

St George and the Calabrian

24

NEWSPAPER-CLIPPING

Michigan
The Guardian

The Conventions 1972

...as a thing but its ongoing movement against the fact
of its nature—one and heard with voices on Milwaukee
workers, and its unions and businessmen and YMCA and
religion, its members, and this whole subscription, and on
the forty-faced like who had always been the nice boy
next door, it was the real self-organizing Apple of a life
devoted to reason, external to itself and to the shore of not
of Christ's love. No, it was not a voice to find easily
acceptable, for it spoke of Methodist beds of Procurement
where good words and had were bent easily into the right
and straight, of a bare, artless, and programmed life.
Small wonder that it his boyhood seeking out to see a
man was motivated by love to an example of forbidden
fruit, yet his voice gave much pleasure because it revealed
so little of the man. And yet McGovern also seemed some-
how reminiscent of an Alchemist. It was in that sense he
gave all of Christ's suffering, of total abandonment of
strength, of loneliness and endless mystery, of the deepest
loyalty to bear inheritance of his words and all of that
great attractive, imperious, professional gentleness,
words of reserve, that subtle charisma so unlike the live
heart of conventional glamour, rather an incorporeal
Roman of charisma, which could be a halo in talking of a
mist, but was intimate in McGovern's and one became

1972

15-98
St George and the Cal Father

24

NORMAN MAILER

~~cannot change the score of a game which is already played."~~
~~It was the agreeable logic of the playing fields of Mitchell,~~
~~South Dakota. "Are your agents," asked a reporter, "mak-~~
~~ing any headway on the California question with Senator~~
~~Muskie's people?" With a smile McGovern said, "Not to~~
~~my knowledge."~~

"Have you had any conversations with Senator Muskie?"

"I talked to him about this matter."

"What did you say?"

Very drily. "I asked him to meditate upon it."

He did not suffuse his ~~start~~ that fog of imprecision by
which other politicians would bury, trap, suffocate, or slip
a question, he had hardly the air of a politician, indeed he
more like a teacher dealing with a matter common to

~~him and his students.~~ It was still not easy to know
what one thought of him. If the force of his psyche was
with you in the room like a fine silver blade, strong as steel,
yet there was also that damnable gentle singsong prairie
voice, that tight voice of a thousand restraints which sings
of not a thing but its singsong resentment against the fact
of its restraint—one had heard such voices on Midwestern
bankers, and on athletes and bureaucrats and YMCA sec-
retaries, on ministers, and kids selling subscriptions, and on
the baby-faced killer who had always been the nice boy
next door, it was the mild self-negating ripple of a life de-
voted to causes external to oneself and to the show of acts
of Christian love. No, it was not a voice to find easily
agreeable, for it spoke of Methodist beds of Procrustes
where good souls and bad were bent equally into the rigor
and rectitude of a bare, arduous, and programmed life.
Small wonder that in his boyhood sneaking out to see a
movie was mentioned by him as an example of forbidden
fruit, yes, his voice gave small pleasure because it revealed
so little of the man. And yet McGovern also seemed some-
how reminiscent of an astronaut. It was in that sense he
gave off of Christian endeavor, of total commitment of
strength, of loneliness and endless stamina, of the tireless
ability to bear interruption of his mood, and all of that
same astronaut impersonality, professional gentleness,
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hearth of conventional glamour, rather an incorruptible
filament of charisma, which could be a halo if talking of a
saint, but was invisible in McGovern until one became

Miami-

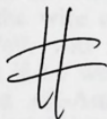
McGovern

McGovern

aware of it. For this charisma was not of personality but of purpose. It spoke of a bravery next to weightless—of course! That sense of a fine blade, stern and silver, was exactly what one felt when meeting certain astronauts. There too was the same sense of a psyche ^{fact} which had traveled already to a space beyond. "It would be nice, I suppose, to have a few more exciting personal qualities," McGovern had once said—it was a remark in the syntax of Neil Armstrong.

It gave focus, then, to think of McGovern this way. Indeed the image grew more comfortable as one wore it along, for McGovern had been a good pilot with a Distinguished Flying Cross for thirty-five bombing missions over Europe, and had, according to his biographer, Robert Sam Anson, the reputation of coming back to base "with more gas in his tank than 99 percent of the other pilots," which would be characteristic of spacemen who were noted for their passion to conserve fuel.

Seeing John Glenn at a party, his first reaction to the observation was "George? I don't think of him as an astronaut." Then Glenn hesitated. "I suppose the one quality in an astronaut more powerful than any other is curiosity. They have to get some place nobody's ever been before." So the question remained alive. "Yes," said Glenn. "It's possible George has that kind of curiosity."



1600
pp 49-50

Miami-2
Gene McCarthy

~~Miami-1972~~
1972, Miami
~~Have, from Miami on July 12, 1977, Agnes~~
~~decide to interview Gene McCarthy, who is a~~

(Start)

~~Humphrey's withdrawal spurs him to interview Gene~~
~~McCarthy. For once, there is no Secret Service about. In~~
~~fact, there is no office, just a suite of three or four rooms,~~
~~and in one of them a few people are gathered. They have~~
~~faces which, if studied, might give insight into the nature~~
~~of the loyal—it is as if they are the last handful of the~~
~~millions who once were followers of McCarthy, decent~~
~~faces with an inbite of the appetite as if they can put up~~
~~with political penury for years. But McCarthy is looking~~
~~splendid. He has never appeared more handsome, more~~
~~distinguished, and more a philosopher prince—he is prob-~~
~~ably the most impressive-looking Democrat in Miami~~
~~Beach. And he takes pleasure in teasing one of his total~~
~~of four delegates who is a good young woman from Chicago~~
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~~details of being completely out of fashion seem to interest~~
~~him as much as the details of power.~~

Humphrey's withdrawal spurs him to interview Gene McCarthy. For once, there is no Secret Service about. In fact, there is no office, just a suite of three or four rooms, and in one of them a few people are gathered. They have faces which, if studied, might give insight into the nature of the loyal—it is as if they are the last handful of the millions who once were followers of McCarthy, decent faces with an inbite of the appetite as if they can put up with political penury for years. But McCarthy is looking splendid. He has never appeared more handsome, more distinguished, and more a philosopher prince—he is probably the most impressive-looking Democrat in Miami Beach. And he takes pleasure in teasing one of his total of four delegates who is a good young woman from Chicago but aware to a fault of her own lacks. "Oh, my God," she says, "I'm just the wife of a butcher. I can't put you in nomination." "Well, you may have to," he says with as much pleasure as if he were President of Notre Dame and had just told an All-American he will have to read the works of Immanuel Kant before trying to go on to the priesthood. "Yes, we're talking of nominating me," he says with a smile. "It seems as if that's the only way we can keep our floor passes and gallery seats," and the petty details of being completely out of fashion seem to interest him as much as the details of power.

Interviewing him alone, his wit flows so naturally through each topic that it is like trying to keep track of the light on water—it is easy to see one reason the Press never adored him is that he is not easy to quote. His phrases engage in extended relations with one another across long interesting sentences full of suspension: part

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of what they used to call his arrogance is his love of the English language—it is possible he has come to dislike politics because its tendency is to debase language, and its necessity all too often is to amputate the limbs of a thought. There is his famous remark about liberal criticism of his indifference to carrying on the fight, "They want me not only to bare my breast but go in for indecent exposure," and he recalls how McGovern accused him in the Wisconsin primary of giving up in the summer of '68. "But that isn't true," McCarthy says. "It was just," and his voice is very quiet with the memory of the frustration, "that we couldn't get anywhere. All the sources of power we needed were closed, the trade unions"—he is about to mention the Kennedy forces who gave him nothing after Bobby's assassination—"it's all very well to talk of carrying on the fight, but that didn't give us anything to fight with." And there is a hint of sadness when he speaks of how he came to run again, "I suppose I believed the loyalty I could arouse would be greater."

A hint of the elegiac arises as Aquarius confesses his wish that it was McCarthy who would be nominated tonight. "I like McGovern," Aquarius says, "but I just wish he spoke with a little metaphor from time to time."

"Methodists are not much on metaphor," says McCarthy.

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On Monday at the Carillon, there had been a Women's Caucus, and behind the speaker's podium a large hand-lettered banner declaring WOMEN POWER was attached to the curtain. Viewed from his angle off to the side, he first read it as OMEN POWER, a tribute to witchcraft in the new political cosmos.

When McGovern addressed OMEN POWER, an incident occurred. The speaker who introduced him said that one reason they were able to attend the convention in large numbers was because of McGovern's efforts to open the party to women.

McGovern rose, and said with modest humor, "The credit for that must go to Adam."

He was booed. "Should I have said Adam and Eve?" asked McGovern. But the laughter was tight-lipped. A humorless friction was in the air. Hisses continued. This cold reception was due warning. Not since militant Blacks arrived on the American scene, had a political group appeared who were as threatening. But there had been a legitimacy to the ugliest Black demands, obviously still was—every injustice against a black man poisoned the root of America's existence. Whereas every injustice against a lady in Women's Liberation gave every promise of poisoning her husband's existence. But just this was the intolerable disproportion of Women's Liberation—they pretended to be suffering as profound as the Blacks, when their anguish came out of nothing more intolerable than the intolerable pointlessness of middle-class life. (Which of course was intolerable for the men.) So Women's Liberation might be a totalitarian movement, yes, ~~but not a~~ ~~totalitarian~~. It appeared to speak for a volcano of rage.

mate furies but its rage was more likely to derive from boundless seas of monotony, and so a species of schizophrenia resided in some of the chillier demands. Ms. for example, spoke of the totalitarian passion for spoiling the language. Mr. at least stood for Mister. But how did one pronounce Ms.? Was it Miz or 'ims? Wherever it could create a mood, language gave life to the human condition. Mood was a bed of rest for the nerves. Totalitarian was the need to inject non-words into the language, slivers of verbal plastic to smash the mood. If Aquarius had a simple idea, it was that language had been a creation of the female first forged from the sounds of communication between herself and her young. But it was a natural mark of the Twentieth Century (perverse to the core of its historical knots) to use the representative of each human promise to defeat that promise. So any dependence of ecology upon the resonance of mood would now be shattered and

¶ No surprise, then, if they booed McGovern for giving the credit to Eve. She was a comic book creation of the male chauvinist pig Jehovah; Eve was acquiescent nature with tits to pop for *Playboy*, and a sea-smelling cunt. Whereas the pride of Women's Liberation was that cunts had the right to smell as bad as any man's half-dead cigar. There was the total Twentieth-Century proposition! Of course, Aquarius' real opinion was that at the bottom of Women's Liberation was all the explosive of alienated will, a will now so detached from any of the old female functions, and hence so autocratic that insanity, cancer, or suicidal collapse might have to be the penalty if the will did not acquire huge social power. Totalitarian power. What a fund of scientific jargon was their ideology. They spoke of the nonexistence of the vaginal orgasm (which was a way of certifying that they had never had one) since it was indeed most likely that the vaginal orgasm involved some temporary surrender of the will to something else, whether man, god, nature or some portion of the cosmos termed "It," but the vaginal orgasm was surrendered ~~just as much as the full orgasm of the man was the giving over of his will to something other in himself or in his woman or in the collective vision of his time.~~ So the best operative definition of a female in Women's Liberation might be that she had so little notion of vaginal orgasm

she was convinced it did not exist and thereby was fortified in her contention that the clitoris was the last station on the line. But the liberator was wrong. Suicide was the terminal station. For people of outrageous and buried will, the failure to attain power is suicide. The liberator is first a woman of murderous will, but then many a suicide is an absolute murderer who is finally reduced to the absolute humiliation of killing himself.

Now, if this was his own prejudice (all because the women booed McGovern for invoking Eve), still one had to recognize that the best was usually bent like a line to the worst. So Aquarius had to contend more than once with a recurring recognition that Women's Liberation had given birth to some revolutionary ideas which he had to respect: the first was their view on abortion. If he had supported the legal right to abortion for as long as he could remember, even took an unadmitted intellectual pleasure in the way the problem buttressed his political philosophy as a left conservative, it was because he found himself in favor of abortion but opposed to contraception; even, by his logic, more opposed to the pill than the pharmacological reek of the diaphragm. The latter offered, at least, a choice each night, whereas the pill removed the dignity of such choice, and so invaded the undeclared rights of the fuck whose romantic imperative is to prevail—against all odds! Something had to be lost when there was no last possibility for lovers to declare, "This fuck ~~must be~~ apocalyptic—why else reach in, remove the plug, and try to have a child?" Yes, upon such remote and unendurably sentimental possibilities did any larger dignity of a fuck depend, for the act of love which discharged into chemical fences of the pill bore the same relation to capital punishment as the old California gas chamber, whereas the apocalyptic fuck owed a little at least to the early Christian who survived the lions.

Of course, abortion, in its turn, was a classical cure against excesses of the romantic spirit. Embryos extinguished by abortion were more likely to be the product of extraordinary fucks than the legal infant who saw the first light in a hospital—all too often embryos who were to be aborted had been conceived in the first place by too many good things happening not to conceive them. Since it is hard to imagine an optimistic view of human nature

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which would not assume that those who are born out of apocalyptic fucks are more likely to be rich in potential than those conceived from a dribble, abortion is tragic. (In clear opposition, it is exactly the logical premise of the technological society that artificial insemination is the perfect equal of any great fuck, so much so that readers can recognize themselves as advocates of a technological society if they believe such a proposition.)

Seen by this perspective, there was the real possibility then that abortion killed off more than an average proportion of superb babies: if so, advocates of the Right To Live had a powerful argument. Aquarius, nonetheless, would remain in favor of abortion; he thought the argument had only been raised to a higher level. For if at its most tragic, abortion is the decision to kill the memory of an extraordinary night, and so can be cruel and unendurable, close on occasion to creating insanity in the woman, still abortion is the objective correlative of sanity. Even in the abysmal condition of much love lost, it always speaks, it says: "My nature is divided between the maximum of my romantic moments and the minimum of my daily self-calculation, too divided to permit this child to live. Finally I prefer to be loyal to my working habits rather than to the recollection of magic." Abortion is therefore an act of self-recognition (which is a step to sanity) even as the decision not to have an abortion is another kind of sanity which states, "I am committed to the best moments I have known and take my truth from that." (Which is why the pill like all other technological concepts is an insulation against sanity for it inhibits the possibility of those confrontations which might reveal a woman to herself.)

The real argument to be presented then to advocates of the Right To Live is that if a woman had the ability to begin an extraordinary conception, she had also the right to terminate it. Who could be certain that a more virulent pollution was not given to existence every time a child was born with remarkable potential and failed to fulfill it than when a soul of such potential was murdered in the womb? Nobody had a deeper sense of what could be provided for a future child than the woman who carried it. If she knew she was not ready to devote herself to such a creation, then why not assume she was in her right to deny the life? For who could ever calculate the violation

by left on life ~~for the extinction of karma, which resided in~~
 the loveless development of souls who had been conceived
 in love? So he thought abortion of even the most apoca-
 lyptic fuck was still the measure of a woman's right. There-
 fore, when it came to the question of abortion for con-
 ceptions which had never been wanted (creations emerging
 out of such resolute mediocrity of impulse as to shatter
 every romantic idea that conception was a serious product
 of human state), well then Aquarius could find no argument
 against abortion at all, not when the world was in danger
 of being overpopulated with a new wad who ~~promised~~
 to be as uninteresting as the mass architecture ~~which~~ would
 house them, no, better to let abortion have its legal status
 and become still another social hypocrisy that it was not
 murder even if, indeed, it was.

The women of the liberation had come up, however,
 with an idea which went further than his own, and he
 admired it. Abortion legislation would of course be equal
 to giving women a new right to control what went on within
 their bodies. The extension of that principle was wondrous!
 It might give patients the right to die in peace when
 doctors were determined to extend, stupefy and therefore
 shift their last meditations before death. It might even open
 the idea that soldiers had first rights over their own bodies
 and need not go out on patrol if in their opinion there
 was an unreasonable or foolish chance that they might die.
 That was equivalent to saying soldiers could demand the
 right to military actions in which their death would not be
 in vain, an altogether stimulating idea, for in nations of one
 hundred million men would there then be ten thousand
 willing to die in an army? What a fine inhibition upon the
 power of mammoth countries to wage mammoth war if this
 became a principle of the world, which of course it would
 (just so soon as the Age of Aquarius arrived).

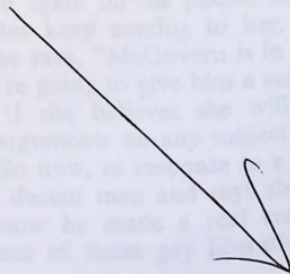
So one did not quit the thought in a hurry.

Still, this was no Age of Aquarius, but the summer of
 1972, and the McGovern forces, thinking of the cholera
 priapism of the wad forced to contemplate all those vaginas
 open to abortion, had an understandable caution before the
 language of the plank. Mild almost to the point of being
 inoffensive—"In matters relating to human reproduction
 each person's right to privacy, freedom of choice, and indi-
 vidual conscience should be fully respected, consistent with

relevant Supreme Court decisions," the plank would still suggest that the right to abortion was part of a proper election campaign. So McGovern's platform man, Ted van Dyk, sent out word to McGovern delegates that if they felt "strongly," they "should feel free to vote accordingly." ~~The vote for the platform change on abortion would be free. Of course, not entirely.~~ There were 250 whips on the floor for McGovern, each with a half-dozen delegates to contact, and some of the whips were employed to discover those delegates who would switch their vote "in an emergency" or abstain. Something like an emergency may have developed, for Rick Stearns was reported later to say, "If we hadn't sent out our word, the abortion plank would have passed." It failed by a vote of 1,569.80 to 1,103.37, and so a switch of 250 votes, or less than one McGovern delegate in six, would have been enough to pass it. The women were furious. ~~First South Carolina, now abortion.~~ Of course, there is always the parochial masochism of politics which is ready to welcome betrayal for the pleasure of the bitterness it provides. Some people are in politics to find a focus for all their latent bile, and nothing generates bile like betrayal. So the women were acting like women—in a fight with the husband: they were now superior to male arguments of priority and proportion. McGovern would be nominated the next day—they were not so furious as to interfere with that—but in the weeks to come when the Eagleton affair would weigh down an election special which was perhaps doomed never to ride and hardly to fly, Aquarius would think more than once of the unvoiced curses of OMEN POWER.

(which was a way of saying that they could vote against WOMEN POWER)

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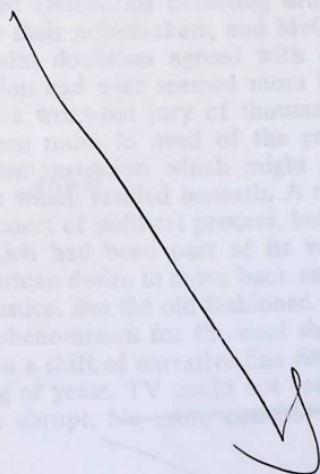
1608

Miami 4
A Liberated
~~13~~ Woman

Wednesday, he gets to see Shirley Chisholm. She has doubled the glory of her campaign overnight by telling the Black Caucus, "I'm the only one among you who has the balls to run for President," her barb so perfectly splitting the shaft of the last arrow she has fired into their ranks (by accusing some of the delegates of being bought) that the Black Caucus gives her a standing ovation. Now in her room on the twentieth floor of the Deauville (which is guarded by a young woman in the Secret Service, blond and attractive) Shirley, who weighs 98 pounds, is ordering a meal, soup and meat and spaghetti and a Key lime pie (~~gift of Rocky Pomerance~~) for dessert. It is enough to put weight on a 200-pound man. "Oh, I burn it all off," she says. And she would. She moves as quickly as a sparrow when she speaks and her arguments pile out nonstop—she is as related to politics as the air is to the wind, and she is soaring on a zephyr now: after coming to the convention with 25.4 delegates, no more, it is obvious she is going to gain ground. And each time Mr. Chisholm, a man whose features and build are as round and reserved and benign as Shirley's are pert and to the point, comes into the room, it is to tell her she is wanted again on the phone. Shirley is having dreams as delegates keep coming to her. It is Wednesday afternoon and she says, "McGovern is in more trouble than he realizes. We're going to give him a surprise tonight," but it is not as if she believes she will stop McGovern, more as if her arguments on any subject must come from a positive base. So now, in response to a question, she calls McGovern a decent man and says she will work for him, "but you know he made a real error in underestimating the innocence of those gay liberationists."

He should have told them he would let them down." She nods her head. "He just assumed they'd understand he was running for President and couldn't afford them. But they're new to politics. Now, they're mad, and they're all flocking to me." A white delegate obviously gives her just as much joy as a black delegate. "You see, I was salty with them from the start, so they trust me now. I started talking to them about bank presidents who are homo and hide it, and I said, 'Don't pretend you speak for your whole group, or that homosexuals are some kind of an elite. Half your people aren't with you, don't even want to be identified as part of your constituency.' I let them have it straight and they like it. Same with the black delegates when I lay it on them. I don't mind getting their vote bought. They're poor people, and poor people always need the money. I just say to them, 'Take the money and run—don't let them fool you. Use them, don't let them use you,' " and when the interview is up, a film crew is moving in, and she is finishing her meal and getting ready to meet some more delegates. In her office, Helen Butler her secretary has put up a sign which is perhaps designed more for the white girls than the black—"We left our maid in Washington, so everybody has to clean up."

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Miami 5

McGovern's Troops

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We can pass easily over Wednesday night when McGovern was nominated. Senator Ribicoff who put him up in Chicago four years ago was here to do it again, but the occasion was quieter. No need on this night for Ribicoff to speak of "gestapo tactics on the streets of Chicago," nor was Mayor Daley there to shout "Fuck you" across the floor. The demonstration while vigorous was brief, it had been coordinated to be brief—something like a total of half an hour for nominating speech, seconding speeches, and demonstration was allotted to each candidate, and Jackson, Chisholm, Wallace, Terry Sanford of North Carolina, McGovern and Mills had all to be nominated. So the demonstrations were cut. It was a bow to the Media; for years the newspapers and TV had been mocking the sight of red-faced heavy-paunched Democrats cavorting drunkenly in the aisles as they blew their noisemakers, and McGovern with his taste for restraint doubtless agreed with such a verdict. But no convention had ever seemed more like an endless litigation before a worn-out jury of thousands, no convention had ever been more in need of the primeval hysteria of an all-out demonstration which might remind the delegates of the fires which resided beneath. A convention had always been a court of political process, but it had also been a circus—which had been part of its value—a fair measure of the American desire to move back and forth between vulgarity and justice. But the old-fashioned demonstration was too hot a phenomenon for the cool shades of TV. That depended upon a shift of narrative line ~~as~~ as carefully as the rising of yeast. TV could not bear shifts in tone which were too abrupt. No more could it tolerate

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shifts

tolerate

a series of images which progressed to no development besides a screaming caterwauling demonstration for the candidate ruined any illusion that the event had entered the living room of the viewer; demonstrations obviously took place in somebody else's house and you were alone with the set. Media executives didn't work at giving a careful wipe to the bottom of every last viewer in TV land in order to remind them that watching TV was an essentially ~~anti-family act~~. So there was no brassy, wild, nor over-extended demonstration. A pity. Who knows how many points the Democrats dropped to the wad by offering no circus?

Later, there was a victory party at the Doral where McGovern kids wandered happily about. The final count had been 1,864.95 for McGovern, and Frank Mankiewicz smiled happily on TV when he mentioned the sum, for it was possible he came as close as anyone at the convention to knowing how each vote was gotten. For the rest, Wallace had received 377.5, Jackson—in a fever of activity once Humphrey and Muskie dropped out—had 486.68, Chisholm 101.45, Sanford 74.5, Mills 32.8, and other votes were scattered for names not placed in nomination: McCarthy, Muskie, Humphrey, Kennedy, Hayes and Mondale. There was no move to make the nomination unanimous. Indeed it would have failed. And the streets were quiet on the way back. The helicopters had gone home, ~~as well as the demonstrators on the street~~. Gone were the Jesus freaks with their broken teeth, a lightning zigzag of sharp and broken teeth and lightning in their eye, but then they looked like an improbable mix of rednecks and Zippies. They sang out to every delegate "You're here to raise hell, I'm here to raise heaven." They sang on street corners. "Who does Wallace need? Jesus," they replied. "J.E.S.U.S." "Who does Humphrey need? Jesus," they replied and went by rote through each of the candidates. "What do the Democrats need? Jesus," they sang. "What do the Republicans need? Jesus! J.E.S.U.S. Go, go, go," they cheered, and cops waiting through the quiet hours while the convention inched its way into history were playing card games for small stakes on the grass behind the wire fence in the cool of a banyan tree. A kid in a denim jacket carried an anti-McGovern placard. Earlier that day a ~~crowd of people~~ ~~had gathered~~

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invaded the lobby of the Doral to protest a remark McGovern had made the night before that he planned to keep "military capability—in Thailand and on the seas," and the candidate had taken the dangerous step of coming to the lobby to talk to them and say, "I'm not shifting my position on any of the fundamental stands I've taken in this campaign." Maybe the placard had been painted earlier and now wobbled in the languid midnight air as a remnant of the afternoon action: "McGovern sucks." A black man in a dark suit carried the morose sign "Don't Vote 172."

Back at the Doral, however, was every incongruous mix of the McGovern kids, all there, Phi Beta Kappas with clean faces and clean horn-rimmed glasses, their presence to offer clear statement of a physiology which had little taste for liquor and much taste for good marks, as well as a horde of suburban youth with long hair and the sense of boredom of waiting on still another evening for some tribal Left wind to touch the hair of their nostrils. Out on the driveway of the Doral were kids wearing no more than white canvas shorts and copper bracelets on their biceps, their bare feet padding the asphalt to a beat which came to them out of Ravi Shankar by way of stereos in Scarsdale, and the mystery of America floated up upon Aquarius still once again. For the social phenomena of the country were as clear as the expressions on groups of faces, yet never a period of four years elapsed in which you saw the same expressions again, America kept shifting, growing more wild even as it grew programmed, more unbalanced as it became stable, the blood of the heart beating with thoughts of the frontier even as the suburbs choked the ponds and killed the trout, and now this latest phenomenon of the technological young and the drug-steeped young both out equally for McGovern, man of principle, clear-headed and altogether separate in mind and style from any vocation for drugs. It was enough to begin to brood on the nature of those reforms the Democrats had put into their party, new pockets for an old suit, but the pockets had become the cloth of the suit, and the young were wearing it. There was humor at the thought of those party bosses who had first agreed to cut the pockets in the comfortable cynicism that it would be an easy way to store the demands of minorities in the party, a sophisticated species of tokenism who

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losses could be absorbed by the old pols in state-house committees. After the debacle of Chicago, it was also seen as a way of putting the party together. No old pol had seen reform as the instrument which would yet take his power away, nobody had been prepared for the possibility of a man laboring for years to set up a code of rules which would work to the benefit of his own candidacy. Nor had any old pol come close to the real meaning of the radicalization of the suburban middle classes (who were finally the parents of these children at the Doral). The country club gentry of ten thousand suburbs (cognoscenti of the golf course, the paddock and the beauties of the jury-rigged spinnaker—Republican, of course, to the bone) had been replaced, or was it swarmed over by millions of families newly prosperous, newly endowed with educations, specializations and professions, and absolutely alienated—or by their own view blissfully delivered—from the old inch-along eat-your-gut game of social advancement in country living under the inspection of one's betters. There were simply not enough betters left to go around. Nor was there anything left to respect. The war in Vietnam had done much to take away one's faith that lawn tennis, proper posting, and a nose for the shift of wind had any value in the training of leaders when the most powerful nation in the history of the world had squandered its moral substance in a war of massive bombardments, near to meaningless, a wholly cancerous war of the technological age. (Of course it is possible that the cancer cell, if possessed of a voice, would argue that it is trying to redesign a way out of the insoluble contradictions of the body.) But then if the Devil was devoted to destroying all belief in conservative values among the intelligent and prosperous, he could not have picked a finer instrument to his purpose than the war in Vietnam. If one continued to ask why America still remained in Vietnam, the final remark History might make was what exceptional power could be possessed by such a small Far Eastern land that it might preside over the slaughter of America's belief in itself, preside over it indeed to such a degree that our climate was finally prepared for peace with China and Russia, an event equal to admitting that America no longer saw itself as a hero facing two villains on a field of Colossi, but rather was ready

to look upon itself as still one more corrupt and tarnished protagonist now as much in need of coexistence as any of the new found friends. Small surprise if the newly prosperous liberals of the suburb welcomed the idea that all principles of the Establishment—God, nation, family, marriage, patriotism, and the distinction of the sexes—were wrong or nonexistent: the social contract, far from being a mystical union between God and man, was a pottage of curds whose lumps were best dissolved by disbelief. Liberal with their money, and liberal to every idea which was anathema to the Establishment (women's liberation, welfare rights, minority rights, tax reform) ~~(it was their pride, their delight, and their levitation from guilt that McGovern's tax reform would hit them hardest)~~, they were also devoted to every right and liberty which would make humans more equal in soul and body. Of course, the center of their aesthetic was the androgynous. A wonder that McGovern was their candidate! But a small wonder so soon as the law of political sex appeal is invoked, for if there was a man in America who was more of a Wasp than Richard Nixon did it not have to be George McGovern? A joy then that the minister was ready to join the swingers! And pick up the children of suburbia as well, those children who lived in a far advancement of the ideological confidence of their parents, for the children were rid completely of the idea that one's personal development might still be measured by the ways one could perform in relation to some code handed over by the cultural lights and sneaky vested needs of the prosperous community, no, one was a child of light, and the enlightenment was new—the sanction to act came from within the body. Did streamings of energy from the body reach out to that horizon where one could join the world stream of new consciousness stirring?—then one was part of a new historical process ~~which no one could comprehend whose body was not part of the stream~~. If drugs were the inner circle of the new world family and acid rock, the second circle, sex the third, well politics, was always on the outside circle of them all, ~~a condition of valence, loose electrons which could be picked up or shed at amazing speed~~. So the suburban young ~~would plunge into politics until the disillusionment of events would strip all outside electrons~~. Then they wandered, inert, ~~practical~~.

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~~through fluids of consciousness, waiting for the hypo-~~
~~dermies of social action to inject a few electrons they could~~
~~spend again. Be certain they~~ were a curious force for old
pols to comprehend! One could never know in which
given season they would exhibit the dedication of the
damned or seal themselves back to apathy again—~~although~~
~~rare was the spring of a year for presidential election which~~
~~would not act as catalyst.~~

This year the suburban young had come out for McGovern, come out in all the muted arrogance of their world confidence that there on the other side of the world, unknown faces were closer to them than the compromised tissues of squalor in the faces of the old pols. And if with their much discussed tribal sense, they made a good army of volunteers, it was not surprising. Their egos were tribal. So their narcissism was for the group—therefore they could for a period immerse themselves in the absolute lack of vanity which routine political work will demand. And were joined to a cadre of hard workers on the left of the Democratic party, a corps of schoolteachers and hard-working professionals, who together with the socially-minded, the community-minded, and the decent-minded, outraged by Vietnam, helped McGovern to do well in the early primaries. After them came the money, the glory, the political technology, and the winning of the nomination at last. Now kids with long sunburned hair and bronzed bodies, wearing copper bangles and spaced-out heavy eyes, sat nodding on the steps of the Doral, kin across all the stages from Flamingo Park to the delegates to the hard-working Phi Beta cadres, holding in common a species of belief in the man, McGovern, even if they could hardly comprehend the gulf between the mindlessness of the Mind which might have brought them here, and the outraged motors overhead of helicopters looking for some wildman or freak or assassin upon whom the helicopter could charge with a beating of blades and a reduction of pressure in the great gorged military-American industrial choleric and McGovern-suffocated great American hard-fucking motor-heart. Around the pool forty or fifty kids were sitting quietly on benches, only two were in the water, and off to the side a boy was playing a violin. Where was the bourbon and broads of yesteryear? Yes, every sense of power in the Democratic

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NORMAN MAILER

party had shifted. History had become a crystal ball whose image shivered so erratically one had to wonder if a TV set was transmitting the image or the underworld of crystal balls was in convulsion.

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Having come down now to the last minutes of the convention week with the speeches done, and the hall closed, the convention's miles finally empty as if the words of the chairman asking the delegates had been to clear the floor had finally taken phony effect, having someone down Collins Avenue in the early morning for the last time, and having come to the last hour before dawn in the morning of the Dorr where borders of the young, half-dressed in the beds of a late Southern night again gave an exotic sense of merray while they lounged on the steps of the hotel (and one were transported beyond identity to some future where Americans to come would sit half-naked in Lotus position before the gates of the American palace), and having attended the electric and the lights and the music in the garden of the Dorr where McGovern was sleeping the congratulations of some of the people of means who had hoped to become the convention. Aquarius was able to take up position at last before the morning and live in the darkness for lack of it, his presence might convey. If there was all the wealth of a quiet and winning mood, and the sense of a vast celebration as McGovern shared for a few words with him a friend and then a spouse, his tall body planted on legs which must have felt the power of sinners after these two long years of out-purging, and these years days of healing and refusing to deal in Miami, the wealth of judges which came off McGovern now was happy and compassionate as the last one-colored vision of evening before the night was in, and it occurred to Aquarius that if he had stood next to Mary

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~~File~~
~~the party after the Baum has~~
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St. George

Having come down now to the final minutes of the convention week with the speeches done, and the huge hall closed, the convention's aisles finally empty as if the echo of the chairman asking the delegates and Press to clear the floor had finally taken ghostly effect, having returned down Collins Avenue in the early morning for the last time, and having come in the final hour before dawn to the entrance of the Doral where hordes of the young, half-dressed in the heats of a late Southern night again gave an exotic sense of disarray while they lounged on the steps of the hotel (as if one were transported beyond Bombay to some future where Americans to come would sit half-naked in Lotus position before the gates of the American palaces), and having ascended the elevator ~~and been brought and issued by the good will of Shirley MacLaine into the room of~~ a private party in some roof garden of the Doral where McGovern was accepting the congratulations of some of the people of means who had helped to finance his campaign, Aquarius was able to take up position at last before the nominee and live in the charisma (or lack of it) his presence might convey. If there was all the warmth of a quiet and winning mood, and the sense of a vast relaxation as McGovern chatted for a few words with first a friend and then a sponsor, his tall body planted on legs which must have felt like posts of concrete after these two long years of campaigning, and these tense days of dealing and refusing to deal in Miami, the wealth of fatigue which came off McGovern now was happy and compassionate as the last rose-colored velvets of evening before the night was in, and it occurred to Aquarius that if he had stood next to many

politicians over the years, he had not ever before had such a splendid sense that he was standing near a man who had a heart which could conceivably be full of love—something awfully nice came off McGovern—and that was an extraordinary gift for a politician to give. It clearly returned Aquarius to the events of the convention and restored a knowledge of why these days had been so agreeable and so boring, and why the faces of the delegates massed in ranks on the floor had been like no faces any political observer had ever seen before, not in a convention hall, for they were in majority the faces of men and women who had come to have a good and serious time, like the faces of a crowd who have gone to the most important basketball game of the year in their home state, and so felt honored to have the ticket of admission, and happy, and there to squeeze the goodness in their will and determination out across the air and into the bodies of their players—a sense of *innocence* lived in more than half these faces as if they had yet to learn of the deaths within compromise and calculation. One had to be partial to a man whose delegates had the fair and average and open faces of an army of citizenry, as opposed to an army of the pols, and Aquarius knew then why the convention was obliged to be boring. There was insufficient evil in the room. With all the evil he had seen, all the lies and deals and evasions and cracks of the open door, with the betrayals of planks and the voids of promises, still there had been so little of real evil in the room.

So one could know none of the fascination one found at other conventions, when a walk on the floor was a promenade through vales of malignity or a passage through corridors of vested bile, and a study of faces was equal to a study of American corporations and crime. There, in those old conventions, the posture of political fixes came out in the set of the hips when a deal was in, and the skill with which it was once possible to read the moves of a convention (because the faces of the leaders and the gargoyle heads of the minions had been as dead and carved and fixed and ornamented forever as the pieces in a set of chess), such skill was lost. There was now no leader to follow as he put a finger to his nose to tip the vote to the leader across the aisle. The spell of drama when an evil

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piece of political property was traded for a more or less equal piece of profitable position was also gone, all gone except for a delegation here and there, as old in appearance with their baffled old-pol stone-set faces as the portraits of another century, and of course one was ready to laugh as one walked down the aisle because the count was already in—there were more live faces than dead ones on the floor—so McGovern was in, simple as that, and how different a sensation and how less compelling than in the days of other conventions when it was one dead face against another, and which of the candidates for nomination was best equipped to enter the sinuosities of negotiation with evil, for evil was the law of politics and the provender of the floor.

Now there was a convention where delegates had come to work. How diffident they were at parties and how good at work—it was as if the animation of being at a party came to them on the floor—their politics was their pleasure, and the tide of those faces returning to him as he stood near McGovern now, there came to him as well the first strains of that simple epiphany which had eluded him through these days, and he realized it, and it was simple, but he thought it true. In America, the country was the religion. And all the religions of the land were fed from that first religion which was the country itself, and if the other religions were now full of mutation and staggering across deserts of faith, it was because the country had been false and ill and corrupt for years, corrupt not in the age-old human proportions of failure and evil, but corrupt to the point of terminal disease, like a great religion foundering.

So the political parties of America might be the true churches of America, and our political leaders the popes and prelates, the bishops and ministers and warring clergymen of ideologies which were founded upon the spiritual rock of America as much as any dogma, and so there was a way now to comprehend McGovern and enter the loneliness which lived in his mood, for he inhabited that religious space where men dwell when they are part of the powers of a church and wish to alter that church to its roots. For yes, the American faith might even say that God was in the people. And if this new religion, not two hundred years old, was either the best or the worst idea ever to

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shake the mansions of eschatology in the world beyond, one knew at least how to begin to think of McGovern; if he had started as a minister in the faith of his father, he had left that ministry to look for one larger. When it came Aquarius' turn to speak to the new candidate of the Democratic party he felt content to say no more than that he had liked all three speeches at the end of the night. Eagleton, Kennedy, and the speech of the candidate himself, which was the best he had ever heard him give. And McGovern listened with that charisma which was finally and indisputably his own—which was to listen—for if his voice had no flaming tongue of fire, his power to listen surrounded everyone who spoke in his presence, and so had the depth to capture many a loyalty before he was done. Then the words of the speech came back to Aquarius:

"From secrecy and deception in high places—come home, America. From military spending so wasteful that it weakens our nation—come home, America. From the entrenchment of special privilege and tax favoritism—come home, America. From the waste of idle hands to the joy of useful labor—come home, America. From the prejudice of race and sex—come home, America. From the loneliness of the aging poor and the despair of the neglected sick—come home, America. Come home to the affirmation that we have a dream. Come home to the conviction that we can move our country forward. Come home to the belief that we can seek a newer world. May God grant us the wisdom to cherish this good land to meet the great challenge that beckons us home."

"I thought Ted Kennedy gave a very fine speech," McGovern said.

"He did. All the speeches were good. It was a fine mood, it was strong and tender," and McGovern nodded (as if it might be his own observation as well) and it was only after they had talked for another minute and Aquarius stepped back to listen to McGovern talk to others again that he realized he had used the word "tender" in speaking to a presidential candidate and felt no remorse and, agog on this realization, headed slowly for the exit with the rueful admission to himself that for the days left in which to write his piece he must leave out much in order to be able to put this little in, and thought McGovern was the first

tall minister he had ever really liked, and so must have a chance to win the election. He kept his good mood until getting in the elevator when it happened that a dreamy McGovern kid started to approach the car ahead of a Secret Service man who gave the practiced equivalent of a karate chop with a small quick blow of his shoulder—for nothing!—and the kid bounced off to the side and the Service man, carrying his drink in his hand, went in first and stared morosely into his glass as though those waters went all the way back to the raw seed of the hurricane. And if Aquarius had been a man to pray, he might have thought of the embattled God he discovered years ago. But then who had the right to ask the Lord to let America have one election which went all the way down the rails without a wreck? He shivered. The idea next to the unexorcised nomenclatures of Oswald and Sirhan left a discomfort on his back.

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Eagleton 95-100

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Washington - 1
Candidate Emerities

Interviewing Eagleton on the afternoon of the morning of his resignation as vice-presidential candidate, Aquarius finds him changed from the diffident politician who perished before the television cameras on the night of his nomination and looked too furtive, too nervous, too quick, too quick-tongued, too bright, too unsure of himself and finally too modest to be Vice-President. Now in the two weeks and more which had elapsed since nomination and through the last seven days of disclosure the nightmare of his most secret life has blazoned every breakfast table, as well as the political shame of his treatment in a mental hospital for electric shock, not once but then and again, 1960, 1964, 1966, all kept so secretly by the family and skillfully over the years that even the worst of the whispering campaigns against him hinted at drink as a serious problem—an excusable vice in a politician. But never shock. Shock spoke of incarceration, not treatment, of manacled hands and the possibility of a blasted mind. For there was the public prejudice and who to refute it? A man who drank too much could be wrestling for his soul and losing it—implicit was the idea he might yet regain it. A heavy drinker could still carry on a political life—the impost of booze spoke of a war against too much of some powerful quality in oneself, too much perhaps of passion, talent, or pain. But shock treatment spoke of the irrevocable. Cures derived from a machine, when the cure itself was not comprehended, left an aversion. Nobody could argue that the cure had not come from blinding the innermost eye of the soul—so went the unspoken weight of public prejudice, and who to refute it? Not Eagleton when it was obvious he had made the choice to let rumors of drinking hang him first. (His disap-

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pearance into the Mayo Clinic had even been once announced as a visit to Hopkins for gastric disturbance.)

Now, in the last week, the secret of his life disgorged, he sat behind his desk in the New Senate Office Building, with a change in his looks. He was bigger today, heavier, stronger and more relaxed, somehow not unreminiscent of a quick and nervous boxer who has finally gotten into a punchout, been hit hard for ten rounds, and now sits around in the next week with lumps on his head, welts on his face, even a certain thickening of his wits, but manhood has come to him. He has a new kind of calm. So sat Eagleton. Yesterday, after a week of desperate campaigning to win public approval of his candidacy, ~~crowds cheering him in Hawaii, and Jack Anderson confronting him on TV like an older brother with evidence of busts for drunken driving which Anderson didn't have, and apologized for, after a~~

after a

week in which half of America took Eagleton to its heart like a wounded puppy, while half of the top brass in the Democratic party threatened to boycott the election if he wasn't dropped from the ticket, and campaign money went dry, McGovern had the fell political embarrassment of asking him to withdraw, this after making the needless remark at the first height of the disclosure that he was behind Eagleton "1,000 percent," a phrase which entered the language so quickly that 1,000 percent might yet live as the conclusive way to let someone know they must certainly not count on your word. A whole disaster for McGovern which had not been helped by Eagleton's unwillingness to withdraw—anyone familiar with politics had to know that McGovern was counting, if it came to it, on just such a voluntary withdrawal to safeguard that 1,000 percent. But Eagleton had been riding with all the energy of ~~the~~ ^{his} cyst being lanced, a buried horror released and himself still alive, crowds cheered him, strangers (from states other than Missouri) grabbed his hand, he was a national figure for the first time in his life, and with a brand-new constituency—all of that Wallace folk who liked a candidate with a flaw they could recognize, something homey and down to rights, a skeleton in the closet at which they had had a peek, what pleasure! That threw a cunning shadow into the soap-opera light. Just as the folk loved Wallace because Lurleen had made the sacrifice to run for

governor knowing it could not help her dread disease, and folk loved Wallace again for recovering from her loss and marrying a young woman—renewal was the precise salvation of which the soap opera sang—so now Wallace folk loved Eagleton because he was a rich boy with a bad secret who was going through a crisis and not giving up. (If Aquarius had any doubt of this last hypothesis, it was demonstrated to the detail while he sat in Eagleton's outer office waiting for the interview, and a file of tourists kept coming by to pay their respects to the Senator, murmuring in intense throat-filled voices to the receptionist that they sure were sorry the Senator wouldn't be running and didn't know if they wanted to express their feelings about George McGovern but leave it that they sure wouldn't vote for him now—Wallace faces, every last one of them, clear in their election plumage to a face-watcher like Aquarius, equal after such years of practice to many a bird-watcher.) Eagleton had lived in politics all his life, could smell the turn of one's luck in the sweat of the work. So he knew better than anyone else that he had become a species of new political dynamite, and he didn't want to quit—how could he? But the less he wished to withdraw, the more livid and enormous became the wrath of the party at the caper he had pulled. "Get that mother fucker out," had to be the sweetest message on the hour to McGovern from all the boss and divergent forces in the party he was trying to unite. By refusing to withdraw, Eagleton had the largest play of his life available to him—~~and if ever elected might just as well have caused an~~ ~~Orlando man~~—but the odds against him were huge, and the bulk of his own party would treat him like a leper. So he met with McGovern, and they came out, Eagleton's arm on McGovern's shoulder, using the old senatorial wedge as they drove into a press conference, and Eagleton announced he would withdraw, and did this morning, and now sat back on his chair, his legs on his desk, and talked in a deep politician's voice which still vibrated with the pain of loss and the pleasure of relaxation. Of course, he was far from wholly relaxed as yet, soon jumping to his feet to read aloud an item from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* which had just come in, and read (in the loud throw-it-away tones of an actor picking up new lines just handed him) that McGovern was "spineless."

"Spineless," Eagleton repeated. "A little too extreme, don't you think?" he said, but he was obviously enjoying himself.

"Oh, oh," he added with mock pain as he picked up another paper, "they're still misspelling my name. My God, they've called me everything and I don't mean dog catcher, I mean Eggleston, Eaglesworth, Egnog, you call it." His secretary now handing him a take-out menu from the Senate cafeteria, he groaned at the familiar items, "Darn it, I'd like something more glamorous than cherry pie," he complained, as if finding his stomach convalescent, ~~he would~~
~~it for a taste to see how it was coming to the palate.~~

Back again behind the desk, Eagleton replied to the quick question, "Do you play chess?" with the answer, "No, I wish I did, why do you ask?"

"Sometimes in chess games between masters, a move comes up which is so unprecedented and therefore so good or so bad that the people who annotate the game put both an exclamation and a question mark after the move. And I thought if you had not withdrawn, it would have been such a situation."

"I see what you mean," he said heartily. "No, I must say I never learned chess, but I wish now that I might have gone in for it." It was a politician's response. Complimented the questioner, but did not answer him; took pains to praise what might be a hobby. A hobby commended is usually worth a vote.

"Granted this may not be the day to ask such a question, but wouldn't you say that on balance you're still in pretty good position? The nation is aware of you, and there are new friends . . ."

"Oh," he rumbled, "I'm not bitter. Hell, we could say it was the cheapest campaign I ever ran. They gave me a free charge for my batteries. Think of it. All that publicity, and I didn't have to spend a cent."

It was an interview which so far had persisted in remaining out of focus. Not twenty-four hours ago, Eagleton had still been running; now with the proper politician's love for a meaty role (even the role of a loser done well is fertilizer for future votes) he was already working out the tone of new lines, but it was the first day, he was probably a slow study after all this pounding and so he had to sound a fraction off on every reading. The problem was to work

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out how much he could speak against McGovern—which would be tonic for his blood—and how much he should support him, a professional decision ~~that~~ might take weeks to work out. So now he chose to get away from any suggestion of bile, and also gave up the forced and hearty gallantry he had been exhibiting of a man who is being good about his pain. Instead, he said in the voice of an absolute good guy, "I'm really not bitter—George McGovern was wonderfully decent to me last night." This line was delivered with no more or less conviction than the others. The new role was going to take work.

"Senator, could I ask a question which might be a little presumptuous?"

"After what I've been asked these last seven days, you could bounce the worst insult off my head, and I wouldn't even know I'd been hit."

Well, one thing did confuse him, the questioner admitted. He had read the reports of Eagleton waiting for hours on the last day of the convention to find out if McGovern would pick him for Vice-President. The former candidate nodded. And it had also been reported that as he waited, his good mood naturally began to go down. Eagleton nodded again. "Well, Senator, forgive me for entering your head, but didn't there come a moment when you said to yourself, 'They're turning me down because of that electro-shock business.'"

Eagleton looked thoughtful. "Earlier in the week when my name first came up as a possibility, and there were still twenty names in the hopper, I talked about the shock treatments with my wife, and we felt it was over and done with. I don't know if you'll believe this, but I then forgot about it."

"You didn't think about it once all that long day of waiting?"

"While I can't vouch for my unconscious, it was not an element of calculation in my conscious head, no sir, strange as that may now sound."

It was preferable to believe he told the truth, that somehow it had not been in his mind when Mankiewicz asked him if there were skeletons in the closet. But who could know what was in Eagleton's mind? Probably he did not know himself. When our motive is imperfect, the flaw is whipped like a pea from mental shell to shell. We smuggle

our honesty just out of our reach while keeping an eye on the other man's game. Maybe Eagleton had built so many reflexes on his ability to whip a miserable recollection from shell to shell that he had lost the power to think of the hospital episode when questions were asked, just as a murderer living in a respectable world must manage to forget his murder and feel as much indignation as anyone else at the thrashing of a cat.

Leaving, Aquarius asked, "Anyone ever told you about a resemblance to Scott Fitzgerald?" He was thinking of photographs in those late years when Fitzgerald was handsome still but growing heavy.

"I've been compared to Jack Lemmon, but never Fitzgerald." He smiled. "Do I want to look like Fitzgerald? Didn't he have a drinking problem after all? I'm in enough trouble without being told I remind people of a drunk."

"Not just a drunk. A fine Irish poet."

"Well," said Eagleton, "*The Great Gatsby* is one of my favorite books."

If he was not telling the truth now, there was a fair chance good George McGovern had just disengaged himself from a congenital teller of the worst fibs.

Walking down the hall, Aquarius felt as if he had been talking to a nice friendly reasonably hard-working good-drinking congressman who in another term would be ready to run for senator. No matter how many times it happened, it was unnerving to meet men who had been near to high office and recognize they were no more magnificent than yourself. Perhaps there were mysteries to charisma he would yet do well to ponder.