; if it can be shown that whatever I am and what I do adversely affects others; and the planet, then I am obliged to do something about that; to remedy, or desist, or whatever is necessary, to bring things to a balance whether socially, or as a conscionable user of the planet. No 'ifs, ands, or buts'. No excuses; No temporizing, no equivocation; no rhetoric, or propaganda; no lies. That's me operating on my own recognizance.

"I want others to do the same. It's a rational thing, a sane thing. It shows some control over the visceral thing, a thing, by the way, that also characterizes an amoeba. We are more than an amoeba, are we not? An amoeba is mostly a food vacuole; that tells you something about life, No!? Are we more than an alimentary canal; both literally and metaphorically speaking?"

"I'm glad we are, metaphorically speaking.

"Sometimes its nice to forget who we are and what we are supposed to be doing to uphold all the great wonderful human traditions. For you and I, even more so. Imagine where we would be today if we had been a little more circumspect in our meeting. I

would be here in my self-imposed stupor, staring at the sea, dreaming of some ethereal relationship with a wood nymph who thought all my words pearls of wisdom, swooning endlessly under a spell of idyllic living; and who knows, I might have even imagined a relationship with you. You, you would be fighting off your Creative Writing professor as he tried to seduce you, with words of wisdom, and a lot of Kudos for your wondrous imagination, with perhaps a hand upon your lovely extremities.

“However, we threw caution to the winds, and here we are, musing upon the verities; and loving each other such as to confound all sense of propriety and decency; even though our anatomy cannot function but in the way it does, with no startling innovations.”

“Are you telling me that I am an ordinary, or that you have had only an ordinary experience with me?”

“Nothing of the kind; and nothing personal. It’s a lot more entrancing and a lot deeper than the remark suggests.

“You are still beyond all wonder to me. I could not have imagined you.”

“You might imagine me stalking out of here if you are not careful with your remarks.”

“My apologies, Catherine. You must believe that my feelings for you are genuine. They are real, and magical; as are you.”

“Mr. D. You do tend to become flippant with things that mean a great deal to me. Maybe that is a kind of justifiable behavior in some circles, but in mine it cannot be; it simply cheapens my life; I feel dismissed in some way that hurts; not dirty necessarily, but an artifact of dubious value; it is important for me to feel otherwise. I do not feel flippant about our relationship; maybe because I do not know any better; I am a naïf. My experience may not have been startling in the sense of being unusual, but it is so heart felt, and entered into with such eagerness, all consuming in some ways; a genuine release of me to you. I will not go beyond these words because I already know they can only become the meager scantlings of what I feel; to say them does not make me feel anything, even though I pour all I am into them. I feel what I feel apart from words, and become wordless for all that.”

“I appreciate what you say, and how you say it, more than you can know; it finds such consonance and resonance within me.

“The flippancy you detect in me is real enough, some kind of reflex; not even a self-protective device; being a wise-ass, without imparting any wisdom. A flaw in my character, in my personality makeup.”

“Best to do something about it Mr. D.; at least with regard to me. I require more consideration. My heart is delicate and tender, and thrives on sweetness and light. I am telling you a truth.”

A short silence ensues, William, feigning contriteness? William however, is anxious to leap into the breach.

“To return to earlier associations; it seems Sigmund is wearing well in our conversations; how do you feel about his oral, anal, and genital phases of our early life?”

“I had hoped to steer the conversation in another direction; but I am more than willing to take a moment for Sigmund. I appreciate his attempt to find a somewhat theoretical basis for our psychological makeup. When an individual appeared in his office, apparently suffering from an illness that was not wholly manifest in the immediate happenings in his life, or detectable in his physical makeup, he surmised something was deeply rooted in subsidiary causes, perhaps even more than in the immediate. We assume these things to be true nowadays. We also know some illnesses have a genetic origin; cultural and environmental origin. But in looking at the earliest formation of personality development, we feel a need to look at basics. Parents or guardians mucking with feeding, parents or guardians mucking with pissing and shitting; parents or guardians mucking with the erogenous zones, in an untimely, or traumatic manner. Only patience can deal with the results of these muckings. An individual might be mucked up by a lot of other things as well, by neglect, for example; or too many expectations.

“Nowadays, we are delving deeper into the significances of early training, early inculcation; early trauma, early neglect, early pressure. We are assigning so much terminology that is only useful to psychologists and counselors, who are splitting hairs in an area where nothing is measurable. An individual is not measurable against some kind of standard. Psychoanalysis is a long process for an individual; its like a major overhaul, one that will hopefully leave the ‘patient’ with an understanding of him or her self that is acceptable, or acceptably human in scope, that enables him or her to function in a ‘dog eat dog’ world.

“The theoretical oral, anal, genital, or the id, ego, and super-ego are simple enough way stations, or constructs, in our attempt to understand something not so simple to understand; human nature; that is, individual human nature. Generalizations help only minimally. I guess I do not feel they are unfounded. There are lots of observations people can make about human suffering. In truth, it has been learned there are subsidiary roots to many mental illnesses. Exacerbating these illnesses one finds a social climate where anything that does not conform to the current social

behavioral norm is regarded with approbation and with disdain, unless one has very indulgent and patient parents or guardians, and lives in a very nurturing society.

“Sometimes I think of Freud as a greater philosopher than a psychologist, indeed a very rational man, always trying to stay within the limits of plausibility, or perhaps, truth. Underneath it all I realize he was a healer, whether of the ailing individual or the ailing society of men. A very humane thinker, to be sure.

“Now I am wondering how humane you might be?”

“I must be alright, if you will even give me a second look.”

“I don’t know what to say about that, but I do sense who and what you are, through myself. It is possible I am mistaken; anything is possible. I may be blind to who I truly am. In which case I may be a dirty young woman, who has seduced an old geezur. Awful to contemplate; not good for my self image. What sort of Syndrome or Disorder affects me?

“I don’t care to speculate upon that aspect of who I might be. I am willing enough to believe other things about us, about who we are and what we want to see happening in this world. We are affined in pursuit of some lasting resolution to the problem of man. We might be somewhat obsessed in this regard. If man would use his reason, and abide by it, it seems the problem could be resolved. The solutions are not complicated, if one obliges the reasons for implementing them.

“Its not that we do not recognize the most problematic part of our task. We have identified parts of our makeup which we find somewhat reprehensible; we have given them names, like pride, sloth, envy, jealousy, avarice, lust, gluttony; deadly sins, to some; but to others, something to parody, to laugh at; not openly confronting those who manifest these traits, but portray in our little dramas, melodramas. Comedies.

“Can we imagine every person dealing with these aspects of his personality, recognizing them for what they are, how destructive they can be, how ruinous in the end, of oneself, of others?”

“Oh yes!, we chide those closest to ourselves for such manifestations, ‘You’re jealous, you’re envious; you’re pride gets in your way, don’t be so lazy; its more difficult to admonish avarice (greed), or gluttony, or lust, don’t you already have plenty, you ought to lose some weight, your behavior leaves much to be desired. These last three seem almost evil in nature; unprovoked, as might be the others; as real character flaws, inherently very destructive of equanimity in the human community. What purpose do they serve?

“Recognizable from the outside, everyone’s duty to call attention to them, and to deal with them.”

“Tell me how I am to deal with you, when you lust after me?”

“I expected you to say something sooner. I suspect the feeling is mutual, which makes your case weaker. If the truth was to be known, I might be less lustful than thee, although I do fall apart when you glide your hands over; well, you know what I mean.

“There is a difference betwixt lust and love, is there not? The chicken and the egg? Is it that one cannot be one without the other; or is that love is smoother, whereas lust is rougher?”

“You’re a smoothie.”

“I do not think we can use ourselves as an example; a qualified – yet!

“Perhaps there are some things we examine too closely. ‘Sex’, per se, becomes an engrossing preoccupation. A necessary ‘evil’ on the one hand, and a matter of consummation of the most intense ‘ardor’ in the feelings (lust?) of one person for another. As an ‘evil’, your friend’s comment ‘a stiff prick has no conscience’ (and perhaps its female equivalent), comes to mind; the driven, lustful component that hurts, affronts and somehow disgraces, even debases, our humanity, or, our presumption to humanity.

“The low point in the ‘continuance’ argument. Makes one want to manage (arrange) the whole step, accomplishing a defined end from a cryostat full of collected sperm.”

“What of the ova?”

“Selected females as recipients.”

“Sex with a syringe?”

“I can’t say that is the answer. I know it is most likely absurd to contemplate. It makes one want to go somewhere where there are no humans to disgust one, to whom to compare oneself; letting it all hang out, so to speak. Live one’s life in a void. How impossible it all seems, at times.

“But we seem also prone not to give up on ourselves; as though this huge potential thing we could become, still tantalizes us.

“It tantalizes me; quite apart from dealing with ‘sex’ per se, although ‘sex’ is inseparable from what and who we are, and what you and I have become.

“Sigmund, or his followers, have tried to show us how far reaching is the issue of ‘sex’ in our psyches, regardless of the origins of our perceptions of it, whether through personal experiences, or through anything that passes as ‘sex education’, or ‘God Forbid’, morality.”

“Pray Tell, most wondrous lady, what say you upon the matter?”

“Mr. D., the knock and knell of your curiosity taunts me, but I’ll not be led into anything deviant. My own personal experience has been revealing, and rewarding, and makes not of me anyone

who would argue for wild abandon; but always for circumspection, but I would not, in any way, argue against my own experience.

“By that I mean, one ought not flaunt what he or she is or what he or she does. As conscionable members of the larger community, we must exhibit some concern for the part we play; at least that is my personal choice.

“I do not advocate that every young woman should seek out the old geezur for an accomplice. If it happens, and it does happen, I suppose we ought not flaunt it. But forbidding such a relationship might cause more anguish to the participants than the society as a whole, who might be mostly unaware of it, and indifferent to it as long as it doesn't make the headlines. Once a thing makes the headlines, it suddenly becomes something else, not quantifiable. Recall the OJ debacle.

“As you have noted previously, Albert Camus might have given the whole enterprise its proper perspective when he noted that most people, ‘fornicate and read newspapers’.”

“Oh! Catherine, it might be a deep subject, on another plain, but we animals have found our way in this one.

“Onward to the void!”

The Author Soliloquizes Again

The author has grown noticeably self-conscious as these two go on and on. He feels he ought to sever this accretion of words.

But he argues with himself, that he would need to start something else, even less interesting to a potential reader. At least, with the persona of Catherine, there isn't so much of an I,I, I, rant. Who's to say there is not an interesting Catherine out there?

The author wants not to convince the reader of anything, even in the plausibility of these two. The author has taken his risk. He has felt he could not abandon his noise making machine, to begin the tedium of yet another annoying disturbance. he felt he needed to keep an eye on man. An eye on himself.

Imagine if you will; there he sits in his log home by the sea, staring at the water. Perhaps a little bit like Siddhartha, after wandering for so long, seeking this place of repose, where he might meditate upon the eternal verities. Pretty soon he becomes hypnotized by the motion of the water; he zonks out as he imagines a kind of Nirvana, an end without end, suspended in a relentless eternity of waves, a ceaseless mesmerization by the water, so unpretentious, so undemanding, and so restful, magically restful, and wordless. The water recites. Long Before,

Long Before. Long After. Long Before, Long Before, Long After. I will be here. I will be here.

Then the telephone rings. It is a neighbor requesting his presence at a meeting, and requesting of him to call around to get others to attend; that its important; that peace and harmony will be jeopardized forever onward if we let this thing happen, this thing that is taking over the rest of the planet, like the killer bees, the Nile virus, the hanta virus, bird flu, ebola, HIV, legionnaires disease, lymes disease, pox humana upon us; more ubiquitous than any other disease.

Yes, there are so many of us we are now considered redundant, perhaps irrelevant, a redundant irrelevant resistant pox, and curse, that is so insidiously invasive; we are full of dread of our own kind massed around us. We must take action against ourselves. Yes! we know who we are, and what we do, and how we occupy, and how indiscrete we are, and careless, aggressive, destructive; how we crap in our nest; we don't want more of this kind of self; a bunch of selves who don't give a damn for the other selves along side, because these selves are so abysmally driven by such base things as pride, envy, jealousy, sloth, lust, avarice and gluttony; all so selfishly.

There we find ourselves wanting this seclusion from such a hateful thing, then, ambivalently, we find ourselves desiring his companionship to assuage our own stubborn loneliness. We welcome this harbinger of such evil, such malevolence; we clasp it incestuously to our breast, grip its hand, we do this detestable thing with this detestable thing. Then we feel remorse at our own weakness.

There we are in our cave with our wired connection to the outside world. And when it doesn't work we are frustrated and distraught (RCWD); Oh!, how pathetic are we! A cursed life it is.

Is that kind of behavior any more plausible than the contrivance of Catherine and William; is it any more or less reasonable? Yes!, man is what he is; yes!, it is reasonable, is untidy, he doesn't bathe often enough.

Well, here he is, doing the impossible again, madly ranting, as though he was alone on the bridge. Where no one could overhear, but where indeed the reader could. "The evil thing is overtaking the world." "I warned You, I warned You!"

He stopped himself to consider allowing the reader to suggest an ending; where perhaps the reader might take the fatal draught instead of heaving the tome into the flames.

He thought of that denouement where the young girl and the older man got together, only for the older man to discover through various coincidences that the girl was his daughter, whom he had

loved in one way, but could no longer, but loved her none the less, perhaps even more. However, before he could tell her of their accursed fate, she was denouemented by yet another, and even more improbable thing than their love affair, she was bitten by an asp (an ass with a lisp) as she slumbered in slumber, slumber land, and while in her intoxicated state, struck her head upon the solid earth; somewhat miraculously, but not unaccountably, recovering from the venomous bite of the slithery menace, only to expire from the cracked skull.

The author promises if he must dispose of any of his characters, it will not be contrived in any such manner. He would rather the reader satisfy his own proclivities in dealing with things with which he disagrees. Perhaps it could be arranged that William could bang his foundering head, and unruly heart, upon the hardest of realities; without involving the author, or the reader; ingest the hemlock. Only a suggestion. But no harm must come to Catherine; Willy will not hear of it.

Is Willie so terrible? He allowed himself to be seduced by the chic chick. The judge looking after the Pearly Gate told him he was old enough to know better. And that she, though of legal age, did not. When Willie protested his innocence, the gate tender informed him there was a difference between being a smart-ass and being smart. Willie thought the adjudicator a quibbler. He wanted him to know that he anguished over his behavior, but felt exonerated by the girl who professed nothing but love for him. But, in consulting his leather bound gold-leafed tome, his puissance, the Grand Disquisitor was not to be dissuaded from his proscription. He cited the damnifying passage upon which he based his decision, reading from the First Afflatus, handed down from tippy-top heights of Babel: *Thou shalt not cleave unto thee, though thou'rt tempted beyond all compass, one so budded in her youth as to not yet have achieved full bloom. And if thee be a withered old thing, thou'rt further adjured to avert thine eyes, for 'tis construed a mere glance upon such fairness is judged a sullyng act, punishable by castigations not revealed, because they are too horrible to imagine.*

'Castigations' mind you, 'castigations'. You know what happens to those who flout the 'castigations'. If you thought Leviticus was a hard ass with his chasing after discharges until every taint was removed, think how long you will be scrubbing to remove your stain; your exemplary former president notwithstanding. His stain, that defiled her wrap, will forever be enshrined in the Smithsonian Institution for all to see, alongside all those pickled syphilitic dongs. Yours will live in infamy, though you scrub and scrub a-rub-a-dub-dub. Two turtle doves or two young pigeons into the bargain.

The author has recovered from his self-conscious self-indulgent binge, his yielding unto madness, and is now ready to proceed with his denouement.

Catherine Flies In

Catherine had departed to visit her family while William was preoccupied with Island Politics, something he seemed unable to resist. She wasn't sure of the efficacy of his involvement, because he seemed always disinclined to continue. He had explained that the lady for whom he did the caretaking in his early days on the Island, cautioned against becoming involved in such politics. He considered himself fairly warned. He already knew of the vast amounts of time one might waste in pursuing a consensus on any issue without ever coming close to achieving it. Most of William's political involvement, wherever he lived, centered on the intrusions and impositions, of man upon man, in whatever form. He thought the greatest amount of space between individuals was the only solution to the problem of man. So when he went to meetings it was always to argue for the lowest density (occupancy) per unit of land. He was always doing battle with developers, land speculators, builders, bottom-liners; and planners. It always seemed a lose-lose situation. He would rant and rave, after the meetings; something that bothered Catherine. She felt he would be better off writing about Utopia than trying to actively create one on this planet.

William always seemed relieved when it was over, and ready to return to writing about the evils of man rather than writing about Utopia.

He missed Catherine, terribly at times. Her buoyant presence, her beautiful smile, her soothing ways; and her sparkling challenging intelligence.

Catherine very seldom wore Jeans although she looked very elegant in them. She favored full wrap around skirts tied with a piece of fabric about her waist. And often wore sheer hose; her calves were marvelous to behold. She also preferred casual buttoning blouses of various fabrics. Also buttoning sweaters; she did not project her sex, which, if she had, would cause interminable distraction to William. When she occasionally put on a tight fitting pullover sweater, or jersey, William became very absorbed in watching her. She was conscious of herself, but chose to project her femininity, rather than something more provocative. Although, when she had something devious in mind, she didn't

hesitate to pull out some of the stops by wearing tight fitting shorts and a tight fitting halter; and when feeling like a miracle, she would don a negligee. A very beautiful example of the distraction from all purposeful activity, save one.

She arrived by floatplane right in front of the house. She must have charmed the pilot; however it was a relatively calm day, and the pilot had installed a foamy like bumper material on his pontoons so he could navigate into rougher rockier places.

William heard the roar of the circling aircraft, and was surprised to see the craft landing so nearby, before realizing it must be Catherine doing her surprise Catherine thing. The plane slowly approached the rocky shore, coming alongside a place where it angled abruptly downward into the sea. The door opened; and there indeed was Catherine, hanging onto the wing as she carried her luggage to the pontoon, then stepped off the pontoon onto the rock ledge. It was all over, and plane was roaring away by the time William was outside to greet her.

This time Catherine was wearing jeans, with a jersey; and when she spied William, she set down her luggage, rushing across the rocky ledge to embrace him, beaming.

In each others arms, overcome, William wept.

“Mr. D., it is so good to be here.

“I can tell you missed me. I’m sorry Mr. D.

“It wasn’t all that great a trip, but it is done. Now I am ready for anything.”

“You will be happy to learn, the politicking is over for a while; maybe forever.”

“I truly believe that would be best for you, Mr. D.

“Come, lets not talk of that now. I’m ready for some quiet relaxation. How about a cup of tea?”

“Sounds perfect, with perfect company.”

“Let me make it, Mr. D.”

William carried her luggage up to the house, Catherine with one arm through his, leaning her head on his shoulder.

“I suppose you charmed that pilot to land so close.”

“He was very obliging; it was his suggestion.”

“I can imagine you doing a little dance around him in your nice little outfit.”

“Mr. D., you know I do not do such things; only with you.”

William stopped, putting down the luggage, and turned to face Catherine, encircling her in his arms, burying his face in her hair, closing his eyes, inhaling her fragrance, and once again allowing himself to be overcome with emotion, sobbing softly onto her shoulder.

“Mr. D., this is unlike you.”

“Catherine, I missed you so very much.”

“There will be more of it Mr. D., so you better find a way of dealing with my absences.

“Mr. D., let me assure you that I will always return; that you are the only person who means that much to me, to whom I would make such a promise.

“I feel your absence too Mr. D.; and there are times when I want to fly to you; as I have done a few moments ago. I was like an animal on a tether at home; even with my sisters this time.

“Now that I am here I feel badly about leaving them, more or less abruptly; I could see the disappointment in Theresa’s face. I’ll need to call her right away.”

They entered the house. Catherine indeed did head for the telephone, quickly dialing her sister. Theresa was the one who answered.

“Tess, I’m so sorry I left without saying a proper goodbye. Please tell Lydia for me too. I think you understand; at least, I hope you do.”

“Oh!, Mr. D., he’s so sweet, crying on my shoulder and all. Such a greeting! Such a greeting!”

“Yes!, Tess, I know you cry too; and I cry too, there we are, a bunch of maladjusted emoters.”

“Will you forgive me.”

“Would you like to have a word with Mr. D.?”

“Tess would like a word with you.”

“Hello Theresa. I’m sorry you got the shorter end while I seem to be getting a larger share.”

“Its very nice of you to say that, Theresa. You are so very special to Catherine. I know she is torn. She tries to encourage me to condition myself to her absences.”

“I suppose its wonderful that such a person should bring out so much love in people. I feel you will be doing the same Theresa.”

“How is your mother taking it all?”

“I get the drift; I’ll soon hear about it all.”

“I’ll give you back to your loving sister. Bye for now. Hello to Lydia.”

“Oh! same to you Lydia.”

William beckoned Catherine to the device, handing it to her.

“You there too Lydia?”

“I’m sorry I ran off without proper goodbyes. I do miss this guy.”

“No, I came by floatplane right to the rock in front of the house.”

“The pilot was very obliging.”

“Here I am telling you how much I love you all, and miss us all being able to be together. But I know how impossible that is. Simply impossible!”

The author intrudes again.

If you will recall, at the outset, you were informed that this improbable tale began in a notebook while the author and his wife were boating (cruising) during a recent summer. Now it is approaching summer again, and he and she are planning once again to take to the water. This work will accompany him. Approximately three months remain in the full year since it began.

Lately the author has been involved in ‘community affairs’, and in various outdoor projects, to have neglected somewhat Catherine. He has yearned to return to her presence. Hopefully he will soon be more faithful to his obligation to finish what he has begun.

Though there isn’t any purpose to life, the author has assigned one through default. His thoughts and feelings have neither served him nor anyone he knows. It was not intended they do so. Being an overbearing SOB, he has insinuated himself into the landscape with his improbable scheme.

Most of what we promise ourselves in this life are improbable schemes, whose improbability we do not question at the time. At the end of the road, weary, and suffering the ravages of the decrepitudes, we have mostly forgotten them.

“Mr. D., the three of us, my sisters and I, each of us was voted the one who showed the most promise, and would be the most likely to succeed. Succeed at what? At getting more good grades? Because we seemed to possess the smarts, we were dedicated to achieving the most, whether through a competitiveness, or a natural desire to learn everything we could, to take on the most difficult assignments, to participate in all aspects of our social intervolition?”

“Were those who visited this condition upon us, the ‘most likely to succeed’, imposing some obligation upon us to perform some kind of miracle? Or were they limiting their perception to doing good, doing right, making an ill-defined contribution within a certain set of expectations to be fulfilled in the also ill-defined status quo, American Dream? Were we to become the ones that could accomplish all this better than others? Were we expected to become doctors, lawyers, judges, chief executives, perhaps, representatives, senators, presidential candidates? Or maybe

something more ordinary, more modest, in fulfilling that illusory, ill-defined American Dream?

“Mr. D., even before you and I became acquainted, I had been aware of certain things, concerning our country, that have bothered me; now, after our conversations, are troubling me even more. As you have spoken, my initial reaction was to want to both defend our country, and to allow you to draw me out with regard to my true feelings. As a result, I have found it difficult to defend our country. This causes a very unsettled feeling within me.

“You have previously mentioned one of our touted thinkers, albeit philosophers, Alfred North Whitehead, had pondered our somewhat dismal performance; the abandonment of ideals for the baser motive of gain. He was right to question what we might have become, and to note that we had missed a great opportunity to build a great civilization; perhaps the greatest ever. A quiet lamentation from the ivory tower.

“We have had access to the whole of recorded human history from which to infer something, but we have seemed little interested. Somehow, we became a crude grasping kind of pestilence. Even as a remarkable a beginning as ours was, it was flawed. We placed few constraints upon exploitation and greed; upon prejudice. Our ‘exemplary’ signers, those imbued with the flourish of freedom from being exploited by mother England, were mostly plantation owners and aristocrats; not from the ‘common’ folk.

“Perhaps if the ‘Terrorist’ thing had not happened in New York, my thoughts would not have grown more critical; more questioning. That is, I might not have begun to add up things, and analyze what had happened before I was born. When I say this I might include the whole history of the human race, rather than prejudice the truth with only our experience. Even being aware of history means so little, because that is somehow assumed to be all behind us; something from which we have already learned, configuring history as lessons we have applied to our betterment, both as a species, and, as a nation.

“I was born into a nation that extols its virtues, lauds its support of human rights; and speaks of ‘democracy’ as something sacred; and has taught me, and most everyone I seem to meet, to value these notions. We play these themes over and over again to ourselves, almost as a mantra, in the Media. Wonder is synonymous with America. I know some of these plaudits have been earned, in some instances; I believe this because I believe that no one nation can be all bad. But now I know no one nation

can be all good; despite all avowals, and persuasions to the contrary.

“This ‘9/11’ thing has happened. It has happened to us, ‘we the people’; America, the ‘good guys’, the ‘mean wells’. It has been a challenge for each of us to understand, to separate the truth from the propaganda. My nation has thrust this challenge upon me, through its lies, its deceptions, distortions, and disinformation; also from its somewhat blatant foreign policy that takes sides in others embroilments; somewhat contrary to our espoused evenhandedness. As a result we have accrued deep resentments. Yes!, I am suspicious that vested interests, corporate interests, are at work shaping that foreign policy. We must recognize our dependence upon OIL; OIL, the bugaboo of our desperate civilization; growing more desperate everyday, in every way, because there are burgeoning nations vying for a resource that is non-renewable, and is rapidly being used up. Another page is being added to the History books regarding the rise and fall of civilizations built upon non-renewable resources. Although forests, in theory, are renewable, the husbanding of the forests has been lacking throughout the ages, where civilizations rose and fell as they consumed their forests for energy. Even though we know better, we continue this practice today. A model for our other forms of consumption. Homo Sapiens will be forced into more reliance upon coal and nuclear energy, simply because that is all that will remain. Then what. Is that the end of it, the end of man?

“In these very words, I am getting away from what I want to summarize.

“The litany of failures is there for us to examine and tally. The tally of human exploitation and human waste. Where does one begin? How does one assess what is fair; sorting the reality from the rhetoric? All generations are culpable, because not one generation has cried out: ENOUGH! What I mean by this is that what is apparent to the few has not become evident to the masses, for one reason or another; and even if it was apparent or evident to the masses, the collective conscience did not cry out.

“From the beginning; Conquest. America. The American Indian. Slaves from Africa. Today the one, the ‘Native American’ has become the ward of the state, and the other, a Black. (Of the original 57 exemplary signers of the Declaration, 41 were slave holders. Of our first 18 presidents, 12 were slave holders, 8 while in office.) What have we done to remedy our ‘mistakes’ in this regard? Wouldn’t we do the same again? Don’t we tolerate something of which we (who are the we?) might want to rid ourselves? As well, we might want to abandon our conscience in this regard. We can’t give it back to the Natives; they have mostly

perished; only their lingering disenfranchised descendants remain. Our third, and fifth presidents proposed sending all the slaves back to Africa; their descendants basically another disenfranchised minority.

“During WWII the Japanese Americans were interred, their wherewithal expropriated, without compensation. Before WWII, and afterwards, we imported braceros, (cheap) labor to work in our fields, because ordinary citizens wanted to strike for a better deal. Many of these found a way of secreting themselves and have eventually become Chicanos, another dubiously scandalized minority. Not only do these fill our ranks, but also the ‘social retards’; the ‘white trash’. The melting pot has gone through several melt-downs. Lady Liberty (your Brass Bitch) of Bedloe’s has become tarnished over time, despite Mr. Iococca’s pleas for funds to clean her up. That skin deep stuff again.

“We had invaded and occupied the Philippines. We brought in ‘coolies’ to throw into the hopper of ‘progress’.

“During WWII, we were party to the annihilation, incineration of 110,000 people, mostly civilians, in Dresden. We firebombed, incinerated, Tokyo; we obliterated 75,000, mostly civilians, in Hiroshima, thousands left to die a horrible death. In Nagasaki, 25,000; mostly civilians; thousands left to die a horrible death.

“After that great ‘Good’ war, when we were doing ‘good’ things for our defeated enemies, we turned down overtures from Ho Chi Minh to remove his country from the yoke of colonialism, we turned down overtures from Mao Tse Tung to remove his country from the yoke of Chaing Kai Chek and the Landlords. Instead we returned, with our blessing, Southeast Asia to the French, and our generals swooned over Madame Chek. Just as awful, we allowed, more, we agreed beforehand, to the Russian occupation of Eastern Europe.

“How many Koreans did we slay in our tussle with Stalin? How many Vietnamese (Cambodians, Laotians) (gooks) did we slay in our xenophobic fear of the yellow peril? (Millions!) So the Commies wouldn’t get the rubber, tin, manganese, tungsten, copra, rice? How many foreign deaths, and governments undermined, by the covert operations by our Intelligence Agencies? How many Afghans have ‘we’ annihilated? How many Iraqies have we annihilated? How much butchery have we silently tolerated by our ‘friends’ in foreign nations?

“We have been conscious of the horror alright; we felt obliged to use the term ‘collateral damage’, as a ‘foreign policy’ tool, in acknowledgement; Herr Goebbels, instead of Dulles, Rusk, McNamara, Kissinger, even Powell, might have been our spokesman.

“Still after more than a century, the old wounds that brought on the Civil War remain open.

“It took us years to legislate ‘civil rights’, something already implicit under our ‘democratic aegis’. But we failed to pass an equal rights amendment to our Constitution; essentially disenfranchising half of our population. We have failed in our government with HUAC, with Joseph McCarthy, with Watergate, Iran Gate, with the Patriot Act. With our Supreme Court interfering in a Presidential election, giving us the meanest, ugliest specimen of humanity for a leader. These are only the most notable of the worst. There is the daily pressure to pledge, to salute, to conform, to be obedient to the ‘status quo’; and to bear up under the gradual erosion of our Constitutional rights. To most to whom I would speak, they tell me of their fear of their own government; more than their fear of any imaginary terrorist. Kent State is ever with us. I don’t know which dismays me the most. All, in their own way, because I was led to expect something different, something better, more humane. What does it mean to be ‘humane’? We must not forget the Klan (the White Supremacists), the Birchers, the America Firsters, and our own version of the Nazi Party, the Love It or Leave Its; the ‘meanies’, the ‘big, bad, and uglies’; and a President who sat in judgment of those on welfare; declaring them ‘social retards’. There is lot I do not know that happens in those secret sacred halls, the rotundas, in the collusion between government and big business.

“Above all, I have expected to be told the truth. I was always expected to tell the truth. Telling the truth meant something. Because if I am to be the one who is part and parcel of the consent of the governed, I must know the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is not incidental to me that it is my life that is at stake.

“Our history books are all frosting, the cake, a plain dose of tasteless reality.”

All the while Catherine was speaking, her beautiful face registered a pained expression; a deep hurt.

She did feel betrayed, but realized it was she who had made certain assumptions. She had misled herself with false assumptions; false expectations. Yes! she was naïve; idealistic, believing in a ‘promise’; taking words at their face value. Now she felt wiser. She did not feel better for her new found wisdom. She felt disillusioned.



She thought of her mother 'working within the system' for change, for something better. 'How futile', she thought. She thought of all those who believed that things were in good hands.

It was Toni Smith who did the right thing. Her simple gesture showed all of us the meaning behind all of those assumptions; that we, as a nation, had few laurels upon which we could rest. We did have to practice 'vigilance' 24 hours a day, vigilance upon ourselves. We had to live the part we espoused, always.

In a perfect world, perhaps her mother's approach might mean something; but it is far from being a perfect world. If anything it is a mean and calculating world. To believe otherwise, is not only naïve, but foolish. Our nation, our government, is one of the meanest and one of the most calculating.

Catherine continued, "Oh!, Yes, we can put it all down to 'survival'. At least that is an understandable pretext; perhaps even an acceptable one. I don't mean only 'Our Way Of Life'. How I have come to hate that phrase. It springs from such arrogance, and such unconcern.

"But what of 'survival'? At any cost?"

"We all need to face up to the fact of what we are; don't pretend, don't gloss it over; don't lie to ourselves. The lie only weakens, dilutes, our position.

"Don't even be righteous about survival.

"Could I support a nation that declared itself a 'survivor, no matter what? I'd have to think about that. Initially, I would say emphatically, NO!, because of what else I imagine I believe.

"Then I might have to face the awful truth, that all nations are alike.

"Then I would feel crushed, because all of my assumptions, and 'ideals', had led me astray, down a path of darkness and oblivion. One could build nothing lasting, because it was always vulnerable to this awful thing that happens when one 'survives'.

"How did I come to believe we were 'all in this together'? Is it matter of shades of meaning for me to get from we are 'all in this together' to, we are meant to be 'survivors'. I am meant to be a 'survivor'. That is reality staring me in the face; no other option?"

"Damn it Mr. D., I want to be thought of as an American, as a good thing, but not the America I have come to know. Perhaps, objectively speaking, there never was an America that I could champion, and perhaps there never was another culture that I could champion in its entirety.

"Yes!, I declare myself a Humanitarian; being that, is what I champion."

Catherine peered intently at William. She was being assertive, and didn't care what William thought about it all in this moment.

But William was listening. She was speaking his mind.

"Mr. D., this is not about me, or about you. We are mere voices amidst a babble, that drowns all voices. Have I allowed myself to imagine things are not so bad on a scale of one to ten, where only three or four is the best that can be had; anywhere?. This self-righteous and smug, complacent argument that I hear; 'if you think its so bad here, why don't cha go somewhere else?'; how it galls me.

"Mr. D., can we build upon anything here? Is there anything that can be salvaged from what we have become; must we allow it to run its course into that dark oblivion, like so many that have come before, merely looking on; or can we short-circuit the process by mercifully razing the whole edifice in order to begin again?"

"Fall down you may; get up, you must."

The Author Promises Restraint

Is this the Author's final aside?

This writing fledge will need to flourish in a world that will condemn it. It is a foregone assumption the piranhas will have a go at it. The piranha is a predatory fish, that feeds on authors. When the volume hits the water, the author mercilessly pushed in after it, and the ripples are felt in those prestigious bastions, the deadly beasts imagine blood. As they swiftly leave their dens and lairs, their hidey-holes, they imagine the smell before they actually sense it. They emerge with gleaming teeth, razor sharp. It is also foregone, there will be no escaping the frenzy.

But the author does escape, but cannot rescue his child.

Lusting after satisfaction, the piranhas create an effigy of the author into which they can sink their rapier like teeth.

'This monster, Catherine, that presumes upon us all. This half-baked, loose morality; this tenth-rate philosophizing. This girl who, even if she was more inclined to pick on someone her own age, is to be held up as some kind of wonder girl, Barbie girl maybe, not to be found anywhere else in this world.'

'What kind of loose fish has the author created here?'

‘She is allowed to run amok of all our sacred institutions, this pretentious twirp, mouthing great truths’; more like delusions; the invention of a third-rate talent.’

‘Trash, utter trash.’

The child, Catherine, is found without any flesh, abandoned, all but dead. But there is a gleam in their eye.

They gather round, satisfied with themselves.

Their words are to be found in the same lexicon from which the author has drawn his words; and the same lexicon to which we must all refer. There is nothing sapient inherent to the word. It cannot be assumed that because it is uttered that it reveals anything more than the prejudice of he or she that utters it. It is part of a long-standing tradition known to us as the people’s ‘right to know and our right to tell you’. It does not matter that what they tell you, although their right, is wrong, that is, in error. It only matters they have the right to be either right or wrong. It does not matter they themselves cannot write, or that their philosophizing is eleventh rate, and that their talents are fourth rate; it only matters, in truth, that it does not matter, because they do not matter. It is the reader who matters. The reader might read only to say to himself, what trash!, or the reader might find something he or she likes, not all liking the same thing; finding some part of themselves therein. The reader might only be killing time as he does with all hundredth rate trash promulgated by a world that has lost its way; or can find no way at all, a world in which these same roaring lions of revelation and truth doth pontificate, both for the lack of anything better to do.

So, dear reader do not be dismayed by nay-saying, for it is all part and parcel of our world; and such a world it is.

On the New York Times Bestsmeller List.

Final Words Before Docking?

Catherine and William at it again.

“The imbeciles have taken to lecturing us on ‘intelligent design’ as they had concerning ‘preventative war’ ‘preemptive strike’ and ‘material breach’ and ‘collateral damage’. We had been through it all before in Tennessee, back in ’25, where and when Mr. Scopes was arraigned for teaching evolution. The Bible Belt has resurrected this driveling monster once again. Once again Darwin is being beheaded, burned at the stake. Another backward step. In Georgia a warning label must appear on any school textbook that

speaks of Gravity; and soon those descending apes will be declaring the world to be flat.

“Whadda bunch a fukin idiots! These pitiful specimens think they got here by design, as if any maker worth its salt would make anything in the image of an ignorant bigoted slob. A slight misspelling of defecation (deification).”

“Mr. D., please! No more. Can’t we elevate the conversational tone?”

“I’m afraid not, Catherine. If I had been given the power, I’d have the lot of them placed in the tower - naked. The truly Grand Inquisition; let it all hang out in its original pathos; that Goddammed error of day six. They have created such havoc and caused such misery with their narrow view of things. Boil them in oil! Feeding to the lions would be a merciful act.”

“But Mr. D., people, humanity, homo sapiens is simply another frightened creature, who doesn’t know very much about anything. We choose one view of things and others choose another view.”

“Not so simple Catherine. You perceive it as fear; they think nothing of striking ‘fear’ in others. ‘Fear of ‘God’! I perceive it as an ego thing, a conceit of an oversized underutilized brain. The planet is a loveless place; or an indifferent place, in the least; or at best, however you want to say it. I imagine even in the most feeble minded amongst us, some degree of awareness exists, a degree of sentience as a function of an underutilized encephalon. This anatomical accretion, so called brain, all of its own, continually spews out a kind of inner noise. It might ask those very questions you put forth, ‘where do we come from, why are we here, and where are we going?’; perhaps not in such poetic terms; more crudely.

“Then conceit or vanity enters the equation as a part of the awareness, wow!, a self-consciousness. If one imagines itself to be an inadequate pitiful specimen, it might do almost anything to compensate for what it lacks, to somehow feel equal, first of all, to other look-a-likes. Why? Then it needs to be equipped to endure the task of surviving in a very indifferent world. Apart from any notions of equality, one wants to be noticed, to be considered special, to be loved. Such a need always exists to be loved. One desires love whether they are morphed out, or disfigured, crippled; or plain, for that matter; even the beautiful may lack self-confidence, maybe realizing that body odors offset the reek of beauty. Surviving is not all that simple a matter; not for the disadvantaged individual, that is, the individual who in its awareness, perceives itself as disadvantaged. Perhaps most feel disadvantaged in some way.

“Don’t mistake what I am acknowledging here, what allowances I might be making. As part of my sentience, I have become aware of the other, the look-a-like. That look-a-like can be regarded as a threat to me, or as neutral, or as a friend. Remember the old adage of needing to eat a peck of salt. I cannot be certain; so I am apprehensive when I meet a look-a-like, even when I have been taught to expect something else; all I need to do is trust a little, maybe even assume that the other is like me, wanting the same things I do.

“Without belaboring the point, we very often become disappointed in our expectations, often betrayed, even by those who are most like us; even in those we trust. In short we cannot reliably find our comforts amongst our brethren. We can become very defensive; or we can become very aggressive, and hostile, as a way of avoiding the implications of interacting with our look-a-likes. We can invent schemes to circumvent, to get ahead of, to thwart, through means fair or foul, to attempt to manipulate or control that human environment in which we must live.

“The Son of God purportedly chased the money changers from the temple, but our nifty persuasions (adaptations if you will) have erected a temple in which we can anoint our legal tender with, ‘In God We Trust’. Such transparency!

“If ever there was an example of a Darwinian creature, there you have it. Adaptive, to say the least. Whether a descendant of something more rudimentary does not matter. If we are ‘God’s’ work, then God ain’t what its cracked up to be. Some of ‘God’s’ creatures prove very devious; as well as disgusting. Money grubbing too!

“The God thing is there, an invention if you will, because the dumpy creature that finds itself alone, inadequate, incapable, surviving in an indifferent world, unloved, fearful as you say, adapts to that situation. The ‘life force’ provides a solution; an imperative arises within the being to ‘get with the program’; to survive, no matter what. Live by ones wits if necessary. Then one clutches for straws. ‘God’ throws out a life line to the drowning man. One is grateful, so he goes about doing ‘God’s’ work. The more work he does, the more of those he enlists in the legions, the more he potentiates his own favored position; or so he imagines. He can be big, fat, ugly, stuffed with Ding Dongs, and completely without any knowledge (to put it kindly), but still find succor with that deity (how rotund thy soul?).

“That doesn’t satisfy him; he’s got to militate his new found, ‘born again’ succoring; everyone must come into the fold, so he imagines his imaginary ally (God) telling him. Then, what was this private matter, becomes an annoyance (to put it mildly) to

everyone else. So what you have assessed as another view of things becomes enshrined in politics, finding its way into legislative action, as a means to ostracize, perhaps exorcise others. It becomes an insidious, inflammatory thing. It becomes a 'man' thing, instead of the thing he imagined in the beginning, a 'God' thing. Man has usurped 'God' for his own purposes, to control and to manipulate others; power trips, monopolies, exclusiveness, non-assimilation, even xenophobia; 'God', per se, no longer exists; only this ugly thing that had begun as an ugly thing, and perseveres as an ugly thing; Man, no God to be found. Is there a truth to be found in any of this banter? God used and manipulated? God Bless America.

"Man is man for all that, a survivor, an animal, a thing, fully obedient to the forces about which he equivocates,"

"I suspect what you are trying to say has some truth and relevance, Mr. D.; but it is only one side of the argument; obviously a side that bothers us. For the most part, unfortunately, most of these 'God' things that arise become orthodoxies; ritualistic, voodooistic, intolerant, ridged, bigoted things. I suppose one imagines a greater security through a kind of ossification of beliefs."

"Hah!, then, after life. Hah! Ossification in perpetuity! All going ga ga over God, the almighty savior who granted eternal life in exchange for enshrining his grandiosity.

"Catherine, I swear man is wholly artless; simple minded; if only he was a little more cunning, foxy, he might be more assured of living a fuller life. A very dull, utterly boring creature on his way to eternal life; what a presumptuous sunuvuabitch! That's an example of 'intelligent design'!? He forsakes this Eden for a nebulous Paradise.

"We somehow fall out of step with our own marching cadence as we follow the imperatives of the blind wandering in the darkness in the search for light, then, unaccountably, we start taking backward steps, becoming fearful of knowledge; we can't handle it. Knowledge without the deity seems intolerable, and perhaps not credible. *Ironically*, the Deity is made in the image of man.

"Its so easy to fall back on ignorance. Not to want to know anything, but to grunt dismissals of real intelligence. To me, this manufactured bullshit is unbecoming; it does not fulfill the promise, either of the creature, or of the integrity of its search. Intelligent Design!, Intelligence, my ass."

"I sense that one bombast doesn't serve any better than the other, Mr. D. We need to do better. Are we not throwing the baby out with the bathwater?"

“Catherine, hypothetically, Science, per se, is not a religion. It does not make quantum leaps without foundation. There are too many of us asking basic questions. Sure, some hypothesis are made only to be discredited, because the discipline of true science does not admit of fallacious proofs. I know you adhere to the evolutionary concept, as do I. We do not question very much its basic thesis. It can be tested in so many ways. In many ways the operatives, the mechanics can be observed, given sufficient time; and they can be demonstrated. We believe in essence that the process is ‘Godless’, even though we cannot know with certainty that aspect of what else we believe. Believing in a creator that resembles us is so beyond the reach of Science, it is not even considered possible of study. As scientists, we would not assign that imperative without being able to observe; we will not jump to that conclusion. We do not ask, Can man live without ‘God’, per se; that is, as a rational being? It simply does not follow, it does not occur even as a decent hypothetical question, deductively.

“Our lives will see the matter unresolved. There is little enough humility, and honesty, within the species. We all come to the same stopping place; then there is nothing. We cannot know beyond the grave anymore than we could before we were born. Somehow sad, because some of us would like to know, definitively. We shrug before eternity.

“For myself, I must admit to ignorance, despite my bombast. I can live, I must live, with my ignorance, but I cannot live with the imposition of another’s ignorance, especially when they arm themselves, and begin to threaten me. Then it becomes me against them; then it gets ugly. I have learned to both fear and hate that which I fear. Irrationality is something to fear. Conversing on the visceral level is deadly.”

“Not entirely, Mr. D., as she snuggled up to him.

“To be completely fair, Mr. D., we all practice a little bit of voodoo. We live by our ‘short-cuts’ to reality. That is, we rattle in proverbs, in sayings, as part of an inheritable thing. We do resort to lucky charms. A kind of magical intervention. We have our favorites. We chant things, like others might recite prayers. But one is not better than another.”

“Ah Yes Catherine, as you recite, it brings to mind my little rant in another of my scribbles: Here ‘tis, in Knotted Twine, in a chapter titled The Green Shirt (fee faw fum): *‘Is it credible to bestow DELOS as proper appellation upon a radar reflector? Is one to impute the precise meaning ‘he cannot die’, merely by instituting a legislative fiat: ONE CANNOT DIE ON DELOS; or does DELOS signify nothing more than nothing? We carried **DELOS** on board. In the ‘Olden Days’, it was believed one sought favor with the sea*



gods to ward off evil. Sea lore would have it a ship needed find her own way across the waters, and could only do so if she had **eyes**. **Figureheads** upon prows appeared in the form of **Holy Birds**, the heads of horses, **boars, lions, leopards** and **tigers; dolphins, bulls, dragons**, even **swans** and **antelopes**; and **centurions; salamanders, unicorns, Neptune driving sea-horses**, even **Kings** and **statesmen; group figures** depicting **Fame, Victory, and Glory**, Yes!, and the **Trinity**; one ship sported the **guillotine** (eyeless) as her figurehead; and finally the **barebreasted woman**, for the naked woman was believed to calm the stormy seas. Today we are so blasé and self-assured; scant craft as much as grace their bow with an extra **eye** or **propitiatory bosom**.”

“I like that Mr. D., I can imagine how you might feel in your little ship if you carried me on your bow.

“But to stay on track, if that is possible.

“Don’t take me wrongly, I do not equate each of these interveners in the affairs of men and women. I am aware of the vicious intolerance of the one. Perhaps I might measure the degree of insecurity by the degree of viciousness. Insecurity assumes many forms as it attempts to compensate for or conceal its reality.

“I want to find a common thread here. I do want to find a way to truth – Hope through truth.

“I suspect we will never find a completely logical route to certain truths, because we simply cannot know the answers to some questions that seem obvious to ask. ‘Please pass the truth’, Mr. D.

“We all want to nail down a ‘Prime Mover’, so to speak. We want that Prime Mover to be the one and only Prime mover. We want it to be perfect, consistent, reliable, all wise, non-discriminatory, fair, equitable, even-handed, just, not vindictive, understanding, forgiving; and we want that prime mover to be accountable as well as infallible. A tidy package. But we can’t get there, but only through believing there is such a being. We even go so far as to assert there is such a being.

“It is convenient to so believe, reassuring, quieting, placating. If we would all believe the same thing, imagine how reassuring. A mutual reinforcement society, a mutual admiration society.

“I know this cannot be. Not because we might not desire it and welcome it, but because we cannot know. Instead of comforting each other in this lack, we assail each other, like a pack of snarling beasts. Each to each other’s detriment. We ignore what knowledge comes to us through the discipline of science. What ‘science’ reveals concerning the habitat, the place we must live.

Instead we throw up some Biblical thing 'multiply and subdue the earth' as a divine message to justify all the our predations, Hah!, 'our way of life'. It is so terribly narrow an outlook; selfish, hostile, and destructive; as well as mean and vindictive. Beneath us, Mr. D? Or, our true character?

"Is 'survival' the underlying name of the game? One tribe, one nation, one creed over the other? Non assimilable? Racial and ethnic? A stubborn thing that kills unrelentingly through the force of habit? How many have met their demise forcing the Savior down someone else's throat? Or Imam, for that matter?"

"An 'intelligent design' might be much preferred, Mr. D., rather than what we have, this hapless evolved thing, seemingly without purpose, other than to reproduce more of the same, without end."

"Catherine, you are much kinder than I, more willing to perceive mankind in a better light, however critical you might be of him otherwise; and persuasive in your eloquence; I am only moderately tempted to modify my stance. My instincts cry out. The temper of my life and thought has been acquired through the repeated hammerings of reality. Assumption has been beaten out of me, expectation has been subsumed in the alloy, hope, merely a thin fracture line in the more crystallized, hardened and enduring fabrication of me. Whereas you are so youthful, made pliable through earnestness and hope, and a belief in mankind, mostly through your own self-effacing self, that desires so much the good that it is willing to see that good in the merest gesture, whereas I see, if not a self-serving gesture, a hesitant, mistrustful one.

"Have my sensibilities yielded to paranoia?"

"I don't know Mr. D. I recognize the distinction being made. I do not want to be dissuaded from what I feel, corrupted as it were, by notions that come from disillusionment, bitterness, and Yes!, a different perception of reality, and Yes!, again, tempered by a life time of exposure to the same old unresolved antagonistic conundrums.

"I can imagine there are those who spend their entire life seeking the common ground. These people are the ones who somehow leave us with the UN, a somewhat United Europe, The Hague, the Geneva Conventions, mostly unanimous International agreements on the protecting of our environment, on the saving of endangered species, even the discontinuing of atmospheric testing of nuclear devices; and even as ineffectual as these agreements may seem at times. It does demonstrate intent, and does demonstrate tacit agreement, a realization of the imperative. It all takes place through a kind of patient plodding, and dedication.

"In short, it does demonstrate that it is not everyone looking out for number one, even though that may be an underlying

reality. This is an important distinction to be recognized. Perhaps some peoples are compromised into supporting something they feel is not in their interest. But one supposes, in the last analysis, there is always a reservation, a vigilance, that can argue for intercession, arbitration, perhaps withdrawal. For me, I see what I want to see, the intent, because I know how necessary that is, it is a sign to me that we are making the effort to do what I personally believe is the right thing to do, without prejudice.”

“I cannot argue against this aspect of reality, Catherine, because underneath all my rancorous yapping, and apparent disenchantment, is at least contained a similar hope. But the notion of ‘intelligent design’ is another backward step, an evasion; all the while pretending to be a forward step, an invasion. It represents a kind of laziness of that underutilized oversized brain, a gravitation toward ignorance, instead of some higher calling, that of enlightenment. Ironically it recalls Orwell’s ‘Ignorance is Strength, although used in another context. Ignorance is ignorance. Ignorance as the chosen one.’”

“We can mostly agree on that Mr. D.”

“Maybe this is a place to change the subject, as is my wont when in your company. You are such an object of beauty, I cannot but be continually surprised and overwhelmed.

“Catherine, it has been my life long habit to avoid looking directly at pretty girls; looks by stealth, that one not be blinded. I imagine this to have begun in my infancy; perhaps before birth. What was I doing inside of a woman? Had I always carried this memory, this realization, this knowledge with me; this inevitable gore? This worm that was ejected in a fit of grind into the canal of my mother. How receptive was she to this disgusting display of wanton desire; how much real enjoyment? Was I conceived in some obtuse, foreordained, perhaps, Catholic manner? The blood and guts servitude to the imperatives of church and mother nature. There was I complicitly, following the imperatives of ‘intelligent design’ doing my part, flagellating, swimming, toward that destined goal, breaking all records to get there before 80,000,000 others. Triumphant, I arrived at the tape, plunging through the membrane with a vicious whipping lunge ahead of all the others. ‘I will be!’ ‘Thy will be done’. Then there was the traumatic emergence traveling the ill-fitting canal again, like crawling through a sewer pipe.

”I feel somewhat confident my mother wanted me; at least, since she got married, I assume she wanted some kind of offspring. ‘God only’ knows what she might have expected. I never felt close to her; she was absent for three years during my early life. I suspect she cared for me, being who she was. I did not feel

rejected by her. I can remember when I in my late teens walking the streets with her, in Silverton, Colorado, not wanting people to think my mother was my girl friend. There was my weird father, thinking I, was old swollen foot, Oedipus, and mother, Jocasta. Crazy stuff, a prickly gauntlet for my youth, no galloping allowed. A slow torture.

“For some reason, for as long as I can remember, I seemed to give offense to pretty girls. There, in the background, were mother’s words echoing, ‘Faint heart n’er won fair lady’. An admonition from on high. What could she possibly have meant?

“I was always stealing looks at them, because if I looked at them directly, and I was observed by them doing so, I got the distinct impression I was doing an offensive, unwanted, perhaps criminal, thing. So my habit turned into one of stealing looks; a thief of looking at what pleased him most. How much heart was in these furtive gestures? OH! for the stolen glance that would earn him a smile, the smile that would break a thousand hearts.

“There you were, as I descended the stair, the prettiest of them all, so pleasant, not an inkling of alarm, of disdain, with a curious warmth radiating from you.”

“Mr. D., you do not have to fear my disapprobation for the theft of glances. You are entirely welcome to study me. Soon enough you will discover my more ordinary parts, my flaws; or I will cease to be a mystery to you, so familiar I will become; that will be both my desire and my regret.

“I want you to feel entirely comfortable with me; I want you to take joy in me, my proximity, my looks. I would feel chagrined if you felt you could not feast your eyes upon me. I want that, and I need for you to be absorbed in me, and by me. May you never tire of this one.”

“All my life, Catherine, can you imagine it, not being able to look. I would always fall all over myself, trying to be the one a pretty girl would ask to assist her. Invariably I would fall on my face. Here! you are! You do not question the venue; how improbable things are; how the author is being so contrary to reality. How he lets this thing continue, this tantalizing torment, if you will. The mad deprived author is stealing his looks now, uninhibited. Finally he has allowed himself this luxury of untruth, this fiction; a desperate man, alone, sequestered in his cubicle. Perhaps, by all standards, a dirty old man. Despicable. The Frog, Quasimodo.

“Yet, why should he be denied what others can do freely, boldly, almost lasciviously? The Claude Frollos? Oh!, Esmeralda what they did to you. What form is the author observing?

"Is the author writing this, or is William speaking for him? Is someone perchance wanting to substitute a deer for the sacrificial Iphigenia?"

"Mr. D., here you are questioning the merits of fiction again. Yes!, the author has the privilege, the 'license', to do as he does. No one has clapped him in irons. He does not restrain himself. I have to go along with his thing, or I will not be. I haven't any choice, so I say all the things he would love to hear, would have loved to hear all of his life, from every pretty girl. Even though he has a pretty wife, he is still famished for this kind of notice. At this point in his life he is not interested in form; and he does not feel he will have to answer for the lack of it, so close to the edge where few dare wander.

"He cannot keep this secret, this yearning, locked up inside anymore; he is too close to the end to risk taking this unexpressed longing to his grave, unspoken. While we might think he cares what might become the judgment of posterity, we cannot know of his desperate need to be forthcoming, to reveal the awful truths of his being; the torments he has endured. His pathetic humanity can no longer be kept under lock and key.

"I might quarrel with his method, his denouement. He might have sent a shy young man my way, as he pretended to do with the college student. But that ploy was only some token assent to reality. Instead he humiliated the student, as perhaps he himself had been humiliated, as Sonja humiliated you.

"Mr. D. do not think for a moment that every girl, pretty or not, doesn't want to be looked at. Yes!, romantically, she desires someone nice to look at. But mostly she craves notice, attention, no less than her counterpart. She wants to be special. Female vanity, adornments, perfumings, manners, all serve a purpose. Attracting the male through glances, looks, demurings, even more overt coquetry, flirtation, provocative gestures, even playing hard to get, all are part and parcel of who and what we are. No mystery about that; you may assume. Take it from me.

"With me, since I am an invention, I think the author was setting me up for a nominal test. Yes!, in real life, many young men, many old men would gaze upon me, would desire me. Some of them, not being of faint heart, would make advances; and even some with faint heart would abashedly pine over this beautiful young woman of me. Would I do what might be natural for me to do, as we seem to speculate upon what is natural? In his self-consciousness he knew his fictional model would become something that would revolt the reader; an oeuvre for old men. Nobody writes for old men, the drones, the useless crabbed things that only clutter the landscape.

“I became a sacrificial lamb; more, a sacrificial virginal princess, thrown into the yawning chasm, an offering to the great one, an appeasement to auger against all the evils of the world. Who was the great one, he that played at being a God? Yes!, the author.

“I don’t mind. I hadn’t any rights except those he provided. I have enjoyed all that we have been together. I have not needed to make a virtue of my loyalty to you. I am; that is enough. Since we are part and parcel of the author’s imagination, we might be resolved favorably in this denouement, even though we go separate paths; even though he must yield to reality in the end. I do not believe he will off us. We must endure long enough this seeming travesty for the author to work through all his essays, all his dubious opinions, all his heartfelt cries, his agonies, his frustrations, his behind-the-curve lamentations, and Yes! all his unrequited desires, casting them into the indifferent universe as the chaff of this one life he has been forced to lead; forced to lead since he had not the courage to end it all once he knew it for what it was.

“I know much of what I say seems dire, so Kierkagaardian, so Dostoevskian, so Kafkaesk.

“Mr. D., life is a darkness with a thin red line wriggling therein. Are we headed in some direction, going toward some place? We don’t know. Sometimes I see us as one of those toys that have been mechanized through a wind-up spring, or are battery operated, maybe even a fancy remote controlled thing. We are placed upon the earth; and released to scramble along until the spring unwinds, or battery runs down, all without guidance, without direction. Even the remote controlled toy can be controlled only so far away, necessarily confined to a circumscribed area, until its battery expires.”

“Your toy image brings to mind my son’s remote-controlled battery-operated toy car, about the size of my hand. Yes! it could only speed along for a limited distance, maneuverable, as though it might contain some ‘intelligent design’; but it could do little more than amuse; perhaps as the maker is amused by homo sapiens. My son would use his four wheeled contraption to chase chickens; or as something to crash into staged piles of things that would scatter to the four corners of the yard; or some stunt one might see Evil Canevil perform.

“We lookers on would laugh hilariously as the chickens would dart around as humans might if they were being taunted by invaders from outer space; and through some dark sadistic urging we would see a fascination in the crashings.”

“Hardly what I was thinking Mr. D.. Furthermore, you and I are inclined to take things more seriously.”

“Perhaps; but I can see myself as a chicken. If we take things more seriously, we are more subject to being unhorsed by windmills.”

“I wasn’t thinking that kind of serious; something more limited, but I suppose that is the inevitable course we must follow.”

“Chickens with lances!”

“Mr. D.! No!, more like fear and trembling, like living in the underground, like becoming a psychological thing that tries to disappear behind walls.”

“Come now, Catherine, we can do better; we do do better. Franz thinks we were fashioned to live in Paradise, even though we have been expelled from it. Which, to Franz, also means that Paradise still exists”

“You and I see the attrition of Paradise, we are witnessing less and less of something. We are not expelled; we are living within, attempting to salvage something that remains. Yes! Paradise exists both in fact, however encumbered with heat and cold, sturm and drang, slings and arrows, and, in the imagination, as a place of sunrises and sunsets, and forests, mountains and oceans, all stocked and staffed with life; living in peace and harmony.

“We know Mr. D., the only apparent peace and harmony comes with several caveats. Franz has opined Paradise is here to serve us; who the hell are we? Yes! We have certainly enslaved Paradise to our bidding. It is our very own invention. There are predators, and there is prey; that is, as humans we are both. Paradise!?! I believe the concept is in error. Paradise is a metaphor for desire.

“I say this without knowing a fitting description for what is here; who are we, why are we here, where are we going?”

“How say you; here we are, we two, somehow magically trothed without bindings, earthlings soaring above, disconnected, variously crashing to the unholy integument, made of hardened magma; then we must submit to our consummations, hoping our transports will not fail their promise, that we might continue our flight.”

“Thus it is, Mr. D.; I do not find fault with OUR transports. But would it be possible to confine this discussion to our other ‘conceivings’?”

“Very clever, Catherine; you mean, the wind-up toy?”

“Not so much that. I was only suggesting how little control we might have. But maybe what I was speculating with regard to the task of the author. Perhaps very boring to the reader, who might be more into the romance and the prurient stuff. But, for now, the reader will need to make his way on his own. There is only so

much titillation I am willing to provide. When I am not engaged in love-making, or feeling the before effect and the after effects of lovemaking, and when I am surfeited with the sunrises and sunsets, and lollygagging in Paradise, I am faced with a creeping, pervasive awareness of other things.

“For example, I become aware of human suffering; particularly all the needless aspects of that suffering; and, as well, all the needless aspects of any life form that is made to suffer at the hands of he who reigns; you know who I mean. Why am I so made. Why cannot I simply wallow in pleasure, obviously?”

“We can quibble over definitions of Paradise, and Reality, but they are only words, brain teasers for us who luxuriate in our circumscribed world. We might even declare an emancipation from that ugly world, that world of suffering; unwilling to pollute our happiness with the awful intransigent human condition.

“No, I cannot yield to that selfish claim. I am bothered, even at long range; even as I might be if I lived on another planet. Something is amiss, something is amiss, that requires everyone’s attention; everyone’s. I cannot idly stand by, like a cow, contentedly chewing its cud.

“If we are to become the master’s of the Universe, let us not dawdle; each life waits in the wings for our concerned intervention. We know of the suffering, where it is, what causes it; yet we dawdle. We speak of ‘preemptive strikes’ against imagined enemies, when the real enemies are claiming privilege, and exemption; not only claiming it, but insisting upon it. They will tell you, even as avowed Christians, whatever that could possibly mean beyond a ticket, or passage to yet another imaginary Paradise, they are not their brother’s keeper.

“Holy something, maybe, Holy Shit!

“As I was intimating, regarding the human condition, there can be no peace and harmony until we, as a species, whether of ‘intelligent design’ as some polemicists would argue, or whether merely a conscionable species, aware of disparity, do something to end that condition. There is no alternative. The status quo is not an alternative.”

“Catherine, it is hopeless. I know you know it is hopeless. You will be unhorsed at every turn. All you, as an individual, can do is sacrifice your life for something that will not oblige your most noble intention, because everything you will do, will be undone by forces that would see you as a meddler, perhaps doing you in, as meddlers get done in everywhere. There are forces that will not be unhorsed.

“One does not reach out at a distance; one enters the trenches, exposing their self to the horrors of the trench; and those who

have dug them, and heap humanity into them. They would stand over you; your beautiful life only something for their pleasure, to be taken, most likely brutalized; then disposed as a conquered thing.

“That’s called ‘field work’.

“Don’t even think of doing it.

“If you feel compelled beyond all reason to do something, create a website. Become an unseen influence. Become a blogger. Stress a message, a clear message. Perhaps the Malicious Virus makers would find a way of shutting down your site; so you would need to set up firewalls. The Internet mimics real life, from which it has drawn its model.

“If you take to the streets, your mother will be on the other side of the barricade. Where will your sisters be? Your father will die a thousand deaths as he mourns the fate of his beautiful offspring.”

“Mr. D., I know you mean well, as do I.

“Yes!, I can imagine doing nothing, because if I do do something, I feel I know the end result will be my body upon the pyre; if not literally, figuratively.

“No I do not want that, for many reasons. But it may be unavoidable; as we stand; so we may also fall? We stand only against other men, other humans. Is there not a seed of good in every other human? Or, to ask it another way, is there a human bone in every look-a-like? Can we not access that, and only that? Should one not try?”

“Will you give yourself a chance to retreat, if you find you cannot do as you had hoped?”

“Mr. D. I suspect it is a lifetime commitment; there may not be any advance; but there can be no retreat; someone must hold the line”

“YOU!!???”

“If necessary.”

