

our education for nothing — all those sanitized hours of orientation via high school, commercials, corporations and mass media have given us one expectation: no matter how beautiful, insane, dangerous, sacrilegious, explosive, holy or damned a new venture may be, count on it, fellow Americans, the language will be familiar. Are you going in for a serious operation, voting on the political future of the country, buying insurance, discussing nuclear disarmament, or taking a trip to the moon? You can depend on the one great American certainty — the public vocabulary of the discussion will suggest the same relation to the resources of the English language that a loaf of big-bakery bread in plastic bag and wax bears to the secret heart of wheat and butter and eggs and yeast.

Your trip to the moon will not deal needlessly with the vibrations of the heavens (now that man dares to enter eschatology) nor the metaphysical rifts in the philosophical firmament; no poets will pluck a stringed instrument to conjure with the pale shades of the white lady as you move along toward the lunar space. Rather, a voice will emerge from the loudspeaker. "This is your pilot. On our starboard bow at four o'clock directly below, you can pick out a little doojigger of land down there like a vermiform appendix, and that, as we say good-bye to the Pacific Coast, is Baja California. The spot of light at the nub, that little bitty illumination like the probe bulb in a cystoscope or comparable medical instrument is Ensenada, which the guidebooks call a jeweled resort."

Good-bye to earth, hello the moon! We will skip the technological dividend in the navigator's voice as he delivers us to that space station which will probably look like a breeding between a modern convention hall and the computer room at CBS. Plus the packaged air in the space suits when the tourists, after two days of acclimation in air-sealed moon motels, take their first reconnoiter outside in the white moon dust while their good

American bowels accommodate to relative weightlessness.

All right, bright fellow, the reader now may say — what does all this have to do with Black Power? And the author, while adept at dancing in the interstices of a metaphor, is going to come back straight and fast with this remark — our American language is not any more equipped to get into a discussion of Black Power than it is ready to serve as interpreter en route to the moon. The American language has become a conveyer belt to carry each new American generation into its ordained position in the American scene, which is to say the corporate technological world. It can deal with external descriptions of everything which enters or leaves a man, it can measure the movements of that man, it can predict until such moment as it is wrong what the man will do next, but it cannot give a spiritual preparation for our trip to the moon any more than it can talk to us about death, or the inner experiences of real sex, real danger, real dread. Or Black Power.

If the preface has not been amusing, cease at once to read. What follows will be worse: the technological American is programmed to live with answers, which is why his trip to the moon will be needlessly God-awful; the subject of Black Power opens nothing but questions, precisely those unendurable questions which speak of premature awakenings and the hour of the wolf. But let us start with something comfortable, something we all know, and may encounter with relaxation, for the matter is familiar:

. . . think of that black slave man filled with fear and dread, hearing the screams of his wife, his mother, his daughter being *taken* — in the barn, the kitchen, in the bushes! . . . *Think* of hearing wives, mothers, daughters, being *raped*! And you were too filled with *fear* of the rapist to do anything about it! . . . Turn around and look at each other, brothers and sisters, and *think* of

this! You and me, polluted all these colors — and this devil has the arrogance and the gall to think we, his victims, should love him!

— *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

“Okay,” you say, “I know that, I know that already. I didn’t do it. My great-grandfather didn’t even do it. He was a crazy Swede. He never even saw a black skin. And now for Crysake, the girls in Sweden are crazy about Floyd Patterson. I don’t care, I say more power to him. All right,” goes the dialogue of this splendid American now holding up a hand, “all right, I know about collective responsibility. If some Scotch-Irish planter wanted to tomcat in the magnolias, then I’ll agree it’s easier for me than for the victim to discern subtle differences between one kind of Wasp and another, I’ll buy my part of the ancestral curse for that Scotch-Irish stud’s particular night of pleasure, maybe I’m guilty of something myself, but there are limits, man. All right, we never gave the Negro a fair chance, and now we want to, we’re willing to put up with a reasonable amount of disadvantage, in fact, discomfort, outright inequality and inefficiency. I’ll hire Negroes who are not as equipped in the productive scheme of things as whites; that doesn’t mean we have to pay iota for iota on every endless misdemeanor of the past and suffer a vomit bag of bad manners to boot. Look, every student of revolution can tell you that the danger comes from giving the oppressed their first liberties. A poor man who wins a crazy bet always squanders it. The point, buddy, is that the present must forgive the past, there must be forgiveness for old sins, or else progress is impossible.” And there is the key to the first door: progress depends upon anesthetizing the past. What if, says Black Power, we are not interested in progress, not your progress with packaged food for soul food, smog for air, hypodermics for roots, air conditioning for breeze — what if we think we have gotten strong by living without

progress and your social engineering, what if we think that an insult to the blood is never to be forgotten because it keeps your life alive and reminds you to meditate before you urinate. Who are you to say that spooks don't live behind the left ear and haunts behind the right? Whitey, you smoke so much you can't smell, taste, or kiss — your breath is too bad. If you don't have a gun, I can poke you and run — you'll never catch me. I'm alive cause I keep alive the curse you put in my blood. Primitive people don't forget. If they do, they turn out no better than the civilized and the sick. Who are you, Whitey, to tell me to drop my curse, and join your line of traffic going to work? I'd rather keep myself in shape and work out the curse, natural style. There's always white women, ahem! Unless we decide they're too full of your devil's disease, hypocritical pus-filled old white blood, and so we stay black with black, and repay the curse by drawing blood. That's the life-giving way to repay a curse."

"Why must you talk this way?" says the splendid American. "Can't you see that there are whites and whites, whites I do not begin to control? They wish to destroy you. They agree with your values. They are primitive whites. They think in blood for blood. In a war, they will kill you, and they will kill me."

"Well, daddy, I'm just putting you on. Didn't you ever hear of the hereafter? That's where it will all work out, there where us Blacks are the angels and honkies is the flunky. Now, let me take you by the tail, white cat, long enough to see that I want some more of these handouts, see, these homey horseballs and government aid."

The splendid American has just been left in the mire of a put-on and throwaway. How is he to know if this is spring mud or the muck of the worst Negro Hades?

The native's relaxation takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity

and the most impelling violence are canalised, transformed and conjured away. . . . At certain times on certain days, men and women come together at a given place, and there, under the solemn eye of the tribe, fling themselves into a seemingly unorganized pantomime, which is in reality extremely systematic, in which by various means — shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backwards — may be deciphered as in an open book the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself . . . in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption. Symbolical killings, fantastic rites, imaginary mass murders — all must be brought out. The evil humours are undammed, and flow away with a din as of molten lava. . . .

— Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Here is the lesson learned by the struggles of present-day colonial countries to obtain their independence: a war of liberation converts the energies of criminality, assassination, religious orgy, voodoo, and the dance into the determined artful phalanxes of bold guerrilla armies. A sense of brotherhood comes to replace the hitherto murderous clan relations of the natives. Once, that propensity to murder each other had proved effective in keeping the peace — for the settler. Now, these violent sentiments turn against the whites who constrain them. Just as the natives upon a time made good servants and workers for the whites, while reserving the worst of their characters for each other, now they looked to serve each other, to cleanse the furies of their exploited lives in open rude defiance against the authority.

This is the conventional explanation offered by any revolutionary spokesman for the Third World — that new world which may or may not emerge triumphant in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. It is a powerful argu-

ment, an uplifting argument, it stirs the blood of anyone who has ever had a revolutionary passion, for the faith of the revolutionary (if he is revolutionary enough to have faith) is that the repressed blood of mankind is ultimately good and noble blood. Its goodness may be glimpsed in the emotions of its release. If a sense of brotherhood animates the inner life of guerrilla armies, then it does not matter how violent they are to their foe. That violence safeguards the sanctity of their new family relations.

If this is the holy paradigm of the colonial revolutionary, its beauty has been confirmed in places, denied in others. While the struggles of the NLF and the North Vietnamese finally proved impressive even to the most gung-ho Marine officers in Southeast Asia, the horrors of the war in Biafra go far toward proving the opposite. The suspicion remains that beneath the rhetoric of revolution, another war, quite separate from a revolutionary war, is also being waged, and the forces of revolution in the world are as divided by this concealed war as the civilized powers who would restrain them. It is as if one war goes on between the privileged and the oppressed to determine how the productive wealth of civilization will be divided; the other war, the seed contained within this first war, derives from a notion that the wealth of civilization is not wealth but a corporate productive poisoning of the wellsprings, avatars, and conduits of nature; the power of civilization is therefore equal to the destruction of life itself. It is, of course, a perspective open to the wealthy as well as to the poor — not every millowner who kills the fish in his local rivers with the wastes from his factory is opposed to protecting our wilderness preserve, not at all, some even serve on the State Conservation Committee. And our First Lady would try to keep billboards from defacing those new highways which amputate the ecology through which they pass. Of course, her husband helped to build those highways. But then

the rich, unless altogether elegant, are inevitably comic. It is in the worldwide militancy of the underprivileged, undernourished, and exploited that the potential horror of this future war (concealed beneath the present war) will make itself most evident. For the armies of the impoverished, unknown to themselves, are already divided. Once victorious over the wealthy West — if ever! — they could only have a new war. It would take place between those forces on their side who are programmatic, scientific, more or less socialist, and near maniac in their desire to bring technological culture at the fastest possible rate into every backward land, and those more traditional and/or primitive forces in the revolution of the Third World who reject not only the exploitation of the Western world but reject the West as well, in toto, as a philosophy, a culture, a technique, as a way indeed of even attempting to solve the problems of man himself.

Of these colonial forces, black, brown, and yellow, which look to overthrow the economic and social tyrannies of the white man, there is no force in Africa, Asia, or Latin America which we need think of as being any more essentially colonial in stance than the American Negro. Consider these remarks in *The Wretched of the Earth* about the situation of colonials:

"The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations." (Of this, it may be said that Harlem is as separate from New York as East Berlin from West Berlin.)

". . . if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn for him. Not only does his presence no longer trouble me, but I am already preparing such efficient ambushes for him that soon there will be no way out but that of flight." (Now, whites flee the subways in New York.)

"... There is no colonial power today which is capable of adopting the only form of contest which has a chance of succeeding, namely, the prolonged establishment of large forces of occupation." (How many divisions of paratroops would it take to occupy Chicago's South Side?)

The American Negro is of course not synonymous with Black Power. For every Black militant, there are ten Negroes who live quietly beside him in the slums, resigned for the most part to the lessons, the action, and the treadmill of the slums. As many again have chosen to integrate. They live now like Negroid Whites in mixed neighborhoods, suburbs, factories, obtaining their partial peace within the white dream. But no American Negro is contemptuous of Black Power. Like the accusing finger in the dream, it is the rarest nerve in their head, the frightening pulse in their heart, equal in emotional weight to that passion which many a noble nun sought to conquer on a cold stone floor. Black Power obviously derives from a heritage of anger ¹²³⁴ which makes the American Negro one man finally with the African, the Algerian, and even the Vietcong — he would become schizophrenic if he tried to suppress his fury over the mutilations of the past.

~~The confrontation of Black Power with American life gives us then not only an opportunity to comprehend some of the forces and some of the style of that war now smoldering between the global rich and the global poor, between the culture of the past and the intuitions of the future, but — since Black Power has more intimate, everyday knowledge of what it is like to live in an advanced technological society than any other guerrilla force on earth — the division of attitudes within Black Power has more to tell us about the shape of future wars and revolutions than any other militant force in the world. Technological man in his terminal disease, dying of cancer, can no longer breathe, of packaged food he can~~

just about digest, of plastic clothing his skin can hardly bear, and of static before which his spirit has near expired, stands at one end of revolutionary ambition — at the other is an inchoate glimpse of a world now visited only by the primitive and the drug-ridden, a world where technology shatters before magic and electronic communication is surpassed by the psychic telegraphy of animal mood.

¶ Nonetheless,

Most of the literature of Black Power is interested entirely, or so it would seem, in immediate political objectives of the most concrete sort; ~~Back in 1923, Marcus Garvey, father of the Back to Africa movement, might have written, "When Europe was inhabited by a race of cannibals, a race of savages, naked men, heathens and pagans. Africa was peopled with a race of cultured black men, who were masters in art, science, and literature, men who were cultured and refined, men who, it was said, were like the gods," but the present leaders of Black Power are concerned with political mandate and economic clout right here. Floyd McKissick of CORE: the Black Power Movement seeks to win power in a half-dozen ways. These are:~~

- "1. The growth of Black *political* power.
- "2. The building of Black *economic* power.
- "3. The improvement of the *self-image* of Black people.
- "4. The development of Black *leadership*.
- "5. The attainment of *Federal law enforcement*.
- "6. The mobilization of Black *consumer power*."

These demands present nothing exceptional. On their face, they are not so different from manifestos by the NAACP or planks by the Democratic Party. A debater with the skill of William F. Buckley or Richard Nixon could stay afloat for hours on the lifesaving claim that there is nothing in these six points antithetical to conservatives. Indeed, there is not. Not on the face. For example, here is Adam Clayton Powell, a politician most respected by Black Power militants, on some of these

points. Political power: "Where we are 20 percent of the voters, we should command 20 percent of the jobs, judgeships, commissionerships, and all political appointments." Economic power: "Rather than a race primarily of consumers and stock boys, we must become a race of producers and stockbrokers." Leadership: "Black communities . . . must neither tolerate nor accept outside leadership — black or white." Federal law enforcement: "The battle against segregation in America's public-school systems must become a national effort, instead of the present regional skirmish that now exists." Even consumer protest groups to stand watch on the quality of goods sold in a slum neighborhood are hardly revolutionary, more an implementation of good conservative buying practices. *Consumers Digest* is not yet at the barricades.

Indeed, which American institution of power is ready to argue with these six points? They are so rational! The power of the technological society is shared by the corporations, the military, the mass media, the trade unions, and the Government. It is to the interest of each to have a society which is rational even as a machine is rational. When a machine breaks down, the cause can be discovered; in fact, the cause must be capable of being discovered or we are not dealing with a machine. So the pleasure of working with machines is that malfunctions are correctable; satisfaction is guaranteed by the application of work, knowledge, and reason. Hence, any race problem is anathema to power groups in the technological society, because the subject of race is irrational. At the very least, race problems seem to have the property of repelling reason. Still, the tendency of modern society to shape men for function in society like parts of a machine grows more powerful all the time. So we have the paradox of a conservative capitalistic democracy, profoundly en-

trenched in racial prejudice (and hitherto profoundly attracted to racial exploitation) now transformed into the most developed technological society in the world. The old prejudices of the men who wield power have become therefore inefficient before the needs of the social machine — so inefficient, in fact, that prejudiced as many of them still are, they consider it a measure of their responsibility to shed prejudice. (~~We must by now move outside the context of power before we can even find General Curtis LeMay.~~)

category — the word we cannot leave out is white-or-white-oriented. The technological society is not able to deal with the self-image of separate peoples and races if the development of their self-image produces personalities of an explosive individuality. We do not substitute sticks of dynamite for the teeth of a gear and assume we still have an automotive transmission.

McKissick covers his third point, of course: "Negro history, art, music and other aspects of Black culture . . . make Black people aware of their contributions to the American heritage and to world civilization." Powell bastes the goose with orotundities of rhetorical gravy:

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"We must give our children a sense of pride in being black. The glory of our past and the dignity of our present must lead the way to the power of our future." Amen. We have been conducted around the point.

Perhaps the clue is that political Right and political Left are meaningless terms when applied conventionally to Black Power. If we are to use them at all (and it is a matter of real convenience), then we might call the more or less rational, programmatic, and recognizably political arm of Black Power, presented by McKissick and Powell, as the Right Wing, since their program can conceivably be attached to the programs of the technological society, whether Democrat or Republican. The straight-out political demands of this kind of Black Power not only can be integrated (at least on paper) into the needs of the technological society, but must be, because — we would repeat — an exploited class creates disruption and therefore irrationality in a social machine; efforts to solve exploitation and disruption become mandatory for the power groups. If this last sentence sounds vaguely Marxist in cadence, the accident is near. What characterizes technological societies is that they tend to become more and more like one another. So America and the Soviet Union will yet have interchangeable parts, or at least be no more different than a four-door Ford from a two-door Chevrolet. It may thus be noticed that what we are calling the Right Wing of Black Power — the technological wing — is in the conventional sense interested in moving to the left. Indeed, after the Blacks attain equality — so goes the unspoken assumption — America will be able to progress toward a rational society of racial participation, etc. etc. What then is the Left Wing of Black Power? Say, let us go back to Africa, ~~back to Carvey~~.

We must understand that we are replacing a *dying* culture, and we must be prepared to do this, and be absolutely conscious of what we are replacing it with. We are sons and daughters of the most ancient societies on this planet. . . . No movement shaped or contained by Western culture will ever benefit Black people. Black power must be the actual force and beauty and wisdom of Blackness . . . reordering the world.

— LeRoi Jones

Are you ready to enter the vision of the Black Left? It is profoundly anti-technological. Here are a few remarks by Ron Karenga:

"The fact that we are Black is our ultimate reality. We were Black before we were born.

"The white boy is engaged in the worship of technology; we must not sell our souls for money and machines. We must free ourselves culturally before we proceed politically.

"Revolution to us is the creation of an alternative . . . we are not here to be taught by the world, but to teach the world."

We have left the splendid American far behind. He believes in speaking his mind; but if LeRoi Jones — insults, absolute rejection, and consummate bad-mouthing — is not too much for him, then Karenga will be his finish. Karenga obviously believes that in the root is the answer to where the last growth went wrong — so he believes in the wisdom of the blood, and blood-wisdom went out for the splendid American after reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in sophomore year. Life is hard enough to see straight without founding your philosophy on a metaphor.

Nonetheless the mystique of Black Power remains. Any mystique which has men ready to die for it is never without political force. The Left Wing of Black Power speaks across the void to the most powerful conservative passions — for any real conservatism is founded on re-

gard for the animal, the oak and the field; it has instinctive detestation of science, of the creation-by-machine. Conservatism is a body of traditions which once served as the philosophical home of society. If the traditions are now withered in the hum of electronics; if the traditions have become almost hopelessly inadequate to meet the computed moves of the technological society; if conservatism has become the grumbling of the epicure at bad food, bad air, bad manners; if conservatism lost the future because it enjoyed the greed of its privileged position to that point where the exploited depths stirred in righteous rage; if the conservatives and their traditions failed because they violated the balance of society, exploited the poor too savagely and searched for justice not nearly enough; if finally the balance between property rights and the rights of men gave too much to the land and too little to the living blood, still conservatism and tradition had one last Herculean strength: they were of the marrow, they partook of primitive wisdom. The tradition had been founded on some half-remembered sense of primitive perception, and so was close to life and the sense of life. Tradition had appropriated the graceful movements with which primitive strangers and friends might meet in the depth of a mood, all animal in their awareness: lo! the stranger bows before the intense presence of the monarch or the chief, and the movement is later engraved upon a code of ceremony. So tradition was once a key to the primitive life still breathing within us, a key too large, idiosyncratic, and unmanageable for the quick shuttles of the electronic. Standing before technology, tradition began to die, and air turned to smog. But the black man, living a life on the fringe of technological society, exploited by it, poisoned by it, half rejected by it, gulping prison air in the fluorescent nightmare of shabby garish electric ghettos, uprooted centuries ago from his native Africa, his instincts living ergo like nerves in the limbo of an ampu-

ordered

tated limb, had thereby an experience unique to modern man — he was forced to live at one and the same time in the old primitive jungle of the slums, and the hygienic surrealistic landscape of the technological society. And as he began to arise from his exploitation, he discovered that the culture which had saved him owed more to the wit and telepathy of the jungle than the value and programs of the West. His dance had taught him more than writs and torts, his music was sweeter than Shakespeare or Bach (since music had never been a luxury to him but a need), prison had given him a culture deeper than libraries in the grove, and violence had produced an economy of personal relations as negotiable as money. The American Black had survived — of all the peoples of the Western world, he was the only one in the near seven decades of the twentieth century to have undergone the cruel weeding of real survival. So it was possible his manhood had improved while the manhood of others was being leached. He had at any rate a vision. It was that he was black, beautiful, and secretly superior — he had therefore the potentiality to conceive and create a new culture (perchance a new civilization), richer, wiser, deeper, more beautiful and profound than any he had seen. (And conceivably more demanding, more torrential, more tyrannical.) But he would not know until he had power for himself. He would not know if he could provide a wiser science, subtler schooling, deeper medicine, richer victual, and deeper view of creation until he had the power. So while some (the ones the Blacks called Negroes) looked to integrate into the super-suburbs of technology land (and find, was their hope, a little peace for the kids), so others dreamed of a future world which their primitive lore and sophisticated attainments might now bring. And because they were proud and loved their vision, they were warriors as well, and had a mystique which saw the cooking of food as good or bad for the soul. And taste gave the hint. That was the Left of Black

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Power, a movement as mysterious, dedicated, instinctive, and conceivably bewitched as a gathering of Templars for the next Crusade. Soon their public fury might fall upon the fact that civilization was a trap, and therefore their wrath might be double, for they had been employed to build civilization, had received none of its gains, and yet, being allowed to enter now, now, this late, could be doomed with the rest. What a thought!

When the *canaille roturière* took the liberty of beheading the high *noblesse*, it was done less, perhaps, to inherit their goods than to inherit their ancestors.

— Heinrich Heine

But I am a white American, more or less, and writing for an audience of Americans, white and Negro in the main. So the splendid American would remind me that my thoughts are romantic projections, hypotheses unverifiable by any discipline, no more legitimate for discussion than melody. What, he might ask, would you do with the concrete problem before us. . . .

You mean: not jobs, not schools, not votes, not production, not consumption. . . .

No, he said hoarsely, law and order.

Well, the man who sings the melody is not normally consulted for the bylaws of the Arrangers' Union.

Crap and craparola, said the splendid American, what it all comes down to is: how do you keep the peace?

I do not know. If they try to keep it by force — we will not have to wait so very long before there are Vietnams in our own cities. A race which arrives at a vision must test that vision by deeds.

Then what would you do?

If I were king?

We are a republic and will never support a king.

Ah, if I were a man who had a simple audience with Richard Milhous Nixon, I would try to say, "Remember

when all else has failed, that honest hatred searches for responsibility. I would look to encourage not merely new funding for businessmen who are Black, but Black schools with their own teachers and their own texts, Black solutions to Black housing where the opportunity might be given to rebuild one's own slum room by room, personal idiosyncrasy next to mad neighbor's style, floor by floor, not block by block; I would try to recognize that an area of a city where whites fear to go at night belongs by all existential — which is to say natural — law to the Blacks, and would respect the fact, and so would encourage Black local self-government as in a separate city with a Black sanitation department run by themselves, a Black fire department, a funding for a Black concert hall, and most of all a Black police force responsible only to this city within our city and Black courts of justice for their own. There will be no peace short of the point where the Black man can measure his new superiorities and inferiorities against our own."

You are absolutely right but for one detail, said the splendid American. What will you do when they complain about the smog our factories push into their air?

Oh, I said, the Blacks are so evil their factories will push worse air back. And thus we went on arguing into the night. Yes, the times are that atrocious you can hardly catch your breath. "Confronted by outstanding merit in another, there is no way of saving one's ego except by love."

Goethe is not the worst way to say good-night.

IN THE JARDIN EXOTIQUE OF EZE ✓

In the Jardin Exotique of Eze
 the cactus come up from the sea
 like an anemone wooing a spider
 or a pygmy with a blowgun dart.
 Silently they smell the breeze,
 invertebrate,
 their memory as long as the tripe of the Méditerranée.
 Was it once or never? that a God from deep waters
 dreaming of the moon
 fell in love with a gleam from the midnight sky
 who, intoxicated with herself
 and the rapture of the depths,
 like a daughter most fortunate in family,
 beautiful, spoiled, innocent of alarm,
 wandered down an alley
 dark as the pitch of blackest frustration
 and there was trapped by the sound of need
 in the murmur of an ape.
 So did that God of dark waters woo a moon beam
 and from their love leave a seed
 on the spume of the wrack
 which washes a desert shore.
 Cactus,
 mad psychotic bulb of light and dark
 spy of the deep sea
 intimate of the moon
 your form inspires nausea
 for love which dares too much
 and has no soil but sand
 flowers spines of lunar hatred
 shapes tubers on the leaf
 and gives no wine but visions from peyote
 of ether and her gardens
 which burn in gloom
 of poison, bliss, the death of suns
 and phosphorescent nights.

1968

Miami and The Siege of Chicago

May '68

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~~Robert Kennedy~~

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~~THE LIFE OF~~ 201
~~Robert Kennedy - A portrait~~

~~happiness, for they know that one is never in so much danger as when victorious and/or happy—that is when the devils seem to have their hour and hank some thing living from the carnal on the field.~~

The reporter met Bobby Kennedy just once. It was on an afternoon in May in New York just after his victory in the Indiana primary and it had not been a famous meeting, even if it began well. The Senator came in from a conference (for the reporter was being granted an audience) and said quickly with a grin, "Mr. Mailer, you're a mean man with a word." He had answered, "On the contrary, Senator, I like to think of myself as a gracious writer."

"Oh," said ~~Senator~~ Kennedy, with a wave of his hand, "that too, that too!"

So it had begun well enough, and the reporter had been taken with Kennedy's appearance. He was slimmer even than one would have thought, not strong, not weak, somewhere between a blade of grass and a blade of steel, fine, finely drawn, finely honed, a fine flush of color in his cheeks, two very white front teeth, prominent as the two upper teeth of a rabbit, so his mouth had no hint of the cruelty or calculation of a politician who weighs counties, cities, and states, but was rather a mouth ready to nip at anything which attracted its contempt or endangered its ideas. Then there were his eyes. They were most unusual. His brother Teddy Kennedy spoke of those who "followed him, honored him, lived in his mild and magnificent eye," and that was fair description for he had very large blue eyes, the iris wide in diameter, near to twice the width of the average eye, and the blue was a milky blue like a marble so that his eyes, while prominent, did not show the separate steps and slopes of light some bright eyes show, but rather were gentle, indeed beautiful—one was tempted to speak of velvety eyes—their surface seemed made of velvet as if one could touch them, and the surface would not be repelled.

He was as attractive as a movie star. Not attractive like his brother had been, for Jack Kennedy had looked like the sort of vital leading man who would steal the girl from Ronald Reagan every time, no, Bobby Kennedy had looked more like a phenomenon of a movie star—he could have filled some magical empty space between Mickey

Rooney and James Dean, they would have cast him sooner or later in some remake of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and everyone would have said, "Impossible casting! He's too young." And he was too young. Too young for Senator, too young for President, it felt strange in his presence thinking of him as President, as if the country would be giddy, like the whirl of one's stomach in the drop of an elevator or jokes about an adolescent falling in love, it was incredible to think of him as President, and yet marvelous, as if only a marvelous country would finally dare to have him.

That was the best of the meeting—meeting him! The reporter spent the rest of his valuable thirty minutes arguing with the Senator about Senator McCarthy. He begged him to arrange some sort of truce or liaison, but made a large mistake from the outset. He went on in a fatuous voice, sensing error too late to pull back, about how effective two Irish Catholics would be on the same ticket for if there were conservative Irishmen who could vote against one of them, where was the Irish Catholic in America who could vote against two? and Kennedy had looked at him with disgust, as if offended by the presumption in this calculation, his upper lip had come down severely over his two front white teeth, and he had snapped, "I don't want those votes." How indeed did the reporter presume to tell him stories about the benightedness of such people when he knew them only too well. So the joke had been a lame joke and worse, and they got into a dull argument about McCarthy, Kennedy having little which was good to say, and the reporter arguing doggedly in the face of such remarks as: "He doesn't even begin to campaign until twelve."

They got nowhere. Kennedy's mind was altogether political on this afternoon. It did not deal with ideas except insofar as ideas were attached to the name of bills, or speeches, or platforms, or specific debates in specific places, and the reporter, always hard put to remember such details, was forced therefore to hammer harder and harder on the virtues of McCarthy's gamble in entering the New Hampshire primary until Kennedy said, "I wonder why you don't support Senator McCarthy. He seems more like your sort of guy, Mr. Mailer," and in answer, oddly moved, he had said in a husky voice, "No, I'm supporting

you. I know it wasn't easy for you to go in." And even began to mutter a few remarks about how he understood that powerful politicians would not have trusted Kennedy if he had moved too quickly, for his holding was large, and men with large holdings were not supportable if they leaped too soon. "I know that," he said looking into the Senator's mild and magnificent eye, and Kennedy nodded, and in return a little later Kennedy sighed, and exhaled his breath, looked sad for an instant, and said, "Who knows? Who knows? Perhaps I should have gone in earlier." A few minutes later they said goodbye, not unpleasantly. That was the last he saw of him.

The closest he was to come again was to stand in vigil for fifteen minutes as a member of the honor guard about his coffin in St. Patrick's. Lines filed by. People had waited in line for hours, five hours, six hours, more, inching forward through the day and through the police lines on the street in order to take one last look at the closed coffin.

The poorest part of the working-class of New York had turned out, poor Negro men and women, Puerto Ricans, Irish washerwomen, old Jewish ladies who looked like they ran grubby little newsstands, children, adolescents, families, men with hands thick and lined and horny as oyster shells, calluses like barnacles, came filing by to bob a look at that coffin covered by a flag. Some women walked by praying, and knelt and touched the coffin with their fingertips as they passed, and after a time the flag would slip from the pressure of their fingers and an usher detailed for the purpose would readjust it. The straightest line between two points is the truth of an event, no matter how long it takes or far it winds, and if it had taken these poor people six hours of waiting in line to reach that coffin, then the truth was in the hours. A river of working-class people came down to march past Kennedy's coffin, and this endless line of people had really loved him, loved Bobby Kennedy like no political figure in years had been loved.

The organ played somewhere in the nave and the line moved forward under the vast—this day—tragic vaults of the cathedral so high overhead and he felt love for the figure in the coffin and tragedy for the nation in the years ahead, the future of the nation seemed as dark and tortured, as wrenched out of shape, as the contorted blood-spattered painted sculpture of that garish Christ one could

June '69

1248

93-96

~~in a lobotomized ward of Upper Utopia. George Wallace,~~
~~pay heed!~~

Of course, the reporter had been partisan to Bobby Kennedy, excited by precisely his admixture of idealism plus willingness to traffic with demons, ogres, and overloads of corruption. This had characterized the political style of the Kennedys more than once. The Kennedys had seemed magical because they were a little better than they should have been, and so gave promise of making America a little better than it ought to be. The reporter respected McCarthy, he respected him enormously for trying the vengeance of Lyndon Johnson, his heart had been given a bit of life by the success of the New Hampshire primary campaign. If there had then been little to make him glad in the abrupt and unhappy timing of Bobby Kennedy's immediate entrance into the race for nomination, he had, nonetheless, remained Kennedy's man—he saw the battle between the two as tragic; he had hardly enjoyed the Kennedy-McCarthy debate on television before the California primary; he had not taken pleasure in rooting for Kennedy and being thereby forced to condemn McCarthy's deadness of manner, blankness of affect, and suggestion of weakness in each deep pouch beneath each eye. The pouches spoke of clichés—eyes sitting in sagging brassieres of flesh, such stuff. He knew that McCarthy partisans would find equal fault somewhere in Kennedy.

A few nights after this debate, the reporter was awakened from a particularly oppressive nightmare by the ringing of a bell. He heard the voice of an old drinking friend he had not seen in two years. "Cox," he shouted into the phone, "are you out of your skull? What do you mean calling at three A.M.?"

"Look," said the friend, "get the television on. I think you ought to see it. Bobby Kennedy has just been shot."

"No," he bellowed. "No! No! No!" his voice railing with an ugliness and pain reminiscent to his ear of the wild grunts of a wounded pig. (Where he had heard that cry he did not at the moment remember.) He felt as if he were being despoiled of a vital part of himself, and in the middle of this horror noted that he screamed like a pig, not a lion, nor a bear. The reporter had gone for years on the premise that one must balance every moment between the angel in oneself and the swine—the sound of his own voice

shocked him therefore profoundly. The balance was not what he thought it to be. He watched television for the next hours in a state which drifted rudderless between two horrors. Then, knowing no good answer could come for days, if at all, on the possible recovery of Bobby Kennedy, he went back to bed and lay in a sweat of complicity, as if his own lack of moral *witness* (to the subtle heroism of Bobby Kennedy's attempt to run for President) could be found in the dance of evasions his taste for a merry life and a married one had become, as if this precise lack had contributed (in the vast architectonics of the cathedral of history) to one less piton of mooring for Senator Kennedy in his lonely ascent of those vaulted walls, as if finally the efforts of brave men depended in part on the protection of other men who saw themselves as at least provisionally brave, or sometimes brave, or at the least—if not brave—balanced at least on a stability between selflessness and appetite and therefore—by practical purposes—decent. But he was close to having become too much of appetite—he had spent the afternoon preceding this night of assassination in enjoying a dalliance—let us leave it at that—a not uncharacteristic way to have spent his time, and lying next to his wife now, TV news pictures of the assassination rocketing all over the bruised stone of his skull, he hated his wife for having ever allowed such a condition to come to be, hated her subtle complicity in driving him out, and then apart, and knew from the other side of his love that he must confess this afternoon now, as if that would be a warrant of magic to aid Senator Kennedy on the long voyage through the depth of the exploded excavations in his brain, and did not have the simple courage to confess, stopped in his mental steps as if confronting a bully in an alley and altogether unable to go on—the bully in the alley no less than his wife's illimitable funds of untamed redneck wrath. So he did what all men who are overweight must do—he prayed the Lord to take the price on his own poor mortal self (since he had flesh in surfelt to offer) he begged that God spare Senator Kennedy's life, and he would give up something, give up what?—give up some of the magic he could bring to bear on some one or another of the women, yes, give that up if the life would be saved, and fell back into the horror of trying to deal with the sense that his offer might have been given too late.

and by the wrong vein—confession to his wife was what the moral pressure had first demanded—and so fell asleep with some gnawing sense of the Devil there to snatch his offering after the angel had moved on in disgust.

Kennedy dead, he was doubly in gloom, passionate gloom for the loss of that fine valuable light—like everyone else he loved Bobby Kennedy by five times more in death than life—a few lives have the value to illumine themselves in their death. But he was also dull in dejection at what he might have given away that other night. For he believed a universe in which at stricken moments one could speak quietly to whichever manifest of God or Devil was near, had to be as reasonable a philosophical proposition as any assumption that such dialogues were deluded. So it was possible he had given something away, and for nothing: the massive irreversible damage to the Senator's brain had occurred before the spring of his own generosity had even been wet. Indeed! Who knew what in reality might have been granted if he had worked for the first impulse and dared offer confession on a connubial bed. A good could have come to another man and by another route.

He never knew for certain if something had been given up—he was working too hard in too many ways to notice subtle change. (Although it seemed to him that a piece of magic had probably been relinquished.) Who cared but the reporter? He was, in general, depressed; then he met Senator McCarthy at a cocktail party in Cambridge not a week after the assassination. McCarthy was in depression as well.

3

At this party, McCarthy looked weary beyond belief, his skin a used-up yellow, his tall body serving for no more than to keep his head up above the crowd at the cocktail

June '68 Funeral of Bobby Kennedy

THE SIEGE OF CHICAGO

203

you. I know it wasn't easy for you to go in." And even began to mutter a few remarks about how he understood that powerful politicians would not have trusted Kennedy if he had moved too quickly, for his holding was large, and men with large holdings were not supportable if they leaped too soon. "I know that," he said looking into the Senator's mild and magnificent eye, and Kennedy nodded, and in return a little later Kennedy sighed, and exhaled his breath, looked sad for an instant, and said, "Who knows? Who knows? Perhaps I should have gone in earlier." A few minutes later they said goodbye, not unpleasantly. That was the last he saw of him.

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The poorest part of the working-class of New York had turned out, poor Negro men and women, Puerto Ricans, Irish washerwomen, old Jewish ladies who looked like they ran grubby little newsstands, children, adolescents, families, men with hands thick and lined and horny as oyster shells, calluses like barnacles, came filing by to bob a look at that coffin covered by a flag. Some women walked by praying, and knelt and touched the coffin with their fingertips as they passed, and after a time the flag would slip from the pressure of their fingers and an usher detailed for the purpose would readjust it. The straightest line between two points is the truth of an event, no matter how long it takes or far it winds, and if it had taken these poor people six hours of waiting in line to reach that coffin, then the truth was in the hours. A river of working-class people came down to march past Kennedy's coffin, and this endless line of people had really loved him, loved Bobby Kennedy like no political figure in years had been loved.

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1251
To
Bobby
Kennedy

find in every dark little Mexican church. The horror of dried blood was now part of the air, and became part of the air of the funeral next day. That funeral was not nearly so beautiful; the poor people who had waited on line on Friday were now gone, and the mighty were in their place, the President and members of the Congress, and the Establishment, and the Secret Service, and the power of Wall Street; the inside of St. Patrick's for the length of the service was dank with the breath of the over-ambitious offering reverence—there is no gloom so deep unless it is the scent of the upholstery in a mortician's limousine, or the smell of morning in a closed Pullman after executives have talked through the night.

24

The movie came to an end. Even dead, and on film, he was better and more moving than anything which had happened in their convention, and people were crying. An ovation began. Delegates came to their feet, and applauded an empty screen—it was as if the center of American life was now passing the age where it could still look forward; now people looked back into memory, into the past of the nation—was that possible? They applauded the presence of a memory. Bobby Kennedy had now become a beloved property of the party.

Minutes went by and the ovation continued. People stood on their chairs and clapped their hands. Cries broke out. Signs were lifted. Small hand-lettered signs which said, "Bobby, Be With Us," and one enormous sign eight feet high, sorrowful as rue in the throat—"Bobby, We Miss You," it said.

Now the ovation had gone on long enough—for certain people. So signals went back and forth between floor and podium and phone, and Carl Albert stepped forward and banged the gavel for the ovation to end, and asked for

~~add p 205 1206~~

Start - Cambridge June, 1968

THE SIEGE OF CHICAGO

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STET

3

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party. Like feeder fish, smaller people were nibbling on his reluctant hulk with questions, idiotic questions, petulant inquiries he had heard a thousand times. "Why?" asked a young woman, college instructor, horn-rimmed glasses, "Why don't we get out of Vietnam?" her voice near hysterical, ringing with the harsh electronics of cancer gulch, and McCarthy looked near to flinching with the question and the liverish demand on him to answer. "Well," he said in his determinedly mild and quiet voice, last drop of humor never voided—for if on occasion he might be surrounded by dolts, volts, and empty circuits, then nothing to do but send remarks up to the angel of laughter. "Well," said Senator McCarthy, "there seem to be a few obstacles in the way."

But his pale green eyes had that look somewhere between humor and misery which the Creation might offer when faced with the bulldozers of boredom.

Years ago, in 1960, the reporter had had two glimpses of Eugene McCarthy. At the Democratic convention in Los Angeles which nominated John F. Kennedy, McCarthy had made a speech for another candidate. It was the best nominating speech the reporter had ever heard. He had written about it with the metaphor of a bullfight:

... he held the crowd like a matador ... gathering their emotion, discharging it, creating new emotion on the wave of the last, driving his passes tighter and tighter as he readied for the kill. "Do not reject this man who made us all proud to be called Democrats, do not leave this prophet without honor in his own party." McCarthy went on, his muleta furled for the naturales. "There was only one man who said let's talk sense to the American people. He said, the promise of America is the promise of greatness. This was his call to greatness ... Do not forget this man ... Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you not the favorite son of one state, but the favorite son of the fifty states, the favorite son of every country he has visited, the favorite son of every country which has not seen him but is secretly thrilled by his name." Bedlam. The kill. "Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Adlai Stevenson of Illinois." Ears and tail. Hooves and bull. A roar went up like the roar one heard the day Bobby Thomson hit his home run at the Polo Grounds and the Giants won the pennant from the Dodgers in the third playoff game of the 1951 season. The demonstration cascaded onto the floor, the

gallery came to its feet, the sports arena sounded like the inside of a marching drum.'

Perhaps three months later, just after his piece on that convention had appeared, and election time was near, he had met Senator McCarthy at another cocktail party on Central Park West to raise money for the campaign of Mark Lane, then running for State Assemblyman in New York. The reporter had made a speech himself that day. Having decided, on the excitements of the Kennedy candidacy and other excitements (much marijuana for one) to run for Mayor of New York the following year, he gave his maiden address at that party, a curious, certainly a unique political speech, private, personal, tortured in metaphor, sublimely indifferent to issues, platform, or any recognizable paraphernalia of the political process, and delivered in much too rapid a voice to the assembled bewilderment of his audience, a collective (and by the end very numb) stiff clavicle of Jewish Central Park West matrons. The featured speaker, Senator McCarthy, was to follow, and climbing up on the makeshift dais as he stepped down, the Senator gave him a big genial wide-as-the-open-plains Midwestern grin.

"Better learn how to breathe, boy," he whispered out of the corner of his mouth, and proceeded to entertain the audience for the next few minutes with a mixture of urbanity, professional elegance, and political savvy. That was eight years ago.

But now, near to eight years later, the hour was different, the audience at this cocktail party in Cambridge with their interminable questions and advice, their over-familiarity yet excessive reverence, their desire to touch McCarthy, prod him, *galvanize* him, seemed to do no more than drive him deeper into the insulations of his fatigue, his very disenchantment—so his pores seemed to speak—with the democratic process. He was not a mixer. Or if he had ever been a mixer, as he must have been years ago, he had had too much of it since, certainly too much since primaries in New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Indiana, Oregon, and California—he had become, or he had always been, too private a man for the damnable political mechanics of mixing, fixing, shaking the hands, answering the same questions which had already answered themselves by being asked.

And now the threat of assassination over all, that too, that his death might come like the turn of a card, and could a man be ready? The gloomy, empty tomb-like reverberations of the last shot shaking rough waves doubtless through his own dreams, for his eyes, sensitive, friendly, and remote as the yellow eyes of an upper primate in a cage, spoke out of the weary, sagging face, up above the sagging pouches, seeming to say, "Yes, try to rescue me—but as you see, it's not quite possible." And the reporter, looking to perform the errand of rescue, went in to talk about the speech of 1960 in Los Angeles, and how it was the second best political speech he had ever heard.

"Oh," said McCarthy, "tell me, what was the best?"

And another questioner jostled the circle about McCarthy to ask another question, the Secret Service man in the gray suit at McCarthy's elbow stiffening at the impact. But McCarthy held the questioner at a distance by saying, "No, I'd like to listen for awhile." It had obviously become his pleasure to listen to others. So the reporter told a story about Vito Marcantonio making a speech in Yankee Stadium in 1948, and the Senator listened carefully, almost sadly, as if remembering other hours of oratory.

On the way out the door, in the press of guests and local party workers up to shake his hand before he was gone, a tall bearded fellow, massive chin, broad brow for broad horn-rimmed glasses, spoke out in a resonant voice marred only by the complacency of certain nasal intrigues. "Senator, I'm a graduate student in English, and I like your politics very much, but I must tell you, I think your poetry stinks."

McCarthy took it like a fighter being slapped by the referee across the forearms. "You see what it is, running for President," said the laughter in his eyes. If he worshipped at a shrine, it was near the saint of good humor.

"Give my regards to Robert Lowell," said the reporter. "Say to him that I read 'The Drunken Fisherman' just the other day."

McCarthy looked like the victim in the snow when the St. Bernard comes up with the rum. His eyes came alight at the name of the poem . . . "I will catch Christ with a greased worm," might have been the line he remembered. He gave a little wave, was out the door.

Yet the reporter was depressed after the meeting. Mc-

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Carthy did not look nor feel like a President, not that tall tired man with his bright subtle eyes which could sharpen the razor's edge of a nuance, no, he seemed more like the dean of the finest English department in the land. There wasn't that sense of a man with vast ambition and sufficient character to make it luminous, so there was not that charisma which leaves no argument about the nature of the attempt.

If that meeting had been in the beginning of June, there were differences now by the end of August. McCarthy, at Midway Airport to greet his followers, looked big in his Presidential candidate's suit this sunny afternoon, no longer tired, happy apparently with the crowd and the air of his reception. He went down the aisle of friends and reporters who had managed to get ahead of the restraining rope for the crowd and shook hands, gave a confident wink or good twinkle there, "Whatever are you doing *here*, Norman?" he said with a grin, quick as a jab, and made his way up to the platform where a clump of microphones on spikes garnished the podium. But the microphones were dead. Which set McCarthy to laughing. Meanwhile posters waved out in the crowd: AMERICA'S PRIMARY HOPE; LUCIDITY, NOT LUNACY; MAKE MINE MCCARTHY. He scanned the home-made posters, as if his sense of such language, after a decade and more, had become sufficiently encyclopedic to treasure every rare departure, and he laughed from time to time as he saw something he liked.

Finally, he called out to the crowd, "*They* cut the power line. *We're* trying to fix it." Great college moans at the depravity of the opposition—wise laughter at the good cheer of the situation. "Let's sing," said Gene McCarthy; a shout from the crowd. His standard was theirs: good wit could

66

Miami Beach August 3-9

1258

Cancer Gulch

What's
he got?

(Made
a little
money

Lost
a little
love)

Miami.

Arms

12

Burg-Jungle

~~Miami Beach, August 3-9~~

They snipped the ribbon in 1915, they popped the cork, Miami Beach was born. A modest burg they called a city, nine-tenths jungle. An island. It ran along a coastal barrier the other side of Biscayne Bay from young Miami—in 1868 when Henry Lum, a California 'forty-niner, first glimpsed the island from a schooner, you may be certain it was jungle, cocoanut palms on the sand, mangrove swamp and palmetto thicket ten feet off the beach. But by 1915, they were working the vein. John S. Collins, a New Jersey nurseryman (after whom Collins Avenue is kindly named) brought in bean fields and avocado groves; a gent named Fisher, Carl G., a Hoosier—he invented Prestolite, a millionaire—bought up acres from Collins, brought in a work-load of machinery, men, even two elephants, and jungle was cleared, swamps were filled, small residential islands were made out of baybottom mud, dredged, then relocated, somewhat larger natural islands adjacent to the barrier island found themselves improved, streets were paved, sidewalks put in with other amenities—by 1968, one hundred years after Lum first glommed the beach, large areas of the original coastal strip were covered over altogether with macadam, white condominium, white luxury hotel and white stucco flea-bag. Over hundreds, then thousands of acres, white sidewalks, streets and white buildings covered the earth where the jungle had been. Is it so dissimilar from covering your poor pubic hair with adhesive tape for fifty years? The vegetal memories of that excised jungle haunted Miami Beach in a steam-pot of miasmas. Ghosts of expunged flora, the never-born groaning in vege-

could never have escaped. If he managed to shoot past the twenty-odd cops in the direct vicinity, the helicopters would have followed his car all the way to Miami, maybe nailed him on Arthur Godfrey Causeway from the sky. Like pieces of flesh fragmented from the explosion of a grenade, echoes of the horror of Kennedy's assassination were thus everywhere: helicopters riding overhead like roller coasters, state troopers with magnums on their hip and crash helmets, squad cars, motorcycles, yet no real security, just powers of retaliation. It forced one to cherish major politicians—no matter how colorless, they all had hints of charisma now that they were obviously more vulnerable to sudden death than bullfighters, and so they were surrounded with a suggestion of the awe peasants reserve for the visit of the bishop—some rushed to touch them, others looked ready to drop to their knees. Thus, at least, for Rockefeller and the Press. He was surrounded almost immediately after he came down the landing ramp, and never left alone, surrounded by Press and cameramen five deep, the photographers by long practice holding their cameras and even their movie cameras up over their heads, aiming down by skillful guess, so that from a distance one could always tell exactly where the candidate was situated, for a semicircle of cameras crooned in from above like bulbs of seaweed breaking surface at high tide, or were they more like praying mantises on the heads of tall grass?—a bazaar of metaphor was obviously offered.

Rocky had come off the plane with his entourage and his wife. She was surprisingly attractive, with a marvelous high color which made her vastly better-looking than her photographs, and Rocky looked like much less than his photographs, gray beyond gray in the flesh, gray as New York City pavements, gray as an old con—the sun could not have touched him in a month or else all the fighting blood of the heart was somewhere deep inside the brain, working through the anxiety-ridden calculations with which he must have come to Miami, for Nixon with his six-hundred-plus votes now almost secure was a handful or a score or at best not fifty votes from the first ballot nomination. ~~Anxiety had to be stirred by every omen: the weather, the first unfamiliar face to greet you off the plane, the sudden flight of a bird, the warmth of the policeman's salutation, or the enthusiasm of the Press corps.~~

Yet, by the enthusiasm of the

1264

~~SECRET~~

Rockefeller

4

Rockefeller came in at Opa Locka Airport next day, and again it rained. The skies over Miami were at their best when rain was near, for cumulus clouds piled high on themselves, making towers, pyramids, turrets, and heavenly Miami Beach hotels two miles up in the air while dark horizontal tides of oncoming tropical storm washed through the sky, crossed the sun, gave gildings of gold and black to the towers of cumulus.

Start

~~The schedule for arrival was Rockefeller on Saturday, Reagan later that evening, and Nixon on Monday. They were all of course coming in on charter flights, and the~~

Rockefeller plane, an American Airlines 727 jet which had carried the candidate 65,000 miles into forty-five states during the campaign, was landing, for security reasons, at the Coast Guard Airport, Opa Locka, out to the west of Miami, almost in red-neck country, the town of Opa Locka still another sad sweet real estate failure of Southern Florida for it had been built to recapitulate a piece of North Africa. Residential streets with names like Ali Baba Avenue, Sesame Street, Sharazad Boulevard, Arabia Avenue, Sultan Avenue, Caliph Street, and Salim Street wound around the center of Opa Locka in complicated ovals and ellipses all planned thirty-plus or forty years ago by a real estate genius, now a town all but deserted in the afternoon sun with the storm coming on, just occasional palmettoes and the crumbling white stucco center where a small old hotel and bar stood like the molderings of a Foreign Legion fort, holding the crossroads before the Coast Guard pushed onto the airport.

SECRET

Perhaps a hundred or a hundred-fifty newsmen, TV cameras, and still photographers were out at the main hangar with the Press bus, way out in the quiet empty reaches of the all but deserted airdrome, and overhead, light planes and helicopters patrolled the near sky, and four or five police cars were parked in uneasy relation to the crowd. The reporter had to show no identification to enter the gate, and needed none now; a potential assassin, tipped to Rockefeller's entrance at Opa Locka, could have packed a piece to within a yard of him—of course, afterward, he

tative chancery beneath the asphalt came up with a tropical curse, an equatorial leaden wet sweat of air which rose from the earth itself, rose right up through the baked asphalt and into the heated air which entered the lungs like a hand slipping into a rubber glove.

The temperature was not that insane. It hung around 87 day after day, at night it went down to 82, back to the same 87 in the A.M.—the claims of the News Bureau for Miami Beach promised that in 1967 temperature exceeded 90° only four times. (Which the Island of Manhattan could never begin to say.) But of course Miami Beach did not have to go that high, for its humidity was up to 87 as well—it was, on any and every day of the Republican Convention of 1968, one of the hottest cities in the world. The reporter was no expert on tropical heats—he had had, he would admit, the island of Luzon for a summer in World War II; and basic training in the pine woods of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in August; he had put in a week at Las Vegas during July—temperatures to 110; he had crossed the Mojave Desert once by day; he was familiar with the New York subway in the rush hour on the hottest day of the year. These were awesome immersions—one did not have to hit the Congo to know what it was like in a hothouse in hell—but that 87° in Miami Beach day after day held up in competition against other sulphuric encounters. Traveling for five miles up the broken-down, forever in-a-state-of-alteration and repair of Collins Avenue, crawling through 5 P.M. Miami Beach traffic in the pure miserable fortune of catching an old taxi without air conditioning, dressed in shirt and tie and jacket—formal and implicitly demanded uniform of political journalists—the sensation of breathing, then living, was not unlike being obliged to make love to a 300-pound woman who has decided to get on top. Got it? You could not dominate a thing. That uprooted jungle had to be screaming beneath.

Of course it could have been the air conditioning: natural climate transmogrified by technological climate. They say that in Miami Beach the air conditioning is pushed to that icy point where women may wear fur coats over their diamonds in the tropics. For ten miles, from the Diplomat to the Di Lido, above Hallandale Beach Boulevard down to Lincoln Mall, all the white refrigerators stood, piles of white refrigerators six and eight and twelve stories

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high, twenty stories high, shaped like sugar cubes and ice-cube trays on edge, like mosques and palaces, shaped like matched white luggage and portable radios, stereos, plastic compacts and plastic rings, Moorish castles shaped like waffle irons, shaped like the baffle plates on white plastic electric heaters, and cylinders like Waring blenders, buildings looking like giant op art and pop art paintings, and sweet wedding cakes, cottons of kitsch and piles of dirty cotton stucco, yes, for ten miles the hotels for the delegates stood on the beach side of Collins Avenue: the Eden Roc and the Fontainebleau (Press Headquarters), the Di Lido and the De Lano, the Ivanhoe, Deauville, Sherry Frontenac and the Monte Carlo, the Cadillac, Caribbean and the Balmoral, the Lucerne, Hilton Plaza, Doral Beach, the Sorrento, Marco Polo, Casablanca, and Atlantis, the Hilyard Manor, Sans Souci, Algiers, Carillon, Seville, the Gaylord, the Shore Club, the Nautilus, Montmartre, and the Promenade, the Bal Harbour on North Bay Causeway, and the Twelve Caesars, the Regency and the Americana, the Diplomat, Versailles, Coronado, Sovereign, the Waldman (dig!), the Beau Rivage, the Crown Hotel, even Holiday Inn, all oases for technological man. Deep air conditioning down to 68°, ice-palaces to chill the fevered brain—when the air conditioning worked. And their furnishings were monumentally materialistic. Not all of them: the cheaper downtown hotels like the Di Lido and the Nautilus were bare and mean with vinyl coverings on the sofas and the glare of plastic off the rugs and tables and tiles, inexpensive hotel colors of pale brown and buff and dingy cream, sodden gray, but the diadems like the Fontainebleau and the Eden Roc, the Doral Beach, the Hilton Plaza (Headquarters for Nixon), the Deauville (Hq for Reagan) or the Americana—Rockefeller and the New York State delegation's own ground—were lavish with interlockings, curves, vaults and runs of furnishings as intertwined as serpents in the roots of a mangrove tree. All the rivers of the very worst taste twisted down to the delta of each lobby in each grand Miami Beach hotel—rare was the central room which did not look like the lobby of a movie palace, imitation of late-Renaissance imitations of Greek and Roman statues, imitations of baroque and rococo and brothel Victorian and Art Nouveau and Bauhaus with gold grapes and cornucopias welded to the modern bronze

tubing of the chair, golden moldings which ran like ivy from room to room, chandeliers complex as the armature of dynamos, and curvilinear steps in the shape of amoebas and palettes, cocktail lounge bars in deep rose or maroon with spun-sugar white tubes of plaster decor to twist around the ceiling. There was every color of iridescence, rainbows of vulgarity, aureoles of gorgeous taste, opium den of a middle-class dollar, materialistic as meat, sweat, and the cigar. It is said that people born under Taurus and Capricorn are the most materialistic of us all. Take a sample of the residents in the census of Miami B.—does Taurus predominate more than one-twelfth of its share? It must, or astrology is done, for the Republicans, Grand Old Party with a philosophy rather than a program, had chosen what must certainly be the materialistic capital of the world for their convention. Las Vegas might offer competition, but Las Vegas was materialism in the service of electricity—fortunes could be lost in the spark of the dice. Miami was materialism baking in the sun, then stepping back to air-conditioned caverns where ice could nestle in the fur. It was the first of a hundred curiosities—that in a year when the Republic hovered on the edge of revolution, nihilism, and lines of police on file to the horizon, visions of future Vietnams in our own cities upon us, the party of conservatism and principle, of corporate wealth and personal frugality, the party of cleanliness, hygiene, and balanced budget, should have set itself down on a sultan's strip.

That was the first of a hundred curiosities, but there were mysteries as well. The reporter had moved through the convention quietly, as anonymously as possible, wan, depressed, troubled. Something profoundly unclassifiable was going on among the Republicans and he did not know if it was conceivably good or a concealment of something bad—which was the first time a major social phenomenon like a convention had confused him so. He had covered others. The Democratic Convention in 1960 in Los Angeles which nominated John F. Kennedy, and the Republican in San Francisco in 1964 which installed Barry Goldwater, had encouraged some of his very best writing. He had felt a gift for comprehending those conventions. But the Republican assembly in Miami Beach in 1968 was a different affair—one could not tell if nothing much was going on, or to the contrary, nothing much was going on near the

surface but everything was shifting down below. So dialogue with other journalists merely depressed him—the complaints were unanimous that this was the dulllest convention anyone could remember. Complaints took his mind away from the slow brooding infusion he desired in the enigmas of conservatism and/or Republicanism, and any hope of perspective on the problem beyond. The country was in a throe, a species of eschatological heave. The novelist John Updike was not necessarily one of his favorite authors, but after the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, it was Updike who had made the remark that God might have withdrawn His blessing from America. It was a thought which could not be forgotten for it gave insight to the perspectives of the Devil and his political pincers: Left-wing demons, white and Black, working to inflame the conservative heart of America, while Right-wing devils exacerbated Blacks and drove the mind of the New Left and liberal middle class into prides of hopeless position. And the country roaring like a bull in its wounds, coughing like a sick lung in the smog, turning over in sleep at the sound of motorcycles, shivering at its need for new phalanxes of order. Where were the new phalanxes one could trust? The reporter had seen the faces of too many police to balm his dreams with the sleep they promised. Even the drinks tasted bad in Miami in the fever and the chill.

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His first afternoon in Miami Beach was spent by the reporter in Convention Hall. He stepped up on the speaker's podium to see how it might feel, nosed into the jerrybuilt back room back of the podium where speakers would wait, and Press be excluded, once the convention was begun. A room unmatched for dreariness. Dull green daybeds and sofas, a nondescript powder-blue rug, open studding and therefore open wall-board color, brown and tan leatherette

~~Press~~ ~~which~~ ~~greater~~ ~~him~~

Rockefeller was ~~obviously~~ the near-unanimous choice of the Press, and above all, the television—a mating of high chemical potentials existed between the media and the man as if they had been each conceived for the other. Except for his complexion, Rocky had an all but perfect face for President, virile, friendly, rough-hewn, of the common man, yet uncommon—Spencer Tracy's younger brother gone into politics. He had only one flaw—an odd and unpleasant mouth, a catfish mouth, wide, unnaturally wide with very thin lips. In the center of the mouth there seemed almost another mouth which did the speaking, somewhat thicker lips which pursed, opened, deliberated—all the while the slit-thin corners of the mouth seemed off on their own, not really moving with the center. So he gave the impression of a man to whom expert instruction had disclosed what he might be expected to say—therefore only the middle of the mouth would be on call.

The rain which had begun to come down and then providentially stopped, was coming on again. So he was able to slip out of the tight ring of interviewers locked about him after answering fifty more of the million political questions he would reply to in his life, and now the press bus and the private cars were off in a race across Miami to the 72nd Street public beach in Miami Beach maybe ten miles away where a big rally was scheduled. The helicopters rode lead and flank cowhand overhead, the cavalcade sped from Opa Locka; not thirty minutes later, band playing, cymbals smashing, Rocky walked a half-block through a crowd on 72nd Street and Collins Avenue, accepting the mob, walking through them to partial deliriums of excitement, a crazy mob for politicking, dressed in bathing suits, bikinis, bathrobes, surfers' trunks, paper dresses, terry cloth shirts, they jammed the pavement in bare feet, sandals, clod-hoppers, bathers screaming, calling out, falling in line around the free Pepsi-Cola wagon, good-natured but never super-excited—the rally was on the edge of the beach after all, and a leaden milky-green sea was pounding an erratic, nervous foam of surf onto the water's-edge of the beach not fifty yards away.

As Rocky moved forward in his brown-gray business suit, murmurs went up everywhere—"There goes the next President of the United States." But the crowd was some-

how not huge enough to amplify this sentiment—they looked more like tourists than Republicans—all those votes he would get some day if ever he would capture the nomination. And as he moved forward through the crowd, shaking hands, saying “Hiya, hiya,” big grin on his face at the shouts of, “We want Rocky,” so also at that instant a tall skinny Negro maybe thirty years old leaped in front to shake hands and with the other hand looking for a souvenir, he flipped Rocky’s purple handkerchief out of his breast pocket. But Rockefeller showed true Republican blood. A look of consternation for one stricken gap of an instant—*was this an attempt?*—until seeing the handkerchief in the man’s hand, the situation was recovered: Rocky strode forward, pulled the handkerchief back, gave an admonishing look, as if to say, “Come on, fellow!” and immediately had some cardboard sunglasses pilfered from the same breast pocket by a heated happy hysterical lady tourist with whom he could not wrestle. Kerchief recovered, sunglasses offered up in tribute, he made the speaker’s stand—the flat bed of a truck—and the meeting began. *The New York Times* was to report 3,000 people there, perhaps it was half; they cheered everything he said, those who could hear him. The acoustics varied from punko to atrocious, and the reporter circling the crowd heard one plain buxom girl with long brown hair—hippie hints of trinket and dungarees, girl formed out of the very mold of Rockefeller supporters—turn nonetheless sadly to her friend and say, “I can’t hear a thing—bye bye.” Next step, a sixty-year-old blonde in a bikini with half of a good figure left (breast and buttocks) the flesh around her navel unhappily equal to the flesh around her neck, wearing orange plastic bracelets, gold charm necklace, rings, rhinestone sunglasses, wedgies, painted toes, red hot momma kisser lips, a transistor radio giving rock, and she—whatever she was hearing—out to yell, “Rocky, we want Rocky,” beating out the rhythm on one of her two consorts, the one younger than herself; the older, a husband? had a cigar, a paunch, and that benign cool which speaks of holding property in Flatbush in Brooklyn, and putting up with a live-wire wife.

But indeed it must have been reminiscent to Rocky of campaigning on beaches in Brooklyn and Queens, not Coney Island so much as Brighton or Manhattan Beach or Jacob Riis Park: the crowd had the same propinquity, same

raucous cheery wise hard middle-class New York smarts—take the measure of everything and still give your cheer because you are there, Murray. Even the smells were the same—orgiastic onions in red hot dog and knish grease, dirty yellow sand—Rocky had to recognize it all, for when he introduced Claude Kirk, “the young alive Governor of Florida” (sole vote for him in the Florida delegation) a smattering of applause came up, a spattering of comment, and one or two spit-spraying lip blats—it was obvious the crowd didn’t know Kirk from a Mafia dance-contest winner. So Rocky shifted gears. “It’s a thrill for us from New York to be here, in Florida,” he said, “and half of you must be here from New York.” The laugh told him he was right. A delicate gloom began to come in equal to the first tendrils of mist over a full moon; God would know what his advisers had been telling him about the possible power of this open street rally on the 72nd Street beach—with luck and a mass turnout massive enough to break all records in category, he could be on his way—a people’s candidate must ride a tidal wave. This was not even a bona fide breaker. Half of his audience was from New York. Well, he was no weak campaigner. He kept it going, hitting the hard spots, “The Republican Party must become again a national party, the voice of the poor and the oppressed.” Great cheers for the size of the crowd. ~~“The Republican Party cannot afford parochialism any longer.”~~ Smaller cheer, slight confusion in his audience. “Parochialism” had vague connotations of Roman Catholic schools. Rocky had a good voice, man-to-man voice, Tracy, Bogart, hints of Gable. When ~~the~~ very rich, ~~desert~~ their patrician holdings on the larynx (invariably because they have gone into politics) and would come over as regular grips, mill-hands and populists, they lean dependably into the imitation of movie stars they have loved. One could psych a big bet that Spencer Tracy was Rocky’s own Number One and would be on the ticket as Vice President if the election were held in heaven. It was an honest voice, sincere, masculine, vibrant, needy, slightly hoarse, full of honest range-rider muscle, with injections from the honest throatiness of New York. It was a near-perfect voice for a campaigner; it was just a question of whether it was entirely his own or had gravitated to its function, much as the center of his mouth had concentrated itself away from the corners of his lips.

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~~"And while we're on it," said Rocky, powers of transition not notably his true preserve, "Senator McCarthy deserves a vote of commendation for getting the eighteen-year-olds back into politics again," (was this the Rockefeller who had once tried to shove fallout shelters into every suburban back yard?) "and when I'm President, I want to pass a bill letting the eighteen-year-olds vote." Big cheers for this. The kids were out—everybody was enjoying Rocky—and those with him on the flatbed truck. Kirk, Rocky's brother, and several former Republican National Committee Chairmen, came in on the noise machine. In the background, Miami Mimmers wearing pink and orange and yellow and white and sky-blue satin outfits with net wings and white feathers, Miami Beach angels playing triangles and glockenspiels piped up tinklings and cracklings of sweet sound. Oompah went the oompah drum. "I offer," said Rocky, "a choice. It is . . . victory in November . . . victory for four years." He held up both hands in V for Victory signs.~~

"Eight years," shouted someone from the crowd.

"I won't quibble," said Rocky with a grin. But then, defeat licking at the center of this projected huge turnout which was finally not half huge enough, he added drily, "The gentleman who just spoke must be from New York."

The rally ended, and a black sky mopped out the sun for ten minutes, hid the cumulus. Rain came in tropical force, water trying to work through that asphalt, reach the jungle beneath. Everyone scattered, those who were dressed not quite in time. The rain hit with a squall. And the luminaries on the flatbed truck went off with Rocky—~~Leonard Hall, Bill Miller, and Meade Aleorn. It may be worthwhile to take a look at them.~~

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Now heard was the white band. There were sixteen of them, about as good, and about as simple, as a good high school marching band. The Black band was something else, Eureka Brass Band by name, right out of Beale Street sixty years ago, ten Negroes in black pants, white shirts and white yachting caps with black visors did a Dixieland strut up and around the floor, led by their master, a tall disdainful wizardly old warlock, a big Black in a big black tuxedo, black felt Homburg on his head, medals and green sashes and Nixon buttons all over him. He was no ad for anybody but the most arcane Black Power, he was an old prince of a witch doctor—insult him at your peril—but the other ten musicians with their trumpets and snares and assorted brass would prove no pull for Nixon on TV with any Black votes watching, for they were old and meek, naught but elderly Black Southern musicians, a veritable Ganges of Uncle Toms. They had disappeared with Tom Swift and Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Wasps in Miami

7

pp 31-36

That evening at the Fountainebleau, on the night before the convention was to begin, the Republicans had their Grand Gala, no Press admitted, and the reporter by a piece of luck was nearly the first to get in. The affair was well-policed, in fact strict in its security, for some of the most important Republican notables would be there, but strolling through the large crowd in the lobby the reporter discovered himself ~~by accident~~ in the immediate wake of Governor Reagan's passage along a channel of security officers through the mob to the doors of the Gala. It was assumed by the people who gave way to the Governor that the reporter must be one of the plainclothesmen assigned to His Excellency's rear, and with a frown here, judicious tightening of his mouth there, look of concern for the Governor's welfare squeezed onto his map, offering a

security officer's look superior to the absence of any ticket, he went right in through the ticket-takers, having found time in that passage to observe Governor Reagan and his Lady, who were formally dressed to the hilt of the occasion, now smiling, now shaking hands, eager, tense, bird-like, genial, not quite habituated to eminence, seeking to make brisk but not rude progress through the crowd, and obviously uneasy in the crowd (like most political figures) since a night in June in Los Angeles. It was an expected observation, but Mr. and Mrs. Reagan looked very much like an actor and actress playing Governor and Wife. Still Reagan held himself sort of uneasily about the middle, as if his solar plexus were fragile, and a clout would leave him like a fish on the floor.

Once inside the ballroom, however, the reporter discovered that the Governor had been among the first guests to enter. His own position was therefore not comfortable. Since there were no other guests among whom to mix (nothing but two hundred and forty empty tables with settings for two thousand people, all still to come in) and no cover to conceal him but small potted trees with oranges attached by green wire, since Security might be furious to the point of cop-mania catching him thus early, there was no choice but to take up a stand twenty feet from the door, his legs at parade rest, his arms clasped behind, while he scrutinized the entrance of everybody who came in. Any security officer studying him might therefore be forced to conclude that he belonged to *other* Security. Suffice it, he was not approached in his position near the entrance, and for the next thirty minutes looked at some thousand Republicans coming through the gate, the other thousand entering out of view by an adjacent door.

It was not a crowd totally representative of the power of the Republican Party. Some poor delegates may have been there as guests, and a few other delegates might have chosen to give their annual contribution of \$1,000 for husband and wife here (\$500 a plate) rather than to some other evening of fund raising for the party, indeed an air of sobriety and quiet dress was on many of the Republicans who entered. There were women who looked like librarians and schoolteachers, there were middle-aged men who looked like they might be out for their one night of the year. The Eastern Establishment was of course

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present in degree, and powers from the South, West, Midwest, but it was not a gang one could hold up in comparative glitter to an opening at the Met. No, rather, it was modesty which hung over these well-bred subscribers to the Gala.

Still, exceptions noted, they were obviously in large part composed of a thousand of the wealthiest Republicans in the land, the corporate and social power of America was here in legions of interconnection he could not even begin to trace. Of necessity, a measure of his own ignorance came over him, for among those thousand, except for candidates, politicians and faces in the news, there were not ten people he recognized. Yet here they were, the economic power of America (so far as economic power was still private, not public) the family power (so far as position in society was still a passion to average and ambitious Americans) the military power (to the extent that important sword-rattlers and/or patriots were among the company, as well as cadres of corporations not unmarried to the Pentagon) yes, even the spiritual power of America (just so far as Puritanism, Calvinism, conservatism and golf still gave the Wasp an American faith more intense than the faith of cosmopolitans, one-worlders, trade-unionists, Black militants, New Leftists, acid-heads, tribunes of the gay, families of Mafia, political machinists, fixers, swingers, Democratic lobbyists, members of the Grange, and government workers, not to include the *Weltanschauung* of every partisan in every minority group). No, so far as there was an American faith, a belief, a mystique that America was more than the sum of its constituencies, its trillions of dollars and billions of acres, its constellation of factories, empyrean of communications, mountain transcendant of finance, and heroic of sport, transports of medicine, hygiene, and church, so long as belief persisted that America, finally more than all this, was the world's ultimate reserve of rectitude, final garden of the Lord, so far as this mystique could survive in every American family of Christian substance, so then were the people entering this Gala willy-nilly the leaders of this faith, never articulated by any of them except in the most absurd and taste-curdling jargons of patriotism mixed with religion, but the faith existed in those crossroads between the psyche and the heart where

love, hate, the cognition of grace, the all but lost sense of the root, and adoration of America congregate for some.

Their own value was in this faith, the workings of their seed from one generation into the next, their link to the sense of what might be life-force was in the faith. Yes, primitive life was there, and ancestral life, health concealed in their own flesh from towns occupied and once well-settled, from farms which prospered, and frontiers they had—through ancestors—dared to pass. They believed in America as they believed in God—they could not really ever expect that America might collapse and God yet survive, no, they had even gone so far as to think that America was the savior of the world, food and medicine by one hand, sword in the other, highest of high faith in a nation which would bow the knee before no problem since God's own strength was in the die. It was a faith which had flared so high in San Francisco in 1964 that staid old Republicans had come near to frothing while they danced in the aisle, there to nominate Barry, there to nominate Barry. But their hero had gone down to a catastrophe of defeat, blind in politics, impolite in tactics, a sorehead, a fool, a disaster. And if his policies had prevailed to some degree, to the degree of escalating the war in Vietnam, so had that policy depressed some part of America's optimism to the bottom of the decade, for the country had learned an almost unendurable lesson—its history in Asia was next to done, and there was not any real desire to hold armies on that land; worse, the country had begun to wear away inside, and the specter of Vietnam in every American city would haunt the suburb, the terror of a dollar cut loose from every standard of economic anchor was in the news, and some of the best of the youth were mad demented dogs with teeth in the flesh of the deepest Republican faith.

They were a chastened collocation these days. The high fire of hard Republican faith was more modest now, the vision of America had diminished. The claims on Empire had met limits. But it was nonetheless uncommon, yes bizarre, for the reporter to stand like an agent of their security as these leaders of the last American faith came through to the Gala, for, repeat: they were in the main not impressive, no, not by the hard eye of New York. Most of them were ill-proportioned in some part of their phy-

~~1274~~ 1274

sique. Half must have been, of course, men and women over fifty and their bodies reflected the pull of their character. The dowager's hump was common, and many a man had a flaccid paunch, but the collective tension was rather in the shoulders, in the girdling of the shoulders against anticipated lashings on the back, in the thrust forward of the neck, in the maintenance of the muscles of the mouth forever locked in readiness to bite the tough meat of resistance, in a posture forward from the hip since the small of the back was dependably stiff, loins and mind cut away from each other by some abyss between navel and hip.

More than half of the men wore eyeglasses, young with old—the reporter made his count, close as a professional basketball game, and gave up by the time his score was up to Glasses 87, No Glasses 83. You could not picture a Gala Republican who was not clean-shaven by eight A.M. Coming to power, they could only conceive of trying to clean up every situation in sight. And so many of the women seemed victims of the higher hygiene. Even a large part of the young seemed to have faces whose cheeks had been injected with Novocain.

Yet he felt himself unaccountably filled with a mild sorrow. He did not detest these people, he did not feel so superior as to pity them, it was rather he felt a sad sorrowful respect. In their immaculate cleanliness, in the somewhat antiseptic odors of their astringent toilet water and perfume, in the abnegation of their walks, in the heavy sturdy moves so many demonstrated of bodies in life's harness, there was the muted tragedy of the Wasp—they were not on earth to enjoy or even perhaps to love so very much, they were here to serve, and serve they had in public functions and public charities (while recipients of their charity might vomit in rage and laugh in scorn), served on opera committees, and served in long hours of duty at the piano, served as the sentinel in concert halls and the pews on the aisle in church, at the desk in schools, had served for culture, served for finance, served for salvation, served for America—and so much of America did not wish them to serve any longer, and so many of them doubted themselves, doubted that the force of their faith could illumine their path in these new modern horror-head times. On and on, they came through the door, the clean, the well-bred, the extraordinarily prosperous, and

for the most astonishing part, the almost entirely proper. Yes, in San Francisco in '64 they had been able to be insane for a little while, but now they were subdued, now they were modest, now they were looking for a leader to bring America back to them, their lost America, Jesus-land.

~~"Nelson Rockefeller is out of his mind if he thinks he can take the nomination away from Richard Nixon," the reporter said suddenly to himself. It was the first certitude the convention had given.~~

8

Still, Rockefeller was trying. He had been mounting a massive offensive for weeks. In speeches which came most often as prepared announcements for television and in full-page advertisements in newspapers all over the country, he had been saturating America with Rockefeller philosophy, paying for it with Rockefeller money, the rhetoric in the style of that Madison Avenue Eminent, Emmet Hughes.

On Vietnam: The country must never again "find itself with a commitment looking for a justification. . . . The war has been conducted without a coherent strategy or program for peace." Of course he had been until recently a hawk with the hawks—like Nixon, he was now a dove of a hawk, a dove of a hawk like all the Republicans but Reagan.

The ads had come with text in 20-point type, 30-point type, larger. "We must assure to all Americans two basic rights: the right to learn and the right to work." (The right to learn would come in mega-universities with lectures pulled in on television and study halls with plastic bucket seats—the right to work? or was it the right to take pride in one's work?)

On Cities: ". . . the confidence that we can rebuild

eye: "If the man wants to throw his money around like that, well, we're not here to stop him!" And the pleasure in the eye is reserved for the thought of telling the home folks about the swinishness, sottishness, and *waste* expenditure of the occasion. "They were spilling half the drinks they were in such a hurry to serve them up."

And in the corridor between the Caribbean Room and the Ballroom a jam of guests. The line would not move. Trapped in the rush hour again. In the first world war, Marshal Haig used to send a million men over the top in a frontal attack. One hundred yards would be gained, one hundred thousand casualties would be the price. It was possible Nelson Rockefeller was the Marshal Haig of presidential hopefuls. Rich men should not surround themselves with other rich men if they want to win a war.

Nixon

Nixon had come in earlier that day. A modestly large crowd, perhaps six hundred at the entrance to the Miami Hilton, two bands playing "Nixon's the One," and the Nixonettes and the Nixonaires, good clean blonde and brown-haired Christian faces, same two Negresses, a cluster of 2,000 balloons going up in the air, flings of color, thin dots of color, and Nixon himself finally in partial view at the center of the semicircle of cameras held overhead. Just a glimpse: he has a sunburn—his forehead is bright pink. Then he has made it into the hotel, pushed from behind, hands in hand-shakes from the front, hair recognizable—it is curlier than most and combed in roller coaster waves, ~~not reminiscent of the hair of Gore Vidal. (But who was Nixon's Breckenridge?)~~

The crowd had been enthusiastic without real hurly-burly or hint of pandemonium. More in a state of respectful enthusiasm, and the hot patriotic cupidity to get near the man who is probably going to be the next American

President. The office, not the man, is moving them. And Nixon passes through them with the odd stick-like motions which are so much a characteristic of his presence. He is like an actor with good voice and hordes of potential, but the despair of his dramatic coach (again it is High School). "Dick, you just got to learn how to move." There is something almost touching in the way he does it, as if sensitive flesh winces at the way he must expose his lack of heart for being warm and really winning in crowds, and yet he is all heart to perform his task, as if the total unstinting exercise of the will must finally deliver every last grace, yes, he is like a missionary handing out Bibles among the Urdu. Christ, they are filthy fellows, but deserving of the ~~rough~~ book. No, it is not so much that he is a bad actor (for Nixon in a street crowd is radiant with emotion to reach across the prison pen of his own artificial moves and deadly reputation and show that he is sincere) it is rather that he grew up in the worst set of schools for actors in the world—white gloves and church usher, debating team, Young Republicanism, captive of Ike's forensic style—as an actor, Nixon thinks his work is to signify. So if he wants to show someone that he likes them, he must smile; if he wishes to show disapproval of Communism, he frowns; America must be strong, out goes his chest. Prisoner of old habit or unwitting of a new kind of move, he has not come remotely near any modern moves, he would not be ready to see that the young love McCarthy because he plays forever against his line. "If I'm nominated, I can't see how I'd possibly fail to win," says McCarthy in a gloomy modest mild little voice, then his eyes twinkle at the myriad of consequences to follow: raps in the newspaper about his arrogance, the sheer delicious zaniness of any man making any claim about his candidacy—yes, many people love McCarthy because his wan wit is telling them, "We straddle ultimates: spitballs and eternal."

Nixon has never learned this. He is in for the straight sell. ~~No wonder he foundered on "America can't stand~~
~~part~~

But the reporter is obsessed with him. He has never written anything nice about Nixon. Over the years he has saved some of his sharpest comments for him, he has disliked him intimately ever since his Checkers speech in 1952—the kind of man who was ready to plough sentimentality

in such a bog was the kind of man who would press any button to manipulate the masses—and there was large fear in those days of buttons which might ignite atomic wars. Nixon's presence on television had inspired emotions close to nausea. There had been a gap between the man who spoke and the man who lived behind the speaker which offered every clue of schizophrenia in the American public if they failed to recognize the void within the presentation. Worse. There was unity only in the way the complacency of the voice matched the complacency of the ideas. It was as if Richard Nixon were proving that a man who had never spent an instant inquiring whether family, state, church, and flag were ever wrong could go on in secure steps, denuded of risk, from office to office until he was President.

In 1962 the reporter had given a small celebration for the collapse of Nixon after his defeat in the election for Governor of California. To the Press: "Well, gentlemen," the defeated man had said, "you won't have Nixon to kick any more." It had seemed the absolute end of a career. Self-pity in public was as irreversible as suicide. In 1964, Nixon had stood about in the wings while Barry was nominated. Now, in 1968, he was on the edge of becoming the nominee. It was obvious something was wrong with the reporter's picture. In his previous conception of Richard Nixon's character there had been no room for a comeback. Either the man had changed or one had failed to recognize some part of his character from the beginning. So there was interest, even impatience to hear him speak.

He was not having a press conference, however, on the day of his arrival. That would wait until the next morning at 8:15. Then, he would face the Press.

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The room filled slowly. By the time Nixon began, it was apparent that 500 seats had been an excessive estimate.

Perhaps half of them were filled, certainly no more than two-thirds. It was nonetheless a large press conference. Nixon came in wearing a quiet blue-gray suit, white shirt, black and blue close-figured tie, black shoes, and no handkerchief for the breast pocket. He stepped up on the dais diffidently, not certain whether applause would be coming or not. There was none. He stood there, looked quietly and warily at the audience, and then said that he was ready for questions.

This would be his sole press conference before the nomination. He was of course famous for his lack of sparkling good relation with the Press, he had in fact kept his publicity to a functional minimum these past few months. The work of collecting delegates had been done over the last four years, particularly over the last two. Their allegiance had been confirmed the last six months in his primary victories. He had no longer anything much to gain from good interviews, not at least until his nomination was secured; he had everything to lose from a bad interview. A delegate who was slipping could slide further because of an ill-chosen remark.

To the extent that the Press was not Republican, and certainly more than half, privately, were not, he would have few friends and more than a few determined enemies. Even among the Republicans he could expect a better share of the Press to go to Rockefeller. Even worse, for the mood of this conference, he did not, in comparison with other political candidates, have many reporters who were his personal friends. He was not reputed to smoke or drink so he did not have drinking buddies as Johnson once had, and Goldwater, and Bill Miller, and Humphrey; no brothel legends attached to him, and no outsize admiration to accompany them; no, the Press was a necessary tool to him, a tool he had been obliged to employ for more than twenty years but he could not pretend to be comfortable in his use of the tool, and the tool (since it was composed of men) resented its employment.

Probably Nixon had agreed to this conference only to avoid the excess of bad feeling which no meeting with the Press would be likely to cause. Still, this was an operation where his best hope was to minimize the loss. So he had taken the wise step of scheduling the conference at 8:15 in the morning, a time when his worst enemies, presumably

the heavy drinkers, free lovers, and free spenders on the Reagan Right and Far Left of the press corps, would probably be asleep in bed or here asleep on their feet.

Nonetheless his posture on the stage, hands to his side or clasped before him, gave him the attentive guarded look of an old ball player—like Rabbit Maranville, let us say, or even an old con up before Parole Board. There was something in his carefully shaven face—the dark jowls already showing the first overtones of thin gloomy blue at this early hour—some worry which gave promise of never leaving him, some hint of inner debate about his value before eternity which spoke of precisely the sort of improvement that comes upon a man when he shifts in appearance from looking like an undertaker's assistant to looking like an old con seriously determined to go respectable. The Old Nixon, which is to say the young Nixon, used to look, on clasping his hands in front of him, like a church usher (of the variety who would twist a boy's ear after removing him from church). The older Nixon before the Press now—the *new* Nixon—had finally acquired some of the dignity of the old athlete and the old con—he had taken punishment, that was on his face now, he knew the detailed schedule of pain in a real loss, there was an attentiveness in his eyes which gave offer of some knowledge of the abyss, even the kind of gentleness which ex-drunkards attain after years in AA. As he answered questions, fielding them with the sure modest moves of an old shortstop who hits few homers but supports the team on his fielding (what sorrow in the faces of such middle-aged shortstops!) so now his modesty was not without real dignity. Where in Eisenhower days his attempts at modesty had been as offensive as a rich boy's arrogance, for he had been so transparently contemptuous of the ability of his audience to *witness* him, now the modesty was the product of a man who, at worst, had grown from a bad actor to a surprisingly good actor, or from an unpleasant self-made man—outrageously rewarded with luck—to a man who had risen and fallen and been able to rise again, and so conceivably had learned something about patience and the compassion of others.

When the reporter was younger, he might have said, "Nixon did not rise again; they raised him; if a new Nixon did not exist, they would have had to invent him." But the reporter was older now—presumably he knew more about

the limits of the ruling class for inventing what they needed; he had learned how little talent or patience they had. Yes, at a certain point they might have decided, some of them at any rate, to dress Richard Nixon for the part again, but no one but Nixon had been able to get himself up from the political deathbed to which his failure in California had consigned him. He was here, then, answering questions in a voice which was probably closer to his own than it had ever been.

And some of the answers were not so bad. Much was Old Nixon, extraordinarily adroit at working both sides of a question so that both halves of his audience might be afterward convinced he was one of them. ("While homosexuality is a perversion punishable by law, and an intolerable offense to a law-abiding community, it is life-giving to many of those who are in need of it," he might have said if ever he had addressed a combined meeting of the Policemen's Benevolent Association and the Mattachine Society.) So he worked into the problem of Vietnam by starting at A and also by starting at Z which he called a "two-pronged approach." He was for a negotiated settlement, he was for maintaining military strength because that would be the only way to "reach negotiated settlement of the war on an honorable basis." Later he was to talk of negotiations with "the next superpower, Communist China." He spoke patiently, with clarity, gently, not badly but for an unfortunate half-smile pasted to his face. The question would come, and he would back-hand it with his glove or trap it; like all politicians he had a considered answer for every question, but he gave structure to his answers, even a certain relish for their dialectical complexity. Where once he had pretended to think in sentimentalities and slogans, now he held the question up, worked over it, deployed it, amplified it, corrected its tendency, offered an aside (usually an attempt to be humorous) revealed its contradiction, and then declared a statement. With it all, a sensitivity almost palpable to the reservations of the Press about his character, his motive, and his good intention. He still had no natural touch with them, his half-smile while he listened was unhappy, for it had nowhere to go but into a full smile and his full smile was as false as false teeth, a pure exercise of will. You could all but see the signal pass from his brain to his jaw. "SMILE," said the signal, and so he flashed teeth in a pain-

ful kind of joyous grimace which spoke of some shrinkage in the liver, or the gut, which he would have to repair afterward by other medicine than good-fellowship. (By winning the Presidency, perhaps.) He had always had the ability to violate his own nature absolutely if that happened to be necessary to his will—there had never been anyone in American life so resolutely phony as Richard Nixon, nor anyone so transcendently successful by such means—small wonder half the electorate had regarded him for years as equal to a disease. But he was less phony now, *that was the miracle*, he had moved from a position of total ambition and total alienation from his own person (at the time of Checkers, the dog speech) to a place now where he was halfway conciliated with his own self. As he spoke, he kept going in and out of focus, true one instant, phony the next, then quietly correcting the false step.

Question from the Press: *You emphasized the change in the country and abroad. Has this led you to change your thinking in any shape or form specifically?*

Answer: *It certainly has.* (But he was too eager. Old Nixon was always ready to please with good straight American boyhood enthusiasm. So he tacked back, his voice throttled down.) *As the facts change, any intelligent man (firm but self-deprecatory, he is including the Press with himself) does change his approaches to the problems.* (Now sharp awareness of the next Press attitude.) *It does not mean that he is an opportunist.* (Now modestly, reasonably.) *It means only that he is a pragmatist, a realist, applying principles to the new situations.* (Now he will deploy some of the resources of his answer.) *For example . . . in preparing the acceptance speech I hope to give next Thursday, I was reading over my acceptance speech in 1960, and I thought then it was, frankly, quite a good speech. But I realize how irrelevant much of what I said in 1960 in foreign affairs was to the problems of today.* (The admission was startling. The Old Nixon was never wrong. Now, he exploited the shift in a move to his political left, pure New Nixon.) *Then the Communist world was a monolithic world. Today it is a split world, schizophrenic, with . . . great diversity . . . in Eastern Europe* (a wholesome admission for anyone who had labored in John Foster Dulles' world.) *. . . after an era of confrontation . . . we now enter an era of negotiations with the Soviet Union.*

While he was never in trouble with the questions, growing surer and surer of himself as he went on, the tension still persisted between his actual presence as a man not altogether alien to the abyss of a real problem, and the political practitioner of his youth, that snake-oil salesman who was never back of any idea he sold, but always off to the side where he might observe its effect on the sucker. The New Nixon groped and searched for the common touch he had once been able to slip into the old folks with the ease of an incubus on a spinster. Now he tried to use slang, put quotes around it with a touching, almost pathetic, reminder of Nice-Nellyism, the inhibition of the good clean church upbringing of his youth insisting on exhibiting itself, as if he were saying with a YMCA slick snicker, "After we break into slang, there's always the danger of the party getting rough." It was that fatal prissiness which must have driven him years ago into all the militaristic muscle-bending witch-hunting foam-rubber virilities of the young Senator and the young Vice President. So, now he talked self-consciously of how the members of his staff, counting delegates, were "playing what we call 'the strong game.'" SMILE said his brain. FLASH went the teeth. But his voice seemed to give away that, whatever they called it, they probably didn't call it "the strong game," or if they did, *he* didn't. So he framed little phrases. Like "a leg-up." Or "my intuition, my 'gut feelings,' so to speak." Deferential air followed by SMILE —FLASH. Was it possible that one of the secrets of Old Nixon was that his psyche had been trapped in rock-formations, nay, geological strata of Sunday school inhibitions? Was it even possible that he was a good man, not a bad man, a good man who had been trapped by an early milieu whose habits had left him with such innocence about three-quarters of the world's experience that he had become an absolute monster of opportunism about the quarter he comprehended all too well? Listening to Nixon now, studying his new modesty, it was impossible to tell whether he was a serious man on the path of returning to his own true seriousness, out to unite the nation again as he promised with every remark: "Reconciliation of the races is a primary objective of the United States," or whether the young devil had reconstituted himself into a more consummate devil, Old Scratch as a modern Abe Lincoln of modesty.

Question from the Press: *A little less than six years ago,*

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after your defeat for the Governorship of California, you announced at the ensuing press conference that that was going to be your last news conference. Could you recall for us this morning two or three of the most important points in your own thinking which made you reverse that statement and now reach for political office on the highest level?

Answer: Had there not been the division of the Republican Party in 1964 and had there not been the vacuum of leadership that was created by that division and by that defeat, I would not be here today. . . . I believe that my travels around the country and the world in this period of contemplation and this period of withdrawal from the political scene (some dark light of happiness now in his eye, as if withdrawal and contemplation had given him the first deep pleasures, or perhaps the first real religious pleasures of his life) in which I have had a chance to observe not only the United States but the world, has led me to the conclusion that returning to the arena was something that I should do (said almost as if he had heard a voice in some visitation of the night)—not that I consider myself to be an indispensable man. (Said agreeably in a relaxed tone as if he had thought indeed to the bottom of this and had found the relaxation of knowing he was not indispensable, an absurd vanity if one stares at Nixon from without, but he had been Vice President before he was forty, and so had had to see himself early, perhaps much too early, as a man of destiny. Now, reservation underlined, he could continue.) But something that I should do (go for the Presidency) because this is the time I think when the man and the moment in history come together. (An extraordinary admission for a Republican, with their Protestant detestation of philosophical deeps or any personification of history. With one remark, Nixon had walked into the oceans of Marx, Spengler, Heidegger, and Tolstoy; and Dostoevski and Kierkegaard were in the wings. Yes, Richard Nixon's mind had entered the torture chambers of the modern consciousness!)

I have always felt that a man cannot seek the Presidency and get it simply because he wants it. I think that he can seek the Presidency and obtain it only when the Presidency requires what he may have to offer (the Presidency was then a mystical seat, mystical as the choice of a woman's womb) and I have had the feeling (comfortably pleasant

and modest again—no phony Nixon here) *and it may be a presumptuous feeling, that because of the vacuum of leadership in the Republican Party, because of the need for leadership particularly qualified in foreign affairs, because I have known not only the country, but the world as a result of my travels, that now time (historical-time—the very beast of the mystic!) requires that I re-enter the arena.* (Then he brought out some humor. It was not great humor, but for Nixon it was curious and not indelicate.) *And incidentally, I have been very willing to do so. (Re-enter the arena.) I am not being drafted. I want to make that very clear. I am very willing to do so. There has never been a draft in Miami in August anyway. (Nice laughter from the Press—he has won them by a degree. Now he is on to finish the point.) . . . I believe that if my judgment—and my intuition, my “gut feelings” so to speak, about America and American political tradition—is right, this is the year that I will win.*

The speech had come in the middle of the conference and he kept fielding questions afterward, never wholly at ease, never caught in trouble, mild, firm, reasonable, highly disciplined—it was possible he was one of the most disciplined men in America. After it was over, he walked down the aisle, and interviewers gathered around him, although not in great number. The reporter stood within two feet of Nixon at one point but had not really a question to ask which could be answered abruptly. “What, sir, would you say is the state of your familiarity with the works of Edmund Burke?” No, it was more to get a sense of the candidate’s presence, and it was a modest presence, no more formidable before the immediate Press in its physical aura than a floorwalker in a department store, which is what Old Nixon had often been called, or worse—Assistant Mortician. It was probable that bodies did not appeal to him in inordinate measure, and a sense of the shyness of the man also appeared—shy after all these years!—but Nixon must have been habituated to loneliness after all those agonies in the circus skin of Tricky Dick. Had he really improved? The reporter caught himself hoping that Nixon had. If his physical presence inspired here no great joy nor even distrust, it gave the sense of a man still entrenched in toils of isolation, as if only the office of the Presidency could be equal (in the specific density of its

importance) to the labyrinthine delivery of the natural man to himself. Then and only then might he know the strength of his own hand and his own moral desire. It might even be a measure of the not-entirely dead promise of America if a man as opportunistic as the early Nixon could grow in reach and comprehension and stature to become a leader. For, if that were possible in these bad years, then all was still possible, and the country not stripped of its blessing. New and marvelously complex improvement of a devil, or angel-in-chrysalis, or both—good and evil now at war in the man, Nixon was at least, beneath the near to hermetic boredom of his old presence, the most interesting figure at the convention, or at least so the reporter had decided by the end of the press conference that Tuesday in the morning. Complexities upon this vision were to follow.

11

The next press conference to be noted was in the French Room of the Fontainebleau for 11:00 A.M. The Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy, former assistant to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and leader of the Poor People's March after King had been assassinated, was scheduled to read a statement and answer questions. While the assembly was nowhere near so large as Nixon's, close to a hundred reporters must nonetheless have appeared, a considerable number of Negroes among them, and then proceeded to wait. Abernathy had not shown up. About fifteen minutes past the hour, another Negro came to the podium and said that the Reverend was on his way, and could be expected in a few minutes.

The gossip was livelier. "We had to look for him in five hotels," said a Black reporter to some other members of the Press, and there was a mental picture of the leader waking heavily, the woes of race, tension, unfulfilled com-

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as to the man that can work best with me, and that will, I think perhaps, if he ever has to do that, serve as President of the United States."

In the old days, he had got his name as Tricky Dick because he gave one impression and acted upon another—later when his language was examined, one could not call him a liar. So he had literally not made any deal with any candidate, but he was stretching the subtle rubber of his own credibility when he claimed he would not have to pay any price. The rest of the night at the Miami Hilton would belong to the South.

Don'traits

15

Ronald Reagan in 1968

~~But let us leave the convention with a look at Reagan. He had come forward immediately after the first ballot was in, and made a move that the nomination be unanimous. Reagan was smiling when he came up for his plea, he looked curiously more happy than he had looked at any point in the convention, as if he were remembering Barry Goldwater's renunciation of the nomination in 1960, and the profitable results which had ensued, or perhaps he was just pleased because the actor in his soul had issued orders that this was the role to play. For years in the movies he had played the good guy and been proud of it. If he didn't get the girl, it was because he was too good a guy to be overwhelmingly attractive. That was all right. He would grit his teeth and get the girl next time out. Since this was conceivably the inner sex drama of half of respectable America, he was wildly popular with Republicans. For a party which prided itself on its common sense, they were curiously, even outrageously, sentimental.~~

~~Now as Reagan made his plea for unity, he spoke with a mildness, a lack of charisma, even a simplicity, which was reminiscent of a good middle-aged stock actor's simplicity—well, you know, fellows, the man I'm playing is~~

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intellectual, and of course I have the kind of mind which even gets confused by a finesse in bridge.

They cheered him wildly, and he looked happy, as if something had gone his way. There was much occasion to recollect him on Thursday when Agnew for Vice President was announced; as the story of this selection developed, the reporter was to think of a view of Reagan he had had on Tuesday afternoon after the reception Nixon had given for the delegates in the American Scene.

On Tuesday the reporter had found Reagan at the Di Lido in downtown Miami Beach where the Alabama and Louisiana delegations were housed. In with Louisiana in a caucus, the Governor came out later to give a quick press conference, pleading ignorance of his situation. Listening to him, it was hard to believe he was fifty-seven, two years older than Nixon, for he had a boy's face, no gray in his head—he was reputed to dye his hair—and his make-up (about which one could hear many a whisper) was too excellent, if applied, to be detected.

Still, unlike Nixon, Reagan was altogether at ease with the Press. They had been good to him, they would be good again—he had the confidence of the elected governor of a big state, precisely what Nixon had always lacked; besides, Reagan had long ago incorporated the confidence of an actor who knows he is popular with interviewers. In fact, he had a public manner which was so natural that his discrepancies appeared only slightly surrealistic: at the age of fifty-seven, he had the presence of a man of thirty, the deferential enthusiasm, the bright but dependably unoriginal mind, of a sales manager promoted for his ability over men older than himself. He also had the neatness, and slim economy of move, of a man not massive enough to be President, in the way one might hesitate, let us say, ever to consider a gentleman like Mr. Johnny Carson of television—whatever his fine intelligence—as Chief Executive of a Heavyweight Empire. It was that way with Reagan. He was somehow too light, a lightweight six feet one inch tall—whatever could he do but stick-and-move? Well, he could try to make Generals happy in order to show how heavy he really might be, which gave no heart to consideration of his politics. Besides, darkening shades of the surreal, he had a second personality which was younger than the first, very young, boyish, maybe thirteen or four-

teen, freckles, cowlick, I-tripped-on-my-sneaker-lace aw shucks variety of confusion. For back on Tuesday afternoon they had been firing questions at him on the order of how well he was doing at prying delegates loose from Nixon, and he could only say over and over, "I don't know. I just don't know. I've been moving around so quickly talking to so many delegations in caucus that I haven't had time to read a paper."

"Well, what do the delegations say, Governor?"

"Well, I don't know. They listen to me very pleasantly and politely, and then I leave and they discuss what I've said. But I can't tell you if we're gaining. I think we are, but I don't know, I don't know. I honestly don't know, gentlemen," and he broke out into a grin, "I just don't know," exactly like a thirteen year old, as if indeed gentlemen he *really* didn't know, and the Press and the delegates listening laughed with him as if there were no harm in Ronald Reagan, not unless the lightning struck.

Cut in here! — But in fact the storm was going on all day Tuesday, delegate-stealing flickering back and forth over all the camps, a nomination on the first ballot no longer secure for Richard Nixon, no longer altogether secure, because Reagan's announcement on Saturday of his switch from being a favorite son of California to an open candidate had meant that a great push was on to pull Southern delegates loose from Nixon in numbers sufficient to stop him on first ballot, then get more delegates loose on second ballot to forestall Nixon's strength among the favorite sons. It was a strategy which reasoned as follows: if Nixon could be stopped on the first two ballots, there was little which could keep the overwhelming majority of delegate votes in Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia away from support of Reagan and a possible total of close to 500. Potentially it was a powerful argument, doubly powerful because Reagan was the favorite of the South, and the reporter talking to a leader of the Louisiana caucus heard him say in courtly tones to a delegate, "It breaks my heart that we can't get behind a fine man like Governor Reagan, but Mr. Nixon is deserving of our choice, and he must receive it." Which was a splendid way to talk of a deal.

R 85-90

(1290)

Chicago, August 24-29

Chicago is the great American city. New York is one of the capitals of the world and Los Angeles is a constellation of plastic. San Francisco is a lady, Boston has become Urban Renewal, Philadelphia and Baltimore and Washington wink like dull diamonds in the smog of Eastern Megalopolis, and New Orleans is unremarkable past the French Quarter. Detroit is a one-trade town, Pittsburgh has lost its golden triangle, St. Louis has become the golden arch of the corporation, and nights in Kansas City close early. The oil depletion allowance makes Houston and Dallas naught but checkbookable for this sort of game. But Chicago is a great American city. Perhaps it is the last of the great American cities.

The reporter was sentimental about the town. Since he had grown up in Brooklyn, it took him no time to recognize, whenever he was in Chicago again, that the urbanites here were like the good people of Brooklyn—they were simple, strong, warm-spirited, sly, rough, compassionate, jostling, tricky and extraordinarily good-natured because they had sex in their pockets, muscles on their back, hot eats around the corner, neighborhoods which dripped with the sauce of local legend, and real city architecture, brownstones with different windows on every floor, vistas for miles of red-brick and two-family wood-frame houses with balconies and porches, runty stunted trees rich as farmland in their promise of tenderness the first city evenings of spring, streets where kids played stick-ball and roller-hockey, lots of smoke and iron twilight. The clangor of the late nineteenth century, the very hope of greed, was in

these streets. London one hundred years ago could not have looked much better.

Brooklyn, however, beautiful Brooklyn, grew beneath the skyscrapers of Manhattan, so it never became a great city, merely an asphalt herbarium for talent destined to cross the river. Chicago did not have Manhattan to preempt top branches, so it grew up from the savoriness of its neighborhoods to some of the best high-rise architecture in the world, and because its people were Poles and Ukrainians and Czechs as well as Irish and the rest, the city had Byzantine corners worthy of Prague or Moscow, odd tortured attractive drawbridges over the Chicago River, huge Gothic spires like the skyscraper which held the *Chicago Tribune*, curves and abutments and balconies in cylindrical structures thirty stories high twisting in and out of the curves of the river, and fine balustrades in its parks. Chicago had a North Side on Lake Shore Drive where the most elegant apartment buildings in the world could be found—Sutton Place in New York betrayed the cost analyst in the eye of the architect next to these palaces of glass and charcoal colored steel. In superb back streets behind the towers on the lake were brownstones which spoke of ironies, cupidities and intricate ambition in the fists of the robber barons who commissioned them—substantiality, hard work, heavy drinking, carnal meats of pleasure, and a Midwestern sense of how to arrive at upper-class decorum were also in the American grandeur of these few streets. If there was a fine American aristocracy of deportment, it was probably in the clean tough keen-eyed ladies of Chicago one saw on the streets off Lake Shore Drive on the near North Side of Chicago.

Not here for a travelogue—no need then to detail the Loop, in death like the center of every other American city, but what a dying! Old department stores, old burlesque houses, avenues, dirty avenues, the El with its nineteenth-century dialogue of iron screeching against iron about a turn, and caverns of shadow on the pavement beneath, the grand hotels with their massive lobbies, baroque ceilings, resplendent as Roman bordellos, names like Sheraton-Blackstone, Palmer House, red fields of carpet, a golden cage for elevator, the unheard crash of giant mills stamping new shapes on large and obdurate materials is always

pounding in one's inner ear—Dreiser had not written about Chicago for nothing.

To the West of the Lake were factories and Ciceros, Mafia-lands and immigrant lands; to the North, the suburbs, the Evanstons; to the South were Negro ghettos of the South Side—belts of Black men amplifying each the resonance of the other's cause—the Black belt had the Blackstone Rangers, the largest gang of juvenile delinquents on earth, 2,000 by some count—one could be certain the gang had leaders as large in potential as Hannibal or Attila the Hun—how else account for the strength and wit of a stud who would try to rise so high in the Blackstone Rangers?

Further South and West were enclaves for the University of Chicago, more factories, more neighborhoods for Poles, some measure of more good hotels on the lake, and endless neighborhoods—white neighborhoods which went for miles of ubiquitous dingy wood houses with back yards, neighborhoods to hint of Eastern Europe, Ireland, Tennessee, a gathering of all the clans of the Midwest, the Indians and Scotch-Irish, Swedes, some Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Rumanians, Finns, Slovaks, Slovenes—it was only the French who did not travel. In the Midwest, land spread out; not five miles from the Loop were areas as empty, deserted, enormous and mournful by night as the outer freight yards of Omaha. Some industrial desert or marsh would lie low on the horizon, an area squalling by day, deserted by night, except for the hulking Midwestern names of the boxcars and the low sheds, the warehouse buildings, the wire fences which went along the side of unpaved roads for thousands of yards.

The stockyards were like this, the famous stockyards of Chicago were at night as empty as the railroad sidings of the moon. Long before the Democratic Convention of 1968 came to the Chicago Amphitheatre, indeed eighteen years ago when the reporter had paid his only previous visit, the area was even then deserted at night, empty as the mudholes on a battlefield after a war has passed. West of the Amphitheatre, railroad sidings seemed to continue on for miles, accompanied by those same massive low sheds larger than armories, with pens for tens of thousands of frantic beasts, cattle, sheep, and pigs, animals in an orgy of gorging and dropping and waiting and smelling blood.

In the slaughterhouses, during the day, a carnage worthy of the Disasters of War took place each morning and afternoon. Endless files of animals were led through pens to be stunned on the head by hammers, and then hind legs trussed, be hoisted up on hooks to hang head down, and ride along head down on an overhead trolley which brought them to Negroes or whites, usually huge, the whites most often Polish or Hunkies (hence the etymology of Honkie—a Chicago word) the Negroes up from the South, huge men built for the shock of the work, slash of a knife on the neck of the beast and gouts of blood to bathe their torso (stripped of necessity to the waist) and blood to splash their legs. The animals passed a psychic current back along the overhead trolley—each cut throat released its scream of death into the throat not yet cut and just behind, and that penultimate throat would push the voltage up, drive the current back and further back into the screams of every animal upside down and hanging from that clanking overhead trolley, bare electric bulbs screaming into the animal eye and brain, gurglings and awesome hollows of sound coming back from the open plumbing ahead of the cut jugular as if death were indeed a rapids along some underground river, and the fear and absolute anguish of beasts dying upside down further ahead passed back along the line, back all the way to the corrals and the pens, back even to the siding with the animals still in boxcars, back, who knew—so high might be the psychic voltage of the beast—back to the farm where first they were pushed into the truck which would take them into the train. What an awful odor the fear of absolute and unavoidable death gave to the stool and stuffing and pure vomitous shit of the beasts waiting in the pens in the stockyard, what a sweat of hell-leather, and yet the odor, no, the titanic stench, which rose from the yards was not so simple as the collective diarrhetics of an hysterical army of beasts, no, for after the throats were cut and the blood ran in rich gutters, red light on the sweating back of the red throat-cutters, the dying and some just-dead animals clanked along the overhead, arterial blood spurting like the nip-ups of a little boy urinating in public, the red-hot carcass quickly encountered another Black or Hunkie with a long knife on a long stick who would cut the belly from chest to groin and a stew and a stink of two hundred pounds of stomach, lungs, intestines, mucosities,

spleen, exploded cowflop and pigshit, blood, silver lining, liver, mother-of-pearl tissue, and general gag-all would flop and slither over the floor, the man with the knife getting a good blood-splating as he dug and twisted with his blade to liberate the roots of the organ, intestine and impedimenta still integrated into the meat and bone of the excavated existence he was working on.

Well, the smell of the entrails and that agonized blood electrified by all the outer neons of ultimate fear got right into the grit of the stockyard stench. Let us pass over into the carving and the slicing, the boiling and scraping, annealing and curing of the flesh in sugars and honeys and smoke, the cooking of the cow carcass, stamp of the inspector, singeing of the hair, boiling of hooves, grinding of gristle, the wax-papering and the packaging, the foiling and the canning, the burning of the residue, and the last slobber of the last unusable guts as it went into the stockyard furnace, and up as stockyard smoke, burnt blood and burnt bone and burnt hair to add their properties of specific stench to fresh blood, fresh entrails, fresh fecalities already all over the air. It is the smell of the stockyards, all of it taken together, a smell so bad one must go down to visit the killing of the animals or never eat meat again. Watching the animals be slaughtered, one knows the human case—no matter how close to angel we may come, the butcher is equally there. So be it. Chicago makes for hard minds. On any given night, the smell may go anywhere—down to Gary to fight with the smog and the coke, out to Cicero to quiet the gangs with their dreams of gung ho and mop-up, North to Evanston to remind the polite that *inter faeces et urinam* are we born, and East on out to Lake Michigan where the super felicities in the stench of such earth-bound miseries and corruptions might cheer the fish with the clean spermy deep waters of their fate.

Yes, Chicago was a town where nobody could ever forget how the money was made. It was picked up from floors still slippery with blood, and if one did not protest and take a vow of vegetables, one knew at least that life was hard, life was in the flesh and in the massacre of the flesh—one breathed the last agonies of beasts. So something of the entrails and the secrets of the gut got into the faces of native Chicagoans. A great city, a strong city with faces tough as leather hide and pavement, it was also a city where the

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faces took on the broad beastiness of ears which were dull enough to ignore the bleatings of the doomed, noses battered enough to smell no more the stench of every unhappy end, mouths—fat mouths or slit mouths—ready to taste the gravies which were the reward of every massacre, and eyes, simple pig eyes, which could look the pig truth in the face. In any other city, they would have found technologies to silence the beasts with needles, quarter them with machines, lull them with Muzak, and have stainless steel for floors, aluminum beds to take over the old overhead trolley—animals would be given a shot of vitamin-enrichment before they took the last ride. But in Chicago, they did it straight, they cut the animals right out of their hearts—which is why it was the last of the great American cities, and people had great faces, carnal as blood, greedy, direct, too impatient for hypocrisy, in love with honest plunder. They were big and human and their brother in heaven was the slaughtered pig—they did not ignore him. If the yowls and moans of his extinction was the broth of their strength, still they had honest guts to smell him to the end—they did not flush the city with Odorono or Pinex or No-Scent, they swilled the beer and assigned the hits and gave America its last chance at straight-out drama. Only a great city provides honest spectacle, for that is the salvation of the schizophrenic soul. Chicago may have beasts on the street, it may have a giant of fortitude for Mayor who grew into a beast—a man with the very face of Chicago—but it is an honest town, it does not look to incubate psychotics along an air-conditioned corridor with a vinyl floor.

2

If the face of Chicago might be reduced to a broad fleshy nose with nostrils open wide to stench, stink, power, a pretty day, a well-stacked broad, and the beauties of a dirty buck, the faces in the crowd of some 5,000 Eugene McCarthy

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Carthy did not look nor feel like a President, not that tall tired man with his bright subtle eyes which could sharpen the razor's edge of a nuance, no, he seemed more like the dean of the finest English department in the land. There wasn't that sense of a man with vast ambition and sufficient character to make it luminous, so there was not that charisma which leaves no argument about the nature of the attempt.

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Chicago
August '68

If that meeting had been in the beginning of June, there were differences now by the end of August. McCarthy, at Midway Airport to greet his followers, looked big in his Presidential candidate's suit this sunny afternoon, no longer tired, happy apparently with the crowd and the air of his reception. He went down the aisle of friends and reporters who had managed to get ahead of the restraining rope for the crowd and shook hands, gave a confident wink or good twinkle there, "Whatever are you doing *here*, Norman?" he said with a grin, quick as a jab, and made his way up to the platform where a clump of microphones on spikes garnished the podium. But the microphones were dead. Which set McCarthy to laughing. Meanwhile posters waved out in the crowd: AMERICA'S PRIMARY HOPE; LUCIDITY, NOT LUNACY; MAKE MINE MCCARTHY. He scanned the home-made posters, as if his sense of such language, after a decade and more, had become sufficiently encyclopedic to treasure every rare departure, and he laughed from time to time as he saw something he liked.

Finally, he called out to the crowd, "*They* cut the power line. *We're* trying to fix it." Great college moans at the depravity of the opposition—wise laughter at the good cheer of the situation. "Let's sing," said Gene McCarthy; a shout from the crowd. His standard was theirs: good wit could

always support small horror. So they sang, This land is your land, this land is my land, and McCarthy moved along to another mike, much shifting of position in his entourage to be near him, then gave up and came back to the first mike. Things were now fixed. He introduced Senator Yarborough from Texas who would in turn introduce him. Yarborough looked like a florid genial iron-ribbed barrel of a British Conservative M.P., and spoke with a modest Texas accent; he told the audience that McCarthy had "won this campaign in the hearts of the American people." While he spoke, McCarthy sat next to his wife Abigail, a warm-colored woman with a pleasant face full of the arch curves of a most critical lady of the gentry. Something in her expression spoke of uncharitable wit, but she was elegant—one could see her as First Lady. Indeed! One could almost see him now as President. He had size, he had humor. He looked strong. When he got up to speak, he was in easy form. Having laughed at a poster which said, "Welcome to Fort Daley," he began by paying his respects to the Mayor of Chicago who is "watching over all of us."

"Big Brother," shouted a powerhouse in the crowd.

McCarthy talked for six or seven minutes. The audience was looking for a bust-out-of-the-corral speech but the Senator was not giving it. He talked mildly, with his throw-away wit, his almost diffident assertion—"We can build a new society and a new world," said he at one point in the mildest tones of his mild register, and then added as if to take the curse off such intellectual presumption, "We're not asking for too much—just a modest use of intelligence."

"Too much," murmured a news-service man admiringly.

A good yell came up. Even a modest use of intelligence would forbid Vietnam.

McCarthy drew one more big cheer by declaring he was not interested in being Vice President. "I'm not here to compromise what we've all worked for," he said to cheers, and shortly after, to the crowd's disappointment, was done. The band played—Warren King's Brass Impact, four trombones, two guitars, drums, six trumpets, one tenor sax, two Negroes not very black among the musicians.

Yes, he had compromised nothing, not even the musicians. If he was at heart a conservative, and no great man for the Blacks, then damned if he would encourage harmo-

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niums and avalanches of soul music. No, he had done it his way up to now, cutting out everyone from his councils who was interested in politicking at the old trough, no, his campaign had begun by being educational, and educational had he left it—he had not compromised an inch, nor played the demagogue for a moment, and it had given him strength, not strength enough perhaps to win, certainly not enough to win, but rectitude had laid the keel, and in that air of a campaign run at last for intelligent men, and give no alms to whores, he left.

~~It was no great meeting, but excitement was there some thin weal of hope that victory, impossible to spring aloft, might still find wings. Take a good look, for it is the last of such pleasant occasions. Later that day, Hubert Humphrey came into O'Hare, but there was no crowd to receive him, just a few of the Humphrey workers. Hubert Humphrey had two kinds of workers. Some, with crew cut or straight combed hair, could have gone with Ronald Reagan. Others were out of that restaurant where Mafia shakes hands with the union. Let no one say that Hubert was unfriendly to the real people. But there is more to see of all these men.~~

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~~Here, my friends, on the prairies of Illinois and the Middle West, we can see a long way in all directions . . . here there are no barriers, no defenses to ideas and to aspirations. We want none. We want no shackles on the mind or the spirit, no rigid patterns of thought and no iron conformity. We want only the faith and the convictions of triumph and free and fair contest.~~

~~(From an address by Adlai Stevenson, Governor of Illinois, to the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1952.)~~

It may be time to attempt a summary of the forces at work upon the convention of 1968.

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Johnson, great wounded secret shaman of the Democratic Party. If Teddy Roosevelt had once wrecked William Howard Taft and the Republican Party by running as a Bull Moose, so Lyndon Johnson was now a warlock of a Bull Moose, conceiving through all the months of June, July, and August how he would proceed to create a cursed convention, a platform, a candidate, and a party which would be his own as much as the nightmarish vision of a phantom ship is the soul of a fever; he would seek to rend his party, crack it in two—that party to which his own allegiance in near to forty years could hardly be questioned—because that party had been willing to let him go. In revenge he would create a candidate who need never run, for his campaign would be completed by the nomination. Conceive what he would have thought of a candidate who could attract more votes than himself.

6

~~Politics~~

Property

pp 105-113

~~"Politics is property," said Murray Kington, delegate from New York, over the epiphanies of a drink and never was a new science comprehended better by a young dele-~~

~~gate.~~ Lyndon Johnson was first preceptor of the key that politics-is-property so you never give something away for nothing. Convention politics is therefore not the art of the possible so much as the art of what is possible when you are dealing with property holders. A delegate's vote is his holding—he will give it up without return no more than a man will sign over his house entire to a worthy cause.

The true property-holder is never ambivalent about his land, he does not mock it, or see adjacent estates as more deserving than his own—so a professional in politics without pride in his holding is a defector. The meanest ward-heeler in the cheapest block of Chicago has his piece—he cannot be dislodged without leaving his curse nor the knotty untangling of his relations with a hundred job-

holders in the area; he gives up tithes in the umbilical act of loyalty to his boss, he receives protection for his holding in return.

Such property relations are to be witnessed for every political sinecure in the land—judgeships, jobs, contracts, promises—it comes down to chairs in offices, and words negotiable like bonds: all of that is politics as simple property. Everybody in the game has a piece, and that piece is workable, it is equivalent to capital, it can be used to accrue interest by being invested in such sound conservative enterprises as decades of loyalty to the same Machine. So long as the system progresses, so will one's property be blessed with dividends. But such property can also be used as outright risk capital—one can support an insurgent movement in one's party, even risk the loss of one's primary holding in return for the possibility of acquiring much more.

This, of course, is still politics at city hall, county or state house, this is the politics of the party regular, politics as simple property, which is to say politics as concrete negotiable power—the value of their engagement in politics is at any moment just about directly convertible to cash.

Politics at national level can still be comprehended by politics-as-property provided one remembers that moral integrity (or the public impression of such) in a high politician is also property, since it brings power and/or emoluments to him. Indeed a very high politician—which is to say a statesman or leader—has no political substance unless he is the servant of ideological institutions or interests and the available moral passions of the electorate, so serving, he is the agent of the political power they bestow on him, which power is certainly a property. Being a leading anti-Communist used to be an invaluable property for which there was much competition—Richard Nixon had once gotten in early on the equivalent of an Oklahoma landgrab by staking out whole territories of that property. “End the war in Vietnam,” is a property to some, “Let no American blood be shed in vain,” is obviously another. A politician picks and chooses among moral properties. If he is quick-witted, unscrupulous, and does not mind a life of constant anxiety, he will hasten—there is a great competition for things valuable in politics—to pick up properties wherever he can, even if they are rival holdings. To the extent a

~~"With F.B.I.'s [redacted] at 16, Ray, Goldwater Camp, [redacted], Eugene S. Dennis, Ronald Reagan,~~

~~and Averill Harrison; but that is another matter.) Johnson~~

The pearl in the oyster of this proposition is that there is only one political job in America which has no real property attached to it, except for the fantastical property of promotion by tragedy, and that, of course, is the Vice Presidency. It is the only high office to which all the secondary characteristics of political property may adhere—comprehensive public awareness of the name, attention in the press to one's speeches, honorary emoluments in the Senate, intimacy (of varying degree) with the President, junkets abroad. If you are very active as Vice President, everyone in America knows your name. But that is your only property. It is not the same thing as real power—more

like being a movie star. Taken in proportion to the size of the office, the Vice President has less real holding than the ward-heeler in his anteroom chair. The Vice President can promise many things, but can be certain of delivering on nothing. So he can never be certain of getting anything back. It is not a job for a politician but a philosopher.

It is the thesis of this argument that Lyndon Johnson, having recognized that he could not win the election in 1968 (and could win the nomination for a candidate of his choice only by exploding his own party into two or more fragments) nonetheless set out to make the party vindicate him. The last property of political property is ego, ego intact, ego burnished by institutional and reverential flame. Not all men wish statues of themselves on their tomb, but it is hard to think of LBJ with a plain stone—"Here lies a simple fellow with many victories and one catastrophic mistake"—Lyndon would carry his emoluments into the debating chambers of Hell. He had had to live after all through March and April and May with the possibility of Bobby Kennedy winning the nomination, winning the election, the laughter of the Kennedys playing echoes off the walls of his own bad dreams; Lyndon had learned during the propertyless period of his own Vice Presidential days how rapid could be the slide of your holdings, how soluble the proud salts of your ego. How quickly might come his deterioration if a Kennedy were again in office—his own bleak death in such a case may have spoken to him already. Men whose lives are built on ego can die of any painful disease but one—they cannot endure the dissolution of their own ego, for then nothing is left with which to face emotion, nothing but the urge to grovel at the enemy's feet. It is the primitive price one pays for holding onto property which possesses no moral value. How much Johnson must have been ready to offer in March and April and May in order that Bobby Kennedy be stopped. Perhaps even his own vindication might have been sacrificed.

After the Senator's assassination, however, nomination for Humphrey was empty for Johnson. If Humphrey wished to win the election, his interest was to separate himself from the President. Since this was counter to Johnson's interest, the torture of Hubert Humphrey began.

Mark it: politics is the hard dealing of hard men over properties; their strength is in dealing and their virility.

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Back of each negotiator is the magic of his collected properties—the real contention of the negotiation is: whose properties possess the more potent magic? A good politician then can deal with every kind of property-holder but a fanatic, because the fanatic is disembodied from his property. He conceives of his property—his noble ideal!—as existing just as well without him. His magic partakes of the surreal. That is why Lyndon Johnson could never deal with Ho Chi Minh, and why he could manipulate Hubert Humphrey with absolute confidence. Humphrey had had to live for four years with no basic property, and nobody knew better than the President what that could do to an animal as drenched in politics as Hubert. Humphrey could never make his move. Deprived for four years of his seat as Senator, deprived of constituency, and the power to trade votes, the small intricate nourishing marrow of being able to measure the profit or loss of concrete favors traded for concrete favors, the exchange of political affections based on solid property-giving, property-acquiring negotiations, forced to offer influence he now might or might not possess, Humphrey never knew where to locate himself in negotiations spoken or unspoken with Lyndon Johnson. So his feet kept slipping. Against the crusades of law and order building on the Right, his hope was to build a crusade on the Left, not to divide the Left. But to do that, he would have had to dare the enmity of Lyndon Johnson, have had to dare the real chance that he might lose the nomination, and that was the one chance he could not take for that would be the hollowest death of them all. He would be lost in retirement, his idle flesh would witness with horror the decomposition of his ego. A politician in such trouble can give away the last of his soul in order not to be forced to witness how much he has given away already.

Hubert Humphrey was the small genius of American politics—his horror was that he was wed to Lyndon Johnson, the domestic genius of us all. Humphrey could not find sufficient pride in his liver to ask for divorce. His liver turned to dread. He came to Chicago with nobody to greet him at the airport except a handful of the faithful—the Vice President's own poor property—those men whose salary he paid, and they were not many. Later, a group of a few hundred met him at the Sherman House, the boys and the Humphrey girls were out. In 1964 some of the

Goldwater girls had looked like hookers on horses, now in '68, some of the women for Humphrey looked like hookers. The Mafia loved Humphrey; they always loved a political leader who kept a well-oiled pair of peanuts in his pants, and there was big money behind Humphrey, \$800,000 had been raised for him in one night in New York; he would be the perfect President—for a time—for every speculator who liked a government contract to anchor his line while he got off that touchdown pass. So Humphrey money was there in Chicago for convention frolics, and a special nightclub or cabaret in the Hilton called the Hubaret where you needed a scorecard to separate the trade-union leaders from the Maf, and the women—let us not insult women. Suffice it that the beehives were out, and every girl named Marie had a coif like Marie Antoinette. Every Negro on the take was there as well—some of the slickest, roundest, blackest swingers ever to have contacts in with everyone from Mayor Daley to the Blackstone Rangers. There was action at the Hubaret, and cheer for every late-night drinker. If Hubie got in, the after-hours joints would prosper; the politics of joy would never demand that all the bars be dead by four—who could argue with that?

Negroes in general had never been charmed with McCarthy. If he was the epitome of Whitey at his best, that meant Whitey at ten removes, dry wit, stiff back, two-and-a-half centuries of Augustan culture and their distillate—the ironic manners of the tightest country gentry; the Blacks did not want Whitey at his best and boniest in a year when they were out to find every justification (they were not hard to find) to hate the Honkie. But if the Black militant and the Black workingman would find no comfort or attraction in McCarthy, think then of how the Black mixer-dixer was going to look on Clean Gene. He wasn't about to make a pilgrimage up to some Catholic rectory in the Minnesota North woods where they passed one bean through the hot water for bean soup, no, he wanted some fatback in his hands. You couldn't take the kind of hard and sanctified little goat turds McCarthy was passing out for political marbles back to the Black homefolk when they were looking for you to spread the gravy around. So Hubie Humphrey came into Chicago with nine-tenths of

the organized Democratic Party—Black support, labor support, Mafia support, Southern delegates support, and you could find it all at the Hubaret if you were looking, as well as a wet wash of delegates with buttons for Humphrey, the big bold HH with its unwitting — though who knew these days what was unwitting? — reference to barbed-wire fences, concentration camps, gas chambers. The letter H went marching to the horizon.

There were 1,400-1,500 delegates secured for Hubert Humphrey on the day he came to town—such was the hard estimate of the hardest heads on his staff, Larry O'Brien, Norman Sherman, Bill Connell; the figure was low, they were not counting on the favorite sons of the South, nor on the small reserve of uncommitted delegates. Still there were rumors up of gale warnings, and much anxiety—Mayor Daley had led the Illinois delegation into caucus on Sunday, and led them out again without committing a single one of the state's 118 votes to a single delegate and there were stories Daley wanted Teddy Kennedy. ~~John Connally, of Texas, furious that the animal was about to be abolished in this convention, gave threats on Sunday of nominating Lyndon Johnson.~~

Either the convention was sewed up for Humphrey or the convention was soft. No one really knew. Usually it was enough to come to conventions with less than a first ballot victory, even two hundred votes less, and you were certain of winning. The panic among delegates to get on the winning side at the last minute is always a stampede. It is as though your land will double in value. Humphrey came in with one hundred to two hundred votes more than he needed, yet he was not without his own panic; he took care to announce on "Meet the Press" before taking the plane to Chicago that he supported President Johnson's Vietnam policies because they were "basically sound." For two months he had been vacillating, giving hints one day that he was not far from the doves, rushing back the next to be close in tone to the Administration. It could be said, of course, that it was part of his political skill to keep the McCarthyites uncertain of his position; once convinced that he would take a line close to Lyndon Johnson on the war in Vietnam, they might look—McCarthy included—to induce Teddy Kennedy to run. So Humphrey played at being

a dove as a way of holding the youngest Kennedy in Hyan-nis. But what was he to gain besides the approval of Lyndon Johnson? A liaison with McCarthy could even give him a chance for victory in November. Yet Humphrey engaged in massive safe play after massive safe play, paying court to the South, paying court to LBJ, to Daley, to Meany, to Connally; even then, he came to Chicago with his nomination insecure. He had 1,500 votes, but if something went wrong he did not know if he could count on a single one of them—they could all wash away in the night. Humphrey was staying at the Conrad Hilton, but his first act after landing at O'Hare was to proceed to the Sherman House to visit the Illinois delegation. Daley was working to induce Teddy Kennedy to run—once Teddy Kennedy ran and lost, he might have to accept a draft as Vice President. At the same time, once running, he might show huge strength—Daley would then be able to claim he stole the nomination from Humphrey and got it over to Kennedy. Daley could not lose. All the while he was encouraging Kennedy to run, Humphrey was promising Daley more and more treasures, obliged—since he had no political property of his own just yet—to mortgage future property. He was assigning future and double substance to Daley, to the unions, to the South, to business interests. His holding operations, his safe plays to guarantee the nomination once the nomination was already secure, became exorbitantly expensive. A joke made the rounds of the convention:

"What was Hubert able to keep?"

"Well, he was able to keep Muriel."

His dangers were absurdly small. McCarthy, three times unpopular with the delegates, for being right, for being proud that he was right, and for dealing only in moral property, had no chance whatsoever. Moreover, he was disliked intensely by the Kennedyites. If Bobby Kennedy and Gene McCarthy had been in the Sinn Fein together they would have carried their guns in holsters under opposite shoulders—they embodied the ultimate war of the Irish. McCarthy was reputed to carry volumes of Augustine and Aquinas in his suitcase; it is possible Bobby Kennedy thought one of the penalties of being Irish is that you could get lost in the *Summa Theologica*.

But Hubert Humphrey carried no gun and no tome.

Finally he was a hawk not a dove for the most visceral of reasons—his viscera were not firm enough to face the collective wrath of that military-industrial establishment he knew so well in Washington, that rifleman's schizophrenia one could see in the eyes of the clerks at the Pentagon, yes, his fear went beyond political common sense and a real chance to win, it went even beyond slavery to LBJ (because LBJ finally had also been afraid of the Pentagon) it came down to the simple fear that he was not ready to tell the generals that they were wrong. Peace they might yet accept, but not the recognition that they were somewhat insane—as quickly tell dragons to shift their nest.

7

It was a curious convention, all but settled before it began, except for the bile-bubbling fear of the nominee that he would lose; it was locked, yet extraordinarily unsettled, even if totally dominated by Lyndon Johnson. He had his men everywhere—Hale Boggs, Majority Whip of the House on the Platform Committee; Carl Albert, Majority Leader of the House as Chairman of the convention; John B. Connally, Governor of Texas, and Mayor Daley, Governor of Chicago, in front of the rostrum with their Texas and Illinois delegations, the rostrum indeed so layered about with Humphrey delegations that if one took a swing in semicircle through the states nearest to the podium, Minnesota, Utah, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, Rhode Island, the Virgin Islands, Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Hawaii, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware and Florida, the final returns for Johnson's candidate were 730 votes out of a possible 834, and in none of those states did he have less than two-thirds of the delegates. To the rear of the Amphitheatre, in a semicircle through the seats farthest removed from the podium, Vermont, Puerto Rico, New York, Cali-

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McCarthy's Resignation Dinner

NORMAN MAILER

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Later that day, ~~Early~~ in the evening, McCarthy went into a meeting with Steve Smith, Teddy Kennedy's brother-in-law, and told him that he was willing to withdraw from the race if Kennedy would enter, and that he would instruct his delegates that they were free; further, he would suggest that they give their support to Kennedy.

Would there be anything he desired in return?

No, he was not asking for anything in victory or defeat. (McCarthy was obviously a fanatic—he was seeking to destroy politics-is-property.)

Smith thanked him, told him he would relay his message to Teddy Kennedy, made some comment on the munificence of the offer, perhaps thinking to himself that it came a little late, and left.

Perhaps two hours after this, the reporter encountered McCarthy by chance in a Chicago restaurant on the North Side.

The Senator, sitting at a long table in the corner of the main dining room, a modest room (for the restaurant was situated in a brownstone) had his back comfortably to the wall, and was chatting over the coffee with his guests. The atmosphere was sufficiently relaxed for the reporter and his friend, another reporter who had been doing a story on McCarthy for *Look*, to come up past the Secret Service without great strain and greet the Senator. Neither of the reporters was to know anything about the meeting with Steve Smith until some days later, but it was likely McCarthy had come to some decision—at the least, he was more relaxed than at any time the reporter had seen him in Chicago. Perhaps it was the friends he was with, big Irishmen like himself for the most part, a couple of them present with their wives, or at least such was the reporter's impression, for he was introduced to more than a half-dozen people in the aftermath of meeting the Senator and some were big genial Irishmen with horn-rimmed glasses and some were lean Irishmen with craggy faces, and one was an Irishman from Limerick with a Dublin face, one-third poet, one-third warrior, one-third clerk. Perhaps it

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was the company, but the reporter had never seen McCarthy in such a mood. The benign personality of the public meetings, agreeable but never compelling, was gone—the personality which suggested that serious activity had something absurd about it—gone. The manner which declared, “I’m a nice guy, and look what I got into”—gone!

Speaking with the license a man has when his dinner is interrupted, McCarthy struck back to the conversation twelve weeks earlier in a living room in Cambridge, “Still waiting for me to repeat that 1960 speech?”

“Well, Senator,” said the reporter—he was trying to become sufficiently presumptuous to say, “if you could make a speech like that on the war in Vietnam tonight when the peace plank is debated . . .”

But McCarthy cut him off. “That was then. We don’t retain all our abilities necessarily. Once the ability leaves you, how do you regain it?” It was impossible to tell if he was mocking the reporter or mocking himself. “I used to be angry then,” he said across the table with an evil look of amusement, as if recording these remarks for posterity as well, his yellow eyes gleaming in the light, “but I can’t seem to get angry again. It’s a gift to get angry when you wish to get angry, Mailer.”

“A grace I would say, sir.”

If the table had been laughing at McCarthy’s sallies, they chuckled now with his. The Senator’s friends looked tough and were tough-minded, but they were obviously open to wit from any corner.

“Then you also want to ask yourself if you should get people angry.” McCarthy went on in a voice of the hardest-tempered irony. “Once you get them angry, you’ve got to get them quieted down. That’s not so easy. Lyndon, for instance, has never understood the problem. He thinks politicians are cattle, whereas in fact most politicians are pigs. Now, Norman, there’s a little difference between cattle and pigs which most people don’t know. Lyndon doesn’t know it. You see, to get cattle started, you make just a little noise, and then when they begin to run, you have to make more noise, and then you keep driving them with more and more noise. But pigs are different. You have to start pigs running with a great deal of noise, in fact the best way to start them is by reciting Latin, very loudly, that’ll get

them running—then you have to quiet your voice bit by bit and they'll keep moving. Lyndon has never understood this."

These gnomic remarks now concluded, the reporter had no idea precisely what the Senator was talking about. He had been expanding a metaphor, and images of the stockyards, the convention, the war on the streets, the expression on the face of Humphrey delegates and McCarthy delegates, and some tidal wave of contempt at the filthy polluted plumbing of things was in the remark. In the laughter which followed, the reporter was silent.

"It's a funny thing about pigs," McCarthy went on. "They have an odd way of keeping warm in winter if they find themselves outside. You see, pigs don't know if they're cold, provided their nose is warm. So they stand around in a circle with their nose between the hind legs of the pig in front of them. Wouldn't you call that a curious relationship?"

"Oh, Senator, I would call that a Satanic relationship."

McCarthy joined in the laughter. Hard was his face, hard as the bones and scourged flesh of incorruptibility, hard as the cold stone floor of a monastery in the North Woods at five in the morning. The reporter leaned forward to talk into his ear.

"You see, sir," he said, "the tragedy of the whole business is that you should never have had to run for President. You would have been perfect for the Cabinet." A keen look back from McCarthy's eye gave the sanction to continue. "Yessir," said the reporter, "you'd have made a perfect chief for the F.B.I!" and they looked at each other and McCarthy smiled and said, "Of course, you're absolutely right."

The reporter looked across the table into one of the hardest, cleanest expressions he had ever seen, all the subtle hints of puffiness and doubt sometimes visible in the Senator's expression now gone, no, the face that looked back belonged to a tough man, tough as the harder alloys of steel, a merciless face and very just, the sort of black Irish face which could have belonged to one of the hanging judges in a true court of Heaven, or to the proper commissioner of a police force too honest ever to have existed.

The reporter left. But the memory of McCarthy at this

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table persisted. And the memory of his presence, harder than the hardest alloys of steel. But not unjust. What iron it must have taken to be annealed in Lyndon's volcanic breath. Yes, the reporter had met many candidates, but McCarthy was the first who felt like a President, or at least felt like a President in that hard hour after he had relinquished the very last of his hopes, and so was enjoying his dinner.

end

10

We have been present until now at an account of the Democratic Convention of 1968. It has not, however, been a description of the event. The event was a convention which took place during a continuing five-day battle in the streets and parks of Chicago between some of the minions of the high established, and some of the nihilistic of the young. But if we had begun with a description of this superb battle, it might not have been automatic to transfer interest to the convention, since the greatest excitement in the Amphitheatre was often a reflection of the war without.

Yet, let us hesitate for one last patriot's cry before slogging to the front. It is from the speech of Governor Lester G. Maddox of Georgia which announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination on August 17, 1968. Since we will see the Governor but once again, and he is a fellow of pithy comment, let us describe him pithily: Governor Maddox has the face of a three-month-old infant who is mean and bald and wears eyeglasses.

From our Governor's speech:

I am proud to be an American. Aren't you?
I love my country and its flag and I regard defending them as a privilege as well as a duty. Don't you?
I . . . when I sing God Bless America, I mean it with all of my heart.

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11

LINEOLN PARK

PP139-145

A moment:

The following is a remark by Dino Valente, an electric guitarist. It ran as the headline in an advertisement in the *East Village Other* for an album of his records.

"You take this electrical power out of the wall and you send it through the guitar and you bend it and shape it and make it into something, like songs for people and that power is a wonderful thing."

Yes, the Yippies were the militant wing of the Hippies, Youth International Party, and the movement was built on juice, not alcoholic juice which comes out of the mystery of fermentation—why, dear God, as fruits and grains begin to rot, does some distillate of this art of the earth now in decomposition have the power to inflame consciousness and give us purchase on visions of Heaven and Hell?—no, rather, we are speaking of the juice which comes from another mystery, the passage of a metallic wire across a field of magnetism. That serves to birth the beast of all modern technology, electricity itself. The Hippies founded their temple in that junction where LSD crosses the throb of an electric guitar at full volume in the ear, solar plexus, belly, and loins. A tribal unity had passed through the youth of America (and half the nations of the world) a far-out vision of orgiastic revels stripped of violence or even the differentiation of sex. In the oceanic stew of a non-violent, tribal ball on drugs, nipples, arms, phalluses, mouths, wombs, armpits, short-hairs, navels, breasts and cheeks, incense of odor, flower and funk went humping into Breakthrough Freak-out Road together, and children on acid saw Valhalla, Nepenthe, and the Taj Mahal. Some went out forever, some went screaming down the alleys of the mad where cockroaches drive like Volkswagens on the oilcloth of the moon, gluttons found vertigo in centrifuges of consciousness, vomitoriums of ingestion; others found love, some manifest of love in light, in shards of Nirvana, sparks of satori—they came back to the world a twentieth-century tribe wearing celebration bells and filthy garments. Used-up livers gave their complexions a

sickly pale, and hair grew on their faces like weeds. Yet they had seen some incontestable vision of the good—the universe was not absurd to them; like pilgrims they looked at society with the eyes of children: society was absurd. Every emperor who went down the path was naked, and they handed flowers to policemen.

It could hardly last. The slum in which they chose to live—for they were refugees in the main from the suburbs of the middle class—fretted against them, fretted against their filth, their easy casual cohabiting, their selflessness (which is always the greatest insult to the ghetto, for selflessness is a luxury to the poor, it beckons to the spineless, the undifferentiated, the inept, the derelict, the drowning—a poor man is nothing without the fierce thorns of his ego). So the Hippies collided with the slums, and were beaten and robbed, fleeced and lashed and buried and imprisoned, and here and there murdered, and here and there successful, for there was scattered liaison with bikers and Panthers and Puerto Ricans on the East Coast and Mexicans on the West. There came a point when, like most tribes, they divided. Some of the weakest and some of the least attached went back to the suburbs or moved up into commerce or communications; others sought gentler homes where the sun was kind and the flowers plentiful; others hardened, and like all pilgrims with their own vision of a promised land, began to learn how to work for it, and finally, how to fight for it. So the Yippies came out of the Hippies, ex-Hippies, diggers, bikers, drop-outs from college, hipsters up from the South. They made a community of sorts, for their principles were simple—everybody, obviously, must be allowed to do (no way around the next three words) his own thing, provided he hurt no one doing it—they were yet to learn that society is built on many people hurting many people, it is just who does the hurting which is forever in dispute. They did not necessarily understand how much their simple presence hurt many good citizens in the secret velvet of the heart—the Hippies and probably the Yippies did not quite recognize the depth of that schizophrenia on which society is built. We call it hypocrisy, but it is schizophrenia, a modest ranch-house life with Draconian military adventures; a land of equal opportunity where a white culture sits upon a Black; a

horizontal community of Christian love and a vertical hierarchy of churches—the cross was well-designed! a land of family, a land of illicit heat; a politics of principle, a politics of property; nation of mental hygiene with movies and TV reminiscent of a mental pigpen; patriots with a detestation of obscenity who pollute their rivers; citizens with a detestation of government control who cannot bear any situation not controlled. The list must be endless, the comic profits are finally small—the society was able to stagger on like a 400-lb. policeman walking uphill because living in such an unappreciated and obese state it did not at least have to explode in schizophrenia—life went on. Boys could go patiently to church at home and wait their turn to burn villages in Vietnam. What the Yippies did not recognize is that their demand for all-accelerated entrance into twentieth-century Utopia (where modern mass man would have all opportunities before him at once and could thus create and despoil with equal conscience—up against the wall mother-fucker, let me kiss your feet) whether a vision to be desired or abhorred, was nonetheless equal to straight madness for the Average Good American, since his liberated expression might not be an outpouring of love, but the burning of his neighbor's barn. Or, since we are in Chicago, smashing good neighbor's skull with a brick from his own back yard. Yippies, even McCarthyites, represented nothing less by their presence than the destruction of every saving hypocrisy with consequent collision for oneself—it is not so easy to live every day of your life holding up the wall of your own sanity. Small wonder the neighborhood whites of Chicago, like many small-town whites in other places, loved Georgie Wallace—he came in like cavalry, a restorer of every last breech in the fort.

Somber thoughts for a stroll through Lincoln Park on a Sunday afternoon in summer, but the traffic of the tourists and the curious was great; one had to leave the car six blocks away. Curiosity was contained, however, in the family automobile: the burghers did not come to the park. Young tourists and cruisers were there in number, tough kids, Polish and Irish (not all plainclothesmen) circulating around the edges of the crowd, and in the center of the southern part of Lincoln Park where the Yippies had chosen to assemble on an innocuous greensward undistin-

guished from similar meadows in many another park, a folk-rock group was playing. It was an orderly crowd. Somewhere between one and two thousand kids and young adults sat on the grass and listened, and another thousand or two thousand, just arrived, or too restless to sit, milled through an outer ring, or worked forward to get a better look. There was no stage—the entrance of a flatbed truck from which the entertainers could have played had not been permitted. so the musicians were half hidden, the public address system—could it work off batteries?—was not particularly clear. For one of the next acts it hardly mattered—a young white singer with a cherubic face, perhaps eighteen, maybe twenty-eight, his hair in one huge puff ball teased out six to nine inches from his head, was taking off on an interplanetary, then galactic, flight of song, halfway between the space music of Sun Ra and “The Flight of the Bumblebee,” the singer’s head shaking at the climb like the blur of a buzzing fly, his sound an electric caterwauling of power come out of the wall (or the line in the grass, or the wet plates in the batteries) and the singer not bending it, but whirling it, burning it, flashing it down some arc of consciousness, the sound screaming up to a climax of vibrations like one rocket blasting out of itself, the force of the noise a vertigo in the cauldrons of inner space—it was the roar of the beast in all nihilism, electric bass and drum driving behind out of their own non-stop to the end of mind. And the reporter, caught in the din—had the horns of the Huns ever had noise to compare?—knew this was some variety of true song for the Hippies and adolescents in the house, in this enclave of grass and open air (luxury apartments of Lake Shore Drive not five football fields away) crescendos of sound as harsh on his ear, ear of a generation which had danced to “Star Dust,” as to drive him completely out of the sound, these painted dirty under-twenties were monsters, and yet, still clinging to recognition in the experience, he knew they were a generation which lived in the sound of destruction of all order as he had known it, and worlds of other decomposition as well; there was the sound of mountains crashing in this holocaust of the decibels, hearts bursting, literally bursting, as if this were the sound of death by explosion within, the drums of physiological climax when the mind was blown, and forces

of the future, powerful, characterless, as insane and scalding as waves of lava, came flushing through the urn of all acquired culture and sent the brain like a foundered carcass smashing down a rapids, revolving through a whirl of demons, pool of uproar, discords vibrating, electric crescendo screaming as if at the electro-mechanical climax of the age, and these children like filthy Christians sitting quietly in the grass, applauding politely, whistles and cries of mild approval when the song was done, and the reporter as affected by the sound (as affected by the recognition of what nihilisms were calmly encountered in such musical storm) as if he had heard it in a room at midnight with painted bodies and kaleidoscopic sights, had a certainty which went through gangs and groups and rabble, tourists and consecrated saints, vestal virgins with finger bells, through the sight of Negroes calmly digging Honkie soul, sullen Negroes showing not impressed, but digging, cool on their fringe (reports to the South Side might later be made) through even the hint of menace in the bikers, some beaks alien to this music, come to scoff, now watching, half turned on by noise so near to the transcendencies of some of their own noise when the whine of the gears cohabited with the pot to hang them out there on the highway singing with steel and gasoline, yeah, steel and gasoline exactly equal to flesh plus hate, and blood plus hate; equations were pure while riding the balance of a machine, yes, even the tourists and the college boys who would not necessarily be back contributed nonetheless to the certainty of his mood. There was a mock charade going on, a continuation of that celebration of the Yippie Convention yet to come, when Pig-asus, a literal pig, would be put in nomination. Vote Pig in '68, said the Yippie placards, and now up at the stage, music done, they announced another candidate to a ripple of mild gone laughter across the grass, Humphrey Dumpty was the name, and a Yippie clown marched through the crowd, a painted egg with legs, "the next President of the United States," and in suite came a march of the delegates through an impromptu aisle from the stage to the rear of the crowd. A clown dressed like a Colorado miner in a fun house came first; followed Miss America with hideous lip-sticked plastic tits, stars of rouge on her cheeks; Mayor

Daley's political machine—a clown with a big box horizontal to his torso, big infant's spoon at the trough on top of the box, and a green light which went on and off was next; then the featured delegate, the Green Beret, a clown with a toy machine gun, soot, and red grease on his face, an Australian bush hat on his head. Some sort of wax vomit pop-art work crowned the crown. Yes, the certainty was doubled. Just as he had known for one instant at the Republican Gala in Miami Beach that Nelson Rockefeller had no chance of getting the nomination, so he knew now on this cool gray Sunday afternoon in August, chill in the air like the chill of the pale and the bird of fear beginning to nest in the throat, that trouble was coming, serious trouble. The air of Lincoln Park came into the nose with that tender concern which air seemed always ready to offer when danger announced its presence. The reporter took an unhappy look around. Were these odd unkempt children the sort of troops with whom one wished to enter battle?

12

The justifications of the March on the Pentagon were not here. The reporter was a literary man—symbol had the power to push him into actions more heroic than himself. The fact that he had been marching to demonstrate against a building which was the living symbol of everything he most despised—the military-industrial complex of the land—had worked to fortify his steps. The symbol of the Pentagon had been a chalice to hold his fear; in such circumstances his fear had even flavored his courage with the sweetest emotions of battle.

But in Chicago, there was no symbol for him. Not the Amphitheatre in the stockyards, for he had a press pass to enter, and had entered indeed—it did not seem as much of a protest to march to a building he had entered already.

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huge trucks, usually used for cleaning the streets, swept toward us spraying more gas. Kids began ripping up the pavement and hurling snowball-size chunks at the truck windows. Then they flooded out into the streets blocking traffic, fighting with plainclothesmen who awaited our exodus from the park, and bombarding hapless patrol cars which sped through the crowds.

The ragged army split up into a series of mobs which roamed through the streets breaking windows, setting trash cans on fire, and demolishing at least a dozen patrol cars which happened to cruise down the wrong street at the wrong time. Smoke billowed from a house several blocks from me and the fire engines began arriving. A policeman ran from an angry brick-throwing mob, lost his cap, hesitated, and ran away without it. At the intersection of Clark and Division, four cop cars arrived simultaneously and policemen leapt out shooting in the air. From all four sides the demonstrators let them have it; most of the missiles were overthrown and hit their comrades or store windows on the other side of the street. Diving down into the subway, I found a large group of refugees who had escaped the same way. The tunnel looked like a busy bomb shelter; upstairs the shooting continued.

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The Militants in Grant Park

14

They were young men who were not going to Vietnam. So they would show every lover of war in Vietnam that the reason they did not go was not for lack of the courage to fight; no, they would carry the fight over every street in Old Town and the Loop where the opportunity presented itself. If they had been gassed and beaten, their leaders arrested on fake charges (Hayden, picked up while sitting under a tree in daylight in Lincoln Park, naturally protested; the resulting charge was "resisting arrest") they were going to demonstrate that they would not give up, that they were the stuff out of which the very best soldiers were made. Sunday, they had been driven out of the park, Mon-

day as well, now Tuesday. The centers where they slept in bedrolls on the floor near Lincoln Park had been broken into by the police, informers and provocateurs were everywhere; tonight tear-gas trucks had been used. They were still not ready to give up. Indeed their militancy may have increased. They took care of the worst of their injured and headed for the Loop, picking up fellow demonstrators as they went. Perhaps the tear gas was a kind of catharsis for some of them, a letting of tears, a purging of old middle-class weakness. Some were turning from college boys to revolutionaries. It seemed as if the more they were beaten and tear-gassed, the more they rallied back. Now, with the facility for underground communication which seemed so instinctive a tool in their generation's equipment, they were on their way to Grant Park, en masse, a thousand of them, two thousand of them, there were conceivably as many as five thousand boys and girls massed in Grant Park at three in the morning, listening to speakers, cheering, chanting, calling across Michigan Avenue to the huge brooding façade of the Hilton, a block wide, over twenty-five stories high, with huge wings and deep courts (the better to multiply the number of windows with a view of the street and a view of Grant Park). The lights were on in hundreds of bedrooms in the Hilton, indeed people were sleeping and dreaming all over the hotel with the sound of young orators declaiming in the night below, voices rising twenty, twenty-five stories high, the voices clear in the spell of sound which hung over the Hilton. The Humphrey headquarters were here, and the McCarthy headquarters. Half the Press was quartered here, and Marvin Watson as well. Postmaster General and Presidential troubleshooter, he had come to bring some of Johnson's messages to Humphrey. His suite had a view of the park. Indeed two-thirds of the principals at the convention must have had a view early this morning, two and three and four A.M. of this Tuesday night, no, this Wednesday morning, of Grant Park filled across the street with a revolutionary army of dissenters and demonstrators and college children and McCarthy workers and tourists ready to take a crack on the head, all night they could hear the demonstrators chanting, "Join us, join us," and the college bellow of utter contempt, "Dump the Hump! Dump the Hump!" all the fury of the beatings and the tear-gassings, all the bitter dis-

appointments of that recently elapsed bright spring when the only critical problem was who would make a better President, Kennedy or McCarthy (now all the dread of a future with Humphrey or Nixon). There was also the sense that police had now entered their lives, become an element pervasive as drugs and books and sex and music and family. So they shouted up to the windows of the Hilton, to the delegates and the campaign workers who were sleeping, or shuddering by the side of their bed, or cheering by their open window; they called up through the night on a stage as vast and towering as one of Wagner's visions and the screams of police cars joined them, pulling up, gliding away, blue lights revolving, lines of police hundreds long in their sky-blue shirts and sky-blue crash helmets, penning the demonstrators back of barriers across Michigan Avenue from the Hilton, and other lines of police and police fences on the Hilton's side of the street. The police had obviously been given orders not to attack the demonstrators here, not in front of the Hilton with half the Democratic Party watching them, not now at three in the morning—would anyone ever discover for certain what was to change their mind in sixteen hours?

Now, a great cheer went up. The police were being relieved by the National Guard. The Guard was being brought in! It was like a certificate of merit for the demonstrators to see the police march off and new hundreds of Guardsmen in khaki uniforms, helmets, and rifles take up post in place, army trucks coughing and barking and filing back and forth on Michigan Avenue, and on the side streets now surrounding the Hilton, evil-looking jeeps with barbed-wire gratings in front of their bumpers drove forward in echelons, and parked behind the crowd. Portable barbed-wire fences were now riding on Jeeps.

Earlier in the week, it had been relatively simple to get into the Hilton. Mobs of McCarthy workers and excited adolescents had jammed the stairs and the main entrance room of the lobby chanting all day, singing campaign songs, mocking every Humphrey worker they could recognize, holding station for hours in the hope, or on the rumor, that McCarthy would be passing through, and the cheers had the good nature and concerted rhythmic steam of a football rally. That had been Saturday and Sunday and Monday, but the police finally had barricaded the kids

out of the lobby, and now at night covered the entrances to the Hilton, and demanded press passes, and room keys, as warrants of entry. The Hilton heaved and staggered through a variety of attacks and breakdowns. Like an old fort, like the old fort of the old Democratic Party, about to fall forever beneath the ministrations of its high shaman, its excruciated warlock, derided by the young, held in contempt by its own soldiers—the very delegates who would be loyal to Humphrey in the nomination and loyal to nothing in their heart—this spiritual fort of the Democratic Party was now housed in the literal fort of the Hilton staggering in place, all boilers working, all motors vibrating, yet seeming to come apart from the pressures on the street outside, as if the old Hilton had become artifact of the party and the nation.

Nothing worked well in the hotel, and much didn't work at all. There was no laundry because of the bus strike, and the house phones usually did not function; the room phones were tapped so completely, and the devices so over-adjacent, that separate conversations lapped upon one another in the same earpiece, or went jolting by in all directions like three handballs at play at once in a four-wall handball court. Sometimes the phone was dead, sometimes it emitted hideous squawks, or squeals, or the harsh electronic displeasure of a steady well-pulsed static. Sometimes one got long distance by taking it through the operator, sometimes one got an outside line only by ringing the desk and demanding it, sometimes one could get the hotel operator only by dialing the outside line. All the while, a photograph of Mayor Daley the size of a postage stamp was pasted on the cradle of the phone. "Welcome to the 1968 National Democratic Convention," it said. Often, one could not even extract a whimper from the room phone. It had succumbed. Sometimes the phone stayed dead for hours. Success in a convention is reduced to success in communications, as the reporter was yet to learn; communications in the headquarters of the largest party in the nation most renowned for the technology of its communications was breaking apart under strikes, pressure, sabotage, security, security over-check, overdevelopment and insufficient testing of advanced technical devices: at the base of the pyramid, sheer human inefficiencies before the combined onslaught of pressure and street war.

The elevators worked abominably. On certain floors the signal did not seem to ring. One could wait a half hour for an elevator to stop on the way down. After a time everybody went up to the top in order to be able to go down. Yet one could not use the stairs, for Secret Servicemen were guarding them. It could, at worst, demand an hour to go to one's room and go down again. So it might have been better to live in a hotel across the Loop; but then there were traffic jams and police lines and demonstrators every night, demonstrators marching along with handkerchiefs to their noses.

This night with the demonstrators up and aroused in Grant Park, tear gas was blowing right into the hotel. The police had tried to gas the kids out of the park when they first arrived in numbers from Lincoln Park, but the wind blew the wrong way, blew the tears across the street into the air conditioning of the Hilton lobby, and delegates and Press and officials walked about with smarting eyes, burning throats, and the presentiment that they were going to catch a cold. The lobby stunk. Not from the tear gas, but from stink bombs, or some advanced variety of them, for the source of the odor was either mysterious, or unremovable, or had gotten into the very entrails of the air-conditioning since it got worse from day to day and drenched the coffee shop and the bars and the lobby with a stench not easily forgettable. Standing near someone, the odor of vomit always prevailed from the bombs—no, it was worse than vomit, rather like a truly atrocious body odor which spoke of the potential for sour vomit in every joint of a bad piece of psychic work. So personal relations were curious. One met attractive men or women, shook hands with them, chatted for a time, said good-bye. One's memory of the occasion was how awful it had smelled. Delegates, powerful political figures, old friends, and strangers all smelled awful.

So nothing worked well in the hotel, and everything stank, and crowds—those who could get in—milled about, and police guarded the entrance, and across the street as the reporter moved through the tight press of children sitting packed together on the grass, cheering the speakers, chanting "Join us! Join us!" and "Dump the Hump" the smell of the stink bombs was still present, but different now, equally evil and vomitous but from a faded odor of

Mace. The nation divided was going to war with stinks: each side would inflict a stink upon the other. The years of sabotage were ahead—a fearful perspective: they would be giving engineering students tests in loyalty before they were done; the F.B.I. would come to question whoever took a mail order course in radio. It was possible that one was at the edge of that watershed year from which the country might never function well again, and service in American hotels would yet be reminiscent of service in Mexican motels. Whatever! the children were alive with revolutionary fire on this fine Tuesday night, this early Wednesday morning, and the National Guard policing them was wide-awake as well. Incidents occurred. Flare-ups. A small Negro soldier started pushing a demonstrator with his rifle, pushing him in sudden fury as at the wild kickoff of a wild street fight; the demonstrator—who looked to be a kindly divinity student—aghast at what he had set off; he had not comprehended the Negro wished no special conversation from him. And a National Guard officer came running up to pull the Negro back. (On the next night, there would be no Negroes in the line of National Guards.)

The kids were singing. There were two old standards which were sung all the time. An hour could not go by without both songs. So they sang "We Shall Overcome" and they sang "This Land Is Your Land," and a speaker cried up to the twenty-five stories of the Hilton, "We have the votes, you have the guns," a reference to the polls which had shown McCarthy to be more popular than Hubert Humphrey (yes, if only Rockefeller had run for the Democrats and McCarthy for the Republicans this would have been an ideal contest between a spender and a conservative) and then another speaker, referring to the projected march on the Amphitheatre next day, shouted, "We're going to march without a permit—the Russians demand a permit to have a meeting in Prague," and the crowd cheered this. They cheered with wild enthusiasm when one speaker, a delegate, had the inspiration to call out to the delegates and workers listening in the hundreds of rooms at the Hilton with a view of the park, "Turn on your lights, and blink them if you are with us. If you are with us, if you are sympathetic to us, blink your lights, blink your lights." And to the delight of the crowd, lights began to blink in the Hilton, ten, then twenty, perhaps so many as

fifty lights were blinking at once, and a whole bank of lights on the fifteenth floor and the twenty-third floor went off and on at once, off and on at once. The McCarthy headquarters on the fifteenth and the twenty-third were blinking, and the crowd cheered. Now they had become an audience to watch the actors in the hotel. So two audiences regarded each other, like ships signalling across a gulf of water in the night, and delegates came down from the hotel; a mood of new beauty was in the air, there present through all the dirty bandaged kids, the sour vomit odor of the Mace, the sighing and whining of the army trucks moving in and out all the time, the adenoids, larynxes, wheezes and growls of the speakers, the blinking of lights in the Hilton, yes, there was the breath of this incredible crusade where fear was in every breath you took, and so breath was tender, it came into the lungs as a manifest of value, as a gift, and the children's faces were shining in the glow of the headlights of the National Guard trucks and the searchlights of the police in front of the Hilton across Michigan Avenue. And the Hilton, sinking in its foundations, twinkled like a birthday cake. Horrors were coming tomorrow. No, it is today. It is Wednesday already.

15

If Wednesday was nominating day, it was also the afternoon when the debate on the Vietnam peace plank took place. Indeed, it was also the evening when the Massacre of Michigan Avenue occurred, an extraordinary event: a massacre, equal on balance to some of the old Indian raids, yet no one was killed. Of course, a great many people were hurt. And several hundred delegates started to march back from the stockyards, early Thursday morning after the nomination, carrying lit candles in protest. It was obviously one of the more active days in the history of any convention.

The Massacre on Michigan Boulevard

(164-174)

~~And the answer came back, "Here I read it to you"~~
 these are not my words, these are the words of General Abrams: 'If the bombing in North Vietnam now authorized were to be suspended unilaterally, the enemy in ten days to two weeks could develop a capability in the DMZ area in terms of scale, intensity, and duration of combat on the order of five times what he now has.'

"I cannot agree. I cannot agree to place our forces at the risk which the enemy's capability would then pose. That, my friends, concludes our debate." (Hale Boggs was the hawk's own tern.)

The Administration was taking no chances on birds. A confidential White House briefing had been thrown into the shot-load for this debate, and by the time the last speaker had his word, the military were concluding the debate, that same military which had been giving expert guesses for years on just how many troops and just how many bombs would be necessary to guarantee victory in exactly so many weeks or exactly so many months; the party was still buying just such expert advice. "Scale, intensity, and duration of combat on the order of five times." The Texas delegation up front cheered. Put a big man in a big uniform, let him recite big figures, and they would take the word of no priest or pope. In America the uniform always finished first, the production expert second, and Christ was welcome to come in third. So the vote came out as 1,567 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1,041 $\frac{1}{2}$ —the majority plank was passed. Lyndon Johnson was vindicated by the same poor arguments which had originally implicated him. Politics was property, and the gravitational power of massive holdings was sufficient to pull you out of your own soup.

But the floor would not rest. The New York and California delegations began to sing "We Shall Overcome." Quickly, the Platform was passed; still the New York delegation sang. Now Wisconsin stood on its seats. The rear of the floor booed the front of the floor. A few hundred posters, STOP THE WAR, quickly printed a couple of hours earlier for this occasion, were held up. Defeated delegates yelled, "Stop the War," in the fierce frustration of knowing that the plank was Lyndon Johnson's and the party was still his. The convention recessed. Still the New York delegation sang, "We Shall Overcome," standing on their seats. The convention band across the way tried to

drown them out. It played in ever-increasing volume "We Got a Lot of Living to Do."

The managers of the convention turned the New York microphones down, and amplified the public address system for the band. So on the floor of the convention, the doves were drowned in hostile sound, but on the television sets, the reception was opposite, for the networks had put their own microphones under the voices of the delegates, and they sang in force across the continent. Thus a few thousand people on the floor and the gallery heard little of the doves—all the rest of America heard them well. Politics-is-property had come to the point of fission. He who controlled the floor no longer controlled the power of public opinion. Small wonder the old party hands hated the networks—it was agitating to have mastered the locks and keys in the house of politics and discover that there was a new door they could not quite shut. In disgust the hawk delegations left the floor. The doves continued to sing "We Shall Overcome." Now, the orchestra played "Happy Days Are Here Again."

The demonstrators chanted, "We want peace! We want peace!" "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover," the orchestra offered, then rejected, then switched over to "If You Knew Suzy," then they gave up. The demonstrators began to sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." New York, California, Oregon, Wisconsin, South Dakota and other delegations marched around the empty floor. It was half an hour after the convention had recessed. Still they sang. It had been a long war to lose.



Meanwhile, a mass meeting was taking place about the bandshell in Grant Park, perhaps a quarter of a mile east of Michigan Avenue and the Conrad Hilton. The meeting was under the auspices of the Mobilization, and a crowd of

ten or fifteen thousand appeared. The Mayor had granted a permit to assemble, but had refused to allow a march. Since the Mobilization had announced that it would attempt, no matter how, the march to the Amphitheatre that was the first purpose of their visit to Chicago, the police were out in force to surround the meeting.

An episode occurred during the speeches. Three demonstrators climbed a flag pole to cut down the American flag and put up a rebel flag. A squad of police charged to beat them up, but got into trouble themselves, for when they threw tear gas, the demonstrators lobbed the canisters back, and the police, choking on their own gas, had to fight their way clear through a barrage of rocks. Then came a much larger force of police charging the area, overturning benches, busting up members of the audience, then heading for Rennie Davis at the bullhorn. He was one of the coordinators of the Mobilization, his face was known, he had been fingered and fingered again by plainclothesmen. Now urging the crowd to sit down and be calm, he was attacked from behind by the police, his head laid open in a three-inch cut, and he was unconscious for a period. Furious at the attack, Tom Hayden, who had been in disguise these last two days to avoid any more arrests for himself, spoke to the crowd, said he was leaving to perform certain special tasks, and suggested that others break up into small groups and go out into the streets of the Loop "to do what they have to do." A few left with him; the majority remained. While it was a People's Army and therefore utterly unorganized by uniform or unity, it had a variety of special troops and regular troops; everything from a few qualified Kamikaze who were ready to charge police lines in a Japanese snake dance and dare on the consequence, some vicious beatings, to various kinds of small saboteurs, rock-throwers, gauntlet-runners—some of the speediest of the kids were adept at taunting cops while keeping barely out of range of their clubs—not altogether alien to running the bulls at Pamplona. Many of those who remained, however, were still nominally pacifists, protesters, Gandhians—they believed in non-violence, in the mystical interposition of their body to the attack, as if the violence of the enemy might be drained by the spiritual act of passive resistance over the years, over the thousands, tens

of thousands, hundreds of thousands of beatings over the years. So Allen Ginsberg was speaking now to them.

The police looking through the plexiglass face shields they had flipped down from their helmets were then obliged to watch the poet with his bald head, soft eyes magnified by horn-rimmed eyeglasses, and massive dark beard, utter his words in a croaking speech. He had been gassed Monday night and Tuesday night, and had gone to the beach at dawn to read Hindu Tantras to some of the Yippies, the combination of the chants and the gassings had all but burned out his voice, his beautiful speaking voice, one of the most powerful and hypnotic instruments of the Western world was down to the scrapings of the throat now, raw as flesh after a curettage.

"The best strategy for you," said Ginsberg, "in cases of hysteria, overexcitement or fear, is still to chant 'OM' together. It helps to quell flutterings of butterflies in the belly. Join me now as I try to lead you."

The crowd chanted with Ginsberg. They were of a generation which would try every idea, every drug, every action—it was even possible a few of them had made out with freaky kicks on tear gas these last few days—so they would chant OM. There were Hindu fanatics in the crowd, children who loved India and scorned everything in the West; there were cynics who thought the best thing to be said for a country which allowed its excess population to die by the millions in famine-ridden fields was that it would not be ready soon to try to dominate the rest of the world. There were also militants who were ready to march. And the police there to prevent them, busy now in communication with other detachments of police, by way of radios whose aerals were attached to their helmets, thereby giving them the look of giant insects.

A confused hour began. Lincoln Park was irregular in shape with curving foot walks; but Grant Park was indeed not so much a park as a set of belts of greenery cut into files by major parallel avenues between Michigan Avenue and Lake Michigan half a mile away. Since there were also cross streets cutting the belts of green perpendicularly, a variety of bridges and pedestrian overpasses gave egress to the city. The park was in this sense an alternation of lawn with superhighways. So the police were able to pen the crowd. But not completely. There were too many

bridges, too many choices, in effect, for the police to anticipate. To this confusion was added the fact that every confrontation of demonstrators with police, now buttressed by the National Guard, attracted hundreds of newsmen, and hence began a set of attempted negotiations between spokesmen for the demonstrators and troops the demonstrators finally tried to force a bridge and get back to the city. Repelled by tear gas, they went to other bridges, still other bridges, finally found a bridge lightly guarded, broke through a passage and were loose in the city at six-thirty in the evening. They milled about in the Loop for a few minutes, only to encounter the mules and three wagons of the Poor People's Campaign. City officials, afraid of provoking the Negroes on the South Side, had given a permit to the Reverend Abernathy, and he was going to march the mules and wagons down Michigan Avenue and over to the convention. An impromptu march of the demonstrators formed behind the wagons immediately on encountering them and ranks of marchers, sixty, eighty, a hundred in line across the width of Michigan Avenue began to move forward in the gray early twilight of 7 P.M.; Michigan Avenue was now suddenly jammed with people in the march, perhaps so many as four or five thousand people, including onlookers on the sidewalk who jumped in. The streets of the Loop were also reeking with tear gas—the wind had blown some of the gas west over Michigan Avenue from the drops on the bridges, some gas still was penetrated into the clothing of the marchers. In broken ranks, half a march, half a happy mob, eyes red from gas, faces excited by the tension of the afternoon, and the excitement of the escape from Grant Park, now pushing down Michigan Avenue toward the Hilton Hotel with dreams of a march on to the Amphitheatre four miles beyond, and in the full pleasure of being led by the wagons of the Poor People's March, the demonstrators shouted to everyone on the sidewalk, "Join us, join us, join us," and the sidewalk kept disgorging more people ready to march.

But at Balbo Avenue, just before Michigan Avenue reached the Hilton, the marchers were halted by the police. It was a long halt. Perhaps thirty minutes. Time for people who had been walking on the sidewalk to join the march, proceed for a few steps, halt with the others, wait, get bored, and leave. It was time for someone in command of

the hundreds of police in the neighborhood to communicate with his headquarters, explain the problem, time for the dilemma to be relayed, alternatives examined, and orders conceivably sent back to attack and disperse the crowd. If so, a trap was first set. The mules were allowed to cross Balbo Avenue, then were separated by a line of police from the marchers, who now, several thousand compressed in this one place, filled the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Balbo. There, dammed by police on three sides, and cut off from the wagons of the Poor People's March, there, right beneath the windows of the Hilton which looked down on Grant Park and Michigan Avenue, the stationary march was abruptly attacked. The police attacked with tear gas, with Mace, and with clubs, they attacked like a chain saw cutting into wood, the teeth of the saw the edge of their clubs, they attacked like a scythe through grass, lines of twenty and thirty policemen striking out in an arc, their clubs beating, demonstrators fleeing. Seen from overhead, from the nineteenth floor, it was like a wind blowing dust, or the edge of waves riding foam on the shore.

The police cut through the crowd one way, then cut through them another. They chased people into the park, ran them down, beat them up; they cut through the intersection at Michigan and Balbo like a razor cutting a channel through a head of hair, and then drove columns of new police into the channel who in turn pushed out, clubs flailing, on each side, to cut new channels, and new ones again. As demonstrators ran, they reformed in new groups only to be chased by the police again. The action went on for ten minutes, fifteen minutes, with the absolute ferocity of a tropical storm, and watching it from a window on the nineteenth floor, there was something of the detachment of studying a storm at evening through a glass, the light was a lovely gray-blue, the police had uniforms of sky-blue, even the ferocity had an abstract elemental play of forces of nature at battle with other forces, as if sheets of tropical rain were driving across the street in patterns, in curving patterns which curved upon each other again. Police cars rolled up, prisoners were beaten, shoved into wagons, driven away. The rain of police, madened by the uncoiling of their own storm, pushed against their own barricades of tourists pressed on the street

against the Hilton Hotel, then pressed them so hard—but here is a quotation from J. Anthony Lukas in *The New York Times*:

Even elderly bystanders were caught in the police onslaught. At one point, the police turned on several dozen persons standing quietly behind police barriers in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel watching the demonstrators across the street.

For no reason that could be immediately determined, the blue-helmeted policemen charged the barriers, crushing the spectators against the windows of the Haymarket Inn, a restaurant in the hotel. Finally the window gave way, sending screaming middle-aged women and children backward through the broken shards of glass.

The police then ran into the restaurant and beat some of the victims who had fallen through the windows and arrested them.

Now another quote from Steve Lerner in *The Village Voice*:

When the charge came, there was a stampede toward the sidelines. People piled into each other, humped over each other's bodies like coupling dogs. To fall down in the crush was just as terrifying as facing the police. Suddenly I realized my feet weren't touching the ground as the crowd pushed up onto the sidewalk. I was grabbing at the army jacket of the boy in front of me; the girl behind me had a stranglehold on my neck and was screaming incoherently in my ear.

Now, a longer quotation from Jack Newfield in *The Village Voice*. (The accounts in *The Voice* of September 5 were superior to any others encountered that week.)

At the southwest entrance to the Hilton, a skinny, long-haired kid of about seventeen skidded down on the sidewalk, and four overweight cops leaped on him, chopping strokes on his head. His hair flew from the force of the blows. A dozen small rivulets of blood began to cascade down the kid's temple and onto the sidewalk. He was not crying or screaming, but crawling in a stupor toward the gutter. When he saw a photographer take a picture, he made a V sign with his fingers.

A doctor in a white uniform and Red Cross arm band began to run toward the kid, but two other cops caught

him from behind and knocked him down. One of them jammed his knee into the doctor's throat and began clubbing his rib cage. The doctor squirmed away, but the cops followed him, swinging hard, sometimes missing.

A few feet away a phalanx of police charged into a group of women, reporters, and young McCarthy activists standing idly against the window of the Hilton Hotel's Haymarket Inn. The terrified people began to go down under the unexpected police charge when the plate glass window shattered, and the people tumbled backward through the glass. The police then climbed through the broken window and began to beat people, some of whom had been drinking quietly in the hotel bar.

At the side entrance of the Hilton Hotel four cops were chasing one frightened kid of about seventeen. Suddenly, Fred Dutton, a former aide to Robert Kennedy, moved out from under the marquee and interposed his body between the kid and the police.

"He's my guest in this hotel," Dutton told the cops.

The police started to club the kid.

Dutton screamed for the first cop's name and badge number. The cop grabbed Dutton and began to arrest him, until a Washington *Post* reporter identified Dutton as a former RFK aide.

Demonstrators, reporters, McCarthy workers, doctors, all began to stagger into the Hilton lobby, blood streaming from face and head wounds. The lobby smelled from tear gas, and stink bombs dropped by the Yippies. A few people began to direct the wounded to a makeshift hospital on the fifteenth floor, the McCarthy staff headquarters.

Fred Dutton was screaming at the police, and at the journalists to report all the "sadism and brutality." Richard Goodwin, the ashen nub of a cigar sticking out of his fatigued face, mumbled, "This is just the beginning. There'll be four years of this."

The defiant kids began a slow, orderly retreat back up Michigan Avenue. They did not run. They did not panic. They did not fight back. As they fell back they helped pick up fallen comrades who were beaten or gassed. Suddenly, a plainclothesman dressed as a soldier moved out of the shadows and knocked one kid down with an overhand punch. The kid squatted on the pavement of Michigan Avenue, trying to cover his face, while the Chicago plainclothesman punched him with savage accuracy. Thud, thud, thud. Blotches of blood spread over the kid's face. Two photographers moved in. Several police formed a closed circle around the beating to prevent pictures. One of the policemen then squirted Chemical Mace at the

photographers, who dispersed. The plainclothesman melted into the line of police.

Let us escape to the street. The reporter, watching in safety from the nineteenth floor, could understand now how Mussolini's son-in-law had once been able to find the bombs he dropped from his airplane beautiful as they burst, yes, children, and youths, and middle-aged men and women were being pounded and clubbed and gassed and beaten, hunted and driven, sent scattering in all directions by teams of policemen who had exploded out of their restraints like the bursting of a boil, and nonetheless he felt a sense of calm and beauty, void even of the desire to be down there, as if in years to come there would be beatings enough, some chosen, some from nowhere, but it was as if the war had finally begun, and this was therefore a great and solemn moment, as if indeed even the gods of history had come together from each side to choose the very front of the Hilton Hotel before the television cameras of the world and the eyes of the campaign workers and the delegates' wives, yes, there before the eyes of half the principals at the convention was this drama played, as if the military spine of a great liberal party had finally separated itself from the skin, as if, no metaphor large enough to suffice, the Democratic Party had here broken in two before the eyes of a nation like Melville's whale charging right out of the sea.

A great stillness rose up from the street through all the small noise of clubbing and cries, small sirens, sigh of loaded arrest vans as off they pulled, shouts of police as they wheeled in larger circles, the intersection clearing further, then further, a stillness rose through the steel and stone of the hotel, congregating in the shocked centers of every room where delegates and wives and Press and campaign workers innocent until now of the intimate working of social force, looked down now into the murderous paradigm of Vietnam there beneath them at this huge intersection of this great city. Look—a boy was running through the park, and a cop was chasing. There he caught him on the back of the neck with his club! There! The cop is returning to his own! And the boy stumbling to his feet is helped off the ground by a girl who has come running up.

Yes, it could only have happened in a meeting of the

Gods, that history for once should take place not on some back street, or some inaccessible grand room, not in some laboratory indistinguishable from others, or in the sly undiscoverable hypocrisies of a committee of experts, but rather on the center of the stage, as if each side had said, "Here we will have our battle. Here we will win."

The demonstrators were afterward delighted to have been manhandled before the public eye, delighted to have pushed and prodded, antagonized and provoked the cops over these days with rocks and bottles and cries of "Pig" to the point where police had charged in a blind rage and made a stage at the one place in the city (besides the Amphitheatre) where audience, actors, and cameras could all convene, yes, the rebels thought they had had a great victory, and perhaps they did; but the reporter wondered, even as he saw it, if the police in that half hour of waiting had not had time to receive instructions from the power of the city, perhaps the power of the land, and the power had decided, "No, do not let them march another ten blocks and there disperse them on some quiet street, no, let it happen before all the land, let everybody see that their dissent will soon be equal to their own blood; let them realize that the power is implacable, and will beat and crush and imprison and yet kill before it will ever relinquish the power. So let them see before their own eyes what it will cost to continue to mock us, defy us, and resist. There are more millions behind us than behind them, more millions who wish to weed out, poison, gas, and obliterate every flower whose power they do not comprehend than heroes for their side who will view our brute determination and still be ready to resist. There are more cowards alive than the brave. Otherwise we would not be where we are," said the Prince of Greed.

Who knew. One could thank the city of Chicago where drama was still a property of the open stage. It was quiet now, there was nothing to stare down on but the mules, and the police guarding them. The mules had not moved through the entire fray. Isolated from the battle, they had stood there in harness waiting to be told to go on. Only once in a while did they turn their heads. Their role as actors in the Poor People's March was to wait and to serve. Finally they moved on. The night had come. It was dark. The intersection was now empty. Shoes, ladies'

handbags, and pieces of clothing lay on the street outside the hotel.

17

There have been few studies on the psychological differences between police and criminals, and the reason is not difficult to discover. The studies based on the usual psychological tests fail to detect a significant difference. Perhaps they are not sufficiently sensitive.

If civilization has made modern man a natural schizophrenic (since he does not know at the very center of his deliberations whether to trust his machines or the imperfect impressions still afforded him by his distorted senses and the more or less tortured messages passed along by polluted water, overfertilized ground, and poisonously irritating air) the average man is a suicide in relation to his schizophrenia. He will suppress his impulses and die eventually of cancer, overt madness, nicotine poisoning, heart attack, or the complications of a chest cold. It is that minority—cop and crook—which seeks issue for violence who now attract our attention. The criminal attempts to reduce the tension within himself by expressing in the direct language of action whatever is most violent and outraged in his depths; to the extent he is not a powerful man, his violence is merely antisocial, like self-exposure, embezzlement, or passing bad checks. The cop tries to solve his violence by blanketing it with a uniform. That is virtually a commonplace, but it explains why cops will put up with poor salary, public dislike, uncomfortable working conditions and a general sense of bad conscience. They know they are lucky; they know they are getting away with a successful solution to the criminality they can taste in their blood. This taste is practically in the forefront of a cop's brain; he is in a stink of perspiration whenever he goes into action; he can tolerate little in the way of insult, and virtually no contradic-

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noon to make a speech in which he would declare his failure, and discovered the Park instead was near empty. Who ever had wanted to march had gone off already with Peterson of Wisconsin, or later with Dick Gregory. (Perhaps a total of fifty Democratic delegates were in those walks.) Now the Park was all but deserted except for the National Guard. Perhaps a hundred or two hundred on-lookers, malcontents, hoodlums, and odd petty thieves sauntered about. A mean-looking mulatto passed by the line of National Guard with his penknife out, blade up, and whispered, "Here's my bayonet." Yes, Grant Park was now near to Times Square in Manhattan or Main Street in L.A. The Yippies were gone; another kind of presence was in. And the grass looked littered and yellow, a holocaust of newspapers upon it. Now, a dry wind, dusty and cold, gave every sentiment of the end of summer. The reporter went back to his room. He had political lessons to absorb for a year from all the details of his absolute failure to deliver the vote.

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CONVENTION'S END

20

Let us look at the convention on the last night. Two hours before the final evening session the Progress Printing Company near the stockyards finished a rush order of small posters perhaps two feet high which said: CHICAGO LOVES MAYOR DALEY. They were ready to be handed out when the crowds arrived tonight; thousands of workers for the city administration were packed into the spectators' gallery, then the sections reserved for radio, TV and periodicals. The crowd fortified with plastic tickets cut to the size of Diner's Club cards, and therefore cut to the size of the admission pass one had to insert in the signal box to enter, had flooded all available seats with their posters and their good Chicago lungs-for-Daley. The radio, television and periodical men wandered about the outer en-

virons of the Amphitheatre and were forced to watch most of the convention this night from the halls, the ends of the tunnels, the television studios.

Daley had known how to do it. If he had been booed and jeered the first two nights and openly insulted from the podium on Wednesday, despite a gallery already packed in his favor, he was not going to tolerate anything less than a built-in majesty for tonight. Power is addicted to more power. ~~So thoughts of pigs were swept to him as hungry for a mouse and he made certain of the seat.~~

Shortly after convening, the convention showed a movie thirty-two minutes long, entitled "Robert Kennedy Remembered," and while it went on, through the hall, over the floor, and out across the country on television, a kind of unity came over everyone who was watching, at least for a little while. Idealism rarely moved politicians—it had too little to do with property. But emotion did. It was closer to the land. Somewhere between sorrow and the blind sword of patriotism was the fulcrum of reasonable politics, and as the film progressed, and one saw scene after scene of Bobby Kennedy growing older, a kind of happiness came back from the image, for something in his face grew young over the years—he looked more like a boy on the day of his death, a nice boy, nicer than the kid with the sharp rocky glint in his eye who had gone to work for Joe McCarthy in his early twenties, and had then known everything there was to know about getting ahead in politics. He had grown modest as he grew older, and his wit had grown with him—he had become a funny man as the picture took care to show, wry, simple for one instant, shy and off to the side on the next, but with a sort of marvelous boy's wisdom, as if he knew the world was very bad and knew the intimate style of how it was bad, as only boys can sometimes know (for they feel it in their parents and their schoolteachers and their friends). Yet he had confidence he was going to fix it—the picture had this sweet simple view of him which no one could resent for somehow it was not untrue. Since his brother's death, a subtle sadness had come to live in his tone of confidence, as though he were confident he would win—if he did not lose. That could also happen, and that could happen quickly. He had come into that world where people live with the recognition of tragedy, and so are often afraid of

happiness, for they know that one is never in so much danger as when victorious and/or happy—that is when the devils seem to have their hour, and hawks seize something living from the gambol on the field

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The reporter met Bobby Kennedy just once. It was on an afternoon in May in New York just after his victory in the Indiana primary and it had not been a famous meeting, even if it began well. The Senator came in from a conference (for the reporter was being granted an audience) and said quickly with a grin, "Mr. Mailer, you're a mean man with a word." He had answered, "On the contrary, Senator, I like to think of myself as a gracious writer."

"Oh," said Senator Kennedy, with a wave of his hand, "that too, that too!"

So it had begun well enough, and the reporter had been taken with Kennedy's appearance. He was slimmer even than one would have thought, not strong, not weak, somewhere between a blade of grass and a blade of steel, fine, finely drawn, finely honed, a fine flush of color in his cheeks, two very white front teeth, prominent as the two upper teeth of a rabbit, so his mouth had no hint of the cruelty or calculation of a politician who weighs counties, cities, and states, but was rather a mouth ready to nip at anything which attracted its contempt or endangered its ideas. Then there were his eyes. They were most unusual. His brother Teddy Kennedy spoke of those who "followed him, honored him, lived in his mild and magnificent eye," and that was fair description for he had very large blue eyes, the iris wide in diameter, near to twice the width of the average eye, and the blue was a milky blue like a marble so that his eyes, while prominent, did not show the separate steps and slopes of light some bright eyes show, but rather were gentle, indeed beautiful—one was tempted to speak of velvety eyes—their surface seemed made of velvet as if one could touch them, and the surface would not be repelled.

He was as attractive as a movie star. Not attractive like his brother had been, for Jack Kennedy had looked like the sort of vital leading man who would steal the girl from Ronald Reagan every time, no, Bobby Kennedy had looked more like a phenomenon of a movie star—he could have filled some magical empty space between Mickey

find in every dark little Mexican church. The horror of dried blood was now part of the air, and became part of the air of the funeral next day. That funeral was not nearly so beautiful; the poor people who had waited on line on Friday were now gone, and the mighty were in their place, the President and members of the Congress, and the Establishment, and the Secret Service, and the power of Wall Street; the inside of St. Patrick's for the length of the service was dank with the breath of the over-ambitious offering reverence—there is no gloom so deep unless it is the scent of the upholstery in a mortician's limousine, or the smell of morning in a closed Pullman after executives have talked through the night.

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The movie came to an end. Even dead, and on film, he was better and more moving than anything which had happened in their convention, and people were crying. An ovation began. Delegates came to their feet, and applauded an empty screen—it was as if the center of American life was now passing the age where it could still look forward; now people looked back into memory, into the past of the nation—was that possible? They applauded the presence of a memory. Bobby Kennedy had now become a beloved property of the party.

Minutes went by and the ovation continued. People stood on their chairs and clapped their hands. Cries broke out. Signs were lifted. Small hand-lettered signs which said, "Bobby, Be With Us," and one enormous sign eight feet high, sorrowful as rue in the throat—"Bobby, We Miss You," it said.

Now the ovation had gone on long enough—for certain people. So signals went back and forth between floor and podium and phone, and Carl Albert stepped forward and banged the gavel for the ovation to end, and asked for

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order. The party which had come together for five minutes, after five days and five months and five years of festering discord, was now immediately divided again. The New York and California delegations began to sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and the floor heard, and delegations everywhere began to sing, Humphrey delegations as quick as the rest. In every convention there is a steamroller, and a moment when the flattened exhale their steam, and "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!" was the cry of the oppressed at this convention, even those unwittingly oppressed in their mind, and not even knowing it in their heart until this instant, now they were defying the Chair, clapping their hands, singing, stamping their feet to mock the chairman's gavel.

Carl Albert brought up Dorothy Bush to read an appreciation the convention would offer for the work of certain delegates. The convention did not wish to hear. Mrs. Bush began to read in a thin mean voice, quivering with the hatreds of an occasion like this, and the crowd sang on, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, his truth goes marching on," and they stamped their feet and clapped their hands, and were loose finally and having their day as they sang the song which once, originally, had commemorated a man who preached civil disorder, then mutiny, and attacked a ~~man~~ in his madness and was executed, ~~John~~ ^{Fort} Brown was also being celebrated here, and the Texas and Illinois delegations were now silent, clapping no longer, sitting on their seats, looking bored. Every delegate on the floor who had hated the Kennedys was now looking bored, and the ones who had loved them were now noisier than ever. Once again the ~~party~~ ^{party} was polarized. Signs waved all over the floor, "Bobby, We'll Remember You," "Bobby, We'll Seek Your Newer World," and the ever-present, "Bobby, We Miss You." Yes they did, missed him as the loving spirit, the tender *germ* in the living plasma of the party. Nothing was going to make them stop: this offering of applause was more valuable to them than any nutrients to be found in the oratorical vitamin pills Hubert would yet be there to offer. The demonstration went on for twenty minutes and gave no sign of stopping at all. Dorothy Bush had long ago given up. Carl Albert, even smaller than Georgie Wallace, was now as furious as only a tiny man can be when his hard-earned authority has turned to wax—he glared across the

floor at the New York delegation like a little boy who smells something bad.

However did they stop the demonstration? Well, convention mechanics can be as perfect as the muscle in a good play when professionals have worked their football for a season. Mayor Daley, old lover of the Kennedys, and politically enough of an enigma six months ago for Bobby to have said in his bloodwise political wisdom, "Daley is the ballgame," Mayor Daley, still flirting with the Keenedys these last three days in his desire for Teddy as Vice President, now had come to the end of this political string, and like a good politician he pulled it. He gave the signal. The gallery began to chant, "We love Daley." All his goons and clerks and beef-eaters and healthy parochial school students began to yell and scream and clap, "We love Daley," and the power of their lungs, the power of the freshest and the largest force in this Amphitheatre soon drowned out the Kennedy demonstrators, stuffed their larynxes with larger sound. The Daley demonstration was bona fide too—his people had suffered with their Mayor, so they screamed for him now and clapped their hands, and Mayor Daley clapped his hands too for he also loved Mayor Daley. Simple narcissism gives the power of beasts to politicians, professional wrestlers and female movie stars.

At the height of the Daley demonstration, it was abruptly cut off. By a signal. "Shut your yaps" was an old button, no matter how the signal came. In the momentary silence, Carl Albert got his tongue in, and put Ralph Metcalfe (Daley's Black Man) who was up on the podium already, into voice on the mike, and Metcalfe announced a minute of silence for the memory of Martin Luther King. So New York and California were naturally obliged to be silent with the rest, the floor was silent, the gallery was silent, and before the minute was up, Carl Albert had slipped Dorothy Bush in again, and she was reading the appreciation of the convention for certain delegates. Business had been resumed. The last night proceeded.

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At length, the moment came for Humphrey's acceptance speech. Tonight, he looked good—which is to say he looked good for Humphrey. Indeed if a man could not look good on the night he accepted the nomination of his party for President, then his prospects of longevity must certainly be odd. Humphrey, of course, had been looking terrible for years. His defeat in West Virginia in 1960 by Jack Kennedy seemed to have done something of a permanent nature, perhaps had dissolved some last core of idealism—it was a cruel campaign: if one would dislike the Kennedys, West Virginia was the place to look. Since then, Humphrey had had a face which was as dependent upon cosmetics as the protagonist of a coffin. The results were about as dynamic. Make-up on Hubert's face somehow suggested that the flesh beneath was the color of putty—it gave him the shaky put-together look of a sales manager in a small corporation who takes a drink to get up in the morning, and another drink after he has made his intercom calls: the sort of man who is not proud of drinking; and so in the coffee break, he goes to the john and throws a sen-sen down his throat. All day he exudes odors all over; sen-sen, limewater, pomade, bay rum, deodorant, talcum, garlic, a whiff of the medicinal, the odor of Scotch on a nervous tum, rubbing alcohol! This resemblance Hubert had to a sales manager probably appeared most on those average days when he was making political commercials to be run as spots all over the land—in such hours he must have felt like a pure case of the hollows, a disease reserved usually for semi-retired leading men. They have been actors so long they must be filled with something—lines of a script, a surprise bouquet of attention, a recitation of Shakespeare, a bottle of booze, an interview. Something! Don't leave them alone. They're hollow. That was how Humphrey must have looked on average days, if his commercials were evidence.

Tonight, however, he was not hollow but full. He had a large audience, and his actor's gifts for believing a role. Tonight he was the bachelor uncle who would take over a family (left him by Great-Uncle Baines) and through kindness, simple courtesy, funds of true emotional compassion, and stimulating sternness upon occasion of the sort only a bachelor uncle could comprehend—. . . rioting, burning, sniping, mugging, traffic in narcotics, and disre-

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gard for law are the advance guard of anarchy, and they must and they will be stopped . . ." he would bring back that old-fashioned harmony to his ravaged folks. Since he was now up on the podium, the crowd was cheering, and the gallery on signal from Daley roared like a touchdown just scored. Hubert Humphrey was warm; he could believe in victory in the fall. He smiled and waved his hands and beamed, and the delegates, loosened by the film on Bobby Kennedy (their treachery spent in revolt against the Chair) demonstrated for Humphrey. The twenty years in Washington had become this night property to harvest; politicians who didn't even like him, could think fondly of Hubert at this instant, he was part of their memory of genteel glamour at Washington parties, part of the dividend of having done their exercise in politics with him for twenty years, for having talked to him ten times, shaken his hand forty, corresponded personally twice, got drunk with him once—small property glows in memory, our burning glass! These Humphrey politicians and delegates, two-thirds of all this convention, had lived their lives in the shadow of Washington's Establishment, that eminence of Perle Mesta parties and Democratic high science, they had lived with nibbles of society, and gossip about it, clumps of grass from Hubert's own grounds; but it was their life, or a big part of it, and it was leaving now—they all sensed that. The grand Establishment of the Democratic Party and its society life in Washington would soon be shattered—the world was shattering it. So they rose to cheer Humphrey. He was the end of the line, a sweet guy in personal relations so far as he was able—and besides the acceptance speech at a convention was pure rite. In such ceremonies you were required to feel love even if you didn't like him. Politicians, being property holders, could feel requisite emotions at proper ceremonies. Now they gave proper love to Humphrey, two-thirds of them did. They would only have to give it for an hour. Everybody knew he would lose. The poor abstract bugger.

He gave his speech out of that bolt of cloth he had been weaving for all his life, that springless rhetoric so suited to the organ pipes of his sweet voice, for it enabled him to hold any note on any word, and he could cut from the sorrows of a sigh to the injunctions of a wheeze. He was a holy Harry Truman. Let us not quote him except

where we must, for the ideas in his speech have already entered the boundless deep of yesterday's Fourth of July, and "... once again we give our testament to America ... each and every one of us in our own way should once again reaffirm to ourselves and our posterity that we love this nation, we love America!" If sentiment made the voter vote, and it did! and sentiment was a button one could still prick by a word, then Humphrey was still in property business because he had pushed "Testament" for button, "America" for button, "each and every one of us in our own way"—*in our own way*—what a sweet button is that! and "reaffirm"—pure compost for any man's rhetoric, "our posterity," speaks to old emotion from the land of the covered loins, "we love this nation"—pure constipation is now relieved—"we love America." The last was not exactly property but rather a reminder to pay the dues. Not every last bit of politics was property—some portion consisted of dunning the ghost-haunted property of others. Nobody had to tell HH. One could deduce the emotional holdings and debts of the most mediocre Americans by studying HH in the art of political speaking—he showed you how to catalogue your possessions: Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, winner! John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson—there were sudden boos. Lyndon Johnson, he repeated, and got the cheers from the medicine balls and gallery ding-dongs for Daley. "And tonight to you, Mr. President, I say thank you. Thank you, Mr. President." His presumption was that Lyndon Johnson was necessarily listening.

Humphrey went on to speak of the new day. That would be his real-estate development for the campaign—New Day Homes. The doors would stick, the dishwashers would break down, the vinyl floor would crack with the extra sand in the concrete foundation, but the signs might be all right.

Then he called for Peace in Vietnam, and the crowd roared and the band played *Dianas* as if he had made a glorious pass. Peace in Vietnam was now the property of all politicians; Peace in Vietnam was the girl who had gone to bed with a thousand different guys, but always took a bath, and so was virgin. Hubert felt like a virgin every time he talked of Peace in Vietnam. He spoke with the innocent satisfaction of a drop of oil sliding down a scallion.

Of course, Hubert was no vegetable. He was the drug-store liberal. You had better believe it. He knew who had

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asthma and who had crabs. It is important to locate him in the pharmacopoeia. Back of that drop of oil, he was an emollifacient, a fifty-gallon drum of lanolin—"We are and we must be one nation, united by liberty and justice for all, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. This is our America." He was like honey from which the sugar had been removed and the saccharine added, he was a bar of margarine the color of make-up. He had the voice of a weeper, a sob in every arch corner and cavern of his sweet, his oversweet heart; he was pious with a crooning invocation of all the property of sentiment, he was all the bad faith of twenty years of the Democratic Party's promises and gravy and evasion and empty hollers. He was the hog caller of the mountain and the pigs had put him in—he would promise pig pie in the sky. ". . . With the help of that vast, unfrightened, dedicated, faithful majority of Americans, I say to this great convention tonight, and to this great nation of ours, I am ready to lead our country!" And he ended, and the rite of love went up to its conclusion, and the band played, and the simple common people, and the villainous faces, and the whores with beehive head-dresses in on passes, and the boys and the Southern pols stomped around and were happy, because their man was in, which meant they had won this game, this game, anyway, and happiness consisted of thinking of no future. And Hubert looked shining up on the stage, and made jokes with photographers, and jumped in the air to be tall as Edmund Muskie for one still shot—Humphrey would be a sport at a party—and McGovern came up to the podium and Hubert took him in, and his eyes were bright with light and love and tears. It is not every man who can run for President after four long years as towel boy in Unca Baines' old haw-house with Madame Rusk. He turned to greet others, and from the back had the look of a squat little Mafioso of middle rank, a guy who might run a bookie shop and be scared of many things, but big with his barber, and the manicurist would have Miami hots for him. Let us give the day to Hubert. He had always seen himself as such a long shot and out.