

NAKED IN THE STREETS

That was what I was told about my play, **THE DEER KILL** years ago, in a letter that I'm afraid to read now for fear of being shocked by my ineptitude or naivete -- whose hipster characters, JOHN, LUKE, PETER and THOMAS, come to a tragic end. The letter was written a long time ago by a tall, thin English Lord whom I much admired. Was it the "spiritual tone" of the characters, Christian names written by a hipster, anarchist, Jew, but modeled on certain people I knew. Directed by Ralph Cook, at Theatre Genesis, in NYC, 1970. A naked play, a troubled play, reflective of, even then, a very divided country. Followed by **THE HUNTER**, same deal, but abstracted, straight from the subconscious, about irresolvable American division resulting in a sacrificial murder. Rather, a failed reconciliation, nailed to a tree.

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I remember shooting up in the back, in the dressing room, during rehearsal. We did the play downstairs in the knave of the church. Walking those streets. Stoned all the time and scared about drugs and having no idea what to do, hoping that the play would work and change my life. To try my luck uptown as a playwright seemed unthinkable. I felt lucky to have some written pages and the hope of some sort of future in the theatre, an Off-off Broadway life.

I wore a Cheyenne Indian headband, a beaded antique -- stolen for me by the poet John Seely from the Museum of the

American Indian, where he worked as a guard -- and a black vest, Navaho beads, black boots. I was also driving a grey mustang with red leather seats at one point. God knows where that came from. Maybe the first Rockefeller Grant. The ancient headband was stolen from the front seat of the car, eventually, by some idiot hippie. I lived in that New York Lower East Side poetry world for years. Late fifties, early sixties. And then Theatre Genesis and the St. Mark's Church.

Now, I'm cornered, isolated. Breathing is difficult and I can't walk far. I hobble around my rooms with a cane and take vast amounts of medicinal drugs. In the San Fernando Valley, no less. During a Pandemic. Little invisible balls, called viruses, try to get into your lungs and kill you. Nature's Way.

Reminds me, I used to smoke a joint every morning when I woke up, and then two or three throughout the day. I have only a vague sense of who I was then, running around New York City high and carrying ounces of marijuana in a briefcase. I was dealing weed and hashish. A hint of Nostalgia for those days. The fear of the cops, the recklessness. The dope world. Eventual Junkiedom.

The current drugs in my life include steroids and painkillers and a nebulizer. Four times a day, various drug appointments. I'm trying to stay alive as long as I can. And not cough my brains out or listen to my annoying wheezing. I want to enjoy a few moments and get my work done. But

I'm not encouraged, and I don't see much good-will percolating out there. People (some) realize that we've become a criminal State, a failing State, but nobody will, or can, or seems able, to do anything about it. Fear of crazy tweets and the cult of a lunatic presidential narcissist.

74 million American people voted for the criminal megalomaniac. They couldn't recognize the con. It shouldn't take more than a minute. Racist? Status? Not the fear of G-d. It's not the Great Awakening #3. It's something stranger than that – a fanatic belief in a fantasy. The evangelical zombies. Zombies is wrong – it's more to do with being right, and being safe, and closing all the other doors, and surviving. Christians. The Geek marched over to a church one day and held up a bible for the cameras. And smirked. The Army and the State department higher ups walked with him, looking confused and stupid. Conned.

It's okay to lie now and kill your neighbor or cut him off on the road or rape his teenage daughter. Or rape your own daughter. The American Military invented a lying machine called the Internet and somehow this timid butthead college kid ended up owning one slimy internet manifestation called FACEBOOK. And he won't budge. He knows where his money is coming from. And now he's a billionaire. No, a trillionaire. The man needs jail time.

You see why unfettered capitalism is so bad for the Earth – you just can't keep turning it into resources for unconscious greedy mechanical creatures, swarming over

everything on the planet like our invisible friend, the Virus. Some people still believe that the earth is flat, and that G-d personally created mankind a few years ago and is watching us all personally, right this minute, and that Armageddon is around the corner. Americans. White Christian Nationalists. Geniuses. Right out of the public school system.

It's the era of cults, so I wouldn't feel like it's a unique situation. People must believe things and think they're right. It's the America everyone knows -- rosy cheeks, snarls, nasty gossip. Guns. Envy. Ignorance. Righteousness. Money. Brutality. Stupidity. The American Dream is itself a fantasy, but now you got people all over the world trying to get in on it. Migration. The Golden economy. For us, of course, it didn't always work out -- they sent many of us to go back where we came from. Remember the Exodus. One person, an Anti-Semite, in the State Dept. sending three-quarters of the Jewish refugees to death. Two hundred fifty thousand men women and children. Life is cheap, about the same price as a piece of paper. It was a matter of survival, as it is now with Central Americans coming North. Immigrants on the move. Camped in cages and tents on the streets at the Southern border. Africans on the Mediterranean and indigenous peoples on the Mexican/ American Rio Grande. And you see what happens. Better call Superman to keep them out. Or build a wall. Maybe exterminate a solid percentage. There'll be an inevitable die-off sooner or later. Our Friends on the Right would love it. Let's get rid of the dirty poor. The Black and Brown, the speakers of foreign

languages. The Jews. Get 'them out of the way. Get them out of the country. Get them off the planet.

There are people who want to see that now – the extermination of populations. There are people who want to do that. Don't take my word for it. Spacious living, familiar faces. Meanwhile, those thousands parked on the border in Mexico wait in solidarity, balloons and helicopters flying overhead. What to do? 81-year-old experimental playwrights like me can't do much, especially now that there are no living theater stages.

Had a moment, recently, in a silence, of not having to be anybody, not even myself -- a moment of freedom, sweet, formless, open. Didn't last long.

You can't keep the virus in a cage. You'd know that if you had half-a brain. You look at the faces in power and they look smashed – hung up on a contradiction that is hammering (rioting) in their heads: you can't just kill everybody, because then power would become meaningless. But I know the idea has crossed their minds. "Lose the intellectuals and the artists and the Blacks and the Jews, and we'll have a shot at a normal American life." A life without thought, without conscience, without meaning. A nice life, prolonged by meds. Smiles. TV. Cons. Addictions. Alcohol. Lies.

Look at the Parade: Dickheads with AR 15s and flags and boots and weird hats. Strutting the streets, driving their

pickups into people. Marching on the Capitol. Shooting strangers. Crazy ignorant white males outfitted to kill righteously cracking heads.

And get rid of the foreign races, the Chinese, and the Latinos. Muslims. There are Young White Gentile armed-to-the-teeth graduates of the third grade who think that way. Aggressive pubescent mindlessness. "Jews will not replace us." We're not far from there now. Saw parts of Schindler's List last night – the German teenager soldiers seemed to love the action. Watched a version of Landau in my homage to Bruno Shultz. Random shooting from the balcony. Couldn't continue looking at it, can't stand it anymore: the wanton murdering of Jews.

In hopes of repairing the past, or of at least legitimizing it, I may include here some poems, old and new, which I have ransacked from my papers scattered about in my house. Reading them now gives me certain pangs, but it seems best to save them from oblivion and let the devil take the hindmost, whatever that is supposed to mean. My guess, many years later, is that these Choruses were all written on Acid. LSD was a kind of psycho-medicine for me – it blew up much of my inferiority complex, though I still needed therapy, off and on, for the next fifty years.

1st Chorus

It is the world. It is the world in a red light.
There is no quiet on these causeways.

There is no rest station on this route.
Nobody knows how to turn off the alarm clock.

There are frightened beasts gathered in my dream,
Together in a red light, in my dream,
But surely the end is coming.

I am myself a smaller version of G-d.
There are, I think, other rooms.
You can go there if you like.

In my dream, the cloud upon which I walk
Is full of holes: one for every step I take.

There are four or five more of these, naked in the
streets psychedelic type poems.

2nd Chorus

this mind this ancient heat –
ball bearing in

ward, thought machine.

(All the changes

lean

for this

Presence)

this soul itself

is the end

Bright Light

City of Destruction!

I turn outward

I turn lover

(WHERE CAN I GO FROM HERE?
WHAT CAN I DO NOW?)

O my dark bride!

The world is all around us!

1963.

That last phrasing makes me a little uncomfortable. Even though no one will probably ever read it. But I'll let it stand, for now. Gives a sense of the acid state of mind if you can call it that. I'm an old man now. I was in my twenties during the acid years, waiting on tables and selling grass and hashish. I was not thinking about career or making money – only getting high and making it through the day. Writing snippets of poetry. Couple of drinks before dinner. The exquisite loneliness I felt on those NY streets.

Now I never get high. Sit outside and look at the sky. Try to meditate. Not going anywhere but here. In a book review, noticed an idea of the miraculous by Marilynne Robinson: Existence itself is the miraculous. Plus, an acceptance of the coincidence of Good and Evil. The Tree of Life. A certain quality of attention, wakefulness. She is onto it. A hard-eyed Christian, she, from the heart of America.

Me, I must take my steroids and my other various pills and insulin shots and try to observe what's happening while it's happening instead of going over and over things as though I could re-write the script. In my relentless imagination, these movie-like events in my head are mainly made-up of attacks on my character and fortitude and the tendency to fall in love with pretty women and be intimidated by everybody. Clockwork, right on time: a voice of opposition. A self-assault. Totally mechanical, but later in the night than usual. I catch it sooner. And not quite true anymore. I have "worked" hard on that one, and the Jerry Rochman therapy was right on the money. I still must suffer through it, evidently. Nothing Jerry ever said has turned out to be wrong in terms of my peculiar psychological mechanisms: Inferiority, claustrophobia, paranoia.

Which reminds me: the Biblical mission of the Jews. Not so off the mark. To bring the Absolute Objective to the World. Conscience.

Also discovered last night that a glass of wine doesn't hurt me physically. Even a diabetic like me. One glass. Could make the sugar count go up or down, apparently. But what a relief to get out of my usual state occasionally, though it does make me sick after a few minutes. Head buzzing with images and dialogue, and the body humming with pain. Bronchitis eruptions. Endless coughing spasms. Had a whole scenario in mind whereby alcohol was verboten for a diabetic. Does make me sick which I have to admit and haven't tried it since. Years, now. Believe all kinds of made-up shit: Like mounting of a website suddenly was a form of bragging. Not so. Maybe a little. I'm still afraid to look at the damn thing. My stay in re-hab – was intimidation – meaning I was brow-beaten into it – the experience produced a play, (CHARLES' STORY), which is usually what happens: Life is material for a finer, more intentional, Life on Stage, Catharsis, where there is more of a possibility for meaning. That higher energy, or finer associations, when you're "cooking," or actively attending, makes Theatre seem more significant than ordinary Life events.

There, at the re-hab, in Malibu, they knew right away why I was there and that I was neither a drunk nor a drug-addict and they treated me well without much hassle. I enjoyed the meetings and the pool and the suboxone, was upset that nobody visited me there and dreamed up the play I meant to write (and could, and did, almost verbatim). One night a fire came right up to the walls, and soon after I was out and in a hotel in Santa Monica.

Back to Naked in the Streets: A form of idiocy. Why talent must be controlled and organized. Once I stopped my mother from hitting me, I was on my own. There was never any what people call "parenting." Mainly lots of reading up there in the attic. Strange influence of the New Testament, the tones, and rhythms. I don't know how that happened. I don't remember ever reading it. The Life of Jesus seems to contain the same sort of chanting as in the synagogue, perhaps, the same sort of timing and thematic rhymes and stops and goes. But I might want to research that idea and take it back.

Yes, now I think that my writing is more reflective of the sound and influence of the New York streets. And the constant blaming and yelling in my family. Where you wouldn't want to run around defenseless. You'd be swatted by my mother like a fly. And the influence of Jazz (I worked the jazz joints in NY as a waiter when I was young – the Village Vanguard, the Village Gate, the Five Spot) and the many other literary voices, like the Russians, Celine, Beckett, Faulkner, the Absurdist playwrights, especially -- the list is a long one and I hope I deserve to mention it. I've written so many plays and I hope they're not all lost. I haven't submitted them anywhere for 20 or 30 years and of course you can't know what will happen to them, later, when I'm not here.

I'm thinking now: It's a strange sort of self-denial -- dropping out like I did, wanting to go it alone. No more submitting, no more cultivating people so they might do

your work. I just got tired of it. And, no doubt, some fear of the stupid rejection letters written by graduate students. But now I've lost touch altogether, and I don't have the dough to keep going. An old man isolated in the San Fernando Valley, a place I never thought I'd live when I was a young man in New York. Never thought I'd leave the city. But I started Padua here, made a few friends, and stayed, year after year.

I am a poet who writes plays, but I made the crucial mistake of signing with the Wm. Morris agency and Marty Caan, who had no interest in that kind of material. And I had to make a living, so I tried hard. Couldn't do it. I had written two pieces for the Visions series on KCET, Iowa, and Blessings which were really plays on a TV set. Got me into the Writers Guild, and that was that in terms of a career in the industry.

Figuratively, in my play, THE DEER KILL, I was running naked in the streets, and was properly nailed for it. But I don't want to make more of it than it deserves. Just a play with religious feeling and Gospel characters straight out of the Bible. It was at the height of the rebellion against the Vietnam War and American political and religious bullshit, full of naïve conviction and anger. Sexual betrayal. Who is alive anymore to remember those days? We knew the situation then for what it was, and it's still that way. The Vietnam war. Iraq. Donald Trump and his minions. (The creepy con should have been locked up years ago, jailed or institutionalized.) What's happening in the streets has no relation to Government, or to the institutions of the State,

which function along with the peckerwoods who believe in the Second Coming. They lie and cheat and pay back as little as they can. The rest of official concern trickles down like scraps of paper or balloons at a rally -- to the dying white middle class, to the ignorant rednecks. You struggle to eat, have a blanket over your head-brain, have a drink, watch the show, and die a lousy death surrounded by phonies and smart phones. Well, who knows? Quantum mechanics may change everything, entanglements revising the history of Man.

Remember those oxen-driven caravans racing West to take over Indigenous Land: the pioneers ridding the country of indigenous peoples using blatant lies and murder and false promises? A process, I think, of the Lower overcoming the Higher, morally speaking.

“Fuck you and die,” basically, is the message from indifferent history. Right up front along with the scourges of Trump and the Virus. He thinks he IS REALITY. Like G-d or the Messiah. A deranged old man, the leader of the Free World. He should have been killed, years ago. Strangled or hung or shot through the head. The stupid white billionaire has broken the country. It's going to be hard, going forward, to preserve a sense of decency and integrity. We're back in the wild west again, gunned up and ready to kill. Will there be fighting in the streets? Battles over water and land and principle? Maybe over hidden tanks of oxygen itself?

It was The Apprentice, my friend Tim informs me -- that's why seventy four million Americans voted for the avaricious clown. He looked good on TV. Swatting people around. Endless egoism. The rest is righteous stupidity and racism.

There are the Eaters and the Eaten, Winners and Losers, ersatz Darwinism. My uncle Hymie used to say that Life in America was a rat race to see who made more money than the next guy. Hyman. A Ladies Man, like my grandfather, Louis. My uncle, one of my father's five brothers.

I'm searching around in my head-brain, and I usually don't find what I'm looking for -- a significant detail, an image -- not always there. There's a woman, at large apparently, who suggests that a very thin veil separates imagination from memory. Puts a kibosh on this whole enterprise.

A blonde bombshell friend of mine, living on Sunset -- a broad avenue where the armed know-nothing boneheads are bound to march, with their guns out, should our dummy, mentally-ill president loses -- the mere thought of this makes our blonde bombshell hysterical. She's an actress who is auditioning, luckily, in the middle of a Plague, but is still without a theatre stage to work on anywhere. We worry about what might happen in that scummy Hollywood neighborhood, because she sees all kinds of horrors happening on the block, like a screaming naked man smearing his shit all over her car. The cops come by, and they see him, but keep on going. A flashlight shining into her

room at night. Lock your door, Honey. Hollywood, the creepy heart of American fantasy. Who could work there? Who could watch another slimy crappy TV commercial? My whole-body shudders when I hear that yelling BUY sound coming at me. The tortuous pitch that never ends.

No theatre, no civilization, really. Without the stage and the possibility of catharsis, the civilization falls apart. like papier mache, and it wasn't glued so firm in the first place. Plaster and wire. A fine art reduced to silly entertainment. Bad acting. No ideas, no contradiction, no observation, lying -- We are watching The Fall while chewing on popcorn dreams and candy and sucking huge volumes of soda pop. Reminds me of a poem I wrote, 1963, in an old magazine I found in a box while searching for remnants of myself:

ELIJAH TOBEY

Lizah Tobey the town idiot
 Head down and straight ahead
 Applauds the dinky happenings
 No eyes for membership
 But lots of enthusiasm.
 Ol' Elizah were you ever bugged
 Being out of it so --
 Nobody inviting you over
 Nobody taking your advice
 Not even the varsity
 Who ate your oranges --
 In fact, only the Yankees

Out-drew the high-school apes
For your one-track mind, Liza,
In praise of baseball.
They never said, "Mr. Tobey,"
They never sent a bill
Or gave you a telephone
With your own number
& The gas company officers
For whom you moved tanks
Paid your movie ticket.
You, the best fan around,
Clapping for musicals
Shouting bad endings down,
Huddling under neon exits
While the citizens go home
Leaving smirks in the lamplight.
Lizah waiting alone for his Lady,
The Woman on the Screen
His diamond Queen/
That beautiful Lady
The one in their dreams –
Does she come to your vigil,
You alone, Lizah,
For love on velvet shadows
When all the dead
Of heart are gone?

__1963

Elijah Tobey was a man who walked around town clapping his hands and shouting praise for the New York Yankees; and he'd ride the school bus when we played games in other towns. Sports was my passion in those days. I'd rather play ball than do anything else. I was pretty good for a little guy and, in retrospect, playing well served to enhance the little self-esteem I had.

The poem, whatever its merits, arouses so much about where I was at the time. And I'm reminded of that school bus ride to Fallsburg where I was already planning who to hit on for lunch and of the hormones activating and the feeling of don't try anything pal or I'll punch your head off or kick you in the nuts. Feisty little guy was I. Angry, ready to fight.

There was another little poem in the packet that I like.

LITTLE BEAR

scraped west 14th Street down
hoisted above the square
a cub spirit blinks
the form of a bear

it's alive kicks the neon
copping souls and signs
ugly songs proclaim him

little bear caught encircled

big holes swallow him

old men desire-grounded
 turn over gravel pits
 boys again hunting caverns
 bring home a small bear

one for the whole family

Father aims a blunt dart
 Mothers scream everywhere.

--1964

Suddenly by association reminded of stirrings in the heart on that school-boy bus -- though this poem was written on the Lower East Side in New York City-- stirrings then, and on that bus, of fantastical loving somewhere – even now -- an old man, me again, grateful for text messages intimating, or implying, or suggesting, the possibilities of love. Persisting, still...Never to be realized, of course. What's left in me of the erotic impulse. Too much head noise, as well, and the sense that I might be avoiding a catastrophe by the skin of my feet.

I'm happy merely to sit alone in an empty theatre and look at the stage. It makes possible "another reality". Something revealed. Catharsis. Levels of meaning. As I've opined since the 60's, plays aren't about what's happening, they are what's happening. There's a finer energy involved,

a finer association in my theatre-mind. A poet's mind. A finer energy on the stage. American culture has reared its ugly head -- lying and vulgarity and cheating and stupidity and greed are the real qualities of the American Dream. My head drops to my chest, and I must make a big effort to go on. Like now. Must economize and get rid of all that. But it will all be gone one day, with the subsidence of life on Earth, unless literature is written down in another dimension, another universe -- maybe in the dreamlife of theoretical physicists. Maybe on a spaceship.

Turns out that the ultra-Orthodox, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, believe in a kind of Heaven, Shemayim, and a Hell, Gehenna. But I think the terms are symbolic for they are still waiting for the Messiah and the Resurrection of the Dead. The High Court of Justice. The Hebrew Laws are exact. They have an Ideal about justice but still Screw the Palestinians and hate Arabs. It's the Law of Seven coming back up their asses. An octave. That, and the struggle for land and water.

For myself, I begin to wonder more and more about Life after Death. "Energy cannot die." And in my searching, I sometimes come in touch with something that feels Eternal, independent of, but deep in my ordinary life.

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Talked about Sam again. The night after he died, I got a little drunk and thought I was talking to him directly.

Would've sworn to it. Sounded just like him. Wrote some of it down but I don't know what I did with it. N. told me a story about Sam at the first Padua Festival, drunk, kicking Sarah's windows in, first time I think I heard that one. Sam could be a nasty drunk. Strange how a whole segment of one's life can be erased, like an edit.

Gold instead of brass.
Finer associations.

Too tired to sit. Head falls to my chest. Strange images and voices, like from another person's brain. Come back to the computer stunned. Empty. Slight sensation of my hands. But I have to say – I was frightened by the worm-like MAGA creatures on CNN. Worms with big teeth and red hats. Two or three women planted into the landscape like mushrooms. If G-d could only help us to get away from these crazy white people. It's disgusting. Redneck, toothless, haters of the intelligentsia. We may never get over this. They equate Trump with Jesus Christ no less, the new nihilist, criminal Messiah. Right here in the Land of the Free, grifting half the population.

Right now, I'm going purely on momentum. Selah, as it says in the bible. The pause that summarizes.

Love by text. Dream-like. Ambiguous. The pretty face. The Jewess. The always ambiguous acceptance of me as a person. It's all still there like it was in the 8th grade. The

Mednick clan. My father and a few of his brothers and my grandfather—all sex-obsessed.

Watching the news: People in the media acting as though nothing bad was happening: all coverage with the same tone, neither here nor there, while the Americana myth is rolling down the drain and can't roll back up again. But the talking heads continue to speak without alarm. Having deified Evil. Frightening. Giving so much attention to that creep, mesmerized by him.

Nothing to be done but sit here and take it and try to do my daily routine and get my website up for an indeterminate posterity. Everything seems to have been pre-set, with all the edgy cues in place. What survives, of course, is the big question. More pertinent now, of course, than in the 8th grade, when life seemed to be an infinite test of masculine and athletic mastery -- playing ball and fighting off bullies. Now, we see and endure the finite test of psychopathy in the species: The President of the United States. Nuts. The worst kind of Human Evil – out of control Narcissism. Elected by the People.

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We – the family -- seem to have gone from homelessness in 1946 or 47 to that unheated vacant house across the street from the old synagogue, used mainly by the bearded, sad old men from the “old country.” We were right across the street. I have a spotty, subjective vision of the

interior where we lived at the time – a large kitchen with a coal stove, oil tablecloth, stairs up to the attic. There was a front room with a wood-burner which mainly stayed empty because it was so hard to maintain – there was nothing else in that room, no furniture, nothing -- three bedrooms: one on the left where I slept with my brain-damaged brother -- In winter, I slept in my overcoat -- a coat that my brother pissed on, every night, for years on end. Across the hall were two more rooms where my mother and father and another brother and my three sisters all slept. I don't know how they managed that, especially with my parents fighting every night over sex and/or money or my mother's hysterical sorrow about leaving Brooklyn, her home, and how everyone had betrayed her. And then came the oven-heated kitchen and then the back yard with its mound of coal under a tarp. The rent must have been very cheap. Whoever owned it (maybe the synagogue) was glad to have some people living in that cold, decrepit building.

My mother de-lousing me with kerosene. Finding nits. An oppressive ordeal. She was making all kinds of demands on me in those days: Shopping, lying to grocers, bathing my siblings. Heating the water on the coal stove. Can't remember where the bathroom was. Somewhere downstairs. Upstairs was the attic, where my mother hid dollar bills in the second-hand clothes that people gave us. Socks. Boxes of the hand me-down stuff. She was hiding dollars wrapped up in the socks. The smell of the place. Like acrid Crisco. In the early Winter mornings, I dug coal from under the tarp in the backyard and started the kitchen stove

with it. Then, in Winter, I started the woodturner in the front room with paper, sticks and logs.

There was a separated attic room upstairs in the front that we rented out to an old Danish woman called Dutrisak. She was impoverished, like us, in her 80's or 90's at the time, and she would sit in the kitchen next to the stove all day long, eating fried bread, drinking coffee, and playing solitaire. I don't remember ever having a conversation with her. She had been a ballerina in Copenhagen. Prima. Held her head in a funny way--slanted -- like an aristocrat gone to seed. And she held us in a certain contempt. The fried bread. The solitaire. The odors. The look of things, the huge black frying pan on the stove, the coffee pot, the dark and dirty room, pipes showing.

I had to be careful about catching a cold. It would mean being trapped at home. Any kind of sick was bad. I had eczema on my calves which plagued me for years. That abominable itch and the scab that followed. And boils and all kinds of crappy diseases. I hid them as much as I could so I could avoid having to stay at home.

Going to school: I had no friends at first and was afraid to speak in class. I recall all the elementary school teacher's names in this little Catskill tourist town, the name of which I hesitate to say, I hated it there so much. Once, when I was twelve, I moved the entire high school library from one room to another. Thousands of books. And keeping them in order.

Author and title. He was trying to help me out. And I did it. Moved the whole library by myself.

I might add how much I'm grateful for that school. It was a good school, with good teachers who cared, and who had high standards, some of whom were veterans of the war, and I was very lucky to have attended there through high school, until I went back to NY.C. in the Summer of 1957.

Playing marbles in the yard. I'd get mad if I lost and wanted to punch somebody. Softball field. Woods. Fights. Snow. Slush. Decorations. Dick and Jane. Men walking around in Army uniforms. The older kids who were such sadists that we younger ones had to fight them all the time. Sticks and stones – bloody noses and cracked heads. Gerson's Grocery store, where I used to beg to put more groceries on the family tab. Sometimes yes, sometimes no, depending on Mr. Gerson's mood. Then the Lyceum Movie Theatre, where my father worked on weekends in the off season, and all week in the Summer – matinees on Saturday, serious pictures, for adults, Sunday night – as a projectionist. candy store across the street. Sol's luncheonette, where my mother ate her chicken salad sandwiches, and where my brain-damaged brother swept the floor. Down the hill to the railroad tracks. I knew every inch and corner and hideout and shortcut of that village -- especially where theft could happen, like the parking meters on the street, and the shelves at Abe's candy store, and the empty tourist bungalow colonies in the Winter, which I ransacked

occasionally, alone, stealing things like pillowcases or pots and pans.

Trains still came to town in the early days. Late forties, early fifties. We played a vertical version of handball at the station – a game called UPS. It was one of the chief aims in my life at the time to excel at that game. That and cadging food and money wherever I could. Always on the lookout to steal or be treated to, or be invited somewhere, for a meal. Quick to punch. “Hit first,” my mother advised on my way to kindergarten. Walked like I do now, Brooklyn Street walk, like my father. I didn’t smile much. Scowled. Women were always pinching my cheek and telling me to smile. Would get into fights. Weirdly and intensely protective about my family honor, even though I couldn’t stand to be around them myself. Pride. Sense of being undoubtedly deprived. Defensive. Quick. Small. I loved running and playing and fighting.

Cold winters in the Catskills. Bitter cold. Arctic winds coming through. In the shivering cold, shoveling coal with my mother to get the stove going in the morning, my mother standing over me brandishing a coal shovel. Wanted to play ball and run around. Didn’t raise my hand. Teachers were nice, but not intimate. Everybody seemed to know something dark about me. Poor kid, got a bad break, etc. Belligerent. Partially, it was my willingness to fight. Mr. Blumberg, the principal, took my side, usually, when I got into trouble.

On Saturdays, until my mother forbade it, I would walk up the unpaved road to my grandmother's little house in the woods. She hated my mother. The hatred was mutual. Hard to give a true impression about all that. I sat on her lap, and she bounced me around. She was bubbly and emotional. Had a soft spot for my father. But somehow, I never was all in with any of those people. And it's still true today. It's as though there's a tribal blanket of protection and attention that I never got under.

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I liked that solitary walk up to my grandmother's house. Celia, or her Hebrew name, Tzibil. The rustling sounds in the woods and the sense of mystery. The sweet air. A feeling of consequence in my chest. And I remember thinking to myself: this counts, this should be remembered: you have an obligation, somehow, to render these impressions in your thought, in language, and thus in "reality."

Dutrisak died one day, and I got to get away from my incontinent brother and move up to the attic room. It was freezing up there in those bitter winters, but I had some privacy and started to read. I was maybe ten or eleven. I also discovered where my mother was hiding money, in the attic clothes, and I clipped bits of it, a dollar at a time. She never did figure it out.

It all seems very strange now, those days: craftily surviving, avoiding going home, and then hoping to be invited for dinner at some friend's place; a humiliating, but

somehow do-able feat. That will to survive, on top of everything else in me: the self-doubt, the murderous impulses, hatred of the idiot-level politics. The Absurdist playwrights were right. Who cares about the planets and the stars and sun flares and all the rest? You wind the thing up and then it takes its last gasp and stops.

*

Remembering suddenly, the poet's life on the Lower East Side. How I looked up to everybody and was so glad to be getting published in the little mags and doing readings occasionally.

TO THE SHARP - TOOTHED LADY AT THE DOOR

Nobody, so definite, lives,
Unless it be some icy place

W/ a motive.

Lady, I've got yr. waves.
You come on like snort,

A to go,
B to keep warm.

Don't come no closer.

IN THE HOLE

O What
 A scene
 In the sun
 On the
 Patio!

A gathering
 Of women
 Too far
 In the hole,

& Their
 little boy
 courtiers
 gone fishing
 in the hole

w/ a sad
 old tune
 for bait.

—

Selling ounces of pot and working lunches in the city and weekends and holidays in the Catskills. Got into N. Y. Local Eleven, the one good Waiter's Union, because my father, Sol, as a projectionist, was part of the Stage-hands Union, all members of the Teamsters. Worked with a group of Cuban Exiles, doctors, lawyers, teachers – they wore good orthopedic shoes (news to me) and were impeccably good

waiters. We wore cummerbunds, red jackets, black bowties. Slicked our hair back. Very high-end, under the skating rink at Rockefeller Plaza.

Tompkins Park. Hippies. The first LSD. It came as little blue dots in sugar cubes from uptown at Rockefeller Center, delivered by a heady student there named Jim Frazier. The world turned molecular and electronic. The people looked dirty, deformed, tragic. The city an ever-moving hellish web of doorways and windows and sidewalks and struggling trees. The murder of Groovy in that bar on Avenue B, which ended the era. Turns out my first wife was making it with Ritchie Velez, owner of that very same scandalous bar, where we used to gather with our friends. And where Groovy was found dead one day in the basement.

Met Amy in '62, married in '63. The Hotel Pierre. We lived at East Ninth and Ave. D. Movie Star Lingerie, that was Amy's family business. On Fifth Avenue. She was a New Left person, U. of Wisconsin at Madison, knew Bob Dylan, whom I met one time in a Village coffee shop. I don't know what I was doing at the time. Wanted to be accepted, I suppose, as at least someone with intelligence and talent. But I was flying around NY like a lost soul. No clue. A poet. Waiter. College drop-out. Stoned. A pack of Luckies a day. Whiskey at night. Center of gravity in the smoky clouds above. In my head. Angry, unforgiving. Downcast. Of course, nobody looks up in the city, only sideways and back. Something might be gaining on you.

Amy's father had become a Communist and given away his portion, but, if I remember right, her uncles threw the party at the Pierre, which my whole family attended, looking like rural rednecks amidst this successful Jewish New York garment Center business aristocracy.

Not sure how I held up. Overwhelmed by those impressions. Very much in love. She didn't smoke or take drugs and wanted me to finish up at Brooklyn College. Become a teacher. I probably performed stoned passive/aggressive resistance. One night I went home on 9th street and all my shit was in the hall and the lock changed. I think I went to a hotel. The Chelsea. In the basement. Cockroaches everywhere. Don't know how I lived through that one. Had already done a play or two at Theatre Genesis and ended up with the Hicks family on Henry Street. I gradually fell in love with Louellen, Eddie's wife, an Irish woman from Long Island. I was obsessed with her for a couple of years, especially when I was living with them on Henry Street. Eddie was a down home Hippie folk singer from West Virginia, his head blown by too much acid. Ultimately, we formed a band with Sam Shepard called the Heavy Metal Kid. I wrote most of the songs. But what hurts now is memory of the obsession. The two or three events about which my conscience bothers me to this day were about desiring the wrong women, somebody else's wife or girlfriend.

Weird, the different lives. At least 8 or 9 different lives. Toddler in Brooklyn. The sordid poverty of the Catskills,

horrifying marriage at the Hotel Pierre. (My father stuck his tongue in Amy's mouth – that was the end of that, right there.) That silky tight green dress she wore when we met. She was so hot I got up the nerve to make the fateful phone call. Thought we were mature enough to get married. No, we didn't think about that at all. I don't remember how that all went down. East Ninth Street and Avenue D. I wanted to be a hipster poet and she wanted a regular academic life. You could also say that it was a class issue, a cultural issue, but I was eventually shocked to find myself out on the street again. Amy wanted me to become a schoolteacher like her, secure and helpful to society. I wanted to find my "voice." It was intuitive more than conscious. Stubborn, maybe. Stoned, most of the time. Aggrieved, angry.

Kennedy was shot while I was working lunches at Mayhew's Country Kitchen on East Broadway. Nice hamburgers with a good pickle relish. Our clientele were the office workers in the neighborhood. A big lunch rush at twelve, and by two it was empty. Red jackets and bow ties. Smoking grass morning and night. Bit of a blur there. Lived on East 2nd, 6th, 9th and 11th, and then down on Henry Street. The actor Warren Finnerty, one of my marijuana clients, introduced me to Ralph Cook at Theatre Genesis, and I did my first play there, THE BOX, in '65. Lee Kissman directed it. A very different life began. Same kinds of habitual thinking, self-critical, yet somehow clinging to the idea of a literary life. Mainly getting high and drinking. Irish Whiskey. Waiting on tables. Admiring the Hipsters. The left-wingers, the Anarchists. Often thought I'd be a good high school

basketball coach, and teach English, quietly, anonymous. And I probably would have been good at it. I didn't want to go that way. And get stuck in some American town somewhere and live that academic life, a life of obedience and intimidation.

Woke up sick today. Sick and tired of all the meds. This fumbling attempt to remember my life. Can't hardly walk because of the arthritis in both hips, missing discs in my back, and no sleep, coughing and wheezing. Must have acted like a fiend come back to life. Stumbling into the kitchen for my blessed coffee in the early morning, and then the insulin shot, and then this.

I keep leaving a lot out. Like what I was thinking or feeling. The effect I had on others. Still the source of confusion for me. Even as a kid, I had a double life: an interior one, in my head, and the one I faced it all with, scowling, angry, but good-natured and mostly obedient. But also, fierce if I was challenged. Wild. So, there must have been another "I" in there, someone who stood up and fought back, and competed. I think that's right. Plus, the subjective life, which was – I don't know what, just interior, and inferior, which connected with the writer, the intellectual in me, eventually, at some point. But doubt remains. I am the product of that awful inferiority that I am determined now to throw into the trash or drown in the sink. But it lingers on and surfaces, subtly, especially in the evenings, to give me a hard time.

This over-complicated attitude toward myself! I still have the urge to justify and rationalize, and I still experience a certain paranoia. Claustrophobia. Is it pre-conditioned as the troubled kid from the bad childhood? Yes, the noise, the yelling, the danger, the filth, the feeling of being trapped and accused. Bound. Milton, again! Paradise Lost. What an influence he had on me, he and Byron and Blake, in that honors class at Brooklyn college! Those dactylic/iambic beats. The Greeks!

Suddenly remembering Ms. Clavering, the high school Librarian, who taught diagramming sentences in the 7th Grade. Most useful class I ever took.

*

Just got a flash, an image, of the apartment on East 9th street. Lots of light, facing the projects and the East River, right on the corner, same building that Henry Roth wrote about in Call it Sleep. Opens a Pandora's box of associations. The sixties, lots of coupling and uncoupling, druggies all. I had a widely different persona than the one I have now, but I can't quite catch a picture of it. Years later, when I was shooting up, one of my sources, the ever-conning Peewee, lived in the same projects. He held me up one time in the hall with a large door key on my jugular. Those were the days.

*

Back in the Catskills, there was a bar near the railroad tracks called Luckies, where, reputedly, the local Black community hung out and where, according to my father, prostitutes were available. You never knew with my father, Sol, whether he was making up things or not. He wasn't all there in his head, but he claimed to be a frequent visitor to the bar. Truth is, I never smelled alcohol on his breath – my parents were not drinkers – they'd make a big show of it if they drank a beer. Playing 500 rummy with their friends Stan and Dot in that tiny, crumbling, smelly ground floor apartment from which I'd escape out the window. Sol was his mother's favorite -- he was very handsome in his youth – and strode around in that Brooklyn Street-walk like he was an important American citizen. Up in the projection booth he tried to teach me how to “thread” the film properly into the machines, but I was as technology challenged then as I am now. I ended up watching for the little dot on the upper left-hand corner of the screen – when I would pull a lever which changed the operative machine. Made him proud. Movies got shorter as they made the rounds due to all the splicing of glitches in the film.

*

THE ARRIVAL

What does he want?
he does not speak freely,
no, rather he moves
quietly from

here to there, a perfect
gent, poor, but correct,
& On his head
his hat is bent.

He has nothing to do,
nothing to say for himself.
whether to stay in one place,
to go into another room,
to sit, to stand, to erase,
to explain, to go away?

Winter has come and gone,
leaves its puddles on
the ground, the sun is higher
than it was before
the moon obscure,
the same dull rain
arrives with this new visitor.

What to do, what to do?
Is the hole in his suit
an omen of his fate?
of grief for the dead
in his unkempt head?

Well, well, nothing to say,
He comes & goes again.
winter's labors bring him
warm weather & the rain.

*

30 trips on LSD blew up my introverted inferiority complex and opened me to the world. It was a painful process, especially in the city, but it was worth it. Thought that was it for hallucinogenic drugs, but I did take Ayahuasca a few years ago in Ecuador near a tributary of the Amazon: jungle thundering, stars hissing, earth trembling, vomiting, children running around like elves.

*

Walking across town to the Eighth Street bookstore. Hanging around the Village. Irene's place on Sheridan Square. I loved that walk. Would stop and check out the books at the bookstore. Have lunch somewhere and read the Knicks Box Score. Worked nights at the Village Gate, the Vanguard or the Five Spot on Third Avenue. Jazz joints. Heard some of the masters, Monk, Mingus, Coltrane, Miles, Eric Dolphy, others. Was a very good waiter, eventually – fast, good memory. The dance of it. But bad on the back. I was very influenced by the jazz. The impromptu structures, solos, syncopation, counterpoint. Intricate themes. Wanted to write like that. Here's a poem from back then, that I accidentally recovered from a pile of papers -- it kind of illustrates the impulse.

Christmas poem for the 4th friend

Red from the roses of Eden the Sun

Fifth Avenue descends --
 It's not the bomb yet
 Although "once you get through
 "It's palms up
 And all you see is the Lord"
 Spare me the priestly matadors --
 Those goddamned hungry
 Killing suits
 Must be disentangled/
 I will be less afraid
 When it gets dark
 (I don't know
 Whose
 Tomb this is)
 You see --
 I am exactly 4 inches
 To the left.

—

That form of abstraction and the look of the page. The
 hint of a political stand. Sideways rhymes. Seemed
 important at the time, as well as the uses of slashes and
 dashes. Spaces and grammatical tricks. Not exactly naked
 and hard to fathom. I tried to fix it but no dice. You can't go
 back.

—

*

Eddie Hicks was a folk musician from West Virginia
 whose mind was blown from acid and marijuana, and who

knows what else, probably everything else, but he was an anti-work-of-any-kind type of anarchist, no, nihilist -- a good-looking dude with flowing blonde hair, and a smooth Con. An Entitled One, He conned his way through a life in N.Y. His wife, Louellen, whom I mentioned earlier, was a very pretty Irish girl from Long Island. Eddie had been one of my marijuana clients. After I was locked out of my marriage, Eddie agreed that I could pay him with ounces for rent and they would give me a room in their apartment in exchange. Fifth floor. We soon started writing songs together and formed a little act, in which I played the tambourine and an alto recorder, plus a Pakistani Practice Chanter which made a great acid-high sound. And the tambourine. I had become friends with Sam at the theater and he joined us as our drummer. The man could play. We called the act The Heavy Metal Kid. I've lost all the songs since, and the demos we made, but the material wasn't too bad. Acid-rock, not Metal. Now, I remember that we were doing THE HAWK sometime around in there and Eddie and I played a guitar-tambourine tune that we made up for the Play's intervals.

Pretty soon "I fell in love" with Louellen and became obsessed with her. I was very susceptible to her charms: little, pretty, sexy, druggie. Around her all the time. However long I lived with them. Preparing THE HAWK, the whole company lived on a farm for six weeks near East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. We lived all around the joint, rehearsed in the barn. I had a room in a bungalow which was sinking into the lake that made up most of the farm's

property. Many of the people in that group – the Keystone Company, like the great Walter Hadler -- have died by now. (Walter died of covid a while ago.) The work on THE HAWK was a huge milestone in all our lives. Working hard on an improvisational approach to character and living communally. That whole experience of making and performing THE HAWK was one of best experiences of my life. I was lucky and privileged to be a part of it.

One night Louellen finally came to my room. Moonlight on the lake, just like in the movies. We had amazingly disappointing sex after years of fantasizing about it. I felt guilty for a long time, even though I was sick of Eddie by then and his mind-blown ideas. I don't know what Louellen was thinking. Maybe just to get the whole thing over with. There was still a little love there, but it was all too late, like a lot of things. I did write a play about this which we performed at Cal State Northridge – a play called HEADS. We had a terrific cast with Norbert Weisser, and Bill Hunt (gone now, a gentleman and a scholar). Trouble is, at the end of the play the house burns down, if I remember right, and we couldn't figure out a way to do that.

THE HAWK was a big success Off-Off Broadway and then played for a few nights Off-Broadway after terrible reviews. One of those nights my friend and I were the only people in the audience. Delia Duke. We were rehearsing WILLIE THE GERM (at Theatre Genesis) at the time, and she played CYNTHIA in it. I loved that woman, even though I was with K. then, feeling guilty, living in Brooklyn; K., whom

I had met at a party at Eddie's place: Another life had begun, commuting between Park Slope and the Saint Mark's church downtown. Starting workshops, the New York Theater Strategy with Irene Fornes, applying for grants, teaching, putting on plays, working the jazz joints. But I had found, thanks to Ralph Cook and Genesis, what I wanted to do: Plays.

Perhaps something should be said about that. There were several groups downtown at the time interested in alternative methods in the search for meaningful theater: theatre less dependent on plot, dramatic conflict and story, with more emphasis on the play of language and new approaches to the art of acting. Off-off Broadway, or what the movement came to be called, was youthful, adventurous, and often radical politically. I was a part of all that, and, once I got the feel of making plays in lieu of poems, I began to get the hang of it -- as with poetry, the language comes first, before the interpretation – have faith, as Ralph Cook used to say, and the text tells you everything you need to know.

*

Back in the Catskills, as a kid, I had had a kind of mystical relationship with the woods. It's lush up there, dense forests and high meadows. I had my special paths and special spots. Certain rock formations, special trees, openings, clearings, views. By myself, always by myself. One place was The Jewish Star Rock – a Star of David etched into a boulder overlooking the little valley where the town was. I had a mystical association with it, and I would go up there by myself and commune, I'm not sure with what – the vibe, the

wildness of it, the sense of belonging to an Ancient Tribe.
Some Angelic Jew had scratched the Star of David on it.

MORDECAI

/or the beginning of something

else

from the beginning of the morning
from the beginning of the morning
where Mordecai.

Where Mordecai,
Thanks be to G-d,
 greet the old woman,
 bifocals aglare
within the apothecary shop,

He is aware of a

 sound recurring. The sound is a voice in the
radio repeating itself,

 A presence in the air,
 A Presence in the air

 Her presence dances between them lightly, Like an
old song.

 Her eyes are full of daylight bombing.

---They are queuing up for the cattle cars!
The cattle cars! Will you line up?

Poggomagon Magazine. 1963.

Holocaust Remembrance Day. I blow my buffalo horn, my solo contribution to the tragic history of my people. To whom I feel permanently bound by birth and blood. Like Mr. G. says, it's in the soil of the Earth now -- that dumb envy and hatred of the Jewish People. Will recur, and recur, as I saw an old man say, a survivor, on television. "We have to learn to live with it."

*

It was a big deal, then, moving up into that freezing attic room, where I began to construct a literary approach to life.

I remember fighting a lot, and the cold Winters, and reading, classics mainly. The feeling of being trapped. On the other hand, treasuring my privacy. I began hoarding books and I continued stealing from my mother. While in the fifth grade, my grandmother died. She collapsed at a P.T.A. meeting where a dispute was going on about adding a special class to the school curriculum. She was speaking up for my brain-damaged brother, Gilbert, and she got so excited that she dropped dead on the spot from a heart attack. She was 59.

It seems to me now that her (Bubba's) hatred for my mother was so strong that it impaired the way she looked at me – somewhat of a beggar, somewhat of a lost cause, but the first grandchild, after all, and a nice boy. Not too much deeper than that. It's unsettling a bit, but it doesn't bother me much – my relationship with the Mednick family has

always been tenuous at best, a “somebody” out there In California doing plays that nobody understands but who has won some prizes.

*

While I was still struggling to keep my spot at Brooklyn College, where I was an honor student in '59 or so, in '60, I was living on East 2nd street on the Lower East Side, going out for temp jobs as a waiter -- the rent was like 47 dollars a month at the time – the College was willing to take me back, but I was broke and disgusted with myself for leaving in the first place. I ended up as a busboy at the Alamac Hotel in Miami Beach.

Once I'd realized that the jig was up at the College, I somehow snagged a car to drive to Miami – maybe it was to Pittsburgh and then Miami, but I get the car there, I have no money, I somehow make it to the Beach, considering, hoping, that I'd meet somebody I knew from the Catskill dining rooms on their afternoon break. I started walking down the beach and sure enough soon I hear my name called out -- it was Murgatroyd Box (Irving Saffa) the Legendary Best Busboy in the World. I'd worked with him at a few hotels in the “mountains” but mainly at the River View Hotel in Fallsburg. And he was one hell of a busboy. He would take on two stations, and in those days that was a major operation, amounting to six tables or 48 people. Daunting. I don't know how he did it: part charm, part con, part unrelenting movement and a sure economy of means when running back and forth between the kitchen and the dining

room. And he was a big strong guy who could carry a lot of dirty plates. Wore thick bifocals, took no prisoners, and so on. He'd taken a protective liking to me in the dining rooms, and we'd become friends, so I was glad to see him, and that night I was working at the Alamac Hotel, a kosher joint on Ocean Ave. There's more to this tale that I'll get to later maybe, but I want to say here that it was a hard place to work, that my waiter, Earnest, a survivor with a tattoo on his wrist, was one of the nastiest waiters I ever worked for.

I have spoken already about one of my first busboy jobs in the Kucha lain for survivors – the silent ones -- and the thing about Earnest the Waiter was his sense of unforgiving and total resentment and isolation. And even though I could not blame him, it was hard to get along with him, and sometimes I wanted to hit him over the head with a tray, because he took his rage out on me. And, like the silent ones in the Catskills, he never smiled.

Back to Brooklyn.

I was doing well in school– it was an honors arrangement, a seminar, with a dozen students and four professors. I was a sophomore. One of the professors became my mentor after I'd written an essay on *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, by William Blake. For some incredible reason I have lost her name. Blanked it out. Shamefully. She was an excellent person, a Swede who took me in hand, encouraged me, brought me to my first shrink. She was a scholar of the English Romantic Period, especially

of Wordsworth, and she thought, if nothing else, that I could become a scholar and make a living in the Academic Community.

The psychiatrist she brought me to was Richard Huelsenbeck, then a famous Swiss Phenomenologist painter and intellectual and therapist with a high-end office on 5th Avenue. He had a huge self-portrait behind his desk which you looked at while he was telling you what's what. After advising me that I could be just like him, famous and successful, he'd stand at the door with his hand held out stiffly, and I'd pluck down 25 bucks cash.

BEFORE THE ICY ATAXIA

the glass sidewalk may crack
any minute & the sky go flat
as ice.

I think the lack of balance
Is just cause for an absurd dance.
I mean, going forward or back,
Taking either end of the screen,
You get the same jig,
Like the growth of plants speeded up
In a movie,

 Thus: the man leans
this way & that.
runs through a subway of images,
ends in a dot.

*

I had a clothes hanger jammed into the closet door as a basketball rim, and Merle Lepkowski, son of my mother's only friend in town, would come over to play basketball in my room, using a Spalding. Often, I'd slip out the window to get away from the house and then come back the same way and then read till four or five in the morning. I had to battle to get that room for myself and nobody seems to have noticed my coming and going. I was on my own by then, with fantasies of saving myself and everybody else through G-d-knows- what miracle of capitalist achievement.

In Summer there was action on the streets, or a job in one of the luncheonettes. I had my spots in the village where I hung out, like the special ones in the woods. Endowing certain physical places with meaning. Imaginary meaning, literary meaning. Alleys and doors and shortcuts and hiding places. Ringaleevio, a violent game the way we played it. We'd be caught and beaten up and vice versa. Rock fights. Apple fights. BB guns.

During my last year in high school, the school principal at the time was a man named Ward R. Young. Mr. Young had earlier taught me how to play the infield. During my senior year, knowing what my schedule was at the time – reading till five in the morning – he allowed me to skip the early classes and show up for lunch.

Mr. Young had been the softball coach in a Village Summer League. He thought I had athletic ability and took some time with me. I'd stay out playing into the night. I was very lucky to have gone to school where I did, where the quality of teaching was way above average, and I was encouraged to try my best, to feel like I had talent and could do certain things well, like playing ball and writing.

Sam (Shepard) and I tried to write a movie about these violent games, one called Ringaleevio. We had a complete manuscript, since lost. A good analogy for certain aspects of American life. The hunter/killer syndrome.

An ambition to be a poet. I was looking through my shelves and boxes and there were some old poems and stories in magazines like the Transatlantic Review and others, poems that sound a little like me but more heavily in the head – abstract, intense, unhappy. Forgot about all that, a whole section of my life on the Lower East Side, a part of the Poetry world there at that time. When I was selling grass and working lunches and still trying to get back to college, which I finally gave up on. Memory. Images of the place. The park, the hallways. The small apartments. Living with Steve K. on East sixth. 611 East 6th. Experimenting with drugs. The first LSD sugar cubes from Rockefeller Center. Smoke a joint every morning.

My reefer connection was Jack H. Klein, a former captain in the Army quartermaster corps in Germany, where he got his start importing hashish in drums from Turkey. I'd go down to his loft on Jefferson Street. I'd buy the kilo or

two and divvy it up into ounces, which I sold to people in the neighborhood – poets and painters and actors. I remember that at the end of a stressed-out day delivering dope out of a briefcase, I would go to an Italian restaurant on Sixth Avenue with an outdoor section in the back. I'd drink my Irish whiskeys slowly and smoke my lucky strikes and then order a nice dinner.

Two poems from that period that I still like, published in a magazine called *GENRE OF SILENCE*, connected, if I remember right, with the St. Marks' Poetry Project.

B'S DREAM

I fell into her class
room as she stands there
alone. I'm desperate.

'I need a place to think,'
I tell her, 'Quick, baby.'

'Listen," she says. 'Get in
this sailboat I've got.
a little blue schooner.'

Next, she puts me & the
schooner into a corner
of the blackboard.

Where I cool it.

until the students
arrive, demanding an
Equation. She begins.

Comes across the board
far as an equal's sign,
then drops two fathoms down

so as not to disturb
me in my blue boat,

which is a beautiful
thing on her part.

This other one, **AT THE CONCORD HOTEL**, gives a
pretty good impression of what it was like working up there,
off and on, 20 years, in the Borsht Belt.

here I lie in a plywood room
surrounded by steam pipes
& a 30 yr. old adolescent guy
having an anxiety attack

besides advice and pacifiers
he wants to know where he can
score some little yellow pills
brand named after a Greek goddess

must be the goddess of waiters,
 that brass old lady who rides
 Zeus's super ego like
 A maître' d on busboys.

It is for her those young men
 serve the hung-up hierarchy –
 her palm gets greased, her eyes
 are on us as we bow politely

keeping our voices down w/ grief,
 she has an opening in our skulls
 & a little yellow pill on her
 you can buy w/ a prescription.

—

Warren Finnerty, the actor, was one of my people. One day he invited me to see him in a play by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *THE INSPECTOR WITH BAGGY PANTS*. Theater Genesis. St. Mark's Church. Second Ave. and 10th Steet, where the poetry scene was a big deal. Changed my life. Genesis became my home ground for the next ten years or so -- that walk to the back of the church, then upstairs, past the office, and into the black box. Met Ralph Cook, who said he'd produce anything I'd write, at least at his Monday night readings. I'd been a bit involved next door with the Church's Poetry Program, so Ralph may have known what my writing was like. Years of trial and error followed. I learned everything in those ten years though my ideas haven't

changed much. Also met Sam there. We played pool in a Ukrainian bar on St. Mark's Place, ate in the Orchidia across the street. Lots of experimentation. The fellowship we had with the company of actors in the Genesis orbit. I need to find some of those old programs, can't remember some of the names. Michael Smith's reviews in the Village Voice. I remember especially that walk across town to the theater. How much I enjoyed the walk, up sixth, cross to St. Marks, up to 2nd Avenue, over to the Church.

*

Walking up to my grandmothers, I had the sense that I had to see everything, notice everything, and have certain goals in mind like, "I'll make it up to that tree line and then I'll rest." The way Matt is in Scar, the lone man in the Mountains talking to himself, giving himself aims.

Elaine, with whom I'd lost my virginity at the age of 19, in Gittel Kanterman's apartment on Belmont Ave. in Brownsville, B'klyn. She was in the honors class at the college and came over one day, and we both got on the big bed in that heavy-furniture room I was living in. Lace, curtains, bedspread. TV. Sensation of dark brown and lace. I vaguely remember the store on Belmont, the entrance from the street, and the hallway, and up the stairs to the dark apartment.

It all began with my grandfather, Louis (Lazer), who almost never spoke. He took me to Brooklyn on the subway,

IRT to Rockaway Avenue, and never said a word on the train, to find me a place to live and thus able to attend Brooklyn College. 1957. Gittel (Gussie) was likely an ex-girlfriend of Louis'. They spoke exclusively in Yiddish. She lived above a buttons store that her family used to own on Belmont Ave. Pushcarts on the street. Mostly, I remember the walk down Rockaway Ave. to the IRT in the cold. I remember the darkness of the apartment. Gittel didn't say much. Loewe's Pitkin was around the corner. Tough neighborhood, now mostly Black. (Bugsy Siegel's old neighborhood.) Kept my head down and watched television day and night in that isolated room with the huge bed. G-d knows what was on the television in those days. Had to break out of there somehow and make friends, which I did with *Landscapes*, the Brooklyn College literary magazine. Our heroes were Hart Crane and Walt Whitman. And our politics were adamantly on the far Left.

(Donald Trump needs to be kidnapped, by helicopter, taken out to sea, and dropped into the cold Atlantic from a great height. He will vanish and be no more.)

In Israel, when the Holocaust sirens go on, you get out of your car, you get out of your car and get down on your knees.

*

Night. Both arms broken out with blood on the skin. Steroids. Black of night, as though the atmosphere had lifted away. Itchy, scratchy sensation of flesh withering. Water, maybe a pill. But I can't reach anything solid. No sense of

touch. Must save my arms. They look like bloody meat. Fresh wounds. Apparently, I fell in the night and hit the wrong furniture. My left arm is black and blue. Vestiges of a nightmare:

Big men with armor and weapons outside making siren sounds. What do they want? Blood and treasure. Speaking a language which is not American English. I don't know what it is. Hissing, spitting, hollering. But I understand them very well. They are in no need of speech. They have enormous impregnable weapons made of steel and rock, and they march in a phalanx while they sing their numbingly dissonant anthems.

And they have flags and a god. Crosses on their chests made of belts of ammunition. Eagles. Swastikas. Old Glory. The Confederacy. And their god? A gigantic fat white man with orange hair and pink skin, blown up like a caricature at a parade -- flown above the marchers, one for each phalanx. Are there watchers, an audience of supporters and revelers? Yes, there are. They applaud and cheer and give the energy of rage and righteousness to the Soldiers of their Cause. The People. They are sick of the plague and finished with Authority and Experts, Intellectuals, Jews, Non-believers. Soon to be body parts and blood flowing down the drains into the polluted ocean. How? Believers in what? White Christians, stupefied in the wait for the Second Coming. Of Jesus Christ, of all people. The Jewish preacher who died already and made his re-appearance already, and so what's the point? What could they be thinking? Gog and Magog?

Why are they marching and singing? How many could die from all this? What kind of Christianity is this? They'll kill and march toward Heavenly Glory. They worship this ugly piece of carnival plastic. They pray for him and worship him, this evil Hasnamuss of the day, Donald Trump.

Well, I don't know what's happening to my arms, bloody and withering as the chanting continues -- right outside my window. The Plague has come for me, at last. The Plague that came with the Crusading Christian soldiers. A flaky poison in the air, aimed especially at Anarchist Jewish Poets like me. And spikes that get into our lungs. The ones that come after us won't know that any of us ever existed. We'll drown in the Life Cycle somewhere, way down, whirling around in the chemical soup.

Especially for me, lying here innocently rehearsing my obituary. Odd, indeed. I hope they think nicely of me when I'm gone. Various judgments from whom? Enough of that -- there'll be no one there and the texts will disappear into the volcanic, nuclear, chemical mist. A new creature, eyes on the back of his head, will appear.

It's impossible to know how to take in all this crazy material. The cloud of a killer virus, springing onto the Earth through the intrusive violence of Mankind, may stay until a major meteor collision or a sun storm wipes it out. Or a strong Solar Wind. These American people believe in New Testament prophecies and dreams by redneck nutcases of an Armageddon. Rapturing up to heaven, stinking bodies, and

all. It's getting to me lately: the ignorance and stupidity of the species, the incredible, dumb credulity. Hair on their legs. Rings in their noses. Flagpoles in their mitts. Right outside the window.

My crumbling body and inattentive mind. Blood on the skin. From the steroids and G-d knows what else. Will G-d save me? What do we mean by God? I have never figured it out and it doesn't look likely that I ever will. The Absolute. What does it mean to believe in G-d? Gives friends of mine a certain comfort. Spinoza-like arguments from the first Cause. If this, then that. I don't know that I believe in anything.

And what of the Red Road? Leonard Crow Dog and his VW van crammed with teenage Lakota coming by on the road. I could've stayed on that road. Sweated with Richard Williams, journeying to powwows and piercings and pipe ceremonies and dances. The winless battle against the white-eyes. Play Indian instruments on Jewish Holidays. Whatever happened to Richard? He fell in love with a white girl and kind of disappeared. Good sweat leader but stuck in that awful struggle with booze and the wish for whiteness and True Love.

Story of Selo Black Crow up in Hollister. Magical day. Can hardly believe it happened. Fire all day heating the rocks, people appearing out of the woods and the dirt roads - - Germans, Frenchmen, Danes, people from all over. I'm standing near a corral and Selo --- much revered old Lakota

medicine man -- comes over: You see them horses? Yeah. I can talk to them horses. A stallion comes over and Selo mumbles something and strokes the horse's head. The horse whinnies and goes off. Selo smiles. The second hottest sweat I'd ever done, second only to Crow Dog's.

And then there was Master Ni, old Taoist Master who gave me acupuncture and tea and lots of talks, the work of self-cultivation a lot like the Work. Wanted me to become an acolyte. Wrote to ask Lord P. who said No. Ni was well into his nineties then and could still be alive back in China, far as I know.

You got these people, they have no doubts, it's a performance art routine and all it needs is violence-inspired applause. It's a political vaudeville, entertainment politics, no question of right and wrong. This is maybe not a new kind of human being, but they seem to be having great success with the public. No conscience and no self-scrutiny. The American mythical Yahoo, come into power, full blown.

Suddenly thought about Park Slope. The little white stool I liked. "All in the family." The Knicks. Throwing up in the bathroom, just above the stairway. The bank around the corner. Italian restaurant on 7th Ave. The elementary school on the SE corner. The walk to Grand Army Plaza. The subway entrance. Catch the train. Flatbush Ave. flowing downtown to the Manhattan Bridge. Up on the local to Astor Place.

Memories of walking the length of DeKalb Ave. with a friend, Martin, as teenagers – we were in the 10th grade -- I wouldn't give up the idea that we could walk it. Took hours. Maybe a whole day. We got there, and there she was, mopping the steps, janitor of the building, talking to herself. Rivka. Shouting. My mother's mother, mad as a hatter, put us in an empty room to sleep on the floor. What did we eat? Maybe Chinese food. Chinks. Much of the whole experience is a blank. I think it was the only time in my life that I ever saw that woman. My Grandmother. The aim of the trip. The Short line bus from the Catskills. Port Authority. Confusion on the subway. Walking DeKalb. Past the block where I was born. Way up there. We walked miles and miles. Poor Martin. I remembered his last name the other day and now it's gone again.

And there I was, walking up DeKalb with Martin, almost 70 years ago, knowing nothing and thinking I was right to keep on walking. Never occurred to me to take the bus. Just didn't know how you did it. "We'll get there soon," I kept saying.

*

Scared about the future. There are crazy people out there, nurtured by the bloody, monetized, celebrity culture, and a brutal Fascist regime seems on its way, if it's not here already. Along with the Second Coming of Christ. I.E. Donald Trump, who is worshipped and prayed for, as though in a Satanic Cult. The White Savior.

Now the moronic President has refused to concede. 70 million Americans voted for the Con without conscience or the ability to attend. Doesn't say much favorable about Americans. It's the beginning of the end. The denying idiot is sitting in the white house fuming. At least some people are realizing that the man is crazy and Evil.

He must be killed.

Having bad inferiority frustration dreams. Body falling apart at the seams. Always losing something in my dreams that I can't retrieve -- a woman, a M.S., a car. Can't walk in the mornings. Little sleep and arthritis, diabetes, bronchitis. Thinking of Hemingway, who blew his brains out. A shotgun, no less.

Obviously, I don't see myself. But maybe I never see myself. Not in this life. On the other hand, about "self-observation," I've been thinking in quantum terms: observing the self as creation of Self. A weird way of looking at the principle, which intrigues me. The moving target. I see myself, therefore I am. Flapping photos into the Void.

The Jew in me is indestructible. And I need to overlook her view of me... as what? A somewhat crazy poet-addict mystic Jewish little old man in the Work who doesn't take care of himself. I have no idea.

I have mezuzahs on every door and never remember to touch them. But I do blow my buffalo horn. I'm a secular man with a Jew inside, tucked under a bunch of literature and the Work. Magnetic Center. Childhood memories. Books. Martin Buber. What was I doing? Seems essential that I realize all that somehow, in my mind, on the page, and I can almost do it. The feeling of a memory and its imagery. The literary impulse is partly to memorialize. Very Jewish. Judaica. Realize that the genetic inheritance is both biological and cultural. Tradition.

But the question of memory is important – long term, at night, I'm prodded by a vision of an experience, an event, like what it was like to race up and down on the South Fallsburgh Soccer field – I was the captain and played what was then called the Right Wing. An attacking forward. Later I played at Brooklyn College under Lou Oshuns, I got under everybody's legs and was a nuisance but kicked a couple goals. We played in the snow. I was smoking and couldn't keep it up, the constant running in the cold.

I started smoking when I was eleven and fell out of a tree. And then smoked for fifty years. Lucky Strikes. What a big deal that was, at the very core of my life. They said it was good for you and tastes good, mighty fine, bronchitis was on its way. LSMFT. C.O.P.D.

In memory, living on Henry Street with Eddie Hicks when I was discarded by my first wife and hit the streets. Who was I then and why was I sent away? I can't figure it

out or get a picture of myself. Working as a waiter, refusing to go back to college, smoking a joint every morning and evening, drinking my Irish Whiskey, watching sports, writing poetry -- I don't know what she was seeing or enduring, living with me. And then the shock in memory of when my wife asked me to go into the bedroom with her friend -- Stephanie was her name -- a woman who needed sex badly and I went in there and serviced her. I should have gotten a clue then of what was up with the marriage, but apparently, I was so stoned, I just went along. If not stoned, unengaged, though I enjoyed the little bit of sex we had, me and the stranger. Nice butt. The way she moaned. That bedroom on East Ninth.

*

Once I was teaching playwriting at a Modern Orthodox high school on Olympic Ave. in Los Angeles. **MRS. FEUERSTEIN** came from the experience, along with reading the great poet, Paul Celan. (An homage to him came later, in **G-NOME**.) The school was nearby on the West Side and going home to our apartment on Ayres Ave., behind the West Side Pavilion, was easy -- a home that I thought was permanent. MY life... Enclosed on a screen like a movie... A mini quantum episode.

The Terror of the Situation, as Mr. G. puts it. And then we have The Happy Old Age adage. Glad to see my huge pomelos growing in the garden. Birds around the pool. The Sun. Shining gloriously into my bedroom just now. A wondrous shaft of photons.

*

Malbushim. The Yiddish-Hebrew name for the Jewish high-end aristocracy, a rebellious, contemptuous word used by the Jewish lower classes, especially in the old country, but bleeding into my life even now. But I was not conscious of it. It was emotional, planted by some of the parents of my friends who looked down on me (some who wouldn't even look at me), and my relatives, most of whom stayed away. My teachers were great, always treated me well and with respect, but, in town, there was this unspoken contempt for my family and its sordid circumstances. I seem to have picked all of that up quite deeply. My mother used to call them the "400," the great German-Jewish New York Families. A curse. Great resentment. The class thing is big amongst us, as is the longing for social justice. Now I realize how profound the resentment was, probably still is, so entrenched in me – against the *Malbushim*, or everyone above me, which indeed was everyone.

Looked again at my years on the Lower East Side yesterday. Living for years on East 6th street between B and C. Tompkins Square Park, where old Ukrainians fed the pigeons and where people like me sold or copped (bought) dope. Trying to remember the apartment, and Steve, how brilliant he was and talkative, a dedicated Communist and a very good poet. We were very close at the time. Now the lingering pain of regret. I am ashamed of having once flirted with his wife, Mary, years ago. A moment of failure there, abandoning the relationship. And now he's gone.

Trying to remember the building, the ground-floor apartment on East 6th street. The poet W.S. Merwin lived upstairs. Molly Cohen was the name of our landlord. We'd gotten the first LSD from the Rockefeller Research Center – an intellectual, scientific gent named Jim Frazier was our connection – blue dots in sugar cubes. Steve and I talked endlessly about Politics and Literature in that dark little living room on the ground floor. And the Army. The Vietnam War was heating up and neither of us wanted to be involved, but Steve had already been drafted. He fought it hard, and the Draft harassment was a dark cloud over his life. Later, it got me, too. That sickening war. I might have started dealing pot at the time. Years of around '59 to '62, '63. Trying to remember the layout of the place – my bedroom was a room off to the side, a mattress on the floor. Not much light. One thing I recall is that feeling in NY when you step into the street. We were on the ground floor and there'd be a little hitch, a full stop, as you passed through the threshold and hit the street. A moment of getting ready for the avalanche of impressions to come. That special tension in the body. The threshold.

It was the era of Protest and Poetry readings. Drugs. Loving your friend's wives. Anarchism. Marriages breaking up. The Vietnam War. Rivalries. Egomania. I don't know what I said to myself at night. It was all a matter of survival. I had to get plays on, sell my ounces, work my waiter's gigs.

Here's a little poem I wrote in the old days for a little mag called *El Corno Emplumado*, The Plumed Horn. A periodical I really liked at the time. Go-d knows what happened to them. 1964.

GREEN HAWK

A green hawk, grown wild
With the isolation of his color,
Comes round to murder,

Comes round, uncertain,
The gyre of his anger comes round

& No thing as air or prey,
Played in his species like fate,

Saves the green feather
Its perfect plunge,

The darkness of the flock.

—

One long abstract sentence.

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The night before, I was watching something, and a phrase kept coming to mind – “And they keep on coming” – and I thought it was so familiar and haunting and I kept

thinking maybe I wrote that, and it finally got some memories of certain relationships going: The farm in Pennsylvania. **THE HAWK**. How good those actors were! How hard we worked. I'm so grateful for all of that. Would not have appeared in memory if I wasn't reminiscing with Roxanne last night. Turns out the phrase comes from the last page of **THE HUNTER**. Another good cast: Beeson Carroll, Billie Dixon, Kevin O'Connor, Walter.

*

Here's the thing: nightmares and vivid dreams. Frequent now, and even in daylight, where I'm startled to wake into another world, this world, when I was so involved in the other, the dreamworld. Something there about the workings of the mind. The business of making other worlds and of other worlds appearing. A blink of an eye, a horror in deep sleep.

Was sitting with Rox at dinner and occasionally was aware of myself in conversation – painful, but also tentatively joyful – a sense of being alive. Loved the oysters. But I couldn't eat.

And then it dawned on me that the phrase above – “they keep on coming” – was the chorus at the ending of **THE HUNTER**. And I got up on my cane and found it. Sure enough, it's the last speech. It was a play I had forgotten all about --1968 – then I was filled with love for the damn thing. I recalled the actors and how good they were – Beeson and

(Keeping actors still and not speaking when moving and choreographing everything -- not so popular with actors. I do what I can to avoid "naturalism" and the reliance on behavior, and to emphasize the language, make the language the priority. It's also stylistic: little movement, intentionality, stillness.) You don't jump in front of the lines. You are awake behind them.

Rain and thunderstorms last night. Delightful. We're in a drought here. Keep looking back. Things I never thought of or think about. Moments of real decision. Like leaving college. People leaving me. Me leaving people. Trying to write screenplays. Padua. A feeling, a look. Get paranoid, by association, about not being able to breathe and enduring chest pains. It's mainly the Bronchial situation, which apparently is getting worse. I don't know when this damn episode started or why. The Weather?

*

I'm remembering again all those enjoyable moments with Irish whiskey and Lucky Strikes. "This is it," thought I, at the time, in my youth, "this is the Life." That magical cocktail hour in Italian Restaurants in New York City. Once the ounces had been delivered, you could have a drink and light up and relax and look around: the customers, the organization, the serving style. And now? A plain tonic and an arthritis pill. Oxygen. Plus, the depressing political news and the endless loud commercials.

Turns out that a relative of mine, whom I didn't know, Barry Mednick, died yesterday of lung cancer. Many of the extended family, I must give them credit, came to my play in N.Y., MAYAKOFSKY AND STALIN. Had never met most of them. All different types. Have no idea if they liked it or understood it. Just happy I accomplished something. List of Mednicks in the world grows into the hundreds. Eighteen of them came to the play at the Cherry Lane. I appreciated it. Though they were mostly strangers, except for Celene and my sister, and a few college friends, like Lenny and Padua people like Martin and Susan Mosakowski. Small theatre, full house. Hana's wonderful projections, and I got the staging right, which was interesting. No entrances or exits. Everybody on stage. Had sort of tried it with VILLON, but now I went all in for it. Worked.

Occurs to me at this moment, that the main mistake I made, when coming to the West Coast, was choosing the wrong agent – I was an experimental Theatre poet who had no idea how to write a movie, but I joined up with William Morris, basically a movie/television agency. Marty Caan was my agent. Cousin of Jimmy Caan, the man who had told me that all acting was behavior. Anyway, that was one mistake, compounded by my fear of rejection and the pressure to make a living. K. and I were on food stamps for a while, living in that nice bungalow in LaVerne. I've been putting that failure of P.R. up to my "inferiority complex" (which did play a part) but it was more complicated than that. Fear of rejection. Fear of the commercialization of everything.

And always there's that one casting mistake: one person who screws up the atmosphere and makes rehearsal agonizing. Can't remember her name now, but I seem to make that error a lot – one person in the cast who takes a dislike to you or wants more attention than the others. Getting ready to do THREE TABLES, and I hopefully won't make the inevitable casting mistake. (Which I went ahead and did anyway.)

What's really bothering me is that I was at War last night, in my sleep. I was calling the War, as you do with a radio commentary, and I was also directing the War, like a General. I don't know who was winning, but I was shouting and desperate, because what was happening in the War was urgent and dangerous. My voice was loud. I was shouting. I could not believe it for a moment when I woke up and I was in bed. Seemed unreal.

Goes back to those freezing nights in the attic in that village in the Catskills, where I began to read. And where I had a certain faith in the process, in the effort, the grace of language – a finer level of associations. I look back and it all feels like something I dreamt, but I did try, whoever "I" is or was. Naked in the streets.

I was interested in working the exercises I had in mind, certain approaches I had learned in NY., (Sound and movement, improvisation, work with the body, "in the feet", plus an exercise I took from Castenada: "Finding the spot."), and I had two Actors (Norbert Weisser, Darrell Larson) who

were more than game. They saw and understood the results. We were discovering something, using the whole of our bodies in space, and later, the American Indian material: Stories and precepts. -- both to express their message of loss and repression, and to say what could be said as a warning from The Hopi Prophecy: a warning, and to make the theatre experience as equal spiritually and truthfully as the indigenous ceremonies. **THE COYOTE CYCLE.**

Marty Caan was a cousin of Jimmy Caan's. One-time I was visiting Jimmy in his trailer: I was working on a Meyer Lansky film (The same film, with Harvey Keitel, was eventually made with another writer), and he says to me, "Acting is about behavior. Period. Not the writing. Acting is about behavior." Just the exact opposite of my own thought. Working on that movie script was my introduction, via the Wm. Morris agency, to the Jewish mafia. Here were some American Jews willing to kill people. Guys like Bugsy Siegel, who, as a teenager, burned down pushcarts on Belmont Ave. if they didn't pay up. Meyer, his partner, who kept his head down, but went as far as he could go with Siegel. The entire consortium of American Jews who would fight and kill and not be forbidden by the books or the traditions or Jewish law. They were wise guys but, unlike what mainly happened during the Holocaust, they didn't lay down, they fought and killed and did what thought they had to do to survive. They, along with the Jewish Partisans everywhere, became my heroes. They were willing to fight. Lately, I have discovered that there were many instances of Jewish Partisans, fighters- - kids -like the kids in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and

soldiers from the Jewish Brigade who took revenge. Like the French Resistance – high school and college kids taking on the Germans on the streets of Paris.

I revered the Hebrew writing, the sound of Hebrew prayer, the scent of the shul. The absolute tenacity of the traditions and ways. The thousands of years of persecution and occasional victory. Such is what I was born into and therefore entitled to – a heritage. And I wanted to claim the entitlement, and I claim it still, even though mine is a very private, eccentric way of being Jewish. I grew up secular, inferior feeling, but proud; not insensitive about the meaning of being Jewish, but I don't walk around with it.

When I was a boy, I was fascinated by the horizon. It seemed mysterious to me and had with it a certain presence. It was the presence of Nature, which I collated with the Nature of G-d, or that Nature WAS G-d. When I pray, if I indeed I pray, it's more like intense thought. I expect no answer or reward, more the voluntary exercise of a finer quality of Attention. As a Jew of course, no resurrection has occurred, the Messiah has not come, there is no Son of G-d, no Pauline moral lectures, but a hint of the Holy Spirit, an experience that points to a worthwhile study of one's inner and outer life.

It's difficult facing the falling-apart of the body and the inevitable on-coming death. Horrifying nights of habitual self-incrimination, plus the pain in the bones, and it's so hard to get comfortable enough to read. Eyesight failing. Same

every night. Started blaming myself for egotism on the website. Meant as an archive or a way to reach out. I was going to submit a “Jewish” play to some organization and then thought better of it. Notice all that considering going on in my head. Noted John Ashberry: soul is “a moment of attention.” Good poet.

The Source. The idea of the Double.

I must have meant this as a Blake-like contrary -- in the theory of returning to the Source is blended the idea of Unity. In quantum theory, there is an invisible force connecting two identical singularities.

The Covid Bardo: External Forces weigh me down and clutch my breathing. I need to make up my mind (What is real?), but I’m drugged, not coherent, machines breathing me. Can sort of see out through my eyes, blurred images. Am I dying? How to accomplish it? Just happens, right around the next image. Forced breath. Crumpled up in a stinky heap. Living to become garbage on a truck.

And then you have the President of the United States (Trump), a nihilistic psychopathic, ignorant con, voted for by 74 million Americans. Somehow, they should all pay for this atrocity. The Law of Karma. They shall Pay. Of course, chaos and anarchy and hunger and sickness will come to the Land. The Hebrew Prophets knew what was up and what to say. And Who would back it up. But me, I don’t know. Never settled my beliefs, to this day. But I worry about my

daughter. There'll be simple fools and madmen roaming the country with guns and pick-up trucks. The Righteous Ones with bad teeth and beards and weird hats. White trash. Redneck maniacs. My dark view of things.

The Double. What have I ever meant by the Double? Worked on the concept for so long years ago. Comes from Artaud, of course. The theatrical idea was the parallel theme. A mystical, suffering force. That and a kind of Blakean contrary. Opposite impulses that need each other to live. In the case of THE HAWK, life and death, and Desire. Hunting for something and sometimes we nailed it – the actors got it occasionally through the energies of performance in front of an audience. No way to explore these things except on stage. We could hang onto the theme and be coherent. What was missing, thematically (re THE HAWK), was actual junkie life and the writing that may have come from that. I didn't shoot up myself until a few years later. Would have been perhaps a different play. Are you lookin'? was nice to write and direct, but it doesn't hold up so well anymore. Some nice scenes. Another minimalistic junkie play.

Nothing sublime -- I don't like to talk about those days much or remember them or anything, but it's an actual fact that I was hanging on the corner or in the projects and banging on doors and risking my life in dark hallways. Throwing up in cabs, in the subway. That was me, the same me as now. Go figure. Even now I sometimes think of the rush and a moments relief from the pangs of conscience. And

the guy who is intubated must pray for a shot. And then another one. I know I would.

What an interesting time that was. Off-off. The Vietnam war was going on and we were trying to make Theatre Art. The Rockefeller Grants, the leather clothes, the gray Mustang with red leather seats. Out of the economic loop of the country, though. Looks like I will never feel part of it. The society I subconsciously wanted to be accepted by is obsessed with the evangelical expectation of a Second Coming instigated by a mentally ill Con. A stupid fantasy. A Culture of Psychosis. Guns and drugs.

Brings me back to the question of class, class on two levels: American aspiration, and Jewish judgment. I think I wanted to get even, but I sure kept it repressed, for the most part, except for the fights -- bullies in high school, playing ball aggressively -- and harboring a resentful attitude toward my better-off relatives (as Lord P. once reminded me), who ignored us fucked-up sorry-assed, degenerate poor people: Sol and Betty and the 6 kids. It may have been true when I was young. Not so much anymore. The anger, manifesting in subtle forms—like my withdrawal from the competitive theatre scene -- agents, submissions, artistic directors, theatres, producers, etc. I dropped it all and now I complain that I don't have it.

1969. San Diego. It rained and rained. I'd been invited by Bob and Nina Glaudini who were running a theatre company in La Hoya, to make a play with them from scratch,

using techniques I had learned making *The Hawk*, plus some other ideas derived from Artaud and Brecht. We were operating under the premise – popular in those days – that, under the right conditions, anyone could be an actor. Turned out not to be true, and so the circumstances were difficult. But, working with the idea of the Double, and framing it somehow in a ritualized context, we were able to come up with a performable play called *THE SHADOW RIPENS*.

Not sure now how we pulled it off, but the piece had a ritualized, confessional format, and so the people were exposed. The play was about them. Them and me, who got them to talk and framed it, best I could. I wonder who I was at the time: egotistical for sure, miraculously confident about what we were trying, aggressive sexual behavior – wonder now if the girls at the time are still alive – which seems shocking to me now. Shooting Mexican red, strong heroin from over the border, and drinking at night when we were through working. One night, one of the kids in the company – I can't remember his name – hung himself in the theatre. A painful reminder of the risks of working that way, using the material of people's lives, and putting it onstage. This was a kid who had a serious Oedipal problem with his mother. She was all over him all the time, and he couldn't get out from under. His suicide was a message to her and to me and to the rest of the company.

We performed the play, had a good audience, and, if I remember right, we brought them all to New York to do it at

Theatre Genesis. Eventually, I lost the whole text somehow, and used the title for the second play of THE COYOTE CYCLE. I have never since, and never will, work that way again -- only with actors who are actors.

Did I drop out from “the Theatre World” for fear of rejection, or disgust, or a feeling of inferiority? All the above. Still, I’ve found ways, with the help of others, to get my plays up, including 3 TABLES after the big pandemic shutdown. Self-producing, self-publishing. Brings up the question of posterity. This so-called civilization may soon fall apart entirely, sunk by climate change: violence, psychosis, stupidity.

The class issue in me seems to be mainly emotional, a cluster of feelings embedded somewhere in the emotional center, and impossible to dislodge. Becomes a question of an Objective Look. That subconscious knowing of one’s second-class status– it never goes away.

I Was telling Chris and Celene the other day about working with Mick Jagger at The Ritz hotel in Manhattan, a screenplay just for him, I forget what it was —an adventure story. He liked Are you lookin’?, though I don’t remember how he knew of the play or how he found me. Nice guy, soft-spoken, polite.

Just now closed my eyes and saw an image -- a young girl looking into – maybe a stall, a barn? I was thinking of Paul Celan after reading a bit of Aaron Applefeld. They were

both born in Chernowitz, Bukovina. My feet are still in the Holocaust and the history of the Jews. The rest of me is somewhere else altogether. Secular. Hybrid. Where do those images come from? I continue seeing these little movies in my head. I close my eyes, just so, a vision appears, a lot like a movie, but almost three dimensional. Sometimes in color, sometimes black and white. No sound.

The Movies. I got in free as a kid. The Lyceum theater. What a big deal that was! The American gods on the big screen. My father up in the projection booth. Made me proud for a moment. I must have acquired a sense of patriotism, or ideals about the country then, as a boy. America on the big screen. Otherwise, I don't understand my anger and frustration about the idiocy level in the Land today. People will believe any kind of bullshit you tell them, which is then aggravated and blared out on the mindless internet. As a writer and a Jew, I feel frightened of these right-wing lunatics. The Jews will get it in the neck first. As Mr. G. has said, antisemitism is in the soil of the planet.

After the movie, I'd clean up the theater, pick up the seats, looking for nickels and dimes. Sometimes I found a quarter lying there on the floor, almost beaming up at me. That's how it was. Money ruled my life. The lack of it. Read a thing about memory last night. That it has a space. Very important insight. One wonders. Can't remember who said it. Somewhere in my head, quarters and nickels and dimes.

It's tough to work having all these arthritis and lung problems, but I do remember myself sometimes anyway, and come to. Moments. Is it touching another dimension? I don't know. Feels like the water of another cosmos coming down through the center of me. Water, or a column of fire. Light. Rare. I mentioned earlier somewhere of having a moment of not having to be anyone, anybody, nothing at all, just there. It's possible to experience that in the right conditions. An inner liberation.

Who was it that crept into the Slater garage and slipped a ten dollar bill out of the cigar box that the old man, Jack, put his money in -- then walking, no, running, into the kitchen and Mrs. Slater at the table looking at me for a long time. I was hiding under the opposite end of the table. She knew. She never said a word. The best of American ethical, good will. Kindness toward a homeless Jewish kid taken in by a Gentile home. It's the same ME, a surviving organism in the Catskills, skulking around. I can see flashes of it --- the walk into the garage, the sensation of the hand reaching up and into the box. The apple trees in the yard, the ridge looking down on the railroad station. The incident was in THE HUNTER -- it seems as though there are real, obvious, connections between memory and conscience and the functions of literature.

What a loner I had become by the age of 12 or 13 — talking to myself, making plans and goals as I wandered about, like I'll go to this place or that and I'll do such and so, and plans, thoughts and visualizations — can't believe what

a loner I was and still am, used to being by myself, and handling things on my own, recklessly sometimes, proud of accomplishing the simplest of tasks, like cleaning up or shaving or paying the bills.

*

The shit has really hit the fan now. Americans out there still defending the racist pig who incited a riot. I'm remembering the acid trips back East, so revealing of the state of Mankind and especially of the American psyche, so damaged by ignorance and fear. Their angry, confused, ignorant, ego-shattered, sad faces. And they're still out there, they won't go away, they're part of the population of the United States. It will be the Jews who get punished by these peckerwood Christians -- they have a lot of power and they're righteous and not too bright.

*

Memory: The drive from LaVerne to the House in the Valley. The coming of the 210 freeway. Magnolia and Bonita. Cars crashing on that corner until they finally put a street light in. Mexicans picnicking in the park across the street. The wonderful persimmon trees. Magnolias. Feeling of lonely isolation. Loss of function as a playwright; lost, isolated, New York Theatre Person. Teaching at LaVerne U. Jack Woodruff knocking on my door. Starting Padua. Loneliness persisting. Taught playwriting all over Southern California. Took years to get used to this place.

That was me out there in LaVerne, especially when I was kicking methadone (G-d help all those trying and not trying. It is a very difficult drug to deal with, and almost impossible to kick.), but it's not the same me. I wasn't crippled and out of breath in those days. I was doubtful, but I could teach, and speak well about serious things, like Theatre as a Fine Art. The theatre gods spoke through me, but I'm not sure anymore if I can do it so well nowadays. I looked at my website finally and was surprised that I didn't cringe. I liked it, though I had avoided it for years -- my own website -- partly because I'm uncomfortable using the Internet, partly because of the fear of manifesting egotism. Where did that come from? I had the same fear as a child: Not deserving, not getting out of one's proper class. As a child, I was afraid of saying too much or of getting too much attention.

Note on the music: Always interested in pauses and silences, but also, monologues -- long speeches on the page, solos, that sound like chanting in the synagogue. HOWL again. It's as though Ginsberg caught a note in the air and followed its lawful destination as a literary artifact, one that he just wrote down, probably as fast as he could.

I knew those guys, the old Beats. I sold some of them ounces of grass or slices of hash and met them at poetry readings or on the street. Sam and I once visited Wm. Burroughs (one of my heroes) somewhere downtown, no, Chelsea, in a tiny, well-kept apartment. He had liked ARE YOU LOOKIN'? (a junkie play) and invited me over. We sat

across from him, tight quarters, and we both got so uneasy with the sexual innuendos coming at us that we soon left after talking about my play. My memory shaky here, as is the quality of the relationship with Sam. Seems so abstract now, though at the time it was much warmer and matter of fact. But I do see now that he was more practical than I, more mentally sound, and taller and better looking in his Americana way. I was tough enough and smart enough to deal with him, but at the same time I was intimidated by his incredible ability to do everything well, and his good looks and his Americana plays, and all the praise he was given all over the fucking place. Once, Sam was doing a play at the American Place Theatre – a big deal at the time -- everyone wanted to “graduate up” to the American Place Theater. I forget what play of Sam’s it was, but he had cast K. in the female lead, and then uncast her. She was devastated and I felt I had to take revenge for the insult. I rode the subway from Park Slope to the theatre uptown and marched into Sam’s rehearsal and punched him in the mouth. Bam. To this day I don’t know what possessed me, or who that was who did that, maybe the same guy who fought his way through high school. Hit first, etc. I rue the day, still. And I can’t remember much of what happened after that. My guess is that Sam was startled by the punch and then shrugged it off with the help of his skyrocketing career and a few drinks.

There are two kinds of people, said Burroughs, cons and marks. I am a mark.

Walking and taking note of everything, as though it were a responsibility to do so. Taking pride in paths and shortcuts and being always on time.

*

One day I was standing near the railroad tracks in '46 or '47 when Rose Ottenheimer appeared at my side. She was a beautiful Jewish-German woman in a black coat, with shiny black hair, green eyes. I was only six or seven, but it was love at first sight. "Can you come play with my boy?" she asked. Strong German accent. They were a family rescued from a D.P. camp in Europe and her English was bad, but she was a powerhouse of determined survival. Her son was my age, and we were in the same class, and I started spending a lot of time over at his place. We played games and competed and thought of each other as best friends. I hardly remember him now. I used to hang out with him, hoping I'd get a dinner or cookies and milk or something, and I thought Marty would be my friend forever. His Grandmother, who used to knit in the corner, disliked me intensely. They were apparently malbushim in Germany and looked down on us stupid, poverty-stricken American Jews, who had no class. We graduated high school and Marty was like second to the valedictorian. I've never seen him or talked to him since. Sixty, seventy years ago, we played chess, monopoly, gin rummy -- seriously, with a Germanic tinge. He's now a retired professor, living in Florida.

SCAR is more about the Vietnam War and homelessness and Indian lore than it is about friendship. Still, that ending is something I'm proud of – a very slow fade, with the drum and the changing light, MATT dissolving into the desert.

(Ed Harris was great in SCAR. He did my walk. One of the favorite moments of my life in the Theatre.)

Rose. Rose and her son, Marty. We played together as he learned English, Matty and I, and I hung around for gifts of food. I can see the alley running to the back, where they lived. Rose's clothing store was in front. Her husband, Julius, was in the back, pressing pants. Julius was the husband/father. No English. Sad. Rose ran the show. Rose, the incredible survivor. My first -- intimidated -- fascination with a woman. I'm remembering the feeling of me walking into a certain humiliation and braving it for the sake of a meal. Has a taste. And the feeling of walking back home down the hill, the sidewalk, deeply depressed.

1/11/21, Day of impeachment. The gall of that asshole.

The 13th. On Zoom. Is that me in the little box? So curious about how I looked. Memories of a life in the Work. It's remembering is the thing. Sort of an unanswerable question, but I have the feeling of it now, which evokes imagery, and then language, I suppose. Working the power tools. The furniture. The violin, with R. looming over me. Movements. Meetings. Where did it all go? What's in me

now? As the kids next door are happily making noise and silence is everywhere else in my reclusive life.

Brooklyn College. The Honors class. I can recall some of the names: Elaine Sperling, Jerome Bedanes, Jerry Mazza, Herb Lozoff – teenagers on that huge college landscape, droplets in a tidal sea. I had a promising future, academically, and was terrified to walk away from it -- ending up as a busboy at the Alamac Hotel on Ocean Ave, Miami Beach.

Cuba -- it's a hell of a story if I could only remember the details. The Alamac was a kosher hotel, and the three other busboys were Orthodox, with fringes and pais and yarmulkes. I worked there for a few months and then Fidel Castro opened the island to Americans -- me and the other busboys quit our jobs and got on a small plane and went to Havana. We stayed in a whorehouse on the Malecon and the Yeshiva boys went nuts.

Woke up woozy, spilled bio-k on myself and then the coffee as well. Bad hand/eye coordination. No idea what's going on. Plumber looked at me like I was a crazy old man. Later, Metaphysical conversation with K. seemed totally normal. Have no energy to write. Not much interest, either. Something must appear. A note, a muse, a feeling. Everything seems unreal. Man as fertilizer, but maybe something electrical, too, crystalized by intentional suffering, can survive the shock. Join the atmosphere. Come back as lightning. Don't know what I think about that. Just don't

know. Always thought it was Nothing. Nothing appears, like it is in the Kabbalah design -- underlying all that is, nothing at all. Nothing Above, nothing Below. In between, the Tree of Life.

I saw a very good movie last night. 1945. Two incredibly dignified Jews walking through a Hungarian town to the ancient Jewish cemetery there. Nicely done. I feel so haunted by the Holocaust, it must be a drag to other people. Represents Evil incarnate, Evil everywhere. Trump. Evangelical Christians out of their minds. The crimes on the border. The insane beliefs on the internet. America -- It all seems doomed, biblically doomed, permanently doomed.

The planet can't handle it. The pollution, the population, the insanity -- thus my "negative" opinion. It'll be Celie's and K's world and what will it be, if anything? Of course, only the environmentalists agree with me. And all the nutcases on the right should be banned. Ban the internet altogether.

Now I remember, Marty had an uncle who had a farm outside town and who owned horses. A German-Jewish farmer with horses and cows. That's why Rose came to the village. She had an uncle who rented horseback rides to New York tourists. They had a farmhand there whose name was Elias, or Alias, Big German accent. A little teched. Wore huge rubber boots. I used to go up there with Martin and ride the horses. Big red barn. I was fascinated by the barn. Liked the smells. Not too fond of the horses. There was a wife who

never came out of the house. Never knew who she really was. Never got a look inside. Mysterious to me, this German Jewish farmer out in the country where there was also a little man who was tetched (Elijah) and a woman who never came out of the house, and horses and cows and cats and dogs. I was fascinated by the place. Rose, meanwhile, started an affair with Jack Zalkin, who owned Zalkin's Lodge, where I worked sometimes as a busboy. Jack was a war hero with one leg. Rose had a clothing boutique in his hotel lobby.

*

I used to take a walk down the road which ran past the laundry toward the Avon Lodge, a quiet, well-kept hotel on the Neversink river. It also had a lake with ducks and swans on it. The place was a kind of haven for me. The family who owned it let me use the boats and hang out a little. I think they were a moderately left-wing family who took an interest in me. When I got old enough, I worked for them occasionally as a busboy and then as a waiter. In the off-season, I worked as a waiter there one time when my only customers were Sid Ceasar and his family. He was a very nice, low-key guy who drank a little, and tipped well.

I worked in over thirty hotels, off and on, up there in the Catskills. Summers and holidays. The year I quit college was the year I bet on a horse at Monticello Racetrack – BE CHEERFUL – seven to one. Lost 700 dollars to support my college year. The main reason I quit school was I ran out of money. It was that damned horse, that and walking down Rockaway Ave. in the Winter and missing Geology lab because of reading all night and being late and getting an F.

Strange, writing this now in my little house in the Valley, in California. Never intended to stay here, thought I'd live forever in a Brooklyn Brownstone Apartment.

I lived in this Catskill village – horrified but engaged enough to survive – from when I was six to seventeen, when I left for school in New York. I managed to get into Brooklyn College (high S.A.T.s and I.Q.) and my high school teachers had chipped in and given me a three-hundred-dollar scholarship, and I kept on working the hotels. I had started as a busboy when I was fourteen. I think it was at that Kuchalein in the woods serving the Holocaust survivors who never spoke. Gradually, I made it up to the Nevele Hotel and worked there as a busboy on weekends through most of high school. A long walk from the kitchen to the dining room. One day I got caught stealing a box of sugar and a box of tea from the Steward's storeroom. (For my mother.) He brought me in front of the owner, who was a nice Jewish man, turns out. I explained my situation and he let me keep my job.

In those days, I gave most of the money I earned as a busboy – about thirty dollars a week -- to my mother. Nice Jewish boy. But it was the culture that seems so interesting now. In the quality hotels, like the Nevele, everything was very professional and reliable. These were good jobs. I was only a kid, but lots of men, teachers, graduate students, storekeepers., worked regularly and had stations in the dining rooms. We wore uniforms --- red jackets and black bow ties and the waiters wore cummerbunds--- and obeyed the dining room protocols. We guarded coffee cups like

treasures (they were broken a lot and stealing was a way of keeping our busboy supply up.) kept to our stations, waited patiently in the kitchen, never talked back, washed and polished our own silver. (During the service dirty silverware was thrown into soapy pails at the station.)

I can't say enough about how that profession: bussing dirty plates and waiting on tables, and serving people food, had kept me alive for so many years. It's something I always forget. My first real profession, at which I got pretty good at over the years, fast and efficient, and was lucky enough to get into the union in NY when I was in my early thirties. Hard to do. Local eleven. The restaurant was under the skating rink at Rockefeller Center. Most of the waiters were Cuban exiles, professional men with good orthopedic shoes. Grateful, hard-working guys, glad to be in America and making a good living.

Up and down the NY Thoroughway, Route 4 and then Route 17. The Harriman exit, drive past fields and barns up into the hills, get off at Rock Hill, past the cemetery where all the Mednicks are buried. Those years at the Nevele when I was a teenager. Earlier, when I was in ninth grade, there was incident in the children's dining room at the RIVER VIEW (also on the Neversink) when I purposely spilled spaghetti on that little nasty kid, Ira. Was fired immediately. A rock and roll song was playing on the loudspeaker as I bopped down the sidewalk. (Rock Around the Clock) There was a beautiful girl at the River View whom I had a huge crush on. Worked as a counselor. Can't remember her name,

a beauty with a ponytail who was so far above me, I couldn't talk to her. Never spoke a word. Kind of a mindless spoiled brat she was. There were a few of those. I also remember Bernie and Marvin Silverman, at THE RIVER VIEW, friends of mine, my age. All we were interested in then was money and girls. Three brothers owned the hotel which became the setting for my play, FEDUNN.

The Holocaust – I met some survivors up there, in the hotels and in town. None of them liked to talk about it. Nobody liked to talk about it, even in the fifties. Something absurd about the juxtapositions: a Jewish Playground in the Catskills, directly in the shadow of the Mass Murder of Jews. There were the Hadassah cans – coins but no commentary. I didn't learn a lot about what happened, its incomprehensible and unforgivable enormity, and how and where, until much later, when I started obsessively researching the history.

The Jewish Mafia! How I liked being associated in spirit with the story of the Jewish gangsters, the Hebrew mob, teenagers on the Lower East Side and East New York in Brooklyn, because they fought, they stood up, however creepy some of them turned out to be. I admired the chutzpah and the willingness to fight. One of the scenarios I was hired to write when I first came to L.A. was a story about Meyer Lansky. I learned a lot about those days -- Jewish life in America and elsewhere in the 20's and 30's and have always identified with those lower-class Jews who fought their way into the money and who weren't afraid of

killing. Bugsy Siegel was a lot like the nutcase sadistic types I grew up with in the Catskills.

*

The problem of Evil in the world. Donald Trump pillaging the country. Was so happy at yesterday's inauguration of Joe Biden. The happiness lasted all day. Realized I'm not the only old person who wakes up at three in the morning to take a piss and drink a glass of water. There are many of us. Elderly.

The nurses are at pains to let me know how good I've got it. The functions. What is the function of Man on Earth? To receive, to be intelligent. To suffer the pangs and arrows. The abundance of mistakes. The lies. Excuses. And so on and so forth. Feels unbearable.

Like Rose Ottenheimer, the beautiful green-eyed German woman finding me standing by myself at the railroad tracks. "Will you play with my little boy?" What an effect that had on my life in that Greenhorn tourist village which became my world -- I really knew that place, every fucking inch of it. Was it me? The same me, looking at everything, sussing everything out, investigating all the alleys and shortcuts and hidden paths? Who was that? The "mystical" feelings I had about the horizon. The horizon at twilight. Clearings in the woods. The spot behind the synagogue, a little hollow under a tree. I thought it was my

secret spot. Just across the street. I don't know how I did all that. Competed with other boys. Fistfights. Running. School. Hebrew school, just down the street. I was a traumatized kid. Quick to fight. I hated to go home. The woods and the hidden spots I knew, they saved me in an important way. They were refuges. HIDING PLACES. How odd that revelation seems now, but it was the case. I'm trying to be in that kid's head, and I can't quite make it. I was hiding. And ready to fight. The substance of memory, the substance of the Self. Elusive.

Poverty. POVERTY. Poverty and Mental Illness.

Ward R. Young. The Summer soft ball coach at the school yard field. Formerly a Giants minor-league catcher. What an influence he had, teaching me how to play the infield and hit line-drives. The confidence he gave me as someone who could play ball, who was little but who could hit and throw. He made no other judgments, far as I can remember. Mr. Young made a big difference in my life, as High School Principal, when I was a senior, letting me miss school in the mornings because I was reading all night.

*

Sam (Shepard) had become famous and a movie actor, so we hadn't really been in touch, but Norbert and I were in Santa Fe rehearsing a Coyote play or two and we ran into Sam by accident. Can't remember why or how. He was living there at the time with Jessica Lange. And he was

playing polo that day. Like I already described. So, he invites us to the polo match and we dutifully show up and watch the horses running up and down chasing a ball, and then he invites us over for dinner. We go to the address and ring the bell, and nobody answers. The origins of SCAR, though the play is more about the War and homeless veterans and Native American ways. It felt like I was talking to him after he died. And I shook my Zuni rattle at his memorial. I think he may have heard me. I felt like he heard me. I had moments of intentional idiocy -- I shook that fuckin' Indian rattle for all it was worth.

*

So much substance there, in memory. Is it a substance, real material? A connection? A vibe? That's the question. A life intensely lived. I got myself into the Work, eventually, because of Sam. I went to London for some reason and stayed with Sam and O-lan. Jesse had been born about a year earlier, and IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS was on the table and Sam was different – more open, humbler. Noticeable. Made a big impression. So, I got back to NY and Scarlett interceded with Lord Pentland and everything came from there. I guess she merely gave him my name.

THE HAWK. How Scarlett almost stole the show except for Walter Hadler, brilliant as the DEALER and the INSPECTOR. Know now that he's not alive anymore. I feel regret about that. Remorse. What was I thinking, not to stay in touch? Turns out he's gone now, due to Covid. Had just

emailed him when O-lan told me he was gone. Good man. We had a lot in common. So stupid of me not to stay in touch.

*

I lasted in the honors class at Brooklyn College until the Winter of my sophomore year, when I ran out of money and gave up. I feel bad about that to this day. And, that I couldn't make it to the morning Geology lab and was probably going to fail. Pride. How much of that was going on? Jerry Rochman, my shrink for years, who turned out to be right about everything, thought I didn't want to be an Academic, and hit the road. And also, that I didn't know that I was good-looking, attractive to girls? I never thought so, but maybe I was. Maybe I knew. So much a Mednick thing. Sex. I think the drive was high but the self-esteem too low. And now, now it's more or less out of the question, bad hips and back and I'd be breathing hard for an hour with the bronchitis. Enough to scare anyone off. Afraid that's all over now. Got a buzz from C., but it's fading fast. The idea seems impossible now, a facsimile of sexual activity, a shadow of its former self;

Chesters Zunbarg. Worked there for years in my twenties. Had many sexual adventures there —whatever happened to Harvey, the Bartender? I think he was a sociologist or a teacher. We were so close in those days. We even had a two-on-one evening with a famous pianist. I couldn't quite get it up, if I remember right. Same thing

happened in Havana, years before, when I was nineteen, with a large young Cuban prostitute. She really liked me and I couldn't get it up. Nice, round, brown girl, no English, playful and eager. I still have like a photo glimpse of the harbor and the action in the hotel.

Always shocked, repeatedly, at the actual touch and smell of a woman, they were so much always a fantasy in the mind first, like in a movie, but each always turned up with a different taste, a different actuality. Probably would be the same today, if I ever get laid again, which seems more and more unlikely.

That's how it was in my childhood, the love of the fresh, sweet Catskill air. Summer of '46, I wake up on a windowsill in my grandmother's house in the woods and heard birds singing and insects creaking and felt a sweet soft breeze -- I thought I was in Paradise. Maybe the most important impression of my life. A wild projection maybe, but it was the real deal, a new world, one that made me suddenly happy. This little Jewish skinny city kid who never talked and scowled -- to wake up that morning and breathe that good air, and I always was happy to breathe it, conscious of it or not. I was very conscious of it, even appreciative, innocently, at the time.

That August I turned six and got ready for the First Grade. Mrs. Carden. This was mainly a Jewish tourist village, few people lived there year-round, but there were Gentiles in the class. Interesting -- did I not trust them, even

then? I don't know where that came from, exactly. Maybe my grandmother, who wouldn't walk past a church. Crossed the street. But her best friend in town was a Gentile. I'm not sure where it came from, this fear and distrust of Goyim. The boys who picked on me in school were mainly Jewish. Maybe it was the stacks of bodies in the newsreel at the Brooklyn Paramount. I don't know. Maybe it's something in my blood. Ancient. Maybe it's imagination.

No, it's in the blood.

No, it's rage.

Line 'em up in a ditch and shoot 'em down. That's how we know it, that's how we know: movie footage, newsreels. The Holocaust takes place in movieland. So, it's easy to deny. And people lie and make money off it. Like I say, when I was young, nobody wanted to talk about the Shoah. It had become the aching shame and fury of the Jewish people. And I've got my share: Humiliation. The attraction of imaginary revenge, the Pride of the Traditions. The Writings, shrouded in mist, as though written by G-d.

I had to fight a lot when I was in school for my dignity and honor. Attack first and get your licks in. Gives you a big advantage to swing first. Betty was right about that. As was Meyer Lansky. I went after them hard, swinging wildly, and I played ball that way — combative, angry.

*

Time to tell Betty's story: It begins in the wilds of deep Brooklyn. Bushwick/Greenpoint. As a teenager, Betty sewed garments on a sewing machine. She'd quit school in the 10th grade. "I was very good at it. Until your father came along." Somewhere up on Dekalb Avenue. She had two sisters and a brother. The two sisters did okay. Mildred and Shirley. Shirley became a famous NY psychiatrist, Mildred a schoolteacher. Betty became psychotic. Blamed her sisters for betrayal and abandonment endlessly. And she was right. Her brother, Martin, was taken away one day in an ambulance and spent the rest of his life in the Middletown Hospital for the Insane. (See SIXTEEN ROUTINES.) "He was a mathematician, my brother, Martin, a genius." My mother's mental illness was inherited from her mother, Rifka, who was equally out of her mind, and a hitter, to boot. She must have kicked the shit out of Martin, who retreated into insanity. My mother retreated into my father. And then she became a hitter, too – of me and the siblings. Story is, there is a Jewish mental illness, propagated in the European Ghettos, cousins marrying cousins, coming down the genetic line. Betty and Sol lived across from each other in a tenement in Brooklyn. Sol was movie star good looking. "He took advantage." They got married and had me a year later, in 1939.

Thus, I was born, squeezed out in Beth Moses Hospital on DeKalb, six o'clock in the morning of August 24. "The hottest day ever recorded in New York City." Then I was in a room in an apartment, maybe with a beige ceiling. Lying

there in my crib. Window on an empty lot while an old mattress flopped in the weeds like an amoeba. Afraid of Betty's approaching footsteps. Sol had a decent job dropping cans of film around for RKO, but suddenly decided he had to be near his mother in the Catskills. He needed help. By then there were three other kids in the family. 1945. Saw the concentration camp horrors at the Paramount. Drove up that Summer in an old Hudson, had to carry a rubber mattress and rubber sheets for my brain-damaged brother – that, and the muggy heat.

(My brother Gilbert had a way of looking at you as though you were already dead. Like, "what's going on? You're walking and talking in another world." He worked sweeping the floors for Sol's luncheonette and died of colon cancer at 38.)

Floating up to the Catskills on an old, decrepit boat. Washington Bridge through North Jersey to Route Seventeen. Family screaming and crying and fighting. I'm a piece of living meat, covered in my mother's sweat, quiet as a worm, defenseless and vulnerable, imprisoned with dangerous, unstable people.

Waking up in that windowsill in my grandmother's house which had no bathroom. Stinky outhouse. What an impression! Birds singing and people shitting in the outhouse, my Bubba's chicken soup, and then, I don't know what happened, but we ended up in that shithole faux shtetl village where I would spend the next 11 years of my life.:

Hard Winters. Jewish poverty in a little Jewish tourist hamlet, ninety miles from New York City.

(Gardeners making a racket outside. Valley life goes on. Dump trucks. Mailmen. Orthodox Jews walking by. Kids shouting next door. Basketball in the driveway. Nurses in the kitchen.)

Sex, money, revenge.

Ricki Diamond -- an elaborate scam. Go figure. And I was all prepared to change my attitude. Toward Betty. It did. Changed a bit. Second cousin appears, opens a cauldron of shit-house data, and then the scam. The ravages of the internet and digital technology. Here it is, slightly fictionalized, but almost exactly like it was.

“Hello, I’m your long-lost Mother’s family, the Marx’s.”
Or: “This is Ricki, I’m your second cousin, a Marx.” The Marx family. No relation to Karl. There’s a story for you: Mental illness and larceny in the family. From Florida. The person I’m talking to on the internet highlights each section.

RICKI DIAMOND

RICKI

You don’t know me. (FB photo of RICKI)

No.

My name is Ricki.

Hello.

Ricki Diamond.

Okay.

Through Ancestry.com I've discovered that we're second cousins.

Really? Amazing.

A Marx.

Marx!

I'm a cousin of your mother's. It triggered memories of me staying in your home outside the Catskills.

We lived IN the Catskills.

My grandparents used to bring me there to stay in the Summer.

I don't remember any of that.

Grandpa was Bill Marx, your Mom's uncle. I'm his only son's only daughter, Ricki Marx Diamond.

Okay. Interesting.

Do you recall any of this?

No. I can't remember anything connected to the Catskills, but my mother's mother was a Marx.

I think the house was in Woodbridge.

Woodridge.

I think your grandmother and my grandfather were siblings.

There was an aunt whose name I can't recall. My mother was mostly estranged from her family, but there was one aunt she really liked.

The Marx side of the family.

I don't know anything about that side of the family. I never met any other Marx's, but I'm glad to make the connection.

I spent a lot of time with my grandparents when they lived in Brooklyn.

What's your name again?

Ricki. Ricki Diamond.

Right. You couldn't have stayed in the house up there because it was squalor, total squalor.

We had the same grandparents.

Right.

Your mother, Betty, and I.

Wacko.

I also found two other female cousins with the same grandmother as you and heard she was nuts and abusive to her children.

My grandmother. Rifka. Rachel.

Yes.

There was mental illness on that side of the family. My mother was nuts and her mother was nuts.

I never knew my grandfather had any siblings, he never spoke of them. I didn't realize aunt Betty was actually his niece. I always thought I was the only daughter of an only son.

Her brother, Martin, spent his life in an institution. I only met my grandmother, Rachel, or Rifka, once in my life. She was out of her mind, as I recall.

I'll send you a picture of our grandparents cemetery markers. They died a day apart.

Please.

We also have a mutual friend named Darrell Knowles, which is unusual.

I don't know the guy. Sorry.

RICKI

This is my grandfather, Bill Marx. (Photo)

He has my mother's looks.

And here's my brother. (Photo)

He looks like you.

Yeah.

She was a hitter, my grandmother, Rifka, so my mother was a hitter.

She was my Grandfather's sister.

I see.

We used to stay with my cousin Betty, when we went up to the mountains, the Catskills.

I don't remember that. It seems impossible.

Once in a while.

I wasn't there.

No, we stayed with your sisters.

When was that?

We didn't stay in touch.

My grandmother was very abusive and both Betty and her brother, Martin, were fucked up. I remember an Aunt May.

Yes! May Marx. She took an interest in Betty. She's my father's sister.

She's the only one I remember. Her approach, her walk. Maybe.

I'll see if I can find a picture.

I visited Rifka only once in my life. Yes. I walked with a friend of mine the length of DeKalb Ave. I was fifteen years old. She was the building's janitor. She was mopping the stairs and talking to herself. Loudly.

I have other pictures.

She put us up in an empty room. We slept on the floor.

I'll find them and show them to you.

She got us Chinese food. Chinks, she called it. Chinks food.

That's how they talked in those days.

She was out of her mind.

I'll look for more pictures and I'll be in touch.

A strain down the family line.

JANICE

So, I was glad to hear from this person. Anything from that side of the family. Psychosis coming down the blood line. People married first cousins. In the Ghetto. I wonder where they came from, the Marx's. I think in England. She seems nice. Ricki Diamond. Very glamorous.

Is that her?

Yeah. Miami. She 's got that look.

What?

You know, like my mother, who was originally a Marx, became a Greenstein.

Who was he?

See, I don't know much about that side. I think he was a hatter. I think he was in haberdashery. Then he died of tuberculosis. My mother was seven.

Poor thing.

So she grew up with a hitter.

She go to school?

Tenth grade. She sewed garments. She knew how to work a sewing machine. She had two sisters who did well, two of my Aunts. One was a teacher, the other a psychiatrist.

Well, that's something.

She was quite famous in New York, the psychiatrist.

What was her name?

Shirley something. The other was Mildred, a schoolteacher.

You really don't know much.

No. Betty was a teenager when she married. She was nineteen when she had me. My father lived across the hall. He was supposedly the handsomest man in the neighborhood. Movie star handsome. She never had a life. That was one of her keynote lines: "I never had a life."

Maybe this Ricki person can fill you in.

Maybe. I remember Betty walking me to the corner, on DeKalb, to kindergarten, and showing me how to cross the street. And she taught me how to read and write a little, when I was four. Those black notebooks. What strikes me now is how young she was. I never took that into account. She was just a kid. And she had five more kids in a row. Like one a year. Year and a half.

RICKI

I'd send you pictures, but I don't know how to do it.

If you tap on the picture to the left of this dialogue box it will bring up your camera roll and you can choose photos to send.

I'll try.

I met your aunt Shirley and her husband in another bizarre circumstance, and her daughter, Carolyn. My mom ran a small newspaper in Baltimore where I grew up. The paper's owner had friends come in from New York. And my mom said, "I have a cousin I was very close to and his name is Irv Marx." (photo)

He looks like you.

Shirley was there, six degrees of separation.

Say again?

She's my cousin. Was my cousin, like Betty.

Can you say anything more about that side of the family.? Like, what was Greenstein's thing? Where was he from? Did they come from England? The Marx's or the Greensteins? My mother's married name was Greenstein.

I'll get back to you.

Thanks. Thanks for the photos.

Not a problem.

JANICE

I'm getting all these insulin shots and getting fat and farting all the time.

You're doing fine.

How do you know?

The nurses said so.

Ricki, she got me thinking about the past. My teenage mother, of course, and the time we went to see her in a rest home, up in Livingston Manor, New York. Me and my sister. Betty was hopping around like a happy bird. In her eighties. She was having a good time, at last.

Did you talk?

She didn't recognize us.

Really?

Yes. I've wondered, did she do it on purpose? like I don't want to be bothered with kids anymore? or she just didn't recognize us. I think it was the latter.

But she was happy.

Yeah, chasing another old woman around the house. Like children. We sat there and watched. Then I was remembering other things, like her war with her mother-in-law, my grandmother Tsibil, or Celia, who couldn't stand Betty because movie man Joe was her favorite. She called me Moishe, or Moishela, so I grew up with that name. How could you forget something like that? And walking up the road to her house, like I was trying to memorize the route, the walking, the scenery, the path, as if preparing for a literary life. No, not that. To remember the whole thing. And now I only have this meagre impression, a thought, or an image. At the time it was all of life itself, a whole, slightly awesome impression of -- time passing amidst imagery and fear and the sensation of walking.

I have the opposite – driving home in traffic. It absolutely crushes me.

And your stomach?

I'm okay. Must watch what I eat.

RICKI

I'm so happy to have connected with you. I'm going to look for an old press release of mine before I retired, will fill you in on my career. (Projection: Photo and SOCIAL MIAMI/
RICKI DIAMOND JOINS HUMANE SOCIETY.)

JANICE

She looks a bit like my mother. Similar face. No. A socialite, apparently.

What does she want?

Seems like a family thing.

She's pretty in a way.

I wonder what her social life is. Miami Socialite. Says she knew my aunt Shirley and my three sisters. And of course my mother. She never mentions my father.

Funny.

Yeah. Last time I saw him he was doing a barbecue up in Woodbourne, New York. Dumpy little tourist town that had lost its charm. There was also a prison in Woodbourne. A depressing vista. Provided these stupid little guard jobs. Movieman was barbecuing chicken outside, lots of smoke, and his crazy shiksa wife, Mary, was watching him from the back door. Never looked me in the eye. Diabetes. Colon cancer. He died a few weeks later. And you?

Me, what?

How's your health?

Fine.

Come on.

I may have an ulcer.

Stop worrying.

My half-sister has learning disabilities, she has a condition and I have to take care of her and help her with the schooling.

Half-sister?

We don't have the same father.

RICKI

This photo of Bill Marx has the same expression of my mother's. Like, sad and alarmed and worn out. (Photo) I can't figure out how to send photos. I do have a website which should tell you all you need to know. I was thinking about Woodridge. Trying to remember things. Also that one visit to Rifka. Let me know what you think of the website. Best to you and the entire Marx family.

Lots of crazies down the line. My e-mail is -----. My cell is -
-----. Let's touch base when we can. Best to you, Ricki.

Ricki, I'd love to hear about May. Aunt May. She was the one who came around. In Brooklyn, when I was a boy, when my mother was troubled. May Marx? It would be so interesting for me to know what part of the world they came from, the Marx's. Was it England? And what happened with Mr. Greenstein? Who died when my mother was seven or eleven. If you have a minute. Thanks. Bye, for now.

RICKI

This is your aunt May. (Photo) May Marx. Later, Berman. She moved to Florida at some point. Family lore about her is she cared for Betty and looked after her. Hope all is well with you. Ricki.

Wow. Amazing. She looks a little like the May I remember (I was only little) but smaller. Forties or early fifties. Those clothes. That look. I can't tell you how much it means to me. To see what she looked like. Many thanks. And she smoked!

JANICE

I hardly remember her. Just a flash, coming up the avenue, looking into my carriage and pinching my cheek. Then she'd show up occasionally in the Catskills. God knows how she reacted to the poverty and the mental degeneration. Eventually she disappeared.

Something 's missing.

Especially in my own mind. Memory. "Nobody gives a shit about me," Betty would say, "they don't give a rat's ass, and God hates me." She was right. I got out of there as soon as I could, but, of course, it was not over. None of it was over.

I'm going to have to cut down on my hours.

How come?

Problems with my sister, my half-sister.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry, too.

RICKI

I feel I should tell you about a Government program, they keep it quiet, as a way to get money into the economy.

Certain businesses and projects. But you have to move fast, because it could end at any moment. Ricki.

What is it?

It's a government program. You have to apply before it's too late. I'll send you the link. Okay? Ricki.

I will investigate it. Thanks! Unfortunately, the theatre world is closed now, and that's what I would use it for. My assistant will look into it.

You don't need to have a business or want to start a new business before you can apply for the grant.

Really?

I was only asked to pay the clearance charges on the grant and that's all I did before I received my grant. It was delivered to me at the front of my doorstep by UPS in cash same day after applying within twelve hours just as the agent promised. I received \$150,000 in cash.

No kidding!

The clearance charges was \$3550. Should I give you the online claim agent's Facebook page where I applied, so you can apply there now?

Sure.

Do it right away and let me know. Do it tonight. Yes?

Yes.

RICKI

Here is the link. Do it now. Ricki.

JANICE

It's a picture of a woman.

I never saw her before.

Did you say Yes?

Yes.

Don't do anything.

Of course not.

I know. Amazing, isn't it?

Absolutely.

Absolutely amazing scam.

The work she put into it. The time.

I hope she dies.

END OF SCAM

Memory. A kind of validation of experience. Remnants of desire. Longing for love. Just flashes of images, slanted, like a camera angle. Shots. What's catching about the play – BAD DAY IN L.A.-- is its tone. An old man's tone – moderate, disgusted but not angry. Quiescent. I have so much invested in the simple premise of writing as a vocation, an obligation that one fulfills by exposing oneself. Naked in the streets. The oft-used premise of responsibility to one's problematic talent, talent and intelligence. One's subconscious self-image. Ego. When it's not another self-image entirely, like the kid under a tree, or climbing a tree and falling, or losing something he can't ever recover.

It's the old story of the Malbushim and the Prozt, the class division amongst the Jews, the aristocrats, the rabbis, lawyers, merchants, the well-born -- and then the poor, the illiterate peasantry, of whom my grandfather was one. Louis, the roofer/plumber, who never learned English or became a citizen. It persists, at least in me, until this day,

and explains why I have a hard time with certain people of the Jewish American aristocratic class.

Thousands of years of persecution did the trick. Culled, as it were. Saw a movie – Resistance – that Ed promoted and couldn't help writing a note of support because it showed the French resistance as a Jewish movement, which it was in the beginning. High school and college students and young craftsmen and teachers who were all captured and killed. One kid broke and the Nazis got them all. Murdered by firing squad. They, the French, had to start all over again.

*

One time me and another B.C. student, Larry Telles, were hired to escort an eccentric Dutch Professor, a Mr. Longness, on a tour of Indian burial mounds in the United States. We rented a '56 Chevy and took off. The Professor had a map, which we followed all over the Midwest, staying in motels, eating the crappy American road food. One thing the Dutchman did was eat the butter on the table for dessert. By the time we got to Arizona I'd had enough, and I had Larry drive me over the border to Hermosillo. From there I took a train to Mexico City. I was 19, no Spanish, third class, eating tortas, etc., and by the time we got to the big city I was Turista miserable. I wandered the Reforma until I checked into the first small hotel I saw, which had no more rooms, but a cot on the roof, with a tarp overhead, which, sick as I was, I took. I lay there for days, delirious, while a coca cola sign blinked loudly in the sky. Never forget it. I finally went downstairs to the restaurant/bar when I realized I had

checked into a gay hotel. When the nasty-looking, leather boys saw me in the bar, it was so frightening I immediately checked out and ran. I had also gotten a telegram from my mother, saying, "Please come home, your father is trying to kill me." Telegraphed my friends at the B.C. college literary magazine, Landscapes, who sent me the money for the bus home.

At the border – Nogales -- I was pulled off the bus and arrested by the Mexican border police. I had come in by car and was leaving by bus, typical of a smuggling operation. There was no room in the jail, so they shackled me to a bench in the courthouse while I pleaded with the American consul to get me released. It took a couple of days 'till I got on the bus again. I was sitting next to a very nice Dutch girl with whom I really hit it off. But for some reason, in New Orleans, I missed the bus. I think I was playing the pinball machine. Had to somehow get to Baton Rouge to catch up, but she was gone when I got there. One of those many romantic misses in my life.

I can't remember what happened when we got back to NY. I was surely glad to see my friends, who had helped me get out of Mexico City. I was studying William Blake and the Romantic poets in the Honors class at the College. Meanwhile, proceedings of some kind were being started with my mother. My youngest sister had been taken out of the house by a judge. At some point I had to sign papers, when I turned twenty-one, as my father was in Jail at the time. Betty's first institutional ordeal --.at the Middletown

insane asylum where her brother, Martin was. He's been there since he was teenager.

*

Another time, I was living on E 6th street, and I was making it with two Nancys, Big Nancy and Little Nancy. Can't remember the little one, but I was about to have sex with Big Nancy when my room mate walks in and starts taking his clothes off, as if to join in. Nancy was horrified and never talked to me again. Grew up with the guy in the Catskills. Played ball. Hung out. His father, Fred, a Communist radiologist, had befriended me when I needed adolescent encouragement. Meant a lot to me at the time. I was confused, belligerent, depressed. Scared about the future. Fred took an interest, thought I was bright, and that I did have a future. He and his wife, Sylvia, they really tried to help me, partly out of Marxist principles. I used to hitchhike over there. They lived on a hill facing a huge federal prison. Woodbourne, NY.

Hitchhiking all over these little towns. Hotels and bungalow colonies. Cold, miserable winters. Bitter taste of that entire region, even now.

Just outside Woodbourne was Chester's, the singles hotel for left-wing middle-aged Jewish New Yorkers who came up to the Catskills to get laid. I worked there for years. A whole section of my life. I was working there when I

decided, fatefully, to bet on the pacer BE CHEERFUL at Monticello Raceway.

We worked our asses off at Chesters. Three tables. (24 people) Fucked the guests occasionally. Harriet. Sylvia. Kim. Barbara. A couple of famous movie actresses. One of the first blowjobs I ever had. Karen G. I lived in a dorm, below the bar. Hated it. The loss of privacy, the stink. The hard work. The claustrophobia. Three meals a day. A swim in the afternoon. The bartender, Harvey, would serve me at least two Irish whiskeys, on the house, before I served dinner. I'd set up fast and then head down to the bar and get half-drunk before I could do the job. I thought the guests might smell the booze while I served, but I did it anyway. No one ever mentioned it.

Chesters was the best gig you could get in the "mountains" in those days. Intellectuals. Singles. Tennis court. Pool. Left-wing ideas. Sex. Basketball. I worked them all up there – hotels big and small -- at one time or another, at least thirty hotels over twenty years, and Chesters is the one I liked best. There was always a bus-tray at the dining-room door full of bacon strips for the customers -- we waiters would pop a strip in our mouths as we ran in and out the door. And the guests, except for the occasional jerk, were socialist-minded and didn't hassle the help so much. You might have good conversation and occasional sexual activities. Mrs. Chester was a kind, generous woman. And the tipping in the dining room was just a little above average.

Our nemesis there for a while was a man named Bernie Kahn. I see his slinky walk, his arrogant attitude towards the help, mainly us waiters in the dining room. And now I remember the connection: he was married to Mrs. Chester's daughter! The way we feared and mocked him! He managed the place like a potentate and then one day he was gone for whatever reason, and we did not miss him, and, most importantly, he wasn't really needed in the first place. A good maitre'd let's things happen, doesn't let the pressure of the customers get to the waiters. Says a lot about what it was like up there in the borscht-circuit dining- room world, the world I knew so well. You could say that food reverts man to his animal nature. Customers were sensitive and hard to please.

When I left the college, broke, in '59, I drove a car from Pittsburgh to Miami, not knowing what I was going to do when I got there. I knew a bunch of misfit Jewish busboys who migrated back and forth from the Catskills to Miami Beach and was hoping I 'd run into somebody. Later, Castro opened Cuba up for a thirty-day trial for gringos -- me and the three other busboys -- all Orthodox Yeshiva buchers with sidelocks and yarmulkes -- took a small plane to Havana. There we caroused in what was formerly a brothel, where the bartenders were armed with machine guns and the girls were still living there and doing business. My three friends went ape and forgot all about their Religion. After a week or so, we'd lost all our money in the empty casinos and flew

back to Miami. Somehow, I returned to New York, probably for yet another job at a Catskill hotel.

The Nevele Country Club. Speaking of hotels. Starting I think when I was in the 10th grade, I began working as a busboy weekends at the Nevele. I'd get up at five in the morning and someone would pick me up and take me there. And Friday nights. Not every weekend, but many. Especially the holidays. Winter cold. Made about 35 dollars a week, which was good money, most of which I gave to my mother. I remember the enormous dining room, my station, seemingly miles away from the kitchen. Pails for the soapy silverware, which the busboy washed. Shake it up, run it through the big machine. Huge dining room, with levels. The kitchen. The Steward's pantry. What stands out in memory now is the time I stole a box of tea and a box of sugar cubes. I succeeded once and was going to do it weekly. I was going to give the goods to Betty, regularly. Anyway, I got caught. The Steward was a tall gent with whom I had, if I remember right, a good relationship. He took me up to the owner's office and sat me down. I can't remember the man's name. Slutsky! He looked at me for a long-time, and then said don't do it again, and I kept my job, which was essential.

THE LIFE

East sixth street. 611. Lived there for years. How dearly I want to remember the place. My years as a young hipster poet. (A few good poems.) Molly Cohen was the Landlord. A famous poet, W.S. Merwin, lived upstairs. I lived

there with Steve K. a long time until he moved to the West Coast, part of his battle with the Army, and then with Michael E. where the incident with Big Nancy happened. And where I made out with my first wife, A. Dark room with the mattress on the floor. Candles. Wonderful event, that was. Steve was an ardent Communist, talking and flossing all the time. Staying out of the Army. It was a poet's neighborhood then, poets and musicians and painters, and somehow, I found myself, eventually, dealing pot and hashish, my supplier being Jack H. Klein. He was the man who started the loft craze downtown -- on Jefferson Street. He'd get his goods from the Middle East in drums and other musical instruments. It was a way of life for me, and I didn't think it would ever change. Working lunches at Mayhew's Country Kitchen and selling ounces of grass, or chunks of hash, and then up to the Catskills as a waiter on the holidays and writing short poems about the Life. ("You get up and don't run.") The "Underground Life" of Art and political protest. Poetry readings were popular and had become so elaborate, that they led directly to the Theatre Off-off Broadway movement, as I've suggested in other places. It was a whole world view, the New York Poetry Scene on the Lower East Side. Formative years, with the Brooklyn College connection still alive through Steve and others. I remember Stephen Guarino, who jumped off a building on acid, and survived it to eventually become a Hindu priest. Hare Krishna. Used to brag at the time how I'd never become a heroin addict. Nice Jewish boy like me. I'm not sure what I was thinking.

One day after the lunch rush, a Black waiter friend walked into Mayhew's announcing the death of JFK. 1963. The world didn't change. Seems like a fantasy now. Maybe a slight hitch in the level of hysteria amongst the office worker clientele.

The year I got married, at the Hotel Pierre.

So dreamlike. Marriage. 1963. With a Jewish Princess from Great Neck, Long Island. Where did I find the chutspah to go through with the entire extravaganza? Marrying UP like that? I was living a dream, the life of an angry Poet on the Lower East Side, witnessing my own wedding in the ballroom of a high-end Manhattan Hotel, with my family, practically in rags, looking foolish and weird, in proud attendance, my father putting his tongue in my new wife's mouth as they danced. What kind of idiot would do such a thing?

And then the move to East 9th street which I only remember flashes of, the look of the place, same address as Roth's CALL IT SLEEP, the stairway upstairs, the tracks on 11th avenue, the river, and that's it. And then the honeymoon to Oaxaca- the mole sauce, the hills, Zapotecs and Mixtecs coming down the hills, the town square. I was basically going on with the Poet's Life and she was preparing for a normal life in the city - encouraging me to go back to school, become an educator. One day I came home, and my meager possessions were in the hall and the lock was changed.

I've never seen her again. So odd. And then the Vietnam War had begun eating up the rest of my life -- recklessly hip and wise to the politics of things, especially against that insanely sadistic war in Vietnam.

Theatre Genesis. We thought it was crass to work for money, to be ambitious for money, to sell your work, like the others; to be artistically ambitious, masculine, heterosexual theatre people with a hard-edged, fine-toned, experimental edge. I can feel myself now walking those streets and up the path behind the church, upstairs to the theatre, a true black box. I felt safe there and at home, once I had proved that I could contribute. An identity and a way to live. A Cause, even, radical and fervent, against the war -- part of the cultural upheaval of the day. The theater had a defined and important place in New York City's cultural life.

THE HAWK and THE HEAVY METAL KID. It was a world of magical thinking. Black boots, beads, headband, vest, getting high and getting laid. Opposition to the War. A certain hidden contempt for the gay theatre world (sometimes overt), a search for new and corresponding ways of being on stage: the look of things and the sound of things; an approach to acting that was not derived from Actor's Studio techniques but was language oriented and delivered straight with a touch of irony. Plays steeped in the downtown Life, reflecting personal agonies and victories. In my case, too abstract for the most part, inaccessible to many, but the writing had a good enough sound, and personal honesty and meaning.

SAND. That horrifying anti-war play, mainly about the living conditions I grew up with, hard for me to read now. But I think it holds up. I remember going to England for a production of it – Pip Simmons was the name of the producer/director. I stayed in his place, which was a kind of loft, or attic, in London. He had a girlfriend who was a beautiful woman, and I could hear them making love below me at night. Can't remember much else. Strangely, saw BITTER RICE recently and realized that I got the meat-hook thing from that movie. Must have been 11 or 12. Silvana. She was like my perfect ideal woman, sexy and beautiful and willing.

Checking the diabetes: too low is as bad as too high. Would never have thought, in the good old NY days, that it would come to this, alone in the Valley, in L.A., a nurse checking my sugar. Adriana is her name, smart Mexican American woman, single, with a teenage son who plays football.

Feels treacherous in a way to give up secrets. Like Ralph's rivalry with Ellen Stewart over forms of sexuality in the Theater. Gay V. Hetero. Seems absurd now. The Life. The feeling of it. Young radical poet who played acid rock music and liked the girls -- unregulated, as it were, by laws and norms. I know, for example, what happened in the Catskills in the forties and fifties and sixties – an experiment in relaxing the old Jewish taboos. Escape from the restrictions. At Theatre Genesis, living the Life, I was going

on gut feeling, working mainly with getting looser and then becoming more exact with the lyricism and minimalist staging. Socially, the same thing was going on, a revolution in the processes of sexual relationship. Everybody was fucking up their family ties -- I have a feeling of tragedy about the so-called sexual revolution. Endows me with a shuddering sensation of sorrow, even though I was myself a player.

There was such a strong connection between the dope world and the arts. Many of my grass and hash clients were famous people, poets and actors. Musicians. I was working lunches and then the jazz clubs at night. The Five Spot, The Village Vanguard, the Village Gate. Sam was also at the Gate around that time, but we never met. I don't remember how we met or how the band, The Heavy Metal Kid, got formed. Don't remember the incidents. I was writing songs with Eddie Hicks and playing the tambourine and somehow Sam got involved as a drummer. But it must have been around the activities of the St. Mark's Church. The minister in charge -- Michael Allen -- was socially and politically active. Ralph Cook was Minister to the Arts. Christianity at work on the Lower East Side. I was such a big part of that, unrecognizable to myself now. Drinking and using. But I really wanted to get the plays right, find my own way of staging things, avoiding dramatics, and relying on the language and innovative usage of movement, light and sound. Acting techniques that were not pushy or instructive or interpretive, that had the right tone: streetwise, personal, musical to the ear, edgy.

*

I remember, just now, that at some point I came back from California and Walter Hadler, and Paul and Louise Rodricks, and I went up to the mountains to see my mother. She was living in a shack on the side of a hill. The place was a sordid mess. Walter, who was a great actor in a few of my plays, and a good friend, came down and looked and then fled back up the hill. Walter, whose improvisational performances as the DEALER and the INSPECTOR, (in the Hawk) would shine beautifully even today, funny and horrifying and right on the money.

Seven years at Theatre Genesis. Walter, who is gone now. Covid. I waited too long to get in touch. Way too long. And Ralph, who gave me a life, ended up selling jewelry on the street in Berkley.

We were all mainly interested in self-medication. That was the thread moving through everything – booze and drugs. Some magical pill that would make feel okay about myself.

A kind of hipster outlaw was part of my self-image in those days. As opposed to an esoteric old man with a theatre background that I am n -- dealing with the diseases of old age. Walking around the pool. Nebulizing. Insulin. Alone. Theatre world down. Self-pity rising in the back of my head. I imagine that's where it is. Maybe in the chest. Maybe I let it go. (The fuck you, fuck me stage was also where I was at in

the sixties, early seventies.) I kind of remember that attitude. Defensive. Thinking I was right all the time, but feeling somehow wrong, stricken with doubt and unease.

The Vietnam War was on TV and on the front pages and you still needed phone booths and could not cut and paste. It was the driving force of all our lives, that stupid fucking war. White Christian Capitalist America killing Communist gooks. Homeless old men, veterans, are still walking the streets -- dazed, crazed, addicted, drunk, addled soldiers of that criminal war.

Brings me to the question of old age and its attendant diseases and frailties. It's Covid Pandemic time and I have all the existing pre-conditions.

Dreamt last night, early morning nightmare: the world, me, infected by an Israeli genital disease. What could that possibly mean?

Intentional suffering. I get a hint about that, the meaning of it, in terms of friction in the body between what it wants and what it's refused. Many struggles on that score -- changing routine, no booze, drugs, nicotine, but the point is the energy created that can survive the shock of death. An "I." Must sit in the morning and walk around the pool in "the whole of myself" at least twice a day. Limited by the arthritis and loss of disks in the back, L-three gone, four and five have merged, but it's all doable, I suppose, day to day.

“Good morning, Jesus,” some people say when they wake up. Gets them started on a good day. I don’t think I could do that. I could give it a try. But I have no cultural background for that kind of thing, no Christian associations. I wake up in pain usually, and groggy from lack of sleep. Tipsy, out of whack, out of balance.

THE VILLAGE

I jump out the window into the alley and out to the street and then what? – making up stuff in my mind -- games, and dialogue, wandering that empty Catskill village looking for meaning, everything happening by itself.

I would not submit, I fought back hard, but I was looked down on, and it affected me, as Jerry Rochman, my long-time shrink, pointed out, accurately. I knew that town well, because I wandered it incessantly and sought out all the short cuts and alleys, and all opportunities for theft or gain. The parking meters, the stores, the bungalows, hotels, luncheonettes, places to hide. Claustrophobia. Could not stand the filth and noise at home, or my mother’s constant demands. Fear of confinement, crowds, monitoring, noise -- to this day. I go to no ballgames, or concerts, and very little theater. Avoid hospitals. Stay home. Don’t wander. Walk around the pool. Gaze at my Buddha. Come into my body for a moment.

I was alone a lot and wandered about as a kid, giving myself little aims, goals, reasons, like MATT in the play, SCAR. Now I realize where those monologues came from, obviously, about War Veterans, the homeless, walking the mountains of New Mexico.

My brother, Gilbert was born brain-damaged and never spoke. As a teenager he worked for a luncheonette near the railroad tracks, sweeping and washing dishes. Loved his job. Never spoke except to say yes and no. Lived with my mother for years. Betty and Gilbert. She tried to take care of him, but I have no idea what that was like --- two mentally deprived people in a small, dirty village apartment. Finally, he died of colon cancer, still staring in astonishment, silent, in Monticello hospital. He was the boy I slept with when I was young, and who pissed on me every night. What were his thoughts? Did he think anything? One never asked. He just looked at you, as though he wasn't sure who you were, as though you were dead.

Solomon the Junkie. He comes up by association – a hero to me when I was 13, 14. The most amazing ice cream parlor wizard I ever saw, famous for the way he could throw balls of ice cream around and make frappes and sodas -- so fast it was like he had four arms, like a Hindu God. In the Summers, when things were busy and the joint was jumping, crowds of people would charge out of the Lyceum Theatre (where my father worked as a projectionist) and mob into the luncheonette on our corner. Occasionally, I was invited

to help bus the joint and serve. Solomon – Rubin was his last name – had tattoos and marks on his arms. Everyone knew his story -- addiction was not unknown among the many Latin bands and comedians up in the Borsht Belt at the time – but everyone liked him and admired his fantastic speed with all the banana splits and milk shakes and frappes – balls of ice cream would be flying through the air, and he would catch them in each hand. I was amazed and I hung out and worked some of those nights and he befriended me.

I was working two jobs sometimes. People would comment about me: “Poor kid, so young, look how hard he is working, he’s a good kid, etc.” I forget the name of the place. Right on the corner.

The story of Solomon is that he decided to go straight and give up drugs and stay in the village. A New York junkie thinking he could make it in the country and live a normal life. He got married to a nice-looking blonde shiksa and settled down, working at some dumb job somewhere. One day, about three years later, we heard that Dr. Zimmerman’s office had been broken into and all the illegal drugs there had been stolen -- that was it for Solomon. He disappeared.

The Lyceum was where my father was the full-time projectionist in the Summer, weekends the rest of the year, and filling in occasionally down in Port Jervis. I’d get in free and saw all the movies. I’d walk into the theater, wave up to my father in the booth, and he’d wave back. I felt a mixture of pride and dread. Dread, because I’d have to go up there at

some point to ask him if he wanted anything – Pepsi, pretzels, a cigar, halvah, even though he was diabetic – but he had a hard time saying anything else to me or looking me in the eye. He'd proudly praise the actors and the film and splice and re-thread, all of which was of no interest to me. One thing I could do was watch for the red or yellow dot on the upper left-hand corner of the image and pull the lever down to change machines. Because of the splicing, films got shorter and shorter as they went around the cities and towns.

Sol (or Movieman Joe) couldn't make enough of a living showing movies, so he also worked part time for a small trucking company down the road as a driver. They treated him with friendly condescension. His nickname in town was "Ducky". Good-natured guy, not too bright (he'd fallen on his head as a wild kid in Brooklyn), who could muscle things around---heavy boxes, and furniture, and drive the trucks, and not put up a fight, never complained. He had this Brooklyn gangster walk, self-important and streetwise, and like he had some real aim to go where he was going. (I have the same walk.) Occasionally he'd invite me to ride along with him on the truck. That was a mixed experience, as well – I felt a certain pride, but on the other hand we had nothing to talk about and he never said anything. He'd pull up and jump out and start lifting shit. Sol was physically very strong, but because of the diabetes, during WW II, he was sent to a CC camp where he showed 16 mm films. Four of his brothers served in the army or navy. One of them, Phil,

fought from Hawaii in '41 all the way to Okinawa, and survived, unwounded, and married a Filipina.

I had so many jobs in those days: bakery, souvenir shop clerk with Mrs. Levitt, (who caught me stealing one day and fired me), busboy, cabbage picker, filling station, garage attendant: I worked one Summer at my uncle Sholom's Esso station. I am not good at it -- mechanical, manual labor, cars and tires, oil and gas -- and once a day my uncle Sholom went nuts with frustration. He was, by the way, the only religious Jew in the entire Mednick family. He was Orthodox, up to a point, while everybody else was super-secular. Where my Jewish chauvinism comes from, I don't know. Maybe my grandmother. Like I've tried to say, Jewishness gave me a certain identity and pride and a kind of legitimate moral authority. And the Hebrew letters, and the davening, seemed to support an artistic, spiritual heritage thousands of years old.

One day at the garage I'm ineptly trying to change a tire when my uncle goes crazy and fires me on the spot. Then he rolls the tire into the woods, throwing his tools in after it. We never exchanged words ever after that. He was married to my father's sister, Shirley, now maybe 100 years old in a rest home in Arizona. Sholom took refuge in going to Shul. He was of a family of Orthodox people in what was essentially a secular Jewish town. They owned a kosher hotel on the road up to my grandmother's. Dark and forbidding. Sholom had a brother in the village, Yitz, (Isaac) who was also in the car repair business; as a teenager, he was the

worst bullying sadist in town. I was two years younger and fair game for that kippa-wearing wise-ass. Part of a gang of psychopathic adolescents. Yitz. If I could go back in time, I would hit him over the head with a wrench.

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I was preparing for sleep last night when I suddenly I began to shake, and then I was in a different world. I had come to some place after serious searching for something impossible, as though in a dream, and I thought I was in my sister Blanche's room to rest. But I didn't know where I was. Just serious searching. Shaking. And a man came into the room, kind of looking at me skeptically as I muttered, "I'm in my sister's room, I'm Blanche's brother, I hope I'm in the right place, I hope I'm not disturbing anybody, is this Blanche's bed?" feeling terrified, I was muttering out loud, "I hope this is the right place, I hope I'm not bothering anybody." Muttering, shaking, tired, I didn't know where I was. Then the man left and went into another room leaving me scared and shaking, fearfully, where was I, when I understood, I don't know how or why, that I was home in my own bed. Suddenly I recognized the furniture. A huge relief. I was home, in my bed, my own bed! And then I calmed myself, like nothing had happened. Or a dream had happened.

I worried that I had lost my mind there, for a moment.

BEGGING FOR QUARTERS

The seventh grade. We were Bussed to a nearby town for Junior High School. My grandmother was no longer in the kitchen. I started hitting on the other kids for lunch money. I'd approach somebody and say, "Loan me a quarter," or, "Give me a quarter," or, "I need money for lunch." I had all kinds of schemes, and I made sure that I spaced it out so that I didn't approach any one person too much or too often. I don't know how long I did that. I don't remember how I stopped. And I don't remember having that quality of drive, of imposition, of demand of others in relation to my survival. Once I started working in the hotels, I had some money for lunch, and never had to beg anymore – save for those times layer on when I was begging for my life.

Junior High School in the fifties. Strange. Libidinous. All about making the Junior Varsity athletic teams. The uniforms. The Korean War. Otherwise, the entire episode is a troubled blank. 7th grade, where I learned typing and diagramming sentences. From the school librarian. Maybe the most useful class I ever took. A spinster. Later, I heard, she married the shop-teacher, Mr. Furness, a weird looking man with a bald head and a protruding belly.

My bar mitzvah was an occasion to remember. My grandfather, Louis, uncustomarily for him, put up the money for the occasion -- Not much, Schnapps and pickled herring, pound cake. You spend years learning your Haftorah in Hebrew School – the portion you sing at the ceremony, in Hebrew, mine was one of the Prophets. My mother, for some reason, insisted on it. She had no idea what it all meant, but

still had a feeling of obligation: if you're Jewish, you get bar mitzvah, no question about it. Something you had to do. Those afternoons were the times I wanted to be playing ball, not learning Hebrew singing. Those Hebrew school teachers were mainly old men who hardly knew what they were doing and were almost as poor as we were and/or had problems with English. They never told you what the Hebrew words meant. You learned only the melodies. I was nervous, but I remember enjoying the ritual and I sang well. Felt connected despite all the alienation. My portion was from one of the Prophets. Laid out in the basement were the shnapps and pound cake and herring. I got drunk on the plum brandy. There was a mound of manure in the adjacent yard (They were going to make a playground in the lot between the Shul and the study house.) I climbed up to the top of this hill of fertilized soil with a bottle of slivovitz and then rolled down off the mound, drunk. Now I was a Man, whatever that meant. I was going into Junior High School and was worried about it. What would be my status? How would I make my way amongst all these superiors? And find a way to eat a real lunch like everybody else.

Luckily, when I was a thirteen, I wrote an essay for a contest sponsored by the N.A.A. C. P. It was an essay on Jim Crow, and I won first prize. The contest was county-wide and a big deal at the time. Winning the literary prize may have changed my life in that it was hard evidence that I could do something well, and even be the best at it. Hard to remember those feelings, but they must have gone a long way morale-wise. Easy to forget – now I'm remembering the

American Legion Best Athlete of the Year award – also county-wide -- that I won as a senior in High School. I'd been captain of the soccer team, played basketball (we always got killed by the big black guys in Newburgh and Peekskill and Beacon and Middletown – we had a bunch of small Jewish kids, totally outclassed – it was around then that the jump shot was invented.) and baseball (second base.) So American, but I loved it. The American Legion award was the high point of my life at the time: A dinner, a check, admiration. For a little guy who played hard. I once punched a kid in Monticello or Ellenville and could be a nuisance on the soccer field. Later, I played a little while with the Brooklyn College soccer team but had to quit because of smoking and the hard winter practices.

‘ You must know everything about yourself.

I was very scared coming out of High School. 18 years old at the time, a virgin, writing very short abstract poems. There was Landscapes, the literary magazine at the college, where I began to make friends. It was the theatre world which ultimately saved me, socially, by giving me an artificial family, something to belong to, at Theater Genesis.

I'm thinking: Jeez, how was I going to manage all this, and support myself, find a place to live, do my homework, and so on, with the vague idea of becoming an English teacher, maybe an athletic coach at a high school? But there was a little flame in there that I couldn't completely ignore: I

wanted to be a poet. I grew up with a bunch of hard-core hitters, including my mother, and was more a jock than an intellectual. But maybe I was wrong about that. I'd done a lot of reading up in that freezing concrete attic room. Writing these hebephrenic stanzas so abstract they were mostly incomprehensible. But the poems sure tried hard and were dense with feeling. Thankfully, I've lost them all.

Went out finally yesterday for a ride to the beach, and L.A. looked like Wonderland, a fantasia of itself. Now the lonely feeling is like a bodily implement or an organic part of myself – so I can handle it, with the help of writing, although it's sometimes physically and emotionally painful, especially at night, when the demons appear to chastise and punish, for no fucking reason.

*

Irene Fornes. She came every summer to Padua. Every Summer but one for 17 years. With her mother, Carmen, in the early years, who had reached 100. And back in NY, she was a comrade in arms as we faced the pressure of putting on our experimental plays and the plays of our friends. The struggle for funding. Real and oppressive. We were so close, mentally, Irene and i, even though we were doing different things; she was interested in the look, the business of characterization found in costuming and gesture, and the spare poetic writing. She played with it like a master painter, which is how she started out. We shared a certain recognition about writing and staging and where we stood

artistically and politically. And, at Padua, because of our backgrounds and connection, we could speak about it well with the students and actors, and each other. Our friendship and intellectual compatibility made the Workshop/Festival work well. I do think the Padua Workshop/festival was the best Theatre school in the world at the time. And unique, because it was taught and run by playwrights, like Irene, John Stepling, John O'Keefe, and me, who knew, and could demonstrate, what they were talking about.

*

Rita, riding with me on my scooter up Madison Avenue. Another memory I cling to. I only knew her for a day or two, but the attraction between us was very strong. Rita holding me around the waist on the scooter as we zoomed up Madison Ave. One of my biggest regrets, that I didn't fuck her one afternoon as she lay down and invited me – I'll trick you, she said, for the dope -- she was so beautiful, I don't know what the hell was wrong with me at the time. These stupid refusals, out of guilt or loyalty, or who knows what. I regret them all now, all the misses and refusals.

There's so much more to be said about all that. The junkie years. How I lied to myself all the time. How my body brought me around New York City in the search for dope. How could this be happening to me? Alone a lot, an awful lot. Seems like a theme. There's a gap in my self-knowledge somewhere, eluding me endlessly.

I wanted to get into Theatre, and, later, the Work, partly to have a social life. I guess that's not abnormal. And trying to find something – an exactitude, a precise jewel of action or being. I can't explain it. Can only happen on a stage. Or at the Work. The sublime, the right move, timing. Catharsis. A sudden flash of "Consciousness."

Begging for lunch money in the seventh grade. Searing memory. Cadging quarters. I chose a different person to hit on every day. I made an art out of it, a game, like many of my personal little self-justifying aims. My mother had stopped with her inedible lunches in paper bags, and never gave me any money. My Grandmother was back in the primary school. I was on my own and I would hit on you. Brazenly. "Can you loan me a quarter for lunch? Come on!"

*

The breaking of taboos. Latin bands in the hotels, marijuana, pinball machines, cha cha cha, endless food. Nasty comedians. Four young women in the village, all married, one beautiful, including my sister's stepmother, and one of my aunts, hiring an apartment in a nearby town so they could take turns being with their boyfriends. The entire village knew the story. Adultery was common and acceptable and widely gossiped about. I was bemused but chaste, until the 8th grade. Arlene. My father hanging out in Porky's bar, where, supposedly, black men and women congregated. I never saw them. Heavy drinking and sexual activity. Never saw any of it.

I think my father made it all up. Erotically charged drama. I finally started making a living as a busboy, Summer of '54, year the Dodgers won the pennant. Or was it the Giants, thirteen and a half games back at one point? I get it all mixed up these days. But I knew the entire Dodgers lineup by heart until they split for L.A.

I am the living tip of the long line of the dead.

Nice quote from the Coyote Plays, strangely appropriate for Man as the evolving part of the Earth. Always reminded of the little Jewish cemetery in Glenn Wild, in the Catskills, overgrown, full of Mednicks in the ground. My Grandmother's picture on her gravestone. The devotional pebbles. Louis, high on a mound, the Star of David on his stone. Did he care that he was Jewish? He must have on some level. My direct ancestor, a notorious Ladies Man.

What sees?

I asked the English Lord one day.

Eyes all over the body.

Said He.

*

Endurance. Sense of an organism inside that can bear the nightly pain. Must be important to know everything and remember everything. A function of literature, besides

entertainment. Onstage, the uncanny possibility of catharsis.

Felt it at the meeting the other night – the high wire act informed by an energy that could stay a few moments, talking. Could have gone on talking, staying. Stopped arbitrarily. It is an invisible energy of presence, or awareness, or another level, wherein one wants to both stay and at the same time go away, dreaming again, as soon as possible. The machine, though suddenly inhabited, wants to go back to where it was, stasis: nothing, reacting. Requires an effort to come back -- balanced, attention. Years of preparation.

AA. There was one sponsor, I can't remember his name (maybe Sheldon), in the Palisades, whom I knew I wasn't being honest with. Not that I was drinking, I wasn't, but I needed someone to talk to about a lost daughter and a lost wife. I used my role as an "alcoholic" to get him to sit with me and listen to my sad problems. He advised me to volunteer. I was hurt and confused. Pretending about alcohol. I knew the whole rap and the system and the steps and the jargon and half of me believed it all and enjoyed the company and the efforts to be honest in the rooms. So American. The best America had to offer. Kept at it, especially in the Summer when the Work was closed. Walking over to various meetings in the warm, breezy Palisades nights.

Reminds me of the time me and my sister sat with her son at St. Vincents Hospital on 18thth St. in Manhattan. Her dying son, Brian, was a junkie who had contracted aids. I tried to talk about this tragedy in my play SWITCHBACK, which didn't quite get it. Blanche was married at the time to a jerk whose name was NED, an alcoholic white man who resented her devotion to her son. One night we returned from the hospital to find that he had broken all the windows in the apartment and trashed the place.

Montgomery St. Dark. I used to live around the corner, on 1st. After the move to California, I'd stay with her there, once or twice a year. She always had a dog to walk in Prospect Park. Long talks. Raising Brian, who was a wild, slightly autistic kid who'd gotten into drugs. Finally ended up in the hospital all hooked up, head to toe, so much so that only his eyes could say anything. He wanted to die. Trouble was, St. Vincent's was a Catholic hospital. We watched all day for weeks while Brian pleaded with us, using his eyes. I think we got lawyers involved and finally pulled the plug. We did it together. He was in his early 20's. Blanche mourned him for the rest of her life.

*

Woke up from what? Nightmarish up and down to the john to piss. Back and forth to the chair. Trying to sleep, a tortuous process. Aware of the mechanization of everything. What if we are robots, invented by a higher life form of A.I.? Wired.

Comment in my yearbook -- "Chief weakness: a pretty face." True. But I never quite saw my end of it, my own good-looking side of things that I didn't have enough self-esteem to enjoy. The incidents with Rita, and others were examples of that. Not thinking I was worthy. Mack Thomas was one of those criminal men who write their childhood story and get out of jail. Grove Press. Mack was this good old boy Texan who was caught dealing heroin across the border and who got caught and sent to jail. He'd been doing time in a Federal Prison and now he was out. He'd written about his childhood in Texas and New Directions got him released and he started hanging out in the East Village.

I think Burroughs had befriended him and he was on my marijuana ounces list. Mack was a tall mean Texas type. He impressed some of us by virtue of his uncommon achievement, doing time for smuggling heroin, and then writing his way out. Like Genet. I was up on the roof with him somewhere in midtown, smoking a joint, and he's looking at me with a mean face and I'm not sure what to do, or say. "They'd love you in the joint. They sure will. They'd be all over you," he said. I must have replied something like I wasn't planning to go to jail. We're standing there on the roof, looking down at the people, and he says, "I could throw you off the roof right now." All with this homoerotic tone of voice. I got out of there – somewhere in his Texas voice was the sound of a killer.

*

THEY'LL NEVER STOP UNTIL THEY START COUGHING UP BLOOD. A headline racing through my head. Like the speech at the end of THE HUNTER. The Blacks were winning the endless war, and vengeance was at the door. So uncomfortable, so destined. They keep on coming.

Night. I had to wake up and move to the chair to try to sleep there, as usual. Somehow the nightmare reminded me of going to those employment joints in NY for work as a waiter. One time I left my beautiful black cashmere coat that I had gotten as a marriage present, and it was promptly stolen while I went up to the clerk. I remember the chagrin and anger I felt at the time.

*

We drove from Nova Scotia to Southern California, with a stop in a Las Vegas jail for a weekend. Disturbing the peace. A fight in a dining room. I was still kicking methadone. Michael Allen of the St. Mark's Church got us out of jail. We moved on to Magnolia and Bonita in LaVerne, Ca. Might as well have been the moon. A nice park across the street where Mexicans picnicked on a Sunday. Couldn't see the mountains, San Gabriel's, half a mile away. Smog. Orange groves. Walk downtown to read the Knicks scores and have lunch, amazed by the park. Persimmons. Used to bring boxes of them to Lady P. All kinds of growing things in the backyard where the chicken house had stood. Little room at the top floor where I worked. I still have that maple table. The Bungalow porch, where I sat for hours. The weekly car crash around the corner. Food stamps. The

sense of isolation in California, of all places. I started teaching all over and had to learn the freeways. Got lost a lot. Angry at myself and the world.

Methadone. It took a year and a half before I could eat and sleep normally. Gets in your bones. I didn't think I'd be accepted in the Work until I'd quit the drug, and I finally went to a meeting in Santa Monica with Mrs. L. after 18 months of kicking.

Methadone is a menace to Mankind.

Meanwhile, one day, in LaVerne, I got a visit from a man named Jack Woodruff, a Theatre professor retired from Tufts U., but teaching part time at LaVerne U. He'd heard of me and that I was living down the road. He comes over and invites me to start a workshop at a place called PADUA HILLS – invite my friends in NY to come and go national with it. Which I did. They put up eleven K. My theatre life opened again. Wrote TAXES there on Magnolia, about sitting on the porch. Character enters and re-enters, each time missing another body part. That was me, sitting on the porch, staring at the park. Struck me yesterday how I don't remember the titles of my plays and where and when I wrote them. Aggravating memory loss.

One thing I can never forget, working on COYOTE in New Mexico: I was living in an apartment in Santa Fe, having a drink and watching a Mets game on TV, and in walks this

weird guy with a big knife – through the screen door, left open – and he says, I’m going to kill you now.

Why? I say.

For fun, he says. And a battle began, with me trying to catch his eye and talking constantly, finally holding a door against him until he quit. It was the continual eye contact and talking that saved me, that and the door.

Another nightmare last night, enough to wake me up. Strange, also about War, a civil war, I had a “command” and there was another outfit led by a man named Kertez. I remembered that name. Kertez. I woke up realizing that I hadn’t met an important rendezvous with Kertez and thereby had caused harm to us in the battle. Woke up, and I was still in the war and sorry for it, and then I realized that the dream was really about the pain in my left leg. Pain coming down from my artificial hip. This electrified organism, pain in the leg causing visions in the brain. Still, felt terrible about making that military mistake in my dream. It was still dark. I took my pain meds and coffee early and pondered the situation.

Strange thing: thought last night in the middle of the night that I could sleep without sleeping. Absurd. Did that for hours. What does it mean? The beginning of the ending of mental balance in the night? Could be. I see all kinds of things— cartoons, movie scenes, lines of dialogue, paintings, historical clips, all kinds of imagery, like I’m in someone else’s head. Happens when I have a lot of energy and little sleep.

Back to Santa Fe, when this stranger walked in, eyes ablaze, as they say, wide with anticipation, a young local. He was strong as a horse. Right away he comes after me and I throw the table at him and some other furniture and try to get in the bedroom and hold the door against him. We struggled over the door. He kept saying, "I'm going to kill you." And I kept saying, "Why? You don't know me, etc." But mainly I kept catching his eye and I kept talking as I kept pushing the doors against him -- around the apartment we went. I knew he was on some drug or other -- turned out to be symptoms of PCB intake -- so I had to somehow get into his head if I was going to save my life. I kept talking and catching his eye. He was stronger than me and the game was almost up, but I kept talking and catching his eye and eventually he quit, paused, and left. I called my friends, and the police came, and I sat down and finished my drink. Blessed Irish Whiskey. As far as I know, they never caught the guy.

*

Ecuador. Walking through the jungle to a tributary of the Amazon. They let me walk alone. At first, they -- a group of NGO types -- said I should fly over, because of the pain in my back. A long walk to an indigenous tribe in the jungle. I said No, out of pride. I walked with everybody else. I walked alone, in pain. Rocks and logs and mud. Chris and Celie kept their distance. They kept together -- wife and daughter -- and far from me. My so-called family. It was the beginning of

the end. We walked and walked. Through the jungle. They were a family, and I was not in it. We finally get there and I'm still alone. So obvious, the two of them and then me, a crazy person who wrote poems and plays. I didn't care what anyone of these rich liberal elites we were traveling with thought. Under that weird tent, the lousy beer. (The locals spit in the beer. That fast-flowing river. Pink dolphins. The fucking Indians could care less. Spitting into the beer. Young men my size. Near naked women. And then the Ayahuasca, which the wife and child wouldn't do, of course. I did it alone, with a few of the gringo freaks we were with. Throwing up, shitting in my pants, the pounding of the jungle in sync with my heartbeat, arrows in the sky.

Scared while wife and daughter watched impassively. Isolation and exile in the Amazon jungle. I kind of watched myself falling from that point on, losing my distinction as a person, someone who had counted, and began to fall out of the picture, until they got rid of me altogether. A long fall, down to that singles hotel in the Marina where discarded men go to lick their wounds. Can't be happening to me. Not me! What was I looking at when I looked, the downfall of a person? Riding around in my trusty Corolla. Montana Ave. Yelled at from the top of the stairs. I had to put my dignity back together.

*

Philip Roth. Back pain. Vicodin. Writing every day. Jewish. A lot in common. But I'm a playwright, and I gave up on the women early. At 65 years of age. Been chaste ever

since. But I absolutely admire his, Roth's, intelligence. He does us Jewish people proud. Where else can you find that kind of study of the human stain? It takes a smart Jew who knows what the problem is. In my Jewish opinion. And now I wonder: Where does it come from, that Jewish chauvinism I display so often? I think it was the Hebrew letters in my childhood. They made an enormous impression on me – the letters of the Absolute.

What do I think about sex now? Attracted to a few of the women I know. Imagination. Not sure what I can do anymore. Still, the pleasure principle applies. The impulse is still there.

Pleasure is an attribute of Paradise.

They drive away. I'm standing there on 21st place, Santa Monica, California, America, my chest exploding as they drive away in the green Honda, headed for the Palisades, and nobody looks back. "I'm not coming with you," a voice representing me says, and there goes my family, my sense of myself, my office, my peace of mind, my dignity and so on. I stand there and they drive away. I walk back into the house full of packed boxes. I have a few days to live there, and then move on. The entire edifice is destroyed. The construction of me. The house I loved and the plants I watered. I don't know what I was thinking or why, only not to be in second place, not a low-life citizen, something right back to childhood. Now an old man and not much is changed. I struggle like the man being hoisted in my play, **DEATH SKY**

ABOVE. Aided by Crow Dog, he's trying to rise. Acceptance. Equality. Straight up. Like when I arrived at the Lake one time, getting out of the car, and the famous mathematician sitting there watching, calls out, "We accept everybody here!" Even the frightened little seeker stumbling awkwardly out of a car? (20 miles from where I grew up, went to school.) The turmoil within. Many a work retreat have I attended, ego suffering always. Or maybe not enough ego. Intentional suffering, a sense of obligation to evoke an invisible Force. Conscience. Reconciliation.

Never thought I'd ever leave NYC, and yet here I am, with a pool and a fig tree and a palm tree and a pomegranate tree and oranges. A pomelo tree. An Avocado tree. An old man who loves his trees.

The living tip of the long line of the dead.

*

THE MOUNTAIN

A play

So, we took about thirty-five of them up into the mountains.

What 'd you do with them?

We shot them.

And?

They're all dead.

Where?

Threw them down the mountain. They're strewn about on the mountain.

Now?

I don't know now.

Where are they?

On the mountain.

You know who they were?

Bunch of kids, teenagers, maybe a few older, twenties, thirties.

Armed?

Not armed.

How'd they get there?

I don't know.

So, you just shot 'em?

Yes, sir.

All?

We made sure.

Who were they?

Rebels, sir.

You interrogated?

Yes, sir.

Where were they from?

The North. Sir.

Ok.

They must have hidden their arms somewhere.

Where?

I don't know. A cave maybe.

A cave.

There are caves. In the area.

Find the cave.

Yes, sir.

And what else?

What?

Did you discover?

Nothing, sir.

In your interrogation.

They were surprised, sir.

In what way?

Not surprised. I'd say more like shocked, sir, when they realized the possibility.

Yes?

Of being summarily executed, sir.

I see.

For no fucking reason.

You talked to them?

A few of them.

What did they say?

They saw no reason, sir, like I said.

So what were they doing on the mountain?

Hiding, sir.

Hiding from what?

Hiding from us.

And the interpreter?

We killed him, sir.

Good. No one left.

No, sir.

And now?

Now what?

Scavengers, sir.

Any idea?

Idea?

What were they doing? Where were they going?

They were going to their spot, sir, from which to ambush us.

I see.

Wherever that was.

Right.

And they'd have to find the cache of arms.

Of course.

Here's something odd, sir.

Go on.

They didn't make a fuss.

How so?

They figured it out, and they didn't complain.

No?

No, very soft-spoken. When they realized.

What?

I don't know.

Speculate.

They didn't think we'd do it. On the other hand, they did.

Both?

Both at the same time, sir.

Martyrdom.

No.

What then?

No future. They saw no future, sir. So what the hell.

What the hell.

No point.

No point?

No point in resisting. They started walking, sir.

Where?

Walking away. Slowly. Walking. Different directions.

And then?

We hunted them down, sir. One by one. And we made sure, sir.

Thank you, Corporal.

No problem, sir.

END

Wake up every two hours or so. As though I don't want to sleep. Afraid to die in the night. The nights are gruesome. Can't read, can't get comfortable, nerve pain shooting down my legs. The days are okay. Takes a while for the apparatus to wind down. An electrical machine, wires going every which way, pain attached. Fellow at a meeting suggesting suffering doesn't bring awareness. Yes, it does, say I, Reason is the thing. The Judeo-Christian way.

Looking back, I can see – I have said -- I don't have the Christian associations in me, about Christ or anything else Christian. I see Hebrew letters, and Yiddish accents and the Holocaust. You can fathom how people can be attracted to the Drama of Christianity. Drama and the Faith. Intentional Suffering. Immortality. I don't seem to have it in me. I have an understanding, but none of the associations, if such a

thing is possible. Like that smell of every synagogue I've ever been in. Same smell, the books and the scrolls, dust and Old Men. But I'm a secular, left-wing Jew, pretty much disgusted with Mankind, and not religious. So, what am I? Following a Path now for forty-eight years. Don't know what that makes me if anything. Playing my role. Even remember to remember myself. Sometimes. Looking out at the garden, at the light. The Buddha.

Saw a thing about Hemingway (Ken Burns), how his dialogue rests on the depths and complications of American manly speech – right away I figured, he hit on the rhythm and pitch of a certain American way of looking at things. All that Americana – Ego and posturing, drunken maneuvers. Aggression. This happened and that happened, and it was all so important. Tragic, though. Mental illness. Narcissism.

And I must deal with my own place, such as it is – small stages with small audiences, plays with lyricism and ideas. Plays disappearing like Pueblo villages, Apache paintings. Invisible. Nothing to be done. Rather, I don't know what else to do, and I don't care so much anymore about what people think. Hope I can do more plays soon.

THE DARK

Get up.

I can't see.

Get up.

It's black as night.

Get out of bed.

I woke up again.

Move.

Why?

I don't know why.

To the chair.

Wait.

Over there.

Where?

There!

I can't see.

Fuck!

I'll fall.

Don't fall!

Achhh!

Oh fuck!

I can't get up.

Get up.

I can't get up.

Get up!

Oh!

Move to the chair.

Oh!

Go back to sleep!

I fell and hurt my arm.

Move.

I can't get up.

Move!

I can't move!

To the chair!

I can't see!

*

(Boom, I fell to the floor, hurt my arm. It blew up, black and blue. Paid no attention to it.)

*

So, I fell over in the dark -- I missed the chair by a foot and hit the deck. I can't sleep for more than two hours at a time and must move from bed to chair and chair to bed, in a dizzy, thirsty half-sleep. And I missed. "That's it," I thought. "I missed the fucking chair and can't get up; they'll find me in the morning." But I fell asleep in the chair while women were chattering on the radio, chattering about the pandemic as though they were talking about the gaming odds and the real estate prices in Las Vegas.

Arm black and blue from the fall. That only happened when I was a kid. Lots of falling and hitting then.

Dreamt of a cardboard nunnery inhabited by Muslim nuns dressed in yellow outfits with blue stripes.

Sure enough, the family shows up next day -- supposedly they'd taken a poll. They decided I couldn't live here anymore by myself. I might fall and not get up again. I compromised and said I'd wear the stuff where you hit an alarm and an ambulance comes and gets you. What a drag. I started talking about shrinks for some reason, how Jerry was right about everything and everybody else had been wrong and how my sisters had been helped so much by therapy. And I thought about that therapy woman at the rehab in Malibu – she knew instinctively why I was there and was a huge support. **CHARLES' STORY** came from that ordeal, so it was maybe worth it.

An old friend of mine in the Work is talking about how a hymn he sang in church as a kid is haunting him in his head. Someone says he should sing it. Someone else says we'd all like that.

“Not me,” I say.

Why?

I can't become a Christian.

But what do you mean?

I don't have those feelings.

What do you mean?

I don't have those associations.

Like what?

Like Christ is my Redeemer. I never heard such a thing as a child.

I heard it all the time.

My Grandmother would slap me. She'd throw salt over her shoulder if she passed a church.

It doesn't matter.

Maybe not.

I knew you would say that.

Good for you.

I think he should sing the hymn.

I don't think he should be forced to sing anything.

Why not?

I don't like it. People are put on the spot, as though God was watching.

Maybe he is.

I don't think so. I never liked that.

What?

Putting people on the spot like that. It seems like a G. tradition. Sing a song, tell a joke.

It exposes you.

Yeah, yeah. To what?

To yourself.

I have no answer to that, and now they all hate me, of course. Don't know what I'll do. Counting on the Work to show up and support a decent funeral and now I don't know what to do. Question bothering me my whole life. Loyalty to my people, wearing the Star of David as a reminder of the Dead, solidarity with the Faith. The six million.

Note: Meeting Peter Brook that one time at the House. R. so pleased to say that he (Brook) had never heard of me. Brook later asked me to breakfast, and I said No. Like cutting myself off at the knees. It was a way, stupidly, of taking revenge on R. Of affirming myself. To say No to Brook.

The Messiah has not come to oversee the murder of six million Jews or to set up a Second Coming so that some deluded Evangelicals can fly up to Heaven, bodily intact.

*

Strange night last night. Was up often, every two hours, in the belief that eight of my brothers were killed and I was going to get a phone call about it, so I had to stay awake. A part of me thought this can't be so – this is a memory of something that happened in the past, in another life, maybe in a dream, and I was re-living it in the night -- Re-living the dream, waiting for news of a disaster. Eight brothers. I don't have eight brothers, but I was convinced that something bad had happened and I had to be there for it. Maybe I dreamt it sometime and now I was paying for the disappearance of an old dream/reality. My nights have become sleepless nightmares.

Ironically, 3 or 4 synagogues nearby, mezuzahs on most of the doors of my house. Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One.

The problem is I react to what seems to me like a fog of habitual, hypnotic negativity. People saying the same thing repeatedly.

Back to my eight killed brothers in the night. It was like another dimension in the room, like elements of a dream I was believing in, like sleep walking, though I was quite aware of what I was doing – waiting for a call, sad and weary. Trying to fulfill an obligation, do my duty. I don't have eight brothers. Now I'm frightened – is the problem

early senility, drugs, insulin, what? Being alone too much? It's not alcohol, because I don't drink. Wish I could, take the edge off, change my state of mind.

What else can I say about this? Solidarity with the Dead, with the tradition I was born into, lack of Belief, and yes, Faith. Years ago, I caught Dr. D., once in the courtyard and I asked him, what about Faith? something like that -- "You have no faith," he said. And he was right.

Sun 's out. Nice. Think I'll walk around the pool. Look at the Buddha, the plants.

*

Santa Monica. The right turn into the alley, parking in the garage, playing ball with Celie. Coffee. Writing in the morning, vodka at night, the Work, picking up Mrs. Langmuir. Thought it was an okay life. Should have known better and had a plan. Did not. Adrift in the lonely wilds of Los Angeles. Called my sister, Blanche, every day. And then she got lung cancer, stage four. There was no room in her house in Mass. -- Rhea and many friends were there, so I stayed at an Inn down the road. I got there early the next morning and she had just died, looking at the sunrise through her window, very peacefully. She had refused chemo and knew she only had a few months. A Noble, Quiet, death.

*

Nancy. Always forget that segment of my life. 8 years or so. Living on Lake Shore Avenue, overlooking a wild canyon. Could hear the Dodgers' loudspeaker and the noise of the crowd. Practicing movements with Peter. Hidden away in the woods, the canyons. Cause of my leaving K. but was inevitable in any case. We got married, in a way, trying to feel morally equal to the Work, but really to get divorced, to break the bond. No sex, no children. Nancy had this direct approach, a sort of anarchic, morally free, attitude about sex – one's needs had to be fulfilled. She was smart and devoted to the Work. She held my arm at my wedding to K. and looked at me across the campus at the Work.

Question of Time. Serious interest (from a woman), it's a done deal. K. went North for a month one day and I got my nerve up to call N. Left K. one day feeling horrible about it – we'd been though a lot in eleven years, including the Junkie episode, the exile in Nova Scotia, a trip to Ireland, Las Vegas. What was the thing about Nancy? Sex and the Work. Then she left finally to move to S.F., to be closer to L.P. Handwriting on the wall. But I persisted, commuting on the 405 up there twice a month. Unbelievable how I did that. What was I thinking? To this day I can't get a handle on it. The traveling lover, alone most of the time. Irish whiskeys and cigarettes on the patio in L. A., staying in the Work. Practicing Movements Exercises with P. Losing my cat. Losing my gun. (Left one of the windows open.) Once hurt my back and had to move up to S,F. for a while, so she could take care of me. Painful. Remember trying to walk down the block on 7th Avenue and not making it. Hanging onto the wall. **THE ACTOR'S DELICATESSEN** with Priscilla. But that

traveling up and down the 405 in my grey Toyota Corolla was a drag. I was dedicated and in love, but immune to the signs. Finally figured it out. I remember that pitiful last drive home, knowing that it was over.

Smart cookie, N., but we're friends now, at a distance. Regret my lack of prescience at the time. About the cat and the Gun: The cat, LaVerne, was a great hunter, but she had this habit of killing birds and bringing them into the house, which I didn't appreciate. Finally, she disappeared one day, into the canyons. The gun was a .38 revolver in a beautiful leather holster that K. had smuggled over the border – in her luxurious mane of red hair – coming back from Vera Cruz -- I think on my first Rockefeller Grant. We had lived for a time in this solitary bungalow on the beach, right across from a fabulous sea food restaurant with great *ceviche*.

*

We spent years, K. And I, in that little apartment on 1st street, Park Slope, commuting to the Manhattan Theatre scene, becoming junkies, watching television, becoming junkies, taking drugs – took acid maybe thirty times, Reality appearing in the tired, frightened faces -- and then traveling, as was described above, to the Yucatan, returning to find that we'd been evicted, all our material goods in storage somewhere. Ending up in the strange, windy, grey, rocky, tide-swept shore of Nova Scotia, where people said yes by pulling in their breath and swallowing it.

*

And the serious poverty out there, people on the streets, people barely staying alive. It's a reason for class war, a war the dummies on the Right keep preparing for, and there is good reason it could happen. Not so much class war, though that will be part of it, as a war about Reality, between the sane and the insane. Maybe between the stupid and the intelligent. You see it all the time, people destroyed by the lack of money. Not only the universal disorder that goes on in the head, but unchecked capitalism and the stupidity of the American system when it comes to making a living. At 81, I'm finally getting a bead on what's been bothering me since I was born: my mother's hysteria about money and my father's incapacity to make any. He'd fallen on his head, after all, and that was that. Poor Jews in Brooklyn. He gave me a quarter from time to time to buy a milkshake. A quarter was a magical icon in those days. Restored the world there for a minute. Hopping happily down those iron steps from the projection booth to the street.

*

A teen-age punk with a crazy Grandmother. I never saw her again, except for that vision on the stairs of the brownstone on DeKalb, after blocks and blocks of walking. Seeing her on the stoop with a mop and a pail, shouting to herself.

*

Suddenly a picture of my father, in his undershirt, in the projection booth, sweating and mumbling to himself.

He was thinking aloud up in the booth, confused as to know what was supposed to happen next. I mean, he could hear his thoughts while his father pattered on about the weekend stars, icons he thought of as gods, their names alone resonated in his mind, evoking other worlds, worlds totally different than he, himself, could imagine. The world of movie stars. But, as the projectionist, he knew that he played an essential role in the weird magic displayed on the screen, because of the light, and he was proud of it, and of his expertise.

` I'm trying to find something, like a glittering quarter on the floor, under a seat in the Lyceum movie house. A gift from above.

*

Nightmare last night. Kept me up, off and on. Can't sleep much anyway, but this was ridiculous. Dreamt I was at a swanky party in Malibu or Santa Monica, and nobody knew who I was. All these movie people and beautiful people, they thought I was unnecessary shit on the wall. Nobody looked me in the eye. I felt the true weight of what I meant, which was nothing. I woke to feel the inconsequential nature of all my work, in the corner, hidden away in oblivion. So frightening and true that I woke with a shock and had to

consider the situation, and I couldn't escape from the truth of it – all this work and never produced and never noticed.

No joke. A couple hours of sleep at a time. It's possible and likely that I might disappear before long. Not just the body, but the body of work. Full of doubts again. Better do something, but I don't know what. Can't re-write well. Clean it up? Then what?

One finds one's own, in the text, and nothing is resolved, and nothing is as unreliable as the so-called human spirit. It'll turn on you in a NY minute. My current view is, it's in the text, take it or leave it, and don't come if you don't like that sort of thing.

Girlfriend gets lost in the Port of Authority, says don't look back or I'll die – so she looks back and she dies, and the trains keep on running. It's like that.

Tough guy talk. Have never liked anyone telling me what to do -- an antidote, partly, to my mother's tyranny, but also a class issue, a size issue, but now so immediate and strong. Don't get nasty with me or put me down. I'll attack, right away. Usually. I am not the person (in manifestation) I think I am. Avoid confrontation.

*

I'm thinking suddenly about ACTION, Sam's little play that I directed at Genesis, with Patti Smith in the cast -- just a flash of the black floor and a dirty old couch. And now I've

forgotten all I was thinking about. Will it come back to me, the incidents and the irreversible and the inevitable, like Ed Harris sitting down with the Navaho blanket over him at the End of **SCAR?** The long dim out. One of the best moments in my theatre life. Probably no one will remember it anymore. Maybe Ed will. Understand for a second why Proust made such an effort to recall the details, the manners, the tone, the behavior.

That moment on Martha's Vineyard where we performed, in the rain, **THE COYOTE CYCLE**, for ourselves. Twilight to dawn. A magical moment, though no one was there but us, a beautiful night. There was an *Action* there. An event. *Catharsis*.

There's an opportunity for something subtle, cathartic, even touching, if you can find that sustaining, sublime breath under the play, the iambic strut, the exact spacing of the performances, the staging —something I heard said about trauma: Not necessarily the foundation of a play. As it is so often. You could say the trauma IS the play.

NOTHING ABOVE, NOTHING BELOW. *Ein Sof*. Puts me in mind of The Ray of Creation. The Absolute. The colors of the sky in a storm, the breaking up of the storm. Somehow related to the traumatic shocks of childhood. Thoughts as electrical phenomena. The iambic beat. BANG. The instrument vibrates in the present.

Following nightmare: my plays flying into oblivion. A life's work. Planes Eat the fuckers. RAN TO THE COMPUTER AND CHECKED OUT THE WEBSITE. ALL THERE. ONLY ME KNOWS. Have no idea what that means. Could not sleep.

Tired?

Yes.

But you can walk, you can think.

Words.

The sound of words.

The stage.

My body. Limbs and heart.

Pain.

I can hear my pulse at night.

It's high blood pressure or clogged up ears.

There you go.

There I went.

Goodbye for now.

Take it easy.

Take a breath.

Take a hike.

Then I had another nightmare, worse than the other one. It was about words, the failure of language. The tone of it is hard to catch. But all meaning, all flesh, all mind, was failing again into an incomprehensible dark war of misunderstanding. Something happened personally as well: A beautiful woman whom I wanted to talk to. Through a fence, or a grid. Unreachable. Untouchable. I'm afraid to go to sleep at night because I get up every two hours having to piss and carry a nightmare in my head. I stumble around almost feeling myself stumbling around, avoiding a fall, like a clown in front of an audience who, half-asleep, is me.

Now, I don't know. In search of shiny jewels at the bottom of a twisted nervous system. Wisdom and forgiveness. People really want it but don't know anything about it – it doesn't work, and they don't know why. It matters how close I am to myself, and then something is possible, mainly only at that moment – I AM. The real Crime is to not be, to refuse Being. Which is to refuse Conscience. And then you die.

*

Well, I'm in deep water here, but in honor of the god of Literature, I'm wrestling with something in my mind. Maybe it's old age and dying. I need to sit somewhere with the enemy, or the Angel, or me, for at least an hour. To clarify, to unify. My ancestral brothers are haunting me. The nights are battlegrounds based on peeing, dreams -- the urinary tract, the Ancestors, and the blood of my problematic line. No line, in fact, as Celene is adopted.

I was standing on the slope of the wooded hill near the door of my mother's shack. She was in there, talking to herself. The place was shabby, unkempt, and smelly. Walter ran back up the hill to the road and waited by the rental car. I started to cry.

My father – I sigh just like him, sitting down, sitting up – blowing air out to signal inner distress. The difficulties of aging, physical and mental, expressed unconsciously, between him and his world. I do lots of things exactly like him – the famous Brooklyn Street walk; his way of sitting, leaning forward, right arm crossing his left knee; his essential good nature, a mark, open to scams and tricks of all kinds. Like me.

And there is my mother, staring into space, wires crossing in search of a solution that never came. For a while there, I thought I could figure it out for her. Of course, it all had to wait till later in the long, violent fog my mother seemed to be in -- for shock therapy to come along and take a shot at the problem. It seemed to help for a while – she

was calmer, less violently reactive, almost lost in herself. The main issue was, it was me who signed the papers, because Sol was in jail, and I was the nearest male responsible relative to put her in there. If I remember right. The whole escapade seemed shady to me at the time.

Which brings me to the other day when I missed a meeting because I wasn't sure what day it was. It was almost like I was imagining the day, and now I feel the consequences -- also in my imagination. Who knows what it all comes to? Memory and the mind. The association of mind tampering (LSD, heroin, etc.) and early senility, all that worrisome progression of age.

July 4th. Stupid jingoistic holiday. Next door neighbor throwing thousands of cherry bombs. It's like he has a splinter in his forehead. Making thumps. He can't help it. There may never have been what we call civilization. Just a bunch of wilders making babies and noise.

Meanwhile writing a dream play about the end of the world. **SIEGE**. Realizing, in the difficult process -- I keep nodding out in front of the computer -- that my real so-called "mind" is like a pearl hidden under some complicated inferiority garbage. Like I always knew that all Broadway songs sound like the same song to me -- and what is that song about? But I gave them their due. A glance in the mirror. One Monk tune at the Five Spot was worth more to

me than, say, a ten-year run of Hannibal on Broadway. (I confess I never saw Hannibal) Rap is cheap. Like they're constantly rewriting Shakespeare and the Greeks. There is a huge gap there between the Broadway bustle and that Monk phrasing. And all that striving for success is absurd and has nothing to do with real theatre art. It's the entertainment of crazy people by crazy people, as in Marat/Sade. They had it right. And yet it took years and years of not being intimidated by the people making money and fame. The "real" theatre people. On the other hand, no one is knocking on my door to do my plays. Probably very few people know that they even exist.

Last night for some reason had a vision of my mother. An asylum story. My mother's face. A gargoyle. Made by anger and bitterness and trouble. Poverty. The inside was on the outside. (**16 ROUTINES.** Really gets it.) There was love there from Betty until I was four or five. She taught me to read and write. Something turned then. Swerved. More kids, she became angry. Maybe it was all genetic. I was Fearful ever since. Swore (in bed) last night I would never be intimidated by anyone ever again.

Good luck on that one.

Which reminds me: I thought, when I first came to the Work, that everyone was above me, he or she could be an idiot or a fake, but I thought he or she was above me, spiritually, a Saint, I was a nothing but a piece of shit looking up, with the shadow of a an ego, something which actually

transformed, in time, to the beginnings of an individuality, which I can glimpse now and then. But first I had to learn, and be convinced, that I can do certain things well, even make a violin, win awards, stay in a relationship. Both therapy with Jerry and the Work helped me enormously.

Driving to Westwood. Driving to the Valley. The 405. The 10. The 101. Endless driving on the L.A. freeways. Lost.

Another memory: meetings in Venice. Driving from Santa Monica, parking hassles. Intense discussions around *All and Everything*. Teasing arguments with Jack about the superiority of the Jews. He really took offense, and I only half believed it, but I didn't grow up with those heavy Christian associations, even though I can talk about the Law of Three and even understand it a little, I did not have a concept of the Holy Ghost. Not sure I do now. Anyway, years ago, one of the old men in that group shows up at the House, he'd shit himself in his car and I was the only one around then who could help him. Maybe I was living there at the time. Not sure. Spent a few months living there, at the House. So, I had to help him with his clothes and clean him up, and the question arises in me now, as always, is: who was that who was able to deal with the crisis? I'm more myself now, I think, the somewhat angry and disgusted Brooklyn Street kid, but I was able then to help, and be kind. "You're a real friend," he said, at last, when it was over.

With nurses around all the time, too much emphasis on Diabetes and Bronchitis, Arthritis. But more time for the

“inner life.” Looking inward with a cap on dreaming. A voice says: “You’re dreaming again.” Wheezing, whistling a tune in my chest. Sounds like a violin, off key.

Hard to wake up today. Could barely walk. Felt like Frankenstein. Nobody home. Asked if I wanted to sit, I said, nobody ‘s home. A sick feeling. Light coming into the room. A new progression in all these ridiculous diseases. Sally and Mary came over for a swim the other day. Lifted my spirits. Always an ambiguous sense with Mary because of her hearing. Did remember myself occasionally. Stupid not to. Staring at the bamboo automatically, or with the “whole of myself.” A movement of the attention to include the body, that feeling of Time passing. A deeper sense of existence. I can almost write this. But I no longer fear other people the same way or feel unequal. Change is possible. At least with Time, Age, Practice. Comes and goes. Isn’t all it’s cracked up to be.

It’s nip and tuck, touch and go, hanging by a limb, and so on. Real literary effort seems out the window in this consumerist, egotistical culture, where one, for example, follows one’s heart. You take your heart out, put a leash on it, and follow it. A form of cozy entertainment. Bullshit everywhere. Now you can hire a company to lie for you. Legit.

Memory. Out of nowhere. Looking at the pool. The life of a waiter. The sensations. The times between meals. The comradery. The dance. The laconic face on the dance. The

feel of the dirty dishes. People waiting nervously for their food. All so different from one another. The meaning of aging lives, grasping for biological significance, a diminishing chance to get laid. I didn't do much of that, but I did my share. Leftist ideas blown to smithereens by the American way. A whole socialist strand of Judaism, beginning in Europe more than a century ago, the Bund, dwindling away pathetically in front of my eyes.

DINING ROOM

Excuse me.

Sir.

My food is cold.

Sorry.

And it's not what I ordered.

What did you order?

Flank steak.

That is flank steak.

Take it back

Certainly, sir.

And make sure it's hot.

Same thing?

Flank steak, rare, are you an idiot?

No, sir.

So don't stand here arguing with me.

Be right back, sir.

I hope so. (Pause. Lights)

I'm going to spit in his fucking food.

Don't do that.

I'm going to spit in his food or I'm going to punch him in the head.

Don't do that.

I'm going to kill the motherfucker.

Serve him his flank steak.

No, you do it.

Here. Give him his food.

No.

Why?

Let him wait.

He'll complain.

Let him wait.

They'll fire you.

Give it back to him. Same food.

Yeah. (Lights) Here you are, sir.

'Bout time.

Thank you, sir.

Much better.

Yes, sir.

Thank you..

You bet.

Meanwhile, I'll have a chat with the owners. They're old friends. We go back a long way. We were comrades in arms in Spain.

Which side, sir?

Get away from me you little shit, or I'll kill you with my bare hands,

Yes, sir.

I split as fast as I could. Leaving them all sitting there at the table staring at each other. The busboy will take care of it. I ran into the woods and breathed, gasping, and, for a moment, a sweet sigh of relief. And then I wondered, Where to now? (Became part of my play, **THREE TABLES.**)

*

Dream. One of the strangest. Continues the question of knowing myself. Norbert, ostensibly one of my best friends, was the protagonist. I don't know how it happened exactly, but he took my girl away. I knew she was beautiful and that she had a distinctive hairdo, but I never saw her face. Only that she was mine. Norbert took her away and they never turned around. I wanted to ask: "What are you guys doing?" Silence. I was hurt. I kept trying to start the dream over, but they never turned around. In space. Question is, who is the ME in there. It was a side of me I didn't know very well. Looking for love.

*

Memory: Turns out one of my present nurses lives in Laverne, where we landed first in the move to California from Sam's place in Nova Scotia. 1973. (Lori, or Loretta. Down home *shiksa* Americana. But a good nurse. A bit forgetful.) So much smog, I couldn't see the San Gabriel Mountains a half-mile away. Orange trees. Mexicans in the park across the street on Sundays. I was in culture shock. Big change from NYC and the wilds of Nova Scotia. Nice craftsman house, porch going all way round. Magnolia and Bonita. Used to drive to the House in 35 minutes. White Mustang.

We'd arranged with the help of Scarlett, to join the Work in San Francisco, but because of the house in Laverne, we stayed in L. A. instead, and began visiting with Nancy L., who lived on 21st street in Santa Monica. Two drug addled counter-cultural hipsters and a nice little old grey-haired lady in Santa Monica. The incongruence was obvious, but Mrs. L. was not impressed and shrugged it off like -- like we were nice young people who'd lost our way. This was certainly true. Mrs. L. became a kind of mother, or Grandmother, to me, which I sorely needed: Turning all my inferiority complex, gradually, into, or with, a certain moderation -- especially in terms of my attitude towards myself, emphasizing my apparent "good" qualities and my eager commitment to the Work. We visited her formally for over a year until we were invited to join a Group. I looked

up at everybody, automatically, sick with that deep feeling of inferiority.

Turns out my incredible nurse – a nurse, 10 hours a day --- turns out I couldn't handle it. Anyway, she seems to have quit because of my insulting her too much. I'm doing something wrong. I wake up in the morning dazed and in pain, and then I try to get to work and if I'm lucky I get into something interesting, I'm happy as a person who is afraid to lose his purpose in life, and so I told her never to interrupt my work again. "You can't get it back," I said, which is true. "Once it's gone, it's gone." She didn't take it well and quit. "Never have I been so insulted in all my life as a nurse, 41 years." So, I'm doing something wrong in my diseased old age. Impatience. Fear of having lost my vocation. I think she thought I was in my office just to play with my computer, like it was a hobby. They tend to treat all old people the same.

But the ironic thing is, she's living now in Laverne, so when and if we actually talk, we talk about Laverne and I have all these memories. Me and K. in the great Craftsman Bungalow house on the corner. Land of white bread and Americana. Magnolia and Bonita. The persimmons, the park, the weekly car crashes in the intersection behind the house. I wrote **TAXES** there, with intermittent car crashes in the Soundtrack. Really funny. **Crash, bang.** Finally, they put a light up on the intersection.

Nice house. Now. Where I am now. In the Valley. Been lucky that way, once I got out of the Catskills -- leaving aside maybe Nova Scotia, lived mainly in nice places. One of the good angels on my left shoulder where the hummingbird sat. And now in a house just right, the sun coming in from the West astounding and brilliant.

Nurses. Learning a lot about these girls. They want to stay single, have kids. The New America, land of the Single Mom.

Junkies in Orange Tree Land trying for a foothold on a spiritual path. Used to tease Jack with theories of Jewish superiority. One of the beliefs I hang onto in the yearning for an identity. Even my name is a tack-on. They had Hebrew names in the old country. My Grandfather, Louis, from Tomashboleh, wherever that is, Ukraine maybe, was Lazer son of somebody. A roofer/plumber, so he gave his last name as Mednick --- Mied means brass, in Russian, and nick is worker. Mainly meaning roofer/plumber. Or Brass-man. He got lost somewhere on the Canadian border in the middle of a blizzard, buried a young girl there and saved the child, my uncle Paul. I mention him in **MIRABELLE**, a vaudeville play. He was a tough guy, my grandfather Louis, a notorious womanizer, never said two words to me. Part of the problem was he had trouble with the English language, and he never became a citizen. But I don't know really what his problems were or what he was thinking. Has become a character in my psychological and literary life. On his grave,

Star of David prominent on a mound in that little Jewish cemetery in Glenn Wild New York.

People want stories and conflicts to be resolved one way or another. A protagonist, antagonist, a conflict. For me, one line creates the next. Sometimes I must go over and over it. Characters appear, eventually, a theme is discovered, a structure is decided, by itself. There's a certain mental click in the writing and then I realize what it's about. When I was teaching playwriting, I wasn't teaching the usual formulae, I was teaching writing for the stage as a sort of discovery apparatus, although there are rules for the stage that do not apply to movies or television, or the page. I taught that, as well. See the stage. The basic premises of the Padua Hills Playwrights Workshop/Festival.

TEACHING. Started at Theater Genesis when we had to do workshops and classes to be eligible for grants and donations. Acting, directing, playwriting. We even rented a building down the street for a time so we could do all that. Had an office there. (Where Delia and I went to make love. Wish I could remember more – the taste, feelings, touch.) Turns out you can't really teach anything about playwriting itself. More a social thing. But then I taught all over the place when we moved to California. The best class I had was on the West Side, privately, with seven students, where I didn't teach playwriting at all, per se, just the study of great texts, mainly Shakespeare and the Greeks, Beckett, and talking about them in depth, the exercise being one of thought and expression. Thinking. For the mind. (Like

writing, speaking is a form of self-actualization.) There was also a good class at Pomona College, and the Saturday readings for the students that we had at Padua. They were such unusually interesting events at Padua then, because we had people in the room who knew how to talk about plays and playwriting, and we evoked the best in each other.

The Plays. I've sure as hell written a lot of them. I'd like to talk about a few of them here. For posterity, if there is a posterity. Starting with **THE DEER KILL**, where I was running naked in the streets. **THE HUNTER**, clean and accurate, with its excellent cast. I liked The Genesis production, though it ran for a while at the Public Theatre. **WILLIE THE GERM**, Delia Duck and Tom Lillard. Loved that play and loved my time with Delia. Wonder if she ever remembers me. Met her one time at Norbert's years ago – strange, random event -- she was married to this handsome aristocratic German Aryan and had kids and acted like she didn't know me. Later, I guessed maybe the Husband was the Jealous type and she'd had to be careful. Can't forget **THE BOX** (now lost), my first play, directed by Lee Kissman, minimalist, derivative, and **SAND**, which I was always afraid of because of its harshness, but now I think it's okay, it expressed well what I felt about my childhood and the War in Vietnam. **ARE YOU LOOKIN'**, which Wm. Burroughs mentored a bit, my first directorial event - stark and minimal, straight from the horses' mouth, as they say, with one good scene I really liked, when the Christmas lights go on and off in synch with the protagonists' eyes, and the simple, poetic beautiful ending – a description of the

surfaces on the moon. **THE HAWK**, with Tony Barsha. An improvisational play, I wrote the intervals and Eddie Hicks and I played music. Where I met Scarlett, who later helped me with contacting Lord P. How we worked so hard at the Farm – East Stroudsburg, Pa. – it was a big success off-off Broadway, at Genesis, and a dud Off, on Astor Pace. (Delia and I were the only audience after 3 days.) I was learning a lot about working with actors and new techniques about everything to do with The Theatre Arts. We learned on our own. There were no dogmas or conventions, we just worked. And tried things and responded to the War and the intense revolutionary vibe of the times. Gun-toting and drastic.

*

CALIFORNIA. I kept imagining we'd be going back to NY. But we stayed on. I met some people in the Work, and I liked them. And I liked the Ideas. Was still kicking methadone for quite a while. 18 months. Finally met Mrs. L. And Norman Lloyd, for whom I did IOWA and BLESSINGS, two plays at KCET for the Visions series. God knows what happened to them. I still may have the scripts somewhere. Writers Guild. Wm. Morris and Marty Caan. And then Padua and the **COYOTE CYCLE**. Ended up buying the house. Problems with my back. Was on my way for a fusion operation, drove past the hospital and went to Master Ni, acupuncture every day for 6 weeks. Stone Canyon Rd. Wanted me to be an acolyte of Tao, wrote to L.P., who said No. **TAXES.** The awful breakup. That feeling at the wheel of the white mustang at least partly pangs of conscience. Didn't

write much, always worrying about the survival of Padua. 17 years of it.

Interesting how things coincided. Met Darrell at the Work, who had been told about me by Rene Assa. Rene. Wonderful actor and friend who couldn't stop talking. Or smoking. He died of lung cancer years ago. He recommended *The Deer Kill*, which excited a few people. Started working on exercises with Darrell and Norbert in my backyard in Laverne. All the teaching.

Finally kicked one day. Could finally eat, and breathe, and sleep.

*

Big argument going on right now outside amongst a flock of crows. Huge commotion. Doves pecking in front of the garage. Birds in the tree just outside the window. Always there. Feel privileged to observe. Listen.

*

Realized even years ago how much my social life was bound up in the theatre. I'm a reclusive person, turns out, but I wanted to be involved in theatre to be around people -- in the stagecraft, literature-bound way, instead of traveling around the Lower East Side with a briefcase full of dope, which, with one false step, could put me in jail.

In Search. France. With Jean-Claude on the huge estate, St. Remy, near Avignon. Big guy, kindly, club foot, one eye askance, answered directly, treated me like an old gent. Learned a lot there with him, ways to work, relaxation. Long sittings, the way he covered himself head to toe with a black shawl. Hard stone floor for the movements. The swimming pool in the afternoon. The hot sun. Stopped in Paris near the Louvre, walked the Seine. Hung out in the Jewish Quarter. Alone. Maybe everything happens the way it's supposed to.

I seemed to be more afraid of literary oblivion than death, more afraid of pain than death. Enough is enough. Different relationship with the body. Wake up in the morning and I can't walk until the Norco works. Pain in the legs. Hips.

Three Tables. *Have a load-in date: April 11, 2022.*

It occurs to me now, in the bleary, painful, can't walk in the morning haze, as I sit dazed in the chair I sleep in, *Selah*. Great word from the bible, which means, for me: *that's it, Pal, so it goes.*

Prednisone. This is a story and a half. It begins with the diagnosis of Bronchitis, and leads, eventually, to all kinds of mistakes with the drug, the main one where I mistakenly stopped cold and ended up psychotic, crawling on the kitchen floor, where, luckily, Veronica saw me and called an ambulance.

I am essentially telling the story of the Mednick infiltration into America, and at one point, thinking about the death of Walter Hadler- (now interrupted by sad thoughts about him, remembering the time Walter, Paul R. and Louise drove me up to the Catskills to see my Mother and Father. Sol was about to die, in Woodbourne, and my mother was living in a shack on the side of a hill. I had completely forgotten that it was them that brought me up there. I was struck by that lapse of memory. My mother was living in this crumbling grey bungalow on the side of a hill, like an old witch's house, and I was afraid to go into the door. And so was Louise. A mad woman greeted us, and a stench and a weird grey light and me and Louise were standing there in shock. The woman didn't recognize me. I tried to say

something. I don't know if the woman (my mother) made a sound or not. She was a frightening figure. Lost. Louise ran back up the hill. I couldn't stay and I couldn't go inside.

Walter had stood up on the hill while Paul waited in the car.

Finally, I said goodbye, I think, and then I kind of waded through high water back up the hill, over the dried leaves, and through the trees.

I wouldn't mind shooting up right now. I mean, *now*. Then the urge passes. The memory is in my chest and I'm wheezing like a wolf. You got to dress right and move around, head up, "in the feet." As far as my father goes, that event is irrepressible and always the same, the dying man refusing to give in to it, his crazy wife at the kitchen widow, looking out to see if everything was all right, my father, Sol, whom I loved in a way, was barbecuing. You know, like a regular American, like the guys in the movies. That's how he saw himself, like in a movie. A bona fide American. Remembering the story of my father not looking at me when we visited, not recognizing that he was dying, but explaining how the doctors didn't know shit or shinola. And he was dead in a few weeks.

To this day I don't know what my mother was doing in that shack on the hill, crumbling, stinky, by herself, what was she thinking? Her life was a sacrifice to Gotham, in a way, a wild animal running over her past, alone, on the side of hill in the Catskills. My last image: Her bones rattling down a rail chute like coal or garbage. Did I dream that image or make it up?

I'd like to shoot up right now and take a nap.

*

America will split up into another civil war. The first one wasn't enough. There's bloody violence in the belly of the Christian/American Beast. Donald Trump should have been killed 25 years go. Saved us all a lot of grief. Strangled or hung. Shot through the head.

*What gets me in old age is all the continuous lying. And the sordid poverty and mental illness; and the **fuck you** attitude toward the poor.*

*

The workshop on Ayres Ave. We'd discuss the classics, trying to think. I remember preparing for hours. And then an Irish Whiskey in the little backyard – a tremendous relief. The trick is not to teach playwriting per se, but to engage the mind through study of the classics, and then speaking and writing under pressure. When I quit teaching that class, I quit for good. All that struggle in New York, for grants and donations. Workshops.

The church. You'd go in on the side, walk down the back, upstairs -- there was a landing, then the office, door to the theater, a black box, office/dressing room in a corner and the door to the fire escape in the back. Ralph Cook heroically putting together a program, gathering playwrights and actors, designers, and an audience. We were making theater from scratch and learning as we went.

*

The nurses. Another story. How each of them is so different, mainly Latino, Mexico and El Salvador and Shire, from Louisiana. Been a learning and real work experience dealing with them daily, 24 hours a day. Monitoring the sugar and the bronchial. Getting along. Listening to their stories. A look into the America they represent and live with, surviving immigrants, mainly, and the usual American racism, how they're personally affected by the politics and the culture, stoically, with real aims and positivity about the future -- they're not much interested in politics or history -- my pessimism really stands out, so I don't talk so much anymore about the end of the world as we know it, and feel grateful for their support and the way they insist that I use the cane when I walk around the pool, etc..

I want to write about these dreams I've been having, nightmares really. I can't remember the content sometimes, but they all have the same subject, feelings of rejection and abandonment. I don't feel this during the day anymore, and

I wonder what's happening in my subconscious. It's emphatic. Doesn't look like I'll be able to figure it out by writing, but it seems to resound with, all the rejections by the women in my life. Something I need to understand or come to terms with. The nightmares are painful. It has to do with my solitude, my seemingly untouchable singularity about literature, writing and dreaming, all by myself and nobody gets in. Always wanted to have lunch by myself so I could read the paper, especially the Knicks scorecards. The politics. The TV news. My working hours in the morning. A structured, solitary life, no matter who was there. "Reclusive," said N. the other day, "it's your nature." I think he's right.

It's an existential necessity. N. came over, had lunch at Hugo's – I was so happy to be out there, I couldn't believe it. Looking at some beautiful young women. So happy they were there to be looked at. Talk about doing Coyote again, plays, talking to Ed about doing the narration for the doc -- neither N. nor I have seen a bit of it. We shall see. Moments of work or self-remembering or whatever you call it -- blue windows in the sky, cars surrounding us. Glad to be alive.

*

L'affaire text.

I'm interested.

So, am I.

Enjoyable.

Then put out for Christ's sake.

Uh, uh, but –

What? I feel like I'm back in the 10th grade.

I'm married.

I knew that already.

So, I don't have the freedom.

Type and Polarity. That swaying walk. Very attractive.

To explore the connection. Dot dot dot.

*

The good news is that Guy came up with the rough cut of the doc on **THE COYOTE CYCLE**, which was a huge blast, to use N's words. So glad we did that work. Looks and sounds just terrific. And my glaucoma tests were good. And I finished another draft of **MIRABELLE** yesterday. Not done really. Doing it again. Now I also have to put in the names, as well. I don't do that when I'm writing because it slows me down. Then I imagine the reader will figure it out. No dice. Writing this for phantom readers anyway. This is the Fourth World. But seeing the doc today gave me a certain hope for posterity. Maybe in a spaceship.

Had the strangest dream last night 3 in the morning. Chris came into the room with another woman – don't know who she was – chattering away, happy to see me, and then a rat appeared. A large rat. And I tried to kill it with my right hand. I was furious. **Bam, bam.** I was hitting him so hard. Seemed like a solid object I was hitting. Finally, I got him. And I woke up from the intensity of the battle, and my hand hurt. I was lying there in the dark holding my bruised hand. Sort of upset about the whole thing. Hand really hurt. Took another pill and went back to sleep. Hard to get up this morning. No pain, no bruise, nothing.

There is no God but God.

Sort of the ambiguity of the Jewish tradition. It also means you're on your own. Show up, pay your dues, respect, do the right thing. The way I have followed, best I can. Would like to add, in this somehow somewhat journal in search of myself -- **MIRABELLE.** Good Routine. Needs willing actors, with talent. Probably Jewish. We know vaudeville. Someone should read it. Probably won't do anything with it. It's like write or die now. I'm thinking, much of the Work for me was going to the property and being with others, having a place to go and people to talk to, and zooming just doesn't quite get it.

Sherise's head, my nurse today, her head is full of Sayings, aphorisms, that's her whole psychology. Really interesting, but maybe uncatchable on the page. Nice

woman but œdomineering – idea that all old people are the same --made up of Sayings and Routines. From Belize, still young, with a 14-year-old daughter. Sensual and competent, happy with her role in Life. No Higher or Lower or Self-observation, not much thought, ignorant of politics and most cultural things, ambitious, in her Latinx way. Good, smart woman. The nurses don't seem aware of the asshole running the country. Anyway, I like her face – open and honest. They all seem to treat me like any older guy, going' to die eventually, so what, which is starting to get to me. None have much of an interest in Religion, like me, but they are conscientious and reliable. Give me my space.

So, Doctor's visit -- MRI says my brain is still good. Heart is good. Everything else not so much. Different drugs. So interesting, the whole thing. Getting used to walking with a cane. Climate so dry I need moisturizer for my arms.
(Diabetes)

Nice Jewish boy syndrome. A Social thing for me, along with the Work and everything else. Helps to break the isolation typical of writers. Insecurity, wanting attention. Learning to be attentive, work against the ego, making a violin. And then being able to speak to people about their work and the ideas. All a very good thing for an ex-Junkie, trash Jew from New York.

Which brings me to the question of EGO. For many years -- most of my whole life, damn it -- has been getting self-esteem balanced up in me along with real intellectual

ability and talent. For that help I've needed teachers and shrinks and the Work. In regard to the Work, it was Lord P. telling me that I was "an all-rights possessor," Lady P. who saw where I could be of use at ideas meetings: and I've already mentioned my long-time therapist, Jerry Rochman, and the good teachers I was lucky to have when I was young.

Another nightmare. As though heard through a low - frequency microphone, along with radio commentary, of a mass Killing. A massacre. It went on a long time. First half-awake, listening, and then thought, as I often do, that if I don't wake up it won't go away. Such a tormenting voice, or voices, in my own head. Sounded like voices from the cosmos accidentally coming through my skull into my being. So, I made myself get up. Stumbled out of bed, talking to myself, made it to the kitchen to get the coffee going. Asking: "What was going on there? Some horrible, inconceivable murder. On the outskirts of my thought, but enough to wake me.

Notes about **THREE TABLES:** An atmosphere of intentionality.

The light. Entranced by the light. Keep telling people who come over – look at the light! And it really is amazing. The way the light comes into the house from the West.. Took maybe a couple hundred of photos on my camera and the phone. Doesn't quite get it -- so I see myself as the camera in a way, my eyes, the whole functioning of the apparatus. An Electro-chemical-magnetic operation. Leading to the sense

that I'm beginning to have – at meetings and sitting alone – of the possibility of a force inside that can meet the shock of death. And the realization that, as a speck in the solar system, we are a part of the Sun. I say this to people, and they look at me like I'm senile, or they look away.

Getting lost. Remembering all those times in the car or on foot in NY, the subway and the streets, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. And then in L.A. on the road for hours not knowing where I am. That feeling of helplessness and self-reproach. Driving on until I could find a freeway. That time I was supposed to meet Frank at a station in Manhattan and I ended up somewhere in the Bronx and never caught up to him. I tried to apologize but he never responded. I don't remember really what happened. Next time I saw him, years later, at the Lake, he called me a sonofabitch, equal parts anger and affection. So much of that mental clumsiness in my life.

A kind of disorder in my mind, like a misguided robot. I had the same thing as a child. Brings me back to the compelling idea of genes and the evolution of Life on Earth, my ancestry, the savage murder of Jews, right there in my heart, and the whole *megillah*. One other thing: weakness, the fear of everybody, including me, to show vulnerability. I could see it in myself today, writing a note to one of my dearest friends, weak-kneed to reveal my loneliness. It's this barbaric culture, wherein no wounds can be shown.

The Misfits. Back in the day. Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe. Soft core porn. Terribly written and directed by Arthur Miller and John Huston. They decided callously to make a buck on her looks, someone who can't wait to fuck. . I had to turn it off, but I was struck by Clark's parted hair, sparking a memory of my mother parting my hair, on the left, when I was little, what a big deal that was, and the hunting for lice and nits with a rake and kerosene. What a scene, enduring that. And I carried the smell and the humiliation with me to school.

The light. Uplifted by the light coming in, about 3 in the afternoon. Lasts a couple hours. No, half-hour tops. Beautiful. We are part of the sun. 3 planets out. Everything in threes.

Great talking to Priscilla today. Lit up like a Christmas tree. The psychology of Humans, the connectivity of what is termed Love. Not personal. There's an edge there, with P. Spent hours thinking about it. A touch of Ego, envy. I light up around Celene in a different way. There's another law there somewhere. The common denominator there is in me. A question about that: Love of Consciousness. Love as a divine force. Love as the Indians saw it, coming from Nature, a natural force.

Love as Attention.

Low sugar this morning again. Causes pain in my legs and fatigue. Could pass out in the night. Makes me want to

sit more and more. Saddened about the Human Condition, the egoism, sleep, stupidity, violence, and so on. I'm very lucky, as I said to P. the other day, with a touch of apprehension. Had to sit with it for a while.

Nurse came in this morning wearing a red sweater with HOLLISTER stamped on it. Reminds me of that incredible sweat with Selo Black Crow, which was one of the most mysterious and important days -- Also, that wonderful day with Leonard Crow Dog and that equally very hot sweat. The trip up to Central California with Richard Williams. The long day while they heated up the rocks. People appearing from all over the world. The trip with Ed and Richard to Alcatraz, to re-commemorate the place as Indian Land. The ferry. Wind and rain. Wet wind, as Ginsberg put it.

Brings me back to those days again, a poet on the Lower East Side. I knew all those guys "above me" – Ginsberg and Orlovsky, Carol Berge, Sorentino, Huncke the Junkie, Burroughs --- slightly, I was their fallback connection or something, for grass. It was the World then, to write street-oriented poetry and get high and resist the culture around us and go to readings and bars.. Found this favorite poem of mine in the Transatlantic Review, Spring 1965. It's called PARANOIA and ends "You get up and don't run." Reflects the whole atmosphere of those days around Tompkins Park and my hyper awareness of the cops.

Priscilla. Brings an important piece to the documentary, because she knows the old off-off b'way scene

that we worked with and developed in the Coyote plays: the interest in exercises, breaking the norms, sound and movement, posture, inner development (the mind), timing, site –specific, all the techniques we used, along with intuitive discoveries, blessings.

The nurses. All different backgrounds, extended families, break-ups, HIV, abuse, misfortune, the whole package of Latinx and Black life in America. They have in common a wish to help, or a wish to care, to be helpful and civilized. But they don't read and know little about politics or culture. Educated in the medical requirements and pop music and invested in their kids. Married early, no, impregnated early, with teenaged children they're devoted to. Influx of Central Americans, so irritating to the white people. All kinds of disasters, people dying of drugs and alcohol and HIV, and misalliances, and guns, the entire gambit of woes.

Bad night in L.A. Epidural caused my sugar to jump. No sleep. Strange voice in my head, part sound, part imagery, part thought. It was Kyrie Irving, of all people:

I don't understand. What do the women do?

What do the women do?

I don't understand it.

What do they do?

He kept singing that refrain. All night long. ON and on. Have no idea what it meant. Interesting, though, what happened: I was feeling unwell, a little dizzy, weak, but I had realized a certain connection between Moses and the Giza Pyramid, and the Chosen People, and I went to work to get it into MIRABELEEE. Think I got it now, finally. Then I lay in bed all night, awake. Got up finally and listened to the radio. Usual bad news.

—

I'm thinking mammal bipeds with big teeth. Hairy faces and bald heads. They're on TV, telling us what's what with the killer viruses. Actors, they walk in and put something on it, I tell 'em immediately *drop the fucking acting and come to your senses, this is a real play.*

*

Drums. Want to say something about drums. Big part of my life, starting with the tambourine and then the sweat lodge drum and the big drum from Taos Pueblo that I used for *Old Nana*. Had this dream or hallucination or fantasy that, if Trump got elected again, we'd organize a drumming battalion to deny him and ultimately to kill him with the constant four beat Indian drumming outside the White House.

*

Glaucoma nurse: "There's this kid, Korean or Japanese or something he had this fungus on his forehead. Eating him up, couldn't see. So let him die, they said. Then they gave him these drops, he came back, he was okay. "

Driving back in the rain, white-gray sky. So interested in the sky these days, the colors, the changes. Turns out my glaucoma improved by four more points. Then found out my sister had breast cancer. Then found out she didn't have it.
Selah.

Enough of this. Turning out to be too much of a daily complaining. I found these old poems in a sixty's magazine, beautifully produced, called *Spero*. I hope there are other copies somewhere. It was an issue devoted to experiences on drugs. The edition was limited to one hundred copies. The editors put a lot of my stuff in, SEVEN CHORUSES, in all, which must have been part of a longer piece, on LSD, that I've since lost, the first two I showed early on. Here are others, slightly edited.

3rd Chorus

I drift in black night.

An organism out of time,
Touching the concrete,

Just touching,

A dancer in the spectacle – not free, not free –

Light, old as a
 snowflake, bound to gravity again &
 Again, walking
 Out of time in the steep
 Impenetrably deep & moving Eye of the Lord God
 Mover Original Universal tickle w/out end,
 Myself the street, the street, myself,
 Sky, moon, linear branches
 In the moon light,
 My fellow being in the bubble of the head
 LOOK OUT LOOK OUT that painted window /
 Into the black night/ SEE the dancing
 SEE the dance we do
 LOOK how sad we are
 LOOK how lost we are
 LOOK how lonely we are
 LOOK what strange animals we are!

5th Chorus

Brighton Nightmare – Bay 1

It hits on the Coney Island Local—by Newkirk Avenue
 it's a carful—out to the beach! Claustrophobia, hundreds on
 the raw end of the stick to the planet's edge – I can't take
 another stop – they get on, the doors close, they get on, the
 doors close – someone deep inside my skull is screaming – I
 WANT TO GET OFF – my flesh has turned to smoking ice, I'm
 cool as a concrete covered bomb –

Last stop – dumped out – beach and causeways in orange haze—funneled out to street, sad, yelping, confused beings in crumpled shorts --sink or swim with the masses – from here the trains turn back into the maw -- last synapse – the Gaudy Convulsion --- nerve end to the system – energy haywire –jammed circuit—fireworks –

From here you get killed, arrested, or taken care of permanently – also, something criminally erotic under the sand – methodical slap of Ocean – from here you turn black and die – from here you crawl away or become a wolf – roam in packs – rob candy bars – prey on little girls – look back far enough and you see the back of your own head – from here you mutate –

From here you turn black and die – from here you wake up in your BODY – wrapped myself in a blanket and felt holy – REALITY – my God, my God –

Night came and the people went away -- back into their crevasses – back into Brooklyn – to lurk and keep quiet – built a fire, attracting teenage gangs – would ‘ve killed, protecting my fire – Ocean whacking the filthy beach – vengeance – got to clean up the Mess –

IT IS PILING UP BODIES

6th Chorus / Cut

I/ eye

in blood

things in

sounding
the city

I feel

KILL

I can't stand
eat the machine
the machine

embodied in
blonde America

became the horror

glasses start

I would have licked
& As a result

a likely day

when the light

dark, I create

is shut your
stars.

12th Chorus

I ride a yellow garbage truck

I seem to be screaming w/ shut mouth
The creep of a hungry disease
Eating everything in sight

It got me in the middle of the head
Cutting the thread of my thinking
A wild animal in a balloon.

—

Naked in the streets.

Time to end this thing.

Sit quietly, sense the body, breathe.

The Nice Jewish Boy again, “Watch yourself and stay alert,” is more like it. And be ready to throw a punch. I doubt whether aphorisms or advice, or turns of phrase, or changes of governments or practices, or anything else, will be of much use anymore.

