

1977-78

The Executioner's Song - I

April 1977 to August 1977

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THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

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They pulled up to the island that ran parallel to the main entrance of the terminal building. So soon as she got out of the car, there was Johnny over on the driver's side, trying to tuck his shirttail in. That annoyed Brenda no end.

She could see Gary leaning against the building. "There he is," Brenda cried, but Johnny said, "Wait, I have to zip my pants."

"Who gives a shit about your shirttail?" said Brenda. "I'm going."

As she crossed the street between the parking island and the main door, Gary saw her and picked up his satchel. Pretty soon they were running toward each other. As they met, Gary dropped his bag, looked at her, then encircled her so hard she could have been hugged by a bear. Even Johnny had never gripped Brenda that hard.

When Gary put her down on the ground again, she stood back and looked at him. She had to take him all in. She said, "My God, you're tall."

He started to laugh. "What did you expect, a midget?"

"I don't know what I expected," she said, "but, thank God, you're tall."

Johnny was just standing there with his big good face going, um, um, um.

"Hey, coz," said Gary, "it's fine to see you." He shook hands with Johnny.

"By the way, Gary," said Brenda demurely, "this is my husband."

Gary said, "I assumed that's who it was."

Johnny said, "Have you got everything with you?"

Gary picked up his flight bag — it was pathetically small, thought Brenda — and said, "This is it. This is all I have." He said it without humor and without self-pity. Material things were obviously no big transaction to him.

Now she noticed his clothes. He had a black trench coat slung on his arm and was wearing a maroon blazer over — could you believe it? — a yellow and green striped shirt. Then a pair of beige polyester trousers that were badly hemmed. Plus a pair of black plastic shoes. She paid attention to people's footwear because of her father's

trade and she thought, Wow, that's really cheap. They didn't even give him a pair of leather shoes to go home in.

"Come on," said Gary, "let's get the hell out of here."

She could see then he'd had something to drink. He wasn't plastered, but he sure was tipped. Made a point of putting his arm around her when they walked to the car.

When they got in, Brenda sat in the middle and Johnny drove. Gary said, "Hey, this is kind of a cute car. What is it?"

"A yellow Maverick," she told him. "My little lemon."

They drove. The first silence came in.

"Are you tired?" asked Brenda.

"A little tired, but then I'm a little drunk too." Gary grinned. "I took advantage of the champagne flight. I don't know if it was the altitude, or not having good liquor for a long time, but, boy, I got tore up on that plane. I was happier than hell."

Brenda laughed. "I guess you're entitled to be snookered."

The prison sure cut his hair short. It would, Brenda judged, be heavy handsome brown hair when it grew out, but for now it stuck up hick style in the back. He kept pushing it down.

No matter, she liked his looks. In the half-light that came into the car as they drove through Salt Lake on the Interstate, the city sleeping on both sides of them, she decided that Gary was everything she expected in that department. A long, fine nose, good chin, thin well-shaped lips. He had character about his face.

"Want to go for a cup of coffee?" Johnny asked.

Brenda felt Gary tighten. It was as if even the thought of walking into a strange place got him edgy. "Come on," Brenda said, "we'll give the ten-cent tour."

They picked Jean's Cafe. It was the only place south of Salt Lake open at 3 A.M., but it was Friday night and people were sporting their finery. Once installed in their booth, Gary said, "I guess I got to get some clothes."

Johnny encouraged him to eat, but he wasn't hungry. Obviously too excited. Brenda felt as if she could pick up the quiver in each bright color that Gary was studying on the jukebox. He looked close to being dazzled by the revolving red, blue, and gold light show on the electronic screen of the cigarette console. He was so involved it drew her into his mood. When a couple of cute girls walked in, and Gary mumbled, "Not bad," Brenda laughed. There was something so real about the way he said it.

Couples kept coming from parties and leaving, and the sound of cars parking and taking off didn't stop. Still, Brenda was not looking at the door. Her best friend could have walked in, but she would have been all alone with Gary. She couldn't remember when somebody had absorbed her attention this much. She didn't mean to be rude to Johnny, but she did kind of forget he was there.

Gary, however, looked across the table and said, "Hey man, thanks. I appreciate how you went along with Brenda to get me out." They shook hands again. This time Gary did it thumbs up.

Over the coffee, he asked Brenda about her folks, her sis, her kids, and Johnny's job.

Johnny did maintenance at the Pacific State Cast Iron and Pipe. While he was blacksmithing now, he used to make iron pipe, fire it, cast it, sometimes do the mold work.

The conversation died. Gary had no clue what to ask Johnny next. He knows nothing about us, Brenda thought, and I know so little about his life.

Gary spoke of a couple of prison friends and what good men they were. Then he said apologetically, Well, you don't want to hear about prison, it's not very pleasant.

Johnny said they were only tiptoeing around because they didn't want to offend him. "We're curious," said Johnny, "but, you know, we don't want to ask: what's it like in there? What do they do to you?"

Gary smiled. They were silent again.

Brenda knew she was making Gary nervous as hell. She kept staring at him constantly, but she couldn't get enough of his face. There were so many corners in it.

"God," she kept saying, "it's good to have you here."

"It's good to get back."

"Wait till you get to know this country," she said. She was dying to tell him about the kind of fun they could have on Utah Lake, and the camper trips they would take in the canyons. The desert was just as gray and brown and grim as desert anywhere, but the mountains went up to twelve thousand feet, and the canyons were green with beautiful forests and super drinking parties with friends. They could teach him how to hunt with bow and arrow, she was about ready to tell him, when all of a sudden she got a good look at Gary in the light. Speak of all the staring she had done, it was as if she hadn't studied him at all yet. Now she felt a strong sense of woe. He was marked up much more than she had expected.

She reached out to touch his cheek at the place where he had a very bad scar, and Gary said, "Nice looking. isn't it?"

Brenda said, "I'm sorry, Gary, I didn't mean to embarrass you."

This set up such a pause that Johnny finally asked, "How'd it happen?"

"A guard hit me," said Gary. He smiled. "They had me tied down for a shot of Prolixin — and I managed to spit in the doctor's face. Then I got clobbered."

"How," asked Brenda, "would you like to take that guard who hit you, and get ahold of him?"

"Don't pick my brain," said Gary.

"Okay," said Brenda, "but do you hate him?"

"God, yeah," said Gary, "wouldn't you?"

"Yeah, I would," said Brenda. "Just checking."

Half an hour later, driving home, they went by Point of the Mountain. Off to the left of the Interstate a long hill came out of the mountains and its ridge was like the limb of a beast whose paw just reached the highway. On the other side, in the desert to the right, was Utah State Prison. There were only a few lights in its buildings now. They made jokes about Utah State Prison.

3

Back in her living room, drinking beer, Gary began to unwind. He liked beer, he confessed. In prison, they knew how to make a watery brew out of bread. Called it Pruno. In fact, both Brenda and Johnny were observing that Gary could put brew away as fast as anyone they knew.

Johnny soon got tired and went to sleep. Now Gary and Brenda really began to talk. A few prison stories came out of him. To Brenda, each seemed wilder than the one before. Probably they were half true, half full of beer. He had to be reciting out of his hind end.

It was only when she looked out the window and saw the night was over that she realized how long they had been talking. They stepped through the door to look at the sun coming up over the back of her ranch house and all her neighbors' ranch houses, and standing there, on her plot of lawn, in a heap of strewn-about toys, wet with cold spring dew, Gary looked at the sky and took a deep breath.

"I feel like jogging," he said.

"You've got to be nuts, tired as you are," she said.

He just stretched and breathed deep, and a big smile came over his face. "Hey, man," he said, "I'm really out."

In the mountains, the snow was iron gray and purple in the hollows, and glowed like gold on every slope that faced the sun. The clouds over the mountains were lifting with the light. Brenda took a good look into his eyes and felt full of sadness again. His eyes had the expression of rabbits she had flushed, scared-rabbit was the common expression, but she had looked into those eyes of scared rabbits and they were calm and tender and kind of curious. They did not know what would happen next.

CHAPTER 2

The First Week

1

Brenda put Gary on the foldout couch in the TV room. When she began to make the bed, he stood there smiling.

"What gives you that impish little grin?" she said after a pause.

"Do you know how long it's been since I slept on a sheet?"

He took a blanket but no pillow. Then she went to her room. She never knew if he fell asleep. She had the feeling he lay down and rested and never took off his polyesters, just his shirt. When she got up a few hours later, he was up and around.

They were still having coffee when Toni came over to visit, and Gary gave her a big hug, and stood back, and framed her face with his hands and said, "I finally get to meet the kid sister. Man, I've looked at your photographs. What a foxy lady you are."

"You're going to make me blush," said Toni.

She certainly looked like Brenda. Same popping black eyes, black hair, same sassy look. It was just that Brenda was on the voluptuous side and Toni was slim enough to model. Take your pick.

When they sat down, Gary kept reaching over and putting his arm around Toni, or taking hold of her hand. "I wish you weren't my cousin," he said, "and married to such a big tall dude."

Later, Toni would tell Brenda how good and wise Howard had been for saying, "Go over and meet Gary without me." She went on to describe how warm Gary made her feel, not sexy, but more like a brother. He had amazed her with how much he knew of her life. Like

that Howard was six foot six. Brenda kept herself from remarking that he had not learned it from any letters Toni had written, since Toni had never written a line.

Before Brenda took Gary over to meet Vern and Ida, Johnny showed a test of strength. He took the bathroom scale and squeezed it between his hands until the needle went up to 250 pounds.

Gary tried and reached 120. He went crazy and squeezed the scales until he was shaking. The needle went to 150.

"Yeah," said Johnny, "you're improving."

"What's the highest you've gone?" asked Gary.

"Oh," said Johnny, "the scale stops at 280, but I've taken it past there. I suppose 300."

On the drive to the shoe shop, Brenda told Gary a little more about her father. Vern, she explained, might be the strongest man she knew.

Stronger than Johnny?

Well, Brenda explained, nobody could top Johnny at squeezing the scales, but she didn't know who had ever beaten Vern Damico at arm wrestling.

Vern, said Brenda, was strong enough to be gentle all the time. "I don't think my father ever gave me a spanking except once in my whole life and I truly asked for that. It was only one pat on the hind end, but that hand of his could cover your whole body."

The mountains had been gold and purple at dawn, but now in the morning they were big and brown and bald and had gray rain-soaked snow on the ridges. It got into their mood. The distance from the north side of Orem where she lived, to Vern's store in the center of Provo, was six miles, but going along State Street, it took a while. There were shopping malls and quick-eat palaces, used-car dealers, chain clothing stores and gas stops, appliance stores and highway signs and fruit stands. There were banks and real estate firms in one-story office compounds and rows of condominiums with sawed-off mansard roofs. There hardly seemed a building that was not painted in a nursery color: pastel yellow, pastel orange, pastel tan, pastel blue. Only a few faded two-story wooden houses looked as if they had been built even thirty years ago. On State Street, going the six miles from Orem to Provo, those houses looked as old as frontier saloons.

1858

"It sure has changed," said Gary.

Overhead was the immense blue of the strong sky of the American West. That had not changed.

At the foot of the mountains, on the boundary between Orem and Provo, was Brigham Young University. It was also new and looked like it had been built from prefabricated toy kits. Twenty years ago, BYU had a few thousand students. Now the enrollment was close to thirty thousand, Brenda told him. As Notre Dame to good Catholics, so BYU to good Mormons.

2

"I better tell you a little more about Vern," Brenda said. "You have to understand when Dad is joking and when he is not. That can be a little hard to figure out because Dad does not always smile when he is joking."

She did not tell him that her father had been born with a harelip, but then she assumed he knew. Vern had a full palate so his speech was not affected, but the mark was right out there. His mustache didn't pretend to hide it. When he first went to school it didn't take him long to become one of the toughest kids. Any boy who wanted to kid Vern about his lip, said Brenda, got a belt in the snout.

It made Vern's personality. To this day, when children came into the shoe shop and saw him for the first time, Vern did not have to hear what the child was saying when the mother said, Hush. He was used to that. It didn't bother him now. Over the years, however, he had had to do a lot to overcome it. Not only did it leave him strong, but frank. He might be gentle in his manner, Brenda said, but he usually came out and said what he thought. That could be abrasive.

Yet when Gary met Vern, Brenda decided she had prepared him too much. He was a little nervous when he said hello, and looked around, and acted surprised at the size of the shoe shop, as if he hadn't expected a big cave of a place. Vern commented that it was a lot of room to walk around in when customers weren't there, and

they got on from that to his osteoarthritis. Vern had a powerfully painful accumulation in his knee that had frozen the joint. Just hearing about it seemed to get Gary concerned. It didn't seem phony, Brenda thought. She could almost feel the pain of Vern's knee pass right into Gary's scrotum.

Vern thought Gary ought to move in with Ida and himself right away, but shouldn't plan to go to work for a few days. A fellow needed time to get acquainted with his freedom, Vern observed. After all, Gary had come into a strange town, didn't know where the library was, didn't know where to buy a cup of coffee. So he talked to Gary real slow. Brenda was accustomed to men taking quite a while to say anything to each other, but if you were impatient, it could drive you crazy.

When she and Gary went over to the house, however, Ida was thrilled. "Bessie was my special big sister, and I was always her favorite," Ida told him. She was getting a little plump, but with her red-brown hair and her bright-colored dress, Ida looked like an attractive gypsy lady.

She and Gary began talking right away about how when he was a little boy, he used to visit Grandma and Grandpa Brown. "I loved them days," Gary said to her. "I was as happy then as I've ever been in my life."

Together, Gary and Ida made a sight in that small living room. Although Vern's shoulders could fill a doorway, and any one of his fingers was as wide as anyone else's two fingers, he was not that tall, and Ida was short. They wouldn't be bothered by a low ceiling.

It was a living room with a lot of stuffed furniture in bright autumn colors and bright rugs and color-filled pictures in gold frames and there was a ceramic statue of a black stable boy with a red jacket standing by the fireplace. Chinese end tables and big colored hassocks took up space on the floor.

Having lived among steel bars, reinforced concrete, and cement-block walls, Gary would now be spending a lot of his time in this living room.

Back at her house, on the pretext of helping him pack, Brenda got a peek at the contents of his tote bag. It held a can of shaving cream, a razor, a toothbrush, a comb, some snapshots, his parole papers, a few letters, and no change of underwear.

Vern slipped him some underclothes, some tan slacks, a shirt, and twenty bucks.

Gary said, "I can't pay you back right now."

"I'm giving you the money," Vern said. "If you need more, see me. I don't have a lot, but I'll give you what I can."

Brenda would have understood her father's reasoning: a man without money in his pocket can get into trouble.

Sunday afternoon, Vern and Ida drove him over to Lehi, on the other side of Orem, for a visit with Toni and Howard.

Both of Toni's daughters, Annette and Angela, were excited about Gary. He was like a magnet with kids, Brenda and Toni agreed. On this Sunday, two days out of jail, he sat in a gold cloth-upholstered chair drawing chalk pictures on a blackboard for Angela.

He'd draw a beautiful picture and Angela, who was six, would erase it. He got the biggest kick out of that. He would take pains on the next one, draw it extra-beautiful, and she'd go, Yeah, uh-huh, and she'd erase it. So he could do another one.

After a while he sat down on the floor and played cards with her.

The only game Angela knew was Fish, but she couldn't remember how to say each number. She would speak of 6 as an upper because the line went up, and 9 was a downer. A 7 was a hooker. That tickled Gary. Queens, Angela said firmly, were ladies. Kings were big boys. Jacks were little boys.

He called: "Toni, would you explain something? Am I playing some illicit game here with your daughter?" Gary thought it was very funny.

Later that Sunday, Howard Gurney and Gary tried to talk to each other. Howard had been a construction worker all his life, a union electrician. He'd never been in jail except for one night when he was a kid. It was difficult to find much common denominator. Gary knew a lot, and had a fantastic vocabulary, but he and Howard didn't seem to have any experiences in common.

3

Monday morning, Gary broke the twenty-dollar bill Vern had given him, and bought a pair of gym shoes. That week, he would wake up every day around six, and go out to run. He would take off from Vern's house in a fast long stride down to Fifth West, go around the park, and back — more than ten blocks in four minutes, good time. Vern, with his bad knee, thought Gary was a fantastic runner.

In the beginning, Gary didn't know exactly what he could do in the house. On his first evening alone with Vern and Ida, he asked if he could get a glass of water.

"This is your home," Vern said. "You don't have to ask permission."

Gary came back from the kitchen with the glass in his hand. "I'm beginning to get onto this," he said to Vern. "It's pretty good."

"Yeah," said Vern, "come and go as you want. Within reason."

Gary didn't like television. Maybe he'd seen too much in prison, but in the evening, once Vern went to bed, Gary and Ida would sit and talk.

Ida reminisced about Bessie's skill with makeup. "She was so clever that way," said Ida, "and so tasteful. She knew how to make herself look beautiful all the time. She had the same elegance about her as our mother who is French and always had aristocratic traits." Her mother, said Ida, had a breeding that she gave to her children. The table was always set properly, not to the stiffest standards — they were just poor Mormons — but a tablecloth, always a tablecloth, and enough silverware to do the job.

Bessie, Gary told Ida, was now so arthritic she could hardly move, and the little trailer in which she lived was all plastic. Considering the climate in Portland, that trailer had to be damp. When he got a little money together, he would try to improve matters. One night Gary actually called his mother and talked for a long time. Ida heard him say he loved her and was going to bring her back to Provo to live.

It was a warm week for April, and pleasant talking through the evenings, planning for the summer to come.

About the third night, they got to talking about Vern's driveway. It wasn't wide enough to take more than one car, but Vern had a strip of lawn beside it that could offer space for another car provided he could remove the concrete curb that separated the grass from the paving. That curb ran for thirty-five feet from the sidewalk to the garage. It was about six inches high, eight inches wide, and would take a lot of work to be chopped out. Because of his bad leg, Vern had been holding off.

"I'll do it," said Gary.

Sure enough, next morning at 6 A.M., Vern was awakened by the sound of Gary taking a sledgehammer to the job. Sound slammed through the neighborhood in the dawn. Vern winced for the people in the City Center Motel, next door, who would be awakened by the reverberation. All day Gary worked, cracking the curbing with overhead blows, then prying chunks out, inch by inch, with the crowbar. Before long, Vern had to buy a new one.

Those thirty-five feet of curbing took one day and part of the next. Vern offered to help but Gary wouldn't allow it. "I know a lot about pounding rocks," he told Vern with a grin.

"What can I do for you?" asked Vern.

"Well, it's thirsty work," said Gary. "Just keep me in beer."

It went like that. He drank a lot of beer and worked real hard and they were happy with the job. When he was done, he had open blisters on his hand as large as Vern's fingernails. Ida insisted on bandaging his palms, but Gary was acting like a kid — a man don't wear bandages — and took them off real quick.

Doing the work, however, had loosened him up. He was ready to do his first exploring around town.

Provo was laid out in a checkerboard. It had very wide streets and a few buildings that were four stories high. It had three movie theaters. Two were on Center Street, the main shopping street, and the other was on University Avenue, the other shopping street. In Provo, the equivalent of Times Square was where the two streets crossed. There was a park next to a church on one corner and diagonally across was an extra-large drugstore.

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During the day, Gary would walk around town. If he came by the shoe shop around lunchtime, Vern would take him to the ~~Provo Cafe, or to Joe's Spic and Span which had the best coffee in town.~~ It was just a box of a joint with twenty seats. At lunchtime, however, people would be waiting on the street to get in. Of course, Vern told him, Provo was not famous for restaurants.

Provo Cafe, or to Joe's Spic and Span which had the best coffee in town.

"What is it famous for?" asked Gary.

"Darned if I know," said Vern. "Maybe it's the low crime rate."

Once Gary started in the shoe shop, he would be making \$2.50 an hour. A couple of times after lunch he hung around to get the feel of it. After watching Vern wait on a few people, Gary decided he'd like to concentrate on repair work. Didn't know if he could handle rude customers. "I'm going to have to sneak up on that," he told Vern.

Looking around, Gary decided to get out of his polyesters and buy some Levi's. He borrowed a few more bucks from Vern, and Brenda took him to a shopping mall.

He told her that he had never been to anything like this before. It was mind-stopping. He couldn't keep his eyes off the girls. Right in the middle of goggling at them, Gary walked into the ledge of a fountain. If Brenda hadn't grabbed his sleeve, he'd have been in. "You certainly haven't lost your eye," she told him. He had only been gawking at the most beautiful girls. He was nearly all wet, but he had very good taste.

In the Levi's department at Penney's, Gary just stood there. After a while, he said, "Hey, I don't know how to go about this. Are you supposed to take the pants off the shelf, or does somebody issue them to you?"

Brenda really felt sorry for him. "Find the ones you want," she said, "and tell the clerk. If you want to try them on, you can."

"Without paying for them?"

"Oh, yeah, you can try them on first," she said.

End

MAY-1977

THE FIRST MONTH

1864

55

to Salt Lake for the night and didn't get back till morning. The sister had them mixed up with two other guys.

Friday morning, Marge found the window smashed. Gary did it, was the first thing to come to mind, but she hoped it wasn't true. The neighbor downstairs said, "Yeah, that really loud car with those two drunk guys, they pulled up right next to your car. I don't know what happened after that."

She let it go. It was one more unhappiness at the bottom of things.

8

~~Spence~~ morning, Gary called up Brenda. He would be getting his pay that night. His first check from Spence McGrath. "Hey, I want to treat you guys," he told her.

They decided to go to a movie. It was a flick he had seen before. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. He had watched them film it down the road from the penitentiary, watched it right from his cell window. Besides, he told her, he had even been sent over to that very mental institution a couple of times from the prison. Just like Jack Nicholson in the film. Brought him in the same way, with handcuffs and leg irons.

Since the movie was at the Una Theatre in Provo, Brenda and Johnny drove over from Orem and by the time they picked him up at Vern and Ida's, Gary had had about four or five beers to celebrate his paycheck.

In the truck, he smoked a joint. Made him happier than hell. By the time they covered the few blocks to the theatre he was giggling. Brenda said to herself: This is going to be a disastrous evening.

Soon as the movie went on, Gary started to give a running commentary. He said, "You see that broad? She really works in the hospital. But the guy next to her is a phony. Just an actor. Hey!" Gary told the movie theatre at large.

After a while, his language got to be God forbid! "Look at that fucker over there," he said. "I know that fucker."

Brenda could have died. No pain. "Gary—there are people trying to hear the show. Will you shut up?"

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Chapter 3

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"Am I offensive?"

"You're *loud*."

He spun around in his seat and asked the people behind, "Am I being loud? Am I bothering you folks?"

Brenda slammed her elbow into his ribs.

Johnny got up and moved over a space or two.

"Where's Johnny going?" asked Gary. "Does he have to take a piss?" More people started to move.

Johnny slid down in his seat until no one could see his head. Gary's narration of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* continued. "Son of a bitch," he shouted, "that's just the way it was."

From the rear rows, people were saying, "Down in front. Shhh!" Brenda grabbed him by the shirttail. "You're obnoxious."

"I'm sorry." In a big whisper, he said, "I'll hold it down." But his voice came out in a roar.

"Gary, all kidding aside, you're really making me feel like a turd sitting here."

"All right, I'll be good." He put his feet up on the back of the chair in front and started rocking it. The woman who was sitting there had probably been holding out on every impulse to change her seat, but now she gave up, and moved away.

"What'd you do that for?"

"My God, Brenda, do you have to ride herd all the time?"

"You made that poor lady move."

"Her hair was in my way."

"Then sit up straighter."

"Not comfortable sitting up straight."

Going back to Vern's, Gary looked pretty smug. Brenda and Johnny didn't go in with him.

"What's the matter?" asked Gary. "Don't you like me anymore?"

"Right now? I think you are the most insensitive human being I've ever known."

"Brenda, I am not insensitive," said Gary, "to being called insensitive."

He whistled all the way up the steps.

At breakfast, his mood was fine. He saw Vern watching him eat and said, "I guess you think I gobble like a pig, kinda quick."

Vern said, "Yeah, I noticed that."

Gary said, "Well, in prison you learn to eat in a hurry. You've got fifteen minutes to get your food, sit down and swallow it. Sometimes you just don't get it."

"Did *you* manage to get it?" asked Vern.

"Yeah, I worked in the kitchen for a while. My job was to make the salad. Took five hours to make that much salad. I can't touch the stuff now."

"That's fine," said Vern, "you don't need to eat it."

"You're a pretty strong fellow, Vern, aren't you?"

"Just the champ."

"Let's arm wrestle," said Gary.

Vern shook his head, but Ida said, "Go ahead, arm wrestle him."

"Yeah, come on," said Gary. He squinted at Vern: "You think you can take me?"

Vern said, "I don't have to think. I can take you."

"Well, I feel pretty strong today, Vern. What makes you think you can beat me?"

"I'm gonna make up my mind," Vern said, "and I think I can do it."

"Try it."

"Well," Vern said, "you eat your breakfast first."

They got into it before the table was cleared. Vern kept eating his breakfast with his left hand, and arm wrestled with the other.

"Son of a bitch," Gary said, "for an old bastard you're pretty strong."

Vern said, "You're doing pitiful. It's a good thing you finished your breakfast. I wouldn't even give it to you now."

When he got Gary's arm halfway over, Vern set down his fork, picked up a few toothpicks and held them in his left hand. He said, "Okay, my friend, any time you want to say uncle, just quit. If you don't, I'm going to jam your hand right on these toothpicks."

Gary was straining with every muscle. He started giving karate yells. He even got half out of his seat, but it didn't make much difference. Vern got him down on the point of the toothpicks. Gary quit.

"One thing I want to know, Vern. Would you really have stuck me if I hadn't hollered uncle?"

"Yep, I told you I would, didn't I?"

"Son of a gun." Gary shook his hand.

A little later, Gary wanted to wrestle with the left arm. He lost again. Then he tried finger wrestling. No one beat Vern at that.

"You know," Gary said, "I don't usually take a whipping very kindly."

When Vern didn't look away, Gary said, "Vern, you're all right."

Vern wasn't so sure how he felt about the whole thing.

9

Spencer McGrath had developed a few novel techniques in his field. He was able, for instance, to take old newspapers and produce high-quality insulation for homes and commercial buildings. At present, he was working on a plan to take in all the county garbage for recycling. He had been trying to interest people in such projects for twenty years. Now, the field had begun to open up. Just two and a half years ago, Devon Industries in Orem arranged with Spencer McGrath to transfer his operation from Vancouver, Washington, to Utah County.

Spencer had fifteen people in his employ. They were engaged in building the machinery he would need to fulfill his contract with Devon Industries. It was a large contract and McGrath was working very hard. He knew it had become one of those times in a man's life when he could advance his career and his finances ten years in two years. Or he could fail, and have gained very little beyond the knowledge of how hard he could work.

So his social activities were minimal. Seven days a week, he worked from seven in the morning into the night. Once in a while, in the late spring, he would go water-skiing in Utah Lake, or have friends over for a barbecue, but for days in a row he wouldn't even get home in time to see the ten o'clock news on TV.

Maybe he could have gotten away with less work, but it was Spencer's idea that you gave the time that was necessary to each person

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who came before you in the day. So it was natural that he not only kept an eye on Gilmore after he hired him, but talked to him quite a bit, and so far as he could see, nobody was trying to downgrade him in any way. The men knew, of course, that he was an ex-con—Spencer thought it was only fair to them (and to Gary for that matter) to have it known—but they were a good crew. If anything, this kind of knowledge could work in Gilmore's favor.

Yet it was all of a week before Spencer McGrath learned that Gary was walking to work whenever he couldn't hitch a ride, and he only found out because there had been some snow that morning and Gilmore came in late. It had taken him longer to walk all the way.

That got to Spencer. Gilmore had never told a soul. Such pride was the makings of decent stuff. McGrath made sure he had a ride home that night.

Later that day, they had a little talk. Gilmore wasn't real anxious to get into the fact that he didn't have a car while most people did. That got to Spencer too. He thought that with another paycheck or two, he could take Gary to Val J. Conlin, a used-car dealer he knew. Conlin sold cars for a little down and small weekly payments thereafter. Gilmore seemed to be appreciative of this conversation.

Spencer felt all right. It had taken a week but Gilmore appeared to be loosening up. He was coming to see that Spencer didn't like his people to think of him as a boss. He did the same work they did, and didn't want any superior relationship. If, as expected, his employees were faithful to what they were all trying to do, that was enough. No need to ride anybody.

Next day, Gary asked Spencer if he was serious about the car. He wanted to know if they could go down that afternoon and look at one.

At V.J. Motors, there was a 6-cylinder '66 Mustang that seemed to be pretty clean. The tires were fair, the body was good. Spencer thought it was a reasonable proposition. The car sat on the lot for \$795, but the dealer said he would move it at five and a half for Spence. It beat walking.

So that Friday when Gary got paid, Spencer took him back to the car lot and it was arranged that Gary would put up \$50, Spencer McGrath would add another \$50 against future salary, and Val Conlin

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would carry the rest of it in bi-weekly \$50 payments. Since Gary was getting \$140 a week and taking home \$95 of that, the deal could be considered functional.

Gary wanted to know if he could take time off on Monday to get a license. Spencer told him all right. It was agreed that Gary would stop for his license Monday morning, pick up the car, and come to work.

Monday, when he got into the shop, he told Spencer that the Drivers' Bureau said he would have to take a training course unless he had a previous driver's license. Gary told them he had one in Oregon, and they were going to send for it. In the meantime, he would wait on the car.

Wednesday, however, he picked up the Mustang after work. That night, to celebrate, he had an arm-wrestling contest with Rikki Baker at Sterling's house. Rikki tried pretty hard but Gary won and kept bragging it up through the poker game.

Rikki felt embarrassed at losing and stayed away. When, a few days later, he dropped in again, it was to hear that his sister Nicole had gone to visit Sterling one evening, and Gary had been there. Nicole and Gary ended up with each other that night. Now, they were staying out in Spanish Fork. His sister Nicole, who always had to go her own way, was living with Gary Gilmore.

Rikki didn't like the news one bit. Nicole was the best thing in his family as far as he was concerned. He told Sterling that if Gary did anything to hurt her, he would kill him.

Yet when Rikki saw them together, he realized that Nicole liked the guy a lot. Gary came over to Rikki and said, "Man, you've got the most beautiful sister in the world. She's just the best person I ever met." Gary and Nicole held hands like they were locked together at the wrist. It was all different from what Rikki had expected.

Sunday morning, Gary brought Nicole over to meet Spencer and Marie McGrath. Spencer saw a very good-looking girl, hell of a figure, not too tall, with a full mouth, a small nose and nice long brown hair. She must have been 19 or 20 and looked full of her own thoughts. She was wearing Levi's that had been cut off at the thigh, a T-shirt, and no shoes. It sounded like a baby was crying in her car, but she made no move to go back.

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Gary was immensely proud of her. He acted as if he had just walked in with Marilyn Monroe. They were sure getting along in supergood shape. "Look at my girl!" Gary was all but saying. "Isn't she fabulous?"

When they left, Spencer said to Marie, "That's just about what Gary needs. A girl friend with a baby to feed. It doesn't look like she'll be too much of an asset to him." He squinted after their car. "My God, did he paint his Mustang blue? I thought it was white."

"Maybe it's her car."

"Same year and model?"

"Wouldn't surprise me a bit," said Marie.

10

Since Spencer lived next door to the work shed in Lindon, Marie could look out the window and see when Gary was there half an hour ahead of time. Some mornings, she would ask him in for a cup of coffee.

While sipping it, Gary would put his feet on the table. Marie would walk over and slap him across the ankles.

"Now, there," Gary said to Brenda, "is a lady who knows her own mind. She's not wishy-washy." He grinned. "I put my feet up just to annoy her."

"If she's such a nice woman, why do you want to annoy her?"

"I guess," he said, "I like an ankle slap."

Brenda didn't want to hope too hard, but, God willing, Gary might come around the bend.

~~She wasn't too happy, therefore,~~
Brenda
house. Oh, God, Brenda said to herself, Gary would end up with a space cadet.

Nicole just sat there and looked at her. She had a little girl by the arm and didn't seem to know the arm was there. The child, a tough-looking 4-year-old, looked to be living in one world and Nicole in another.

Brenda asked, "Where are you staying?"

Nicole roused herself. "Yeah." She roused herself again. "Down the road," she said in a soft and somewhat muffled voice.

Brenda must have been on radar. "Springville?" she asked. "Spanish Fork?"

Nicole gave an angelic smile. "Hey, Spanish Fork, she got it," she said to Gary as if little wonders grew like flowers on the highway of life.

"Don't you love her looks?" Gary said.

"Yeah," said Brenda, "you got yourself a looker."

Yeah, thought Brenda, another girl who pops a kid before she's 15 and lives on the government ever after. One more poverty-stricken welfare witch. Except she had to admit it. Nicole *was* a looker. Star quality for these parts.

My God, she and Gary were in a trance with each other. Could sit and google at one another for the entire day. Don't bother to visit. Brenda was ready to ask the fire department to put out the burn.

"She's 19, you know," Gary said the moment Nicole stepped away.

"You don't say," said Brenda.

"Do you think she is too old for me?" he asked. At the look on his cousin's face, he began to laugh.

"No," said Brenda, "quite frankly I think you are both of the same intellectual and mental level of maturity. Good God, Gary, she's young enough to be your daughter. How can you mess around with a kid?"

"I feel 19," he told her.

"Why don't you try growing up before you get too old?"

"Hey, coz, you're blunt," said Gary.

"Don't you agree it's the truth?"

"Probably," he said. He muttered it.

They were sitting on the patio blinking their eyes in the sun when Nicole came back. Just as if nothing had been said in her absence, Gary pointed tenderly to the tattoo of a heart on his forearm.

When he had stepped out of Marion, a month ago, he said, it had been a blank heart. Now the space was filled with Nicole's name. He had tried to match the blue-black color of the old tattoo, but her name appeared in blue-green. "Like it?" he asked Brenda.

"Looks better than having a blank," she said.

"Well," said Gary, "I was just waiting to fill it in. But first I had to find me a lady like this."

Nicole also had a tattoo. On her ankle. GARY, it said.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

Johnny replied, "I don't."

Nicole was grinning from ear to ear. It was as if the best way to ring her bell was to tell the truth. Something about the sound set off chimes in her. "Oh," she said, extending her ankle for all the world to see the curve of her calf and the meat of her thigh, "I think it looks kinda nice."

"Well, it's done," said Brenda, "with a nice steady touch. But a tattoo on a woman's ankle looks like she stepped in shit."

"I dig it," said Gary.

"Okay," said Brenda, "I'll give you my good opinion. I like that tattoo about as much as I like that silly-ass hat you wear."

"Don't you like my lid?"

"Gary, when it comes to hats, you've got the rottenest taste I've ever seen." She was so mad she was ready to cry.

Less than a week ago, he had come over to apologize for how he had acted in the movie theatre, came over all decked out in beige slacks and a nice tan shirt, but wearing a white Panama hat with a wide rainbow band. That hat wouldn't even have looked happy on a black pimp, and Gary wore it with the brim tilted down in front and up in back like the Godfather. He'd stood outside on her mat, his body slouched, his hands in his pockets, and kicked the base of the door.

"Why don't you just lift the latch?" Brenda had asked in greeting.

"I can't," he'd said, "my hands are in my pockets," and waited for her to applaud the effect.

"It's a pretty hat," Brenda said, "but it doesn't fit your personality. Not unless you've turned into a procurer."

"Brenda, you're rotten," he'd said, "you're really ignorant." His whole posture was gone.

She had done it to him again. It didn't strike him well that she didn't like Nicole's tattoo any more than his hats. He got up to leave then, and Brenda walked them to the door. Coming outside, she was also surprised by the sight of the pale blue Mustang.

That was enough to restore him. Didn't it have to be fantastic, he told her. He and Nicole had both bought exactly the identical model and year. It was a sign.

She was in all wrong sorts the rest of the day. Kept thinking of the tattoo on Nicole's ankle. Every time she did, her uneasiness returned.

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THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

One day he came home with water skis and that bothered Nicole. It just wasn't worth the risk. He was stealing something he probably couldn't sell for more than \$25, yet the price tag was over \$100. That meant they could get you for felony. Nicole hated such dumb habits. He would take a chance on all they had for twenty-five bucks. It came over her that this was the first time she ever disliked him.

As if he sensed it, he then told her the worst story she ever heard. It was supergross. Years ago, while still a kid, he pulled off a robbery with a guy who was a true sadist. The manager of the supermarket was there alone after closing and wouldn't give the combination to the safe. So his friend took the guy upstairs, heated a curling iron, and rammed it.

She couldn't help herself. She laughed. The story got way in. She had a picture of that fat supermarket manager trying to hold on to the money and the poker going up his ass. Her laughter reached to the place where she hated people who had a lot of things and acted hot shit about it.

5

For the first time she had a day when she thought she shouldn't be living with Gary so much. A part of her simply didn't like staying that close to a man for so long a stretch, but as soon as she realized how she felt, Nicole knew she couldn't tell him. He expected their souls to breathe together. More and more, however, an old ugly feeling was coming back. It was the way she got when she had to fit herself to somebody. You could put that off only so long. She still felt better with Gary than with anyone else, but that wasn't going to change the fact that when she got into a bad mood, it was like she had two souls, and one of them loved Gary a lot less than the other. Of course, maybe a part of him was the same way. He couldn't be loving her that much when they got into one of those five-hour deals.

It happened the night he brought home the water skis. Next morning, she wondered if it had to do with Barrett. Jim had popped up the other day while Gary was out at the store. Walked through the door cool as you please after being away for months. Maybe it was just conditioned reflex, but she felt a little stirring down there.

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After Barrett left, she felt bad at the way she had only kind of told Gary the truth. She had no respect for Barrett, that was right. He was a pussy. But she hadn't let Gary know he could be an eel when it came to wiggling all the way in. So when Gary met Jim this first time, he hadn't acted too heavy. Of course, Barrett just acted like he was the father of Sunny and happy to be tolerated. Still, Nicole felt like she was keeping a rotten secret. Because Barrett could pass a cigarette and make something out of it. Tickle your memory like he was tickling your palm. Hint that you had a gift to offer.

Now, those last couple of nights, she had been tripping a little on good things in the past with Jim to get herself more in the mood for Gary. Barrett's timing had sure been good, just as Gary's—she had to admit—was getting a little crude. ~~Since Rosebeth~~, Gary had to make love six or seven times a week. Maybe they'd skip a night, but make up for it with two another. It was his idea, not hers. She enjoyed it more a day or two apart, but he kept pressing his damn luck.

This night, from seven to midnight, Nicole and Gary argued first about the water skis, then everything else. Finally she convinced Gary she wasn't going to fuck him. He had gone too far on uppers, downers, and around-ers. If she had a gift, Gary was not exactly bringing it out. Not with his demands to do this, do that. Suck him now. She looked at Gary across their bodies and said, "I hate sucking cock."

The Fiorinal had put a glaze on his eyes, but her words still hit. He took off. Left at midnight and didn't come back until 2 A.M. He was hardly through the door when he was asking her to suck him all over again.

Why? she asked. Like a dunce. Do it because I want you to, he said. It was as bad as the first night. They didn't get to sleep till five. At five-thirty, Gary was up like a maniac, ready for work.

6

Between midnight and two, Gary had been to see Spencer and Marie. When McGrath opened the door, Gary asked if he and Marie would like to play three-hand poker.

Marie was already in bed, but she got up and made a cup of coffee. The McGraths, however, did not want to play poker. Not after midnight. Spencer kept himself from saying, "It's a little rude to come by this late."

In fact, they were used to seeing Gary drunk. There had been a couple of times he came over at odd hours. Once he really needed calming down. Started to talk about what he would do to a fellow named Pete Galovan.

Another time Gary had dropped in when Spence and Marie were having a barbecue in the backyard. He was so drunk he couldn't lift the latch on the gate. Spence had to go over, and bring him in, give him some chow. There were a number of guests around but Spencer gave Gary full attention and made him drink a couple of cups of coffee. Then he talked about things that were wild. Got into reincarnation.

"You really believe that?" asked Spencer.

"Oh, you bet," said Gary.

"A lot of people think we come back as other species, like a horse or an insect," Spencer said. "Seems it would be hard to straighten things out if there's all that shuttling back and forth."

Gary didn't go for Spencer's idea. He was going to come back as a human. If he messed this life up, he'd do a better job in the next one. "Why not a better job in this one?" Spencer thought. Chose not to say it.

Of course ever since Gary had found out that Spencer knew a little about cars, he had begun to come by on Saturday with his Mustang. The muffler fell off once, and Gary didn't know to get it back by tightening the clamp. Hadn't the slightest idea. It wasn't that he was lazy, but a month before he might have tried to figure the situation out. Now, he didn't seem to show any initiative. It was more like he was offended there was something wrong with the car. What he couldn't recognize was that these malfunctions might be due to his inability to drive knowledgeably. One more reason for Spencer to be after him continuously about starting the study program for a driver's license. Talking to the wind. Gary could sure keep you awake. Spence would have gotten as much sleep if he had played poker.

He had to admit it, Gary made him sad. In the beginning, he had always been coming over to ask Craig Taylor or himself to take a look at what he had done. If Gary got the hang of something new, he was pleased when they praised him for it. Swelled up proud. Now that he had been living with Nicole, Spence didn't know if he cared whether he did a good job or not. More like he was putting in his time for the paycheck. Those cutoff Levi's of hers. Gary seemed to be going down to the girl's level.

Unable to sleep, Spencer got mad all over again at the way Gary would now goof off during the day. You had to notice how long he took for lunch. Then, every Thursday he had to leave early to see his parole officer. Plus other time he took for other excuses. Not a week had gone by without asking for extra money, and Spence never deducted the lost hours or his own out-of-pocket from the paycheck. Once, Gary did talk of doing a painting to wipe out the debt, but so soon as Marie and he began to think about it, Gary didn't bring it up anymore.

Next morning, before they were even straightened out on the job, Gary was asking if anybody'd like to buy a pair of water skis. One fellow came up to Spence to inquire if Gary might have stolen them. Spence asked, "Are they brand-new?" Couldn't believe Gary had ripped off water skis. A man might slip cufflinks or a watch into his pocket, but how did you steal those big slats right out of a store?

Spencer looked upon himself as a real simple character, but he was beginning to wonder if Gary was taking marijuana on the job or something. He sure looked awful this morning.

"Gary," Spence said, "let's get down to something basic. Every week you're broke. Why don't you take the money you spend on beer and save it?" Gary said, "I don't pay for beer." "Well, then who in hell gives it to you?" Gary said, "I just walk in a store, and take a six-pack."

Spence said, "Nobody catches you, huh?" "No." "How long you been doing that?" "Weeks." Spencer said, "Steal a six-pack of beer every day and never been caught?" Gary said, "Never." Spencer said, "I don't know. How come people get caught and you don't?" Gary said, "I'm better than they are."

"I think you're pulling my leg," said Spencer.

Gary proceeded to tell about the black convict he had stabbed 57 times. Now Spencer thought Gary was trying to impress him with how tough he was, see if he would scare. "Come on, Gary," he said, "57 times sounds like a variety of soup."

After they finished laughing, Gary broke it to Spence. He'd like to get off early on Friday.

"I don't know if you've noticed," said Spence, "but the other fellows don't take off. They work all day, and take care of things after hours. That's how it's normally done."

Still, he gave him the time. One more time. Spence felt a little uneasy. After all, the government, with the ex-convicts' program, was paying half of Gary's \$3.50 an hour. It could account for why Gary was giving him half an hour on the hour.

7

One afternoon, while Nicole was away on a visit to Kathryne, Barrett visited the house in Spanish Fork and found Rosebeth there. By the time Nicole came back, her little friend was no virgin anymore.

At first, Rosebeth merely mentioned that Barrett had been there. Oh, Nicole asked, for how long? About an hour, said Rosebeth, and a half. Nicole began to laugh. If Barrett wasn't feeling bashful, he was in bed. An hour and a half was time enough for Barrett. Seeing that Nicole wasn't upset, Rosebeth began to giggle. She knew now, she told Nicole, why Gary had never been able to put it in. Too big. Nicole and Rosebeth began to have this long laugh waiting for Gary to get home from work.

Gary, however, had dropped in on Val Conlin. The beer he brought was ice cold. After ~~that~~ run-in for not paying on time, Gary made a practice of bringing a six-pack when he went by. Val was appreciative.

Gary had his eye on a truck. The one on the lot that was painted white.

"Buddy," said Val, "pay off the Mustang and I'll get you something better."

"I got to have that truck."

"No can do without mucho mazuma," said Val. The truck was up

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for sale at \$1,700. "Listen, pardner, unless you come back with a co-signer, it's too good a truck for you."

Gary thought he could. Maybe his Uncle Vern.

"I know Vern," said Val, "and I don't think he's in shape for this kind of credit. But, if you want, have him fill out the application. We can always see what we can do."

"Okay," said Gary, "okay." He hesitated. "Val," he said, "that Mustang is no good. I had to put a new battery in, and an alternator. It came to fifty dollars."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Well, if I buy the truck, I think you could allow for what I had to lay out on the Mustang."

"Gary, you buy the truck, and we'll knock that fifty dollars off. No problem. Just get a co-signer."

"Val, I don't need a co-signer. I can make the payments."

"No co-signer, no truck. Pardner, let's keep it simple."

"The goddamn Mustang isn't any good."

"Gary, I'm doing you the favor. If you don't want the Mustang, leave the son of a bitch right out there."

"I want the truck."

"The only way you get the truck is by putting a lot of money on the front end of the loan. Or come in with a co-signer. Here, take this credit application to Vern."

Gary sat across the desk, looking out the window at the white truck on the end of the line. It was as white as the snow you could still see on the peak of the mountains.

"Gary, fill out the application and bring it back."

Val knew it. Gary was madder than hell. He didn't say a word, just took the application, got up, walked out the door, wadded it up, and threw it on the ground.

Harper, Val's salesman, said, "Boy, he's hot."

"I don't give a shit," said Val. Around him, people got hot. That was run of the mill. Just his hell-of-a-success-story boiling away.

In the middle of making love that night, Gary called Nicole, Pardner. She took it wrong. Thought he was jiving at her for getting it on with

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Rosebeth. But as he tried to explain later, he often called men and women alike by Buddy or Pal, Pardner, things like that.

In the morning, it was the Mustang. His car would not start. It was as if something in Gary's makeup killed off the electrical system every morning.

Kathryn was getting another impression of Gary. It began one day around breakfast when he came knocking on her door. It was that late he was so covered with something material that he looked like a man who had clawed his way up of the earth.

He had dropped in, he told her, to see a look at the room she wanted about Kathryn just then. Kathryn said that the time North had brought him was "where" and there was a man standing about looking at the back of his head. Kathryn said she was sure. She wanted to get out of Gary too.

Well, Kathryn said, and she had to talk to a boy who worked with her. Kathryn gave the address. Kathryn said that was real nice. Just enough to get back that same afternoon with a list of engines that looked like a list. She said she'd talk about it.

Three days later, Kathryn said, there was Gary in the doorway again. Talking to her. Kathryn said I'd come and have a beer with you. Get your head out of the hole, and Kathryn, just coffee. Well, he told her, I'd come in morning, then something to eat.

She said she would make him a sandwich. That was okay. He would sit down and get a cup of coffee. Kathryn just looked at her kid sister Kathy.

Two minutes later, he was back with the beer. While she had the sandwich, he started eating. When a conversation, if the time came he came to her house, he never opened his mouth, now, right off, he told Kathryn and Kathy that he had taken the car back. Wanted to know if they might need engine parts. No, she said, she had plenty. How about that? he inquired. Kathryn said it, very cold.

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CHAPTER 9

IN TROUBLE WITH THE LAW

1

Kathryne was getting quite an impression of Gary. It began one day around lunchtime when he came knocking on her door. It startled her. He was so covered with insulating material that he looked like a man who had clawed his way out of the earth.

He had dropped by, he told her, to take a look at the room she wanted done. Kathryne just about remembered that the time Nicole had brought him over to meet her, there was a conversation about insulating the back room. Fine, Kathryne told him now, fine. She wanted to get rid of Gary fast.

Well, he took the look and said he'd have to talk to a boy who worked with him. Then they'd give the estimate. Kathryne said that was real nice. Sure enough, he was back that same afternoon with a kid of eighteen who figured the job at \$60. She said she'd think about it.

Three days later, at lunchtime, there was Gary in the doorway again. Talking fast. Said, I thought I'd come and have a beer with you. Got some beer? Gee, she didn't, said Kathryne, just coffee. Well, he told her, I'll come in anyway. Got something to eat?

She said she could make him a sandwich. That was okay. He would run down and get a six-pack. Kathryne just looked at her kid sister Kathy.

Ten minutes later, he was back with the beer. While she fixed the sandwiches, he started talking. What a conversation. If the first time he came to her house he never opened his mouth, now, right off, he told Kathryne and Kathy that he had stolen the six-pack. Wanted to know if they might need cigarettes. No, she said, she had plenty. How about beer? he inquired. Seldom drink it, very seldom.

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The day before he had gone in the store, he said, picked up a case, walked out, and was setting it in his trunk when a kid not old enough to drink asked if Gary would buy him a case, and handed over five bucks. Gary started to laugh. "I walked in, picked up the kid's beer, walked out, gave it to him, and took off with the cash."

They were careful to laugh. Weren't you afraid? they asked. No, said Gary, act like you own the place.

He started telling stories. One after another. They couldn't believe him. Told of tattooing a man named Fungoo, and taking a fake photograph of a pervert named Skeeze, then there was a fellow he hit over the head with a hammer, and he stabbed a nigger 57 times. He'd look at them carefully, say, Now did you understand that? His voice got gruff.

They would put on a smile. Gary, the ladies would say, that's something else, you know. They got themselves to laugh. Kathryn didn't know if she was more afraid for Nicole or herself. About the time he'd stayed an hour and a half, she asked if he wouldn't be late getting back to work.

To hell with the job, said Gary. If they didn't like it over at the job, they knew what they could do. Then he told about a friend of his who gave it to the manager of a supermarket with a hot curling iron.

All the while, he watched them real close. He had to see their reaction. They felt they better have a reaction.

Weren't you afraid, Gary? they would ask. Didn't you think somebody would catch you?

He did a lot of boasting. Sounded like he was banging along in a boat from rock to rock. When he left, he thanked them for being so sociable.

2

Nicole heard about the lunch. There was a piece of him, she decided, that liked to tell crazy stories to grown-ups. It must have gotten locked in at the age of eight.

Then she ~~thought of the night up in the hills behind the nuthouse~~ ~~she~~ wondered if he was a magnet to evil spirits. Maybe he had to act that nasty to keep things off. The idea didn't cheer her. He could get meaner and meaner if that was the truth.

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Around midnight, Nicole was feeling awfully cooped up with Gary. She found herself thinking of Barrett. It kept working away in her. There had also been a letter from Kip that afternoon but she kept thinking about Barrett and Rosebeth.

She hadn't even wanted to open Kip's letter, and when she did, he wrote that he wanted her to come back. The letter left her feeling crowded. It was like the past was coming back. Hampton, of all people, was going around with her sister April. Everybody, Nicole decided, was fucking with her head.

All the while she was having these thoughts, Gary had been sitting at her feet. Now he had to pick this moment to look up with all the light of love shining in his eyes. "Baby," he said, "I really love you all the way and forever." She looked back. "Yeah," she said, "and so do seven other motherfuckers."

Gary hit her. It was the first time, and he hit her hard. She didn't feel the pain so much as the shock and then the disappointment. It always ended the same way. They hit you when they felt like it.

Soon enough, he apologized. He kept apologizing. But it did no good. She had been hit so fucking many times. The kids were in bed, and she looked at Gary and said, "I want to die." It was how she felt. He kept trying to make up. Finally, she told him that she had felt like dying before but never did anything about it. Tonight, she wouldn't mind.

Gary got a knife and held the point to her stomach. He asked her if she still wanted to die.

It was frightening that she wasn't more afraid. After a few minutes, she finally said, "No, I don't," but she had been tempted. After he put the knife away, she even felt trapped. She couldn't believe the size of the bad feeling that came down on her then.

They had one more marathon. Up all night about whether to fuck. In the middle, around midnight, he took off. Not too long later, he came in with a bunch of boxes. There was a pistol in every box.

She got over it a little. She had to. The guns hung around.

3

Sterling Baker had a birthday party the last Sunday afternoon in June, and the party went on in Sterling's apartment and out in the backyard, fifteen or twenty good people. A lot brought bottles. Nicole had cut-offs on, and a halter top, and knew she was looking good. Gary was sure showing her off. A couple of dudes began to tell Gary what a hot lady he had. Gary would say, "Know it," and grab her by both breasts, or pull her into his lap.

Well, it was Sterling's birthday, and Nicole still had this little crush on her cousin. So Nicole started kidding him about a birthday kiss and Sterling said he'd take her up on it. She asked Gary if it was okay. He gave her a look, but she went and sat on Sterling's lap anyway. Gave him a long kiss that would tell a lot about her.

When she opened her eyes, Gary was sitting with no expression on his face. He said, "Had enough?"

They were keeping a keg of beer out in the back. The fellow upstairs had also invited his friends, and one of them was a guy called Jimmy, a Chicano. He picked up a pair of sunglasses that Sterling had laid on the roof of a broken-down old car out in the back lot while he was tapping a keg. Nicole figured maybe Jimmy didn't know. Just picked them up. Only thing, the glasses were a present from Gary to Sterling.

Gary came on strong. "I want them glasses back," he told Jimmy, "they're mine." Jimmy got kind of upset and left. Nicole started shrieking. "You're fucking up the party," she shouted at Gary. "All this horse-shit over a stupid pair of glasses."

Jimmy came back to the party with a couple of friends. As soon as he walked in the yard, Gary was on his feet and heading toward him. They were throwing fists before you could stop it.

Maybe Gary was too drunk, but Jimmy split his eye with the first punch. Blood was running all over Gary's face. He got hit again and went down to his knees, got back up and started swinging.

About that time, everybody broke the fight up. Sterling walked Jimmy around the front of the house and got him to leave. Just as Jimmy was walking off, Gary came up holding a gear knob that he'd taken off the beat-up car in the backyard. Sterling stepped in front of him. "Gary,

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you're through with that, you're not going to hit him," he said. Just talking in a normal tone of voice. But he had a big fellow standing next to him to back what was said. Nicole got Gary out and took him home.

She hated to see her man have his ass whipped. Especially when he started it. She thought he was a fool all the way. ~~A cheater, too. Like when he ass whipped her brother.~~

He wanted to go back and find Jimmy. By keeping her mouth shut about how disappointed she was in his fighting, she managed to get him to Spanish Fork. She had hardly ever known a guy who hated to lose a rumble as much as Gary. That softened her feelings somewhat. After all, he had taken a beating from a very tough dude, and hadn't quit.

After she washed him off, Nicole discovered that the cut was bad. So she took him next door to her neighbor Elaine, who had just gotten through taking this emergency course on being an ambulance driver and Elaine said he definitely needed stitches. Nicole started to worry. She had heard that oxygen in the air could enter a cut near the eye, go right to the brain, and kill you. So she did take him to the doctor. Through the rest of the night she kept ice packs on his face and babied him, and kind of enjoyed it, considering how things had been lately. In the morning, when he tried to blow his nose, his cheeks blew up right around his glands and sinuses.

4

Spencer said, "Gary, it doesn't make much sense putting your body up to be abused."

"They can't hurt me," said Gary.

"Oh, no? Your eye is cut and it's turning black, and you've got a lump on your forehead and he gave you a good one on the nose. Don't stand there and put that stuff on me, Gary. I just can't believe you keep getting the best of these deals."

Gary said, "I sure did, you know."

Spencer said, "What's going to happen one night is some little guy about five foot six"—which was around Spencer's height—"is going to stuff a mudhole right in the middle of your face. Because that's what happens. A guy doesn't have to be seven feet tall to be mean."

"I'm Gary Gilmore," Gilmore said, "and they can't hurt me."

In the evening, driving around with Nicole and Sunny and Peabody, he stopped at V.J. Motors to talk to Val Conlin about the truck. Even got to take it out for an hour. Gary was that happy up high behind the wheel with something like a real motor in front of them. All the while she could feel him thinking of the guns. They were shining like \$\$\$ in his eyes.

When he got back, he talked to Val about the size of a down payment. Nicole was hardly listening. It was boring to sit in the showroom with all the freaks and deadbeats who were waiting to get some piece of a car. One girl was wearing a turban and had a big swipe of eyeshadow under each eye, and her blouse just about pulling out of her belt. She said to Nicole, "You have very beautiful eyes." "Thank you," said Nicole.

Gary kept repeating himself like a record with a scratch. "I don't want that Mustang," he said to Val.

"Then let's get closer to the truck, buddy. We're not near it. Come in with a co-signer or with money."

Gary stalked away. Nicole hardly had time to gather the kids and follow. Outside the showroom, Gary was swearing like Val had never heard him swear before. Through the showroom window Val could see the Mustang, and it wouldn't start. Gary sat there pounding the wheel as hard as he could.

"Jesus," said Harper, "this time, he is really hot."

"I don't give a shit," said Val, and walked through the people sitting around with their debts on different cars. Yeah, I'm right on top of the mountain, thought Val, and went outside and said to Gary, "What's the matter?"

"This son of a bitch," said Gary, "this goddamn car."

"Well, now, hold it. Let's get some jumper cables, we'll get it started," and, of course Val did, just needed the boost, and Gary took off in a spray of gravel like he had a switch to his hind end.

By the following night, Gary had a guy who would sell the guns. But they had to meet him. That meant carrying the guns in the car. Gary didn't have a license and her Mustang still had last year's license plates. Both cars had the crappy kind of look a State Trooper would pull over for nothing. So they had quite an argument before they finally put the pistols in her trunk and started out. They brought the kids along. The

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kids might be insurance against a State Trooper waving them over for too little.

On the other hand, Sunny and Jeremy made her awfully aware of his driving tonight. That definitely got Nicole nervous. He finally swung into the Long Horn Cafe, a taco joint between Orem and Pleasant Grove, to make a phone call. Only he couldn't get ahold of the guy who was to peddle the guns. Gary was getting more and more upset. It looked like the evening was going to get totally squandered. A sweet early summer night.

He came back out of the Long Horn and looked in the car for another phone number, then started tearing pages out of the book. By the time he finally found the number, his guy was out. Sunny and Jeremy were beginning to make a lot of noise. Next thing she knew, Gary spun out of the Long Horn and headed back toward Orem. He was going 80. She was petrified for the kids. Told him to pull over.

He slammed to the shoulder. A screeching halt. He turned around, and started spanking the kids. They hadn't even been making a sound the last minute. Too scared of the speed.

She started hitting Gary right there, hit him with her fists as hard as she could, hollered for him to let her out of the car. He grabbed her hands to hold her down, and then the kids started screaming. Gary wouldn't let her out. Then this really dumb-looking guy walked by. She must have sounded as if Gary was killing her, but the fucker just stopped and said, "Anything wrong?" Then walked on.

Nicole wouldn't stop hollering. Gary finally wedged her into the space between the bucket seats and got his hand over her mouth. She was trying not to pass out. He had his other hand on her throat to hold her down. She couldn't breathe. He told her then that he would let her go if she promised to be quiet and go home. Nicole mumbled, Okay. It was the best she could get out. The moment he let go, she started yelling. When his hand came back to her mouth, she bit real hard into the flesh near his thumb. Tasted the blood.

Somehow, she didn't know how, she got out of the car. She couldn't remember later if he let her go, or if she just got away. Maybe he let her go. She ran across the street to the middle of the highway divider, a kid in each hand, and started walking. She would hitchhike.

Gary began to follow on foot. At first he let her try to bum a ride, but a car almost stopped for her, and so Gary tried to pull her back to the Mustang. She wouldn't budge. He got smart and tried to yank one of the kids away. She wouldn't let loose, hung on with all she had. Between them, it must have been stretching the kids. Finally a pickup truck pulled over and a couple of guys came over with a chick.

The girl happened to be an old friend Nicole hadn't seen in a year. Pepper, her first girl friend ever. Yet, Nicole couldn't even think of the last name, she was that upset.

Gary said, "Get out of here, this is a family matter." Pepper looked at Gary, just as tall as she could be, and said, "We know Nicole, and you ain't family." That was all of it. Gary let go and walked up the street toward her car. Nicole got the kids into the truck with Pepper, and they took off. The moment she remembered how once she had wanted everything to be good for Gary, she started crying. Nicole couldn't help it. She cried a lot.

5

He got back into her Mustang, drove down to Grand Central Supermarket, picked up a tape deck off the shelf, and started to walk out. At the door, a security guard took one look at his black eye and asked for a receipt.

"Get fucked," said Gary and threw the carton into the guard's arms. Then he ran to the parking lot, jumped in Nicole's car, backed up, and slammed into a car behind him. He careened out of the space he was in, banged another car, and took off.

He zipped through Provo and got out on the back highway to Springville. There he stopped at The Whip. In the parking lot, he hid the pistol boxes under an oil drum, entered the bar, went to the men's room, put Nicole's car keys in the tank over the toilet, and came out to have a beer. While he waited, he called Gary Weston to come and pick him up.

Sirens came along the highway and wound down outside the door of The Whip. Two cops came in, and wanted to know who owned the blue

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"You have to turn yourself in to Mont Court in the morning," said Brenda.

"Cousin, keep on my ass about it, will you?" said Gary.

6

Nicole spent the night at her great-grandmother's house where he would never think of looking for her. In the morning, she went back to her mother's, and Gary called not long after, and said he was coming over. Nicole was scared. She put in a call to the police, and, in fact, was talking to the dispatcher when Gary walked in. So she said into the phone, "Man, get them out here as fast as you can."

She didn't know if Gary had come to drag her away. But he just stood at the kitchen sink. She told him to go away and leave her alone, and he just kept looking at her. He had a look as if everything inside him hurt, man, really hurt. Then he said, "You fight as good as you fuck."

She was trying hard not to smile, but, in fact, it made her a little less afraid of him. He came over and put his hands on her shoulders. Again, she told him to leave. To her surprise, he turned around and went. He practically passed the cops as they were coming in.

By afternoon, she regretted not letting him stay. She was really afraid he would not come back. A voice in her head kept sounding like an echo in a tunnel. It said, "I love him, I love him."

He showed up after work with a carton of cigarettes and a rose. She couldn't help but smile. She went on the porch to meet him, and he handed her a letter.

Dear Nicole,

I don't know why I did this to myself. You are the most beautiful thing I've ever seen and touched . . .

You just loved me and touched my soul with a wondrous tenderness and you treated me so kindly.

I just couldn't handle that. There's no bullshit or meanness about you and I couldn't deal with an honest spirit like yours that didn't want to hurt me . . .

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THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

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She had never known a fellow who wore a suit to the job every day, and it tickled her. The first thought to go through her head tonight when Gary had to leave the party, was that Roger Eaton had told her to use his home phone for emergencies. She could call him tonight. But that might spoil whatever little thing was there. It had been so long since she was able to think about one special or sexy quality in a fellow she liked instead of having to live with the whole thing—sweat, habits, gross-out, all. So she didn't call. Just talked to her father awhile, then went home.

Gary came in later. He had gone on drinking at Fred's Lounge with a couple of heavies in the Sundowners and now he was talking of getting a motorcycle. Told them he was going to rip one off. Then he looked kind of sheepishly at Nicole. Admitted they had almost laughed out loud at him. The one thing, they explained, a cop always looked over was a motorcycle! A hot motorcycle lasted about as long as an ice cube in your ass. Still, they were real dudes—equal to himself. He looked forward, he said, to doing business with them.

He was like a 19-year-old kid. Into bikes. Happy that bikers liked him. It softened her enough for things to get sweet again. ~~What with meal, drink, and relatives in the flesh, the party had left a little sugar after all.~~ So they started to get it on. Then Gary had a time getting it up. She couldn't think of how she had once been so sure it would improve.

Gary always put the blame on prison. All those years he had to get his rocks off on nude pictures instead of learning on a real woman. She got mad enough tonight to tell him it was bullshit. He was drinking too much, using Fiorinal too much. Gary defended the Fiorinal. "I don't want to make love with a headache," he said. "I have headaches all the time, and Fiorinal relieves it."

She sat there with her anger pushed in like a spring. Dead and wet, he was going to give it a go. Don't start what you can't finish, she told him. Be straight.

The work began. Now they wouldn't get to bed till four, and he'd be up at six. Then he took some speed, and it took effect. He got hard as a horn and wanted to fuck. She was so tired she could only think of sleep. But they were doing it. On and on. He couldn't come.

Lying there, she said it clearly to herself, "He's a bad package."

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6

In the second week of July, on a hot morning, she found Jim Hampton over at her mother's house. After the way he had played around with April, Nicole didn't feel too good about him, but he had his little sister and brother in tow, and she kind of enjoyed spending a day with somebody else for once. They just drove around and even stopped at her place in Spanish Fork so she could pick up something for the kids. Then she returned Hampton to her mother's, and drove her own car back. With all that cruising, she must have driven close to a hundred miles that day.

By the time she got in, Gary was already back from work and looking at the motor of his car. She sat down on the front step. There was a silence between them you could push.

He finally asked her what she'd been doing. I, Nicole said, have been sitting on my ass over at my mother's. I didn't have enough gas to come back, so I had to stay there all the goddamn day. "Yes," she told him, "I've been sitting on my ass." Well, he told her, something feels different in the house than when I left this morning. Were you back here today?

Yeah, I got back here today, she answered. I thought you were sitting on your ass over at your mother's all day, he said. She gave a smile and said, That's exactly what I said.

Gary walked over from the car, looking as casual as if he was going into the house, and when he passed, he slapped her front-handed across the face. Pretty sneaky. Her head was ringing like an alarm clock.

Nicole felt like she deserved it. Rudeness that came out of nowhere was something he couldn't handle. Still, this was the second time he had hit her. She could feel a lot of ugliness beginning to collect in her.

Next day, she was able to let some of it out. Since she didn't always have money for diapers, or laundry soap, and there wasn't always clean underwear, she liked to let the kids play naked in the summer. Some of the neighbors must have gotten uptight.

On this day, while Jeremy was on the grass of somebody's lawn, and the rest of the kids were sitting on the edge of the ditch between the sidewalk and the street, their feet in the water, a cop car pulled up and

hollered something. Nicole couldn't believe what she was seeing. The cop drove no faster than a walking pace right up to her house, and came to her door, and started laying down some unbelievable shit, like you know, your kids are in danger of their lives playing in the ditch down there. Your little boy could drown. Nicole said, "Mister, you don't know what you're talking about. My little boy wasn't anywhere near that water. He doesn't have one drop on his body." He didn't.

The cop started to say the neighbors had been phoning in complaints about her not taking proper care of the kids. "Get off my property," said Nicole, "get your fucking ass down the road."

She knew she could say anything so long as she stayed in her house. The cop stood outside making threats about welfare, and she shut the door in his face. He hollered, I better not see those kids outside. She swung the door open again.

Nicole said, "Those kids are going to play outside all the goddamn day, and you better not touch them, or I'll shoot you."

The cop looked at her. He had an expression like, "Now what do I do?" In the middle of her anger, she could see his side—it was such a crazy situation for a cop. Threatened by a lady. Then she closed the door, and he drove off, and Gary got up from bed. These hot days the bed had been moved up right by the living-room window.

Suddenly she realized what those last couple of minutes must have done to him. She had completely forgotten about the guns. The sight of that cop stopping at their house was going to add up to a lot more beer and Fiorinal.

7

Next morning, he was over at Kathryne's house. She thought he was real abrupt. "Come outside," he said. Kathryne felt scared. "Can't you tell me here?" "No," he said, "outside."

She didn't like the way he was acting, but it was daylight. So she went out and Gary said, "I've got something in my car I want to leave here for a little while," and he went over to the Mustang and took a diaper bag out of the trunk and moved it over to the back of her car. Kathryne said, "What have you got, Gary?" and he answered, "Guns."

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"Guns?" she said. "Yes," he said, "guns." She asked where he got them. "Where do you think? I stole them." Kathrynne just said, "Oh." Right there on the back deck of her car he started bringing them out for examination. "I'd like," said Gary, "to leave them here." "My God, Gary," said Kathrynne, "I don't think you better. I can't keep them here."

"I'll be back," Gary said, "when I get off work. I just want to leave them in a safe place for a little while."

She couldn't believe the way he had set them out on the trunk of the car. If any of the neighbors looked through the window, they wouldn't believe what they were seeing.

Deliberately, he took each gun and described it to her like it was a rare beauty. One was a .357 Magnum this-or-that, another was a .22 Automatic Browning, then a Dan Weston .38 something-or-other. Kathrynne just said, "Gary, I don't know much about guns."

"How do you like this one?" he asked.

"Oh, they're nice, they're all nice, you know." She said, "What are you going to do with them, Gary?"

"A couple of dudes are going to buy them," he said.

By now, all the guns were unwrapped. He said, "I gave Nicole one to protect herself. Pretty little over-and-under Derringer. I want you to have this one."

"I don't need it, Gary. I really don't want it."

"I want you to," he said. "You're Nicole's mother."

"God, Gary," said Kathrynne, "I've already got a gun."

"Well," he said, "I want you to have this Special. It's just not safe for two women living out here alone like you and your sister."

She tried to explain that she already had her husband's Magnum. But Gary said, "That's too big a gun. You shouldn't even attempt to shoot it."

Now he laid the guns in her car trunk. Kathrynne let him know that she definitely didn't want to be driving around with them. So he said, "Let me leave them in the house." Told her he'd return at five o'clock. Well, she declared, she wouldn't be home then.

That was all right, he'd just come and get them. With that, he carried the diaper bag into the house, and put the guns behind the couch,

all seven or eight of them. Then he wrapped the Special in an old cloth, and put it under her bedroom mattress.

That evening when she and Kathy got home, they ran to look behind the couch and yes, the guns were gone.

8

During the day, while Gary was at work, Barrett came by in his truck and Nicole drove up with him to the Canyon. Sunny and Peabody left the pickup and went out to play. Before they could even light a stick, his pants were off, hers were off—they were getting it on. She heard herself say, "Gary is crazy. We might end up dead." Then she told Jim, "If anything happens, I want you to know that I love you." She really did as she said it.

Gary came home in a sloppy old windbreaker with the sleeves cut off. His pants were a mess, and he was half drunk. He told her to go over with him to Val Conlin's to examine the truck. She asked him to get cleaned up first. She didn't really want to be seen with him. He looked like he slept out in the yard.

Gary kept talking to that man Conlin as if he had the money. It was a real irritant.

Next, he wanted to stop off and see Craig Taylor. That was the dumbest. Craig's wife, Julie, was in the hospital. Now Nicole's kids and the Taylor kids were carrying on all over while Gary got to play chess with Craig. Whooped when he beat him.

Then Gary started to tee off on Val Conlin for making him wait on the truck. "I'll wreck the place and a couple of his cars too," he said. "I'm going to kick them windows in." It was like opening a bottle that smelled awful.

Craig just listened like an owl. He had the biggest shoulders she'd ever seen for a guy with an owl's face. Never said anything. Just blinked.

Gary said he hated to watch TV. He especially hated the police shows. Nicole yawned.

As they were leaving, Gary asked Craig, "What do you think of me?"

"Well, it seems like you're trying," said Craig. "Just have a few breaks and you'll be all right."

Going up from Craig's to Kathryne's, right on the long road to her mother's house, darn if the Mustang didn't stall again. Gary got so pissed he broke the windshield.

Simply reared back with his feet and kicked the windshield. It cracked.

That got the kids upset. Nicole didn't say two words. She got out and helped him push the car to get it started. It still didn't go. Then somebody came along to give them a shove. They drove in silence for a couple hundred yards.

For a week she had been trying to say that they could live in separate places and see each other time to time. Now, when it came to it, Gary spoke. "I'm taking you to your mother's house," he said, "I don't want to ever see your face again."

He dropped her off with the kids as easily as going down to the grocery for a six-pack. She thought she'd be glad, but she wasn't. It didn't feel like it was over in the right way.

In twelve hours, Gary showed up at Kathryne's house. Just ahead of lunch. He wanted her to come back. He was drunk even as he asked her. She said she wouldn't. She said, I want to think about it awhile.

He didn't want her to think. He wanted her to agree. Still, it amazed her. He didn't force a thing. After he left, though, she decided it had been too easy. By tomorrow he would be coming over every few hours. So she called Barrett and asked if she could stay at his pad. Nicole made it clear she didn't want to hang in. Just wanted a bed for a couple of days.

If she was going to disappear from Gary, there had to be better places than Barrett's. She went looking for an apartment. The next day, Barrett found one in Springville. Hardly anyone knew the address, and she made him swear to keep it secret.

Now she was living five miles away from the house in Spanish Fork. If Gary took the back highway to Provo instead of the Interstate, he would pass two streets from her place.

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THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

Barrett wanted them to try one more time. One more trip of the mind. When she was young and used to read animal stories, Kathryn had told her about reincarnation. Made it sound like a fairy tale. That was when Nicole made the choice to come back as a little white bird. Now she thought that if she didn't straighten out the way she lived with men, she was going to come back ugly and no man would ever want to look at her.

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with four or five officers and several news people, they were hardly alone, and Gilmore seemed ill at ease. He immediately said to Mike, "I'm new in the area and don't know any lawyers." Then he said he had no funds.

Since Esplin wanted to interview him a little more agreeably than this, they were moved down to the holding room in City Jail, a small cell with two bunks. Gilmore seemed paranoid that someone might be listening in on a bug, so they whispered, therefore, in low voices, and Gilmore said he had gone down to City Center Motel and happened to walk right into the robbery.

When Esplin asked Gilmore why he didn't go to the police after he was shot, Gilmore said being an ex-con, he was afraid they wouldn't believe him. To the lawyer, the story sounded like a bunch of bullshit.

In First-Degree Murder cases, the defense was allowed two attorneys, so, after the interview, Esplin went back to his office and called a few people. When two other lawyers told him that Craig Snyder, whom he knew slightly, did good defense work, he phoned and asked Snyder if he wanted to be involved. While he, Esplin, would be doing this as part of his regular salary, \$17,500 a year, a Court-appointed attorney like Snyder, Mike explained, would be paid \$17.50 an hour for legal work and \$22 an hour for Court time. Snyder said that would be agreeable.

Esplin then went back to the jail around noon, and told Gilmore the name of his new attorney. He also mentioned that they would charge Gary with the Jensen murder. Gilmore looked him in the eye and said, "No way, man."

Start

7

→ After the police had driven off, Nicole kept saying that Gary was crazy and she should have left him a long time ago. "That crazy bastard, that crazy bastard," she was still telling herself in the morning. When the Orem police called, however, a little before noon, to say they wanted Kathryn and Nicole to come down, she was pretty deliberate and cool about it. Even kind of flat.

She told Lieutenant Nielsen that she had had fights with Gilmore, and left because she was afraid of him. One time, she said, she had to get out of the car and run down the highway because he started to choke her. Then she told Nielsen that Gary had stolen the guns from Swan's Market in Spanish Fork. Added, "I can't tell you much more than that." "Look," said Nielsen, "I'm not going to prosecute you." So she told him that Gary had given her a Derringer for protection, but that after a while she felt she wanted protection from him.

When the interview was over, Nicole said, "Please don't tell him I told you these things because . . ." She paused and her mind seemed to slide away from all of them. It was as if she was looking for something a distance away, and then she murmured, "Because I still love him." A little later Lieutenant Nielsen drove her to the apartment in Springville and Nicole turned over her gun and a box of bullets. Nielsen couldn't get over how depressed she was about it all. He was used to taking the depositions of people who were real down, but Nicole would equal any of them.

After he came back to the station, the Lieutenant began to look into what evidence had accumulated. Two casings had been found under Jensen's body, and one in the blood by Bushnell's head. Those were useful, because an Automatic's markings were easy to identify. It looked like Provo would have authentication for Bushnell, and Orem for Jensen. If they could tie the gun to Gilmore, the case was solid.

Nielsen went over to see Gary about five in the evening. They had moved him already from Provo City Center to County, and that was one old jail. It was dirty. It was noisy. A real slammer. Nielsen had a real interview.

He brought along a briefcase on which you could flip the handle, and a tape recorder inside would start functioning unseen. He didn't dare take it, however, into the cell. Gilmore would have the right to inquire what was in that briefcase, and whether he was being recorded. Nielsen would then have to open it up. That would destroy all

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confidence Gilmore might have in him. So he left it turned on in the hall just on the other side of the bars. It would pick up what it could.

The county jail had to be one of the oldest buildings in Utah County. By July, it was hot enough inside to offer a free ticket to hell. With its windows open, you had to breathe the exhausts of the freeway. The prison sat on the edge of the desert in a flat field of cinders midway between the ramp that came off the freeway and the one that went up to it. The sound of traffic was loud, therefore. Since a spur of railroad track also went by, boxcars rumbled through the interview. When Nielsen tried listening to the tape recorder in his office, the sound of traffic on a hot summer evening was the clearest statement he could hear.

The detective had hopes for the interview. He felt Gilmore would talk ever since the moment right after the capture in Pleasant Grove when Gary asked for him. Nielsen had a strong feeling then that there would be a chance to get his confession. So he moved quickly and not at all unnaturally, into the role of the old friend and the good cop.

In police work, you had to play a part from time to time. Nielsen liked that. The thing is, for this role, he was supposed to show compassion. From past experience, he knew it wouldn't be altogether a role. Sooner or later, he would really feel compassion. That was all right. That was one of the more interesting sides of police work.

He had had his experiences. Years ago, when a patrolman, Nielsen did some undercover work in narcotics. There was a working agreement then with the Salt Lake City Police. Because Orem was still small, its police were well known to the locals. To get any effective undercover work, they had to import officers from Salt Lake City. In turn, Orem paid back the debt by sending a few of their own cops. That was how Nielsen first got into it.

His personal appearance, however, presented a problem. He had been a scoutmaster for seven or eight years and looked it. His substantial build, his early baldness, his eyeglasses and red-gold hair gave him the appearance of a businessman, rather than a fellow who might be dealing in drugs. For cover, therefore, he had pretended to

be a Safeway meat-cutter, a job he knew something about, since he had done a little of that while working his way through BYU. He even had a union card.

In Salt Lake City he became known for a time as the meat-cutter who was always looking for dope on the weekend. That worked. A lot of meat-cutters weren't known as the straightest people. Nielsen even used to wear working clothes that showed bloodstains on the chest of his white smock, and below the knees of his white slacks where the apron gave no protection.

8

On this hot July evening, Nielsen began by saying that Gilmore's story, unhappily, was full of holes. They were checking it out, but it did not add up. So he wanted to know if it would be all right if they talked. Gilmore said, "I've been charged with a capital offense, and I'm innocent, and you're all screwing up my life."

"Gary, I know things are serious," Nielsen said, "but I'm not screwing with anybody's life. You don't have to talk to me if you don't want to, you know that."

Gary walked away and then came back a little later and said, "I don't mind talking."

Nielsen was with Gilmore about an hour and a half. There, in a Maximum Security cell, the two of them locked in together, they spoke. Nielsen came on very light at first. "Have you seen your attorney?" he asked, and Gilmore said he had. Then Nielsen asked him how he was feeling. "How's the arm?" Gilmore said, "Hey, I'm really hurting. They only give me one pain pill, and the doctor said I was supposed to have two."

"Well," Nielsen said, "I'll tell them I heard the doctor say two."

Nielsen tried to be as easygoing as he could. He inquired if Gary liked to fish, and Gilmore answered that with the time he'd spent in jail, there just hadn't been much fishing. Nielsen began to talk a little about fly casting and Gilmore showed interest at the idea that

you had to get good enough to guess under different circumstances, what a trout was likely to accept in the way of a fly. The detective told him of taking overnight camping trips with his family up in the canyons.

Gilmore, in turn, talked about a few of his experiences in prison. Told of the fat girl who died, and the time they gave him too much Prolixin, and he swelled up, and couldn't move. Spoke of how prison demanded you be a man every step of the way. Then he asked a little more about Nielsen's background. He seemed interested that Nielsen had a wife and five children.

Was his wife a good Mormon? Gilmore asked. Oh, yes. He had met her at BYU where she had gone to get away from Idaho. What did she major in? asked Gilmore, as if he were truly fascinated. Nielsen shrugged. "She majored in home economics," he said. Then he grinned at Gilmore. "Her interest was to — you know, maybe, you know, kind of find a husband." Now they both laughed. Yes, said Nielsen, they had met in freshman year and were married the next summer. Well, said Gilmore, that was interesting. How did Nielsen become a cop? He didn't seem much like a cop. Well, actually, Gerald explained, he had planned on being a science and mathematics teacher when he went up to Brigham Young University from the family ranch at St. John's, Arizona, but he was an active Mormon and in his church work he met a detective on the police force whom he liked and so got interested and took a job as a patrolman.

Now he was a lieutenant, Gilmore remarked. Yes, in a little more than ten years he'd risen to be a detective, then a sergeant, now a lieutenant. He didn't say that he'd taken courses at the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia.

Well, that was interesting, said Gilmore. His mother had been a Mormon, too. Then he paused and shook his head. "It's going to kill my mother when she finds out." Again, he shook his head. "You know, she's crippled," said Gilmore, "and I haven't seen her for a long time."

"Gary," said Nielsen, "why did you kill those guys?"

Gilmore looked him right back in the eye. Nielsen was used to seeing hatred in a suspect's eyes, or remorse, or the kind of indifference that could lay a chill on your heart, but Gilmore had a way of

looking into his eyes that made Nielsen shift inside. It was as if the man was staring all the way to the bottom of your worth. It was hard to keep the gaze.

"Hey," said Gilmore, "I don't know. I don't have a reason." He was calm when he said it, and sad. Looked like he was close to crying. Nielsen felt the sorrow of the man; felt him fill with sorrow at this moment.

"Gary," said Nielsen, "I can understand a lot of things. I can understand killing a guy who's turned on you, or killing a guy who hassles you. I can understand those kind of things, you know." He paused. He was trying to keep in command of his voice. They were close, and he wanted to keep it just there. "But I just can't understand, you know, killing these guys for almost no reason."

Nielsen knew he was taking a great many chances. If it ever came to it, he was cutting the corners on the Miranda close enough to send the whole thing up on appeal, and he was also making a mistake to keep talking about "those guys" or "why did you kill those guys?" If any of this was going to be worth a nickel in court, he should say, "Mr. Bushnell in Provo," and "Why did you kill Max Jensen in Orem?" You couldn't send a guy to trial for killing two men on two separate nights in separate towns if you put both cases into one phrase. Legally speaking, the killings had to be separated.

Nielsen, however, was sure it would be nonproductive to question him in any more correct way. That would cut it off. So he asked, "Was it because they were going to bear witness against you?" Gilmore said, "No, I really don't know why."

"Gary," said Nielsen, "I have to think like a good policeman doing a good job. You know, if I can prevent these kinds of things from happening, that makes me successful in my work. And I would like to understand — why would you hit those places? Why did you hit the motel in Provo or the service station? Why those particular places?" "Well," said Gilmore, "the motel just happened to be next to my uncle Vern's place. I just happened on it."

"But the service station?" said Nielsen. "Why that service station in the middle of nowhere?"

"I don't know," said Gilmore. "It was there." He looked for a

moment like he wished to help Nielsen. "Now you take the place where I hid that thing," he said, "after the motel." Nielsen realized he was speaking of the money tray lifted from Benny Bushnell's counter. "Well, I put the thing in that particular bush," he said, "because when I was a kid I used to mow the lawn right there for an old lady."

Nielsen was trying to think of a few Court decisions that might apply to a situation like this. A confession obtained in an interview that was conducted without the express permission of the man's attorney would not be legal. On the other hand, the suspect himself could initiate the confession. Nielsen was ready to claim that Gilmore had done just this today. After all, he had asked Gary in their first interview at 5 A.M. this morning if he could come back and talk to him after the story was checked out. Gilmore had not said no. With the present Supreme Court, Nielsen had the idea a confession like this might hold up.

9

Nevertheless, Nielsen wasn't forgetting the Supreme Court decision on the Williams case. A ten-year-old girl in Iowa had been raped and murdered by a mental patient named Williams, who had been picked up in Des Moines and taken back to the place where he was to be charged. Williams's attorney in Des Moines told the detectives transporting him, "Don't question him out of my presence," then told his client, "Don't make any statements to policemen." All the same, on the way back, one of the detectives accompanying the suspect started playing Williams on his Christian side. The old boy was deeply religious and so the detective said: "Here we are, just a few days before Christmas, and the family of that little girl doesn't know where the body is. It sure would be nice if we could find the body and give the little girl a good Christian burial before Christmas. The family could at least have that much peace." He went on in such a low-key way that the old guy finally told them where the corpse could be found, and got convicted. The Supreme Court, however, had just overruled. They said once a guy has an attorney, the police could not interview him without permission.

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Yet here he was, talking to Gilmore while his attorneys were not aware of it. Still, a couple of technicalities could be argued. Gilmore had already, out on the road, in Nielsen's presence, been read his Miranda rights. Also, the attorneys had been appointed for the Provo case, not for Orem. He might still be, therefore, on legal ground. Besides, the key thing was not to get a confession but a conviction.

What would be good about a confession, even if they couldn't use it, was that it would produce information they could then employ to dig up further evidence against the guy, and get a good solid case. If they never used the confession in Court, they would have no trouble with the Miranda.

Besides, it would be good for morale. Once the police knew their man was guilty, they could feel more incentive to keep plugging hard on detail work. It would also avoid any power conflict with officers who wanted to work other leads. The confession would integrate the case, make it a psychological success.

They went through the cycle again. Nielsen talked about the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints and what his kids contributed on family night each week. Gilmore was interested in the details, and mentioned again that not only was his mother a Mormon, but all of her folks, and he talked about his father who had been a Catholic and drank like hell, and they stayed off the real subject as if they had earned a rest.

Then they would get back to it. Nielsen would ask one question, then a couple of questions. So soon as Gilmore began to assume a look that said, "No more questions," Nielsen would talk of other things.

Jensen's coin changer had been missing from the service station, and the police had spent much of yesterday going through garbage at the Holiday Inn with no results. Casually, Nielsen now asked about that. Gilmore stared at him for a long time, as if to say, "I don't know whether to answer you or not. I don't know if I can trust you." Finally he muttered, "I really don't remember. I threw it out the window of the truck, but I can't recollect if it was in the drive-in or on the road." He paused as if searching into his recollection of a movie and he said, "I honestly don't remember. It could have been at the drive-in."

"Would April know?" Nielsen asked.

"Don't worry about April," Gilmore said. "She didn't see a thing." He shook his head. "For all practical purposes, she wasn't there."

When Nielsen began to wonder whether April had any idea of the murder, Gary repeated, "Don't worry, she didn't see a thing. In her head, that little girl was never there."

He gave a turn to his mouth that was almost a smile. "You know," he said, "If I'd been thinking as straight the last couple of nights as I am today, you guys would not have caught me. When I was a kid I used to pull off robberies . . ." He had a look on his face like a pimp bragging of the number of women who worked for him over the years. "I guess," he said, "I must have pulled off fifty or seventy, maybe even a hundred successful robberies. I knew how to plan something and do it right."

Nielsen then asked him if he would have gone on killing, if he hadn't been caught. Gilmore nodded. He thought he probably would have. He sat there for a minute and looked amazed. Not amazed, but certainly surprised, and said, "God, I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I've never confessed to a cop before." Nielsen thought he probably hadn't. His record was certainly hard-core all the way. Egotistically speaking, Nielsen felt bolstered. He had gotten a confession out of a hard-core criminal.

"How many guns did you steal?" Nielsen asked. "Nine," Gilmore told him. "Where did they come from?" "Spanish Fork." "Then we've recovered all but three." That left three unaccounted for. Where might they be? "They're gone," said Gilmore. Nielsen didn't bother to follow up. The way Gilmore said that made it obvious they had been sold, and he would never tell who he sold them to. "I'm responsible," said Gilmore. "Don't blame other people."

Then he asked, "Did Nicole tell you about her gun?" "No," Nielsen said, "I asked her." Gary said, "I don't want her to get in any trouble about those guns." Nielsen assured him.

Nielsen tried to get a few more facts about the homicides themselves. Gilmore would give details up to the point where he entered the service station and then he would talk of everything after he left. But he did not wish to describe the crime itself.

1905

Nielsen was trying to determine what went on during the act. Gilmore had asked Jensen to lie on the floor. He must then have told him to put his arms beneath his body. No one would ever be found lying face down in such an uncomfortable position of their own choice. Next Gilmore had fired the shots right into Jensen's head. First with the pistol two inches away, then with the pistol touching. It was the surest way to kill a man and cause him no suffering. On the other hand, ordering those arms to stay under the body was the surest way to be certain the victim didn't grab your leg as you were putting the muzzle to his head. He could not, however, get Gilmore to talk about this.

"Why'd you do it, Gary?" Nielsen asked again quietly.

"I don't know," Gary said.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm not going to talk about that," Gilmore said. He shook his head delicately, and looked at Nielsen, and said, "I can't keep up with life."

Then he asked, "What do you think they'll do to me?"

Nielsen said, "I don't know. It is very serious."

"I'd like to be able to talk to Nicole," Gilmore said. "I've been looking for her and I'd really like to talk to her."

"Hey," Nielsen said, "I'll do anything I can to get her here." They shook hands.

10

About five o'clock that afternoon, while Nielsen was talking to Gary, April came home. She had heard about the murders on the radio and said it wasn't true. Gary hadn't done it. She also said she wasn't going to no police station.

Charley Baker had come in from Toelle when Kathryne phoned to say April was missing. Now, so soon as April saw them together, she got hostile and began shouting that if they tried to take her to the

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police station by force she would call on her protection to stop them. Then, all of a sudden, she seemed to give in. Said she would go.

Now, Kathyne did not want to bring April over on her own. Didn't know if the child would open the door of the car and jump out. So she begged Charley to come along, but he was hesitant. Said, "If she changes her mind even halfway over, then to hell with them. Turn around and bring her back." No way did he want to go.

July 21, 1976

NIELSEN What time did he get gas?

APRIL When we were at the service station in Pleasant Grove.

NIELSEN Was it after dark?

APRIL It was dark, it was past sundown.

NIELSEN After that did you drive around for a while?

APRIL He said he was taking me home and he wasn't going to put up with any of my smart-ass crap telling him where to go and he said he wanted a classy place like the Holiday Inn, so we went there and I was going to go to sleep because I was really tired. I didn't really know why, I felt like I was running from somebody — ever since somebody broke the windows in our bathroom at home, and I can't really sleep well since then.

NIELSEN And then you stayed there for that night until what time the next morning?

APRIL About 8:30 or 9:00.

NIELSEN I don't mean to imply anything or to pry into your personal life, but did you sleep with him that night?

APRIL I almost did, but I changed my mind.

NIELSEN Did he get mad at you then?

APRIL He was mad at me for acting like a kid half the time, but I just lost my love for him, only I never did sleep with him, or anything.

NIELSEN Did you tell your mom that?

APRIL She didn't ask me because she knows I have my private life and if I wanted to blow it, I could . . .

NIELSEN April, Gary is in very serious trouble. I know that, I have talked to him about it and there is no question about it. He already

told me you were with him at the time and so I know that you know about it. I am not interested in you telling me so that I can charge you. I don't intend to charge you with it, but I do intend to see that you tell the truth.

APRIL I am a split personality. I am controlling it pretty good today. A lot of time I like to just let go and let the other person creep on out . . .

NIELSEN Where did you go last night, when you left home?

APRIL I went riding around with a couple of friends.

NIELSEN Did they know him?

APRIL No.

NIELSEN Do you mind telling me who they were?

APRIL One is Grant and one is Joe.

NIELSEN Where did you stay last night?

APRIL I didn't sleep all night, rode to Wyoming, and just went in the mountains and down this road and came home.

NIELSEN What time did you get home?

APRIL 4:30 or 5:00.

NIELSEN Don't you worry about your mom worrying about you?

APRIL I don't think she worries about me. I'm not afraid of no guns and I am not afraid of no dudes with knives. They don't scare me. I have learned self-defense.

NIELSEN I want to ask you one more time about the service station. April, I think it would be best if you tell me what you know.

APRIL I don't remember the service station in Orem.

NIELSEN Do you remember seeing him pull a gun at the service station?

APRIL We went into a service station right before we went to the Holiday Inn and I am sure there were no guns attached. They may have been carrying them, but that's all.

NIELSEN Who are "they"?

APRIL Any of the dudes that were around.

NIELSEN Do you know any of them?

APRIL I recognize all of them, but I don't know some of their names. One of them works with him at the insulation place.

NIELSEN Insulation?

APRIL Where he works at the Ideal Insulation. I am pretty sure it was the friend we visited.

NIELSEN At the cafe?

APRIL It may not have been.

NIELSEN Are you about ready to go back home?

APRIL Yes. I am wondering why I am here.

NIELSEN I will be glad to help you if I can.

When April came out of the interview, she said, "Mama, they told me Gary killed two men. Do you believe that?"

Kathryne said, "Well, April, I guess he must have."

"Gary couldn't kill someone, Mama."

"Well, April," Kathryne said, "I think Gary told them he did."

CHAPTER 18

An Act of Contrition

1

Next morning, Gilmore was brought from Provo to Orem, and Nielsen saw him in his office, and apologized about the crowd outside. There were TV lights and a lot of reporters and city employees in the hall, but what really embarrassed Nielsen was that half the police force including off-duty officers had also come out. People were even standing on chairs to get a look.

Nielsen had his secretary bring a cup of coffee. Then he said, "Lieutenant Skinner is going to sign a complaint charging you with the homicide of Max Jensen." After a short pause, Gary said, "Hey, I really feel bad about those two guys. I read one of their obituaries in the paper last night. He was a young man and had a kid and he was a missionary. Makes me really feel bad."

"Gary, I feel bad too. I can't understand taking a life for the amount of money you got."

Gary replied, "I don't know how much I got. What was there?"

Nielsen said, "It was \$125, and in Provo, approximately the same amount." Gary began to cry. He didn't weep with any noise but there were tears in his eyes. He said, "I hope they execute me for it. I ought to die for what I did."

"Gary, are you ready to?" Nielsen asked. "It doesn't scare you?"

"Would you like to die?"

"Criminy," said Nielsen, "no."

"Me, neither," said Gilmore, "but I ought to be executed for it."

"I don't know," said Nielsen; "there's got to be forgiveness somewhere along the line."

2

A little later, Gary made a private call to Brenda.

"How," he asked her, "did the cops know I was at Craig Taylor's house?"

"Gary, you might as well know, I don't want you hearing it from somebody else. I called the police."

"I see."

Brenda said, "You're probably going to be bent real out of shape with me. But, Gary, it had to stop. You commit a murder Monday, and commit a murder Tuesday. I wasn't waiting for Wednesday to roll around."

"Hey, cousin," said Gary, "don't worry about it."

Brenda said, "Gary, you're going to go down hard this time. You're going to ride this one clear to the bottom."

He said, "Man, how do you know I'm not innocent?"

"Gary, what's the matter with your head?"

"I don't know," Gary said, "I must have been insane."

Brenda asked, "What about your mother? What do you want me to tell her?"

He was quiet for a while. Then he said, "Tell her it's true."

Brenda said, "Okay. Anything else?"

"Just tell her I love her."

Craig Snyder, Gary's other lawyer, was shorter than Esplin, about five-seven, with broad shoulders, blond hair, and pale eyes. He had eyeglasses with pale frames. Today, he was wearing a blond-colored suit with a tie that had several shades of yellow, green, and orange, and a yellow shirt.

On this morning in Orem, Snyder and Esplin didn't even know Gary was being interviewed by Gerald Nielsen until he was brought up to be arraigned. Afterward, they sat down with him, and he said he had committed both murders, and had told Nielsen.

They were certainly upset. Gilmore had been informed of his Miranda rights when arrested, but he had not been given full Miranda down at the jail. Any confession Gilmore offered had to be worthless,

the lawyers decided. It was infuriating. They had been kept waiting forty-five minutes while a Lieutenant of Detectives was grilling him.

In reply, Gary seemed more interested in the fact that Nielsen had promised he could see Nicole at the jail. He wanted his lawyers to make sure Nielsen kept his word.

3

Nicole was in Springville with Barrett when the police came. They didn't phone or anything. Just a cop to ask her to get ready. A little later, Lieutenant Nielsen was there in a car. He would drive her over to see Gary.

She didn't know how she felt, and she didn't know if she cared how she felt. It had been a real hang-up listening to Barrett. The last couple of days he had been coming on as the wise man. Her judgment, he kept saying, was so goofy. Like she had picked a middle-aged murderer for herself.

On the way, Lieutenant Nielsen was nice and polite, and he laid it out. They were going to let Nicole talk to Gary, but she had to ask if he had done the murders. Nicole was about to get mad at the suggestion, except she figured out Nielsen needed a reason to justify bringing her over. She was sure he wasn't so dumb as to think Gary was going to answer her question while a bunch of cops was listening.

That was how it turned out. Nicole walked into this funky one-story jail, went down a couple of short corridors, passed a bunch of inmates who looked like beer bums, then a couple of dudes who whistled as she went by, twirled their mustaches, showed a bicep, generally acted like the cat's ass. Two cops and Detective Nielsen were right behind her, and she came to a big cell with a table in the middle of it, four bunks she could see, and thick prison bars in front of her.

Then she saw Gary come toward her from the back of the cell.

had seen him arrested and lying on the ground, but she could feel the difference. He said, "Hello, baby," and, at first, she didn't even want to look at him.

With her head down, she muttered, "Did you do this?"

She was really whispering as if, should he say yes, maybe the cops wouldn't hear the question. He said, "Nicole, don't ask me that."

Now, she looked up. She couldn't get over how clear his eyes were. There was a minute where they didn't say any more. Then he put one arm through the bars. She wanted to touch him, but didn't. However, she kept feeling the impulse. More and more she had this desire to touch him.

It was close to a spooky experience. Nicole didn't know what she was feeling. She certainly wasn't feeling sorry for him. She wasn't feeling sorry for herself. Rather, she couldn't breathe. She could hardly believe it, but she was ready to faint. That was the moment when she knew that it didn't matter what she had said about him these last couple of weeks. She had been in love with him from the moment she met him and she would love him forever.

It wasn't an emotion so much as a physical sensation. A magnet could have been pulling her to the bars. She reached out to put a hand on the arm he extended through, and one of the officers stepped forward and said, "No physical contact."

She stepped back, and Gary looked good. He looked surprisingly good. His eyes were more blue than they had ever been. All that fog from the Fiorinal was gone. His eyes looked into her as if he was returning from all the way back and something ugly had passed through completely and was gone. All through these last couple of bad weeks, it was like he had been looking a year older every day. Now he looked fine. "I love you," he said as they said good-bye. "I love you," she said.

In the same hour that Nicole was going to and from the jail, April went berserk. She began to scream that someone was trying to blow her head off. Kathyryne could do nothing. First she had to call the police and then she decided to commit her to the hospital. It was

1913

horrible. April had flipped out completely. Kathrynne even had to keep the children out of the house all those hours while it was being decided.

4

The Sheriff, Ken Cahoon, was a tall man with an easygoing manner and white hair. He wore metal-rimmed glasses, had a large nose, a small mouth, a small chin, and a little potbelly. He liked to believe he ran a reasonably good jail. His main tank had bunks for thirty men, but he never went over twenty if he could help it. That kept the fights down. The trustees who worked in the kitchen were given a cell to themselves, and there was also Maximum Detention, with room for six. That was the tank where Gary now sat by himself. Plus another cell for six down the same hall to hold prisoners on work release. Altogether, Cahoon's jail could carry forty people without busting the seams of anyone's patience.

A while after Nicole left, Cahoon decided to look back in on Gilmore.

"I have blisters on my feet," Gilmore told him.

"From doing what?" asked Cahoon.

"Why," said Gilmore, "I've been jogging in place."

"Well, dummy, quit jogging in place."

"No," said Gilmore, "give me some Band-Aids. I'll put them on, and I can jog some more."

Next day, he asked the same thing. Said he wanted Band-Aids because his feet were sore. "Why, let's see," said Cahoon, "if you got an infection."

Gilmore said, "Just give me some Band-Aids. It's not that bad."

"No," said Cahoon, "if you got blisters, I want to see them."

"Oh, hell," said Gilmore, "forget it."

Cahoon decided he was pulling a bluff. There was no telling what he might use the Band-Aids for, unless it was to tape contraband to the bottom of the bedsprings or something.

Next morning, Gilmore said to a guard, "I want out of here today. I've got a Writ of Habeas Corpus. Let me see the head man of the jail."

Cahoon decided Gilmore must have the opinion they were backwoods in this little old humble place. Now Gary said to Cahoon in a nice confidential voice, "Look, I'm in for five days. I'm not being held for nothing but a traffic violation. So I would like out of here right now. You see," he said, "I've got to be under a doctor's care. As you may know, I came in with this cast on, and things of this nature want attention. I'd like to be taken to the hospital. The hand has to have its medication, and if you can't get me out, you see, there could be complications."

Cahoon thought Gilmore was a pretty good con man, considering the odds, and he didn't exactly laugh at the idea that Gilmore might get loose in some simple but crazy way. A while back, they'd had a man in the tank named Dennis Howell, and another prisoner happened to come in also named Dennis Howell. The same day, word came to release the first Dennis. So the jailer on duty who was new on the job went down the list, went back and said to the new arrival, "Howell, your wife is outside, you can go now." The wrong Dennis walked out the door, trotted right past the woman, took off like a whistle.

Gilmore sure kept trying. A little later, he wanted to get ahold of his attorney. Said he was going to sue the jail for not giving attention to his hand. He was really in sympathy with himself over that hand.

After it all failed, Gary said, "I know Utah County is poor in spirit, and full of hard feelings toward me, but Sheriff, you can let me go home now. I'm not mad anymore."

That was a pretty good sense of humor, Cahoon decided.

It made it easier for him to put up with Gilmore decorating the walls. Cahoon liked to eliminate any drawing of obscenity pictures but Gary was not doing that. Pictures he drew were nice pictures. They were also something you could erase. One day he'd do a drawing, and next day wipe it out, do another, so Cahoon never made an issue of it.

They really got along all right until Gilmore learned that they wouldn't allow him to see Nicole on visits. It seemed she wasn't family. That left Gary not speaking to anybody.

About the second time that Brenda went down to the jail, which was on Sunday, a week and a half after his arrest, Nicole had also shown up. When Gary heard she was outside, the expression on his face, Brenda had to admit, was beautiful. "Oh, God," he said, "she promised to come back and she did."

However, he explained, it didn't mean he could visit with her. She wasn't allowed on his list just yet. Brenda said, "Let me see what I can do." She went up to a big tough Indian guard at the door, a confident-looking fellow, and said, "Alex, could you put Nicole Barrett in for the last five minutes of my time?" "Well, now," he said, "we really shouldn't break the rules." "Bullshit," said Brenda, "what's the difference if it's me or Nicole? He ain't going to go nowhere! Why, Alex Hunt, you mean to tell me," she asked, "you can't take care of this poor man with a busted-up hand? What's he going to do with one hand? Tear you apart?" "Well," said Alex, "I think we can handle Gilmore."

While Nicole was visiting, Brenda walked over to Nicole's sister-in-law, who had also come. It was hot that day, and Sue Barker was holding her newborn baby and perspiring in volumes. "How is Nicole doing?" asked Brenda.

The sun didn't stir on the black cinder gravel back of the jail. "She's pretty broke up," said Sue.

Brenda said, "Gary's not going to get out of this one. If Nicole gets all hung up, it's going to ruin her."

"She won't quit," said Sue, "we already tried."

"Well," said Brenda, "she's in for a lot of hurt."

When Nicole came out, she was weeping. Brenda put her arms around her and said, "Nicole, we both love him."

Then Brenda said: "Nicole, why don't you think a little about giving up the ship? Gary is never going to get out. You'll spend the rest of your life visiting this guy. That's all the future you're going to have." Now Brenda began to cry. "Tuck those beautiful memories in your heart," she said, "tuck them away."

Nicole muttered, "I'll stick."

She was feeling an animosity toward Brenda she didn't even understand. Nicole heard herself thinking, "As if I owe her a million dollars for giving me five minutes of her visiting time."

6

There was a Preliminary Hearing on August 3 in Provo and Noall Wootton was determined to ram it through as hard and fast as he could. He had a lot of witnesses so his problem was to keep the case intact. When the defense asked for delay, Wootton objected.

He was reasonably confident of the conviction, or to put it more precisely, he was confident that if he did not get a conviction, it would be his own fault. He was, however, not at all sure of getting the death penalty. So he was feeling the usual tension he had before a case began. His stomach was right with him that morning.

At the Preliminary Hearing, Gilmore didn't take the stand, but Wootton did talk face to face with him in the recess. They got on well. They even joked. Wootton was impressed with his intelligence. Gilmore told Wootton that the prison system was not doing what it was designed to achieve, that is, rehabilitate. In his opinion, it was a complete failure.

Of course, they avoided talking about the crimes themselves, but Noall did detect that Gilmore was doing his best to soften him up. Gary certainly kept flattering him about what a fair and efficient prosecutor he was, what a basic sense of fairness he had. Said he'd never seen another prosecutor with that kind of fairness.

Not every con knew enough to run that line. Wootton expected Gilmore was working up to a deal. He must have heard they were going for the death penalty, and thought if he was nice enough, Wootton might feel encouraged to return from so far out a stand, far out at least from the defendant's point of view.

Sure enough, Gilmore got around asking what Wootton thought would happen. Noall looked him in the eye and said, "They might come back with the death penalty." Gilmore said, "I know, but what are they really going to do?" Wootton repeated, "They might execute you." He had the impression that took Gilmore aback.



Snyder also approached Noall, and suggested they plead guilty to Murder One, and accept a life top. Wootton kind of dismissed it. "No way," he said.

1917

He had made up his mind to go for Death after looking at Gilmore's record. It showed violence in prison, a history of escape, and unsuccessful efforts made at rehabilitation. Wootton could only conclude that, one: Gilmore would be looking to escape; two: he would be a hazard to other inmates and guards; and, three: rehabilitation was hopeless. Couple this to a damned cold-blooded set of crimes.

7

Nicole drove down to the Preliminary Hearing in Provo on August 3, but they let her visit with Gary for only a moment. It made her dizzy to see him in leg shackles. Then they only gave her time for one hug and a tremendous kiss before pulling him away. She was left in the hall of the court with the world rocketing around her. Outside, in the summer light, the horseflies were mean as insanity itself.

On the drive back to Springville, she was dreaming away and got in a wreck. Nobody was hurt but the car. After that, all the way home, her Mustang sounded like it was breaking up in pain. She couldn't shift out of second.

It became a crazy trip. She kept having an urge to cross the divider, and bang into oncoming traffic. Next day, when the mail came, there was a very long letter from Gary that he had begun to write as soon as they took him back to jail from the hearing. So she realized he had been saying these words to her at the same time she had been driving along with the urge to smash into every car going the other way.

Now she read Gary's letter over and over. She must have read it five times and the words went in and out of her head like a wind blowing off the top of the world.



August 3

1918

Nothing in my experience, prepared me for the kind of honest open love you gave me. I'm so used to bullshit and hostility, deceit and pettiness, evil and hatred. Those things are my natural habitat. They have shaped me. I look at the world through eyes that suspect, doubt, fear, hate, cheat, mock, are selfish and vain. All things unacceptable, I see them as natural and have even come to accept them as such. I look around the ugly vile cell and know that I truly belong in a place this dank and dirty, for where else should I be? There's water all over the floor from the fucking toilet that don't flush right. The shower is filthy and the thin mattress they gave me is almost black, it's so old. I have no pillow. There are dead cockroaches in the corners. At nite there are mosquitoes and the lite is very dim. I'm alone here with my thoughts and I can feel the oldness. Remember I told you about The Oldness? and you told me how ugly it was—the oldness, the oldness. I can hear the tumbrel wheels creek. So fucking ugly and coming so close to me. When I was a child . . . I had a nightmare about being beheaded. But it was more than just a dream. More like a memory. It brought me right out of the bed. And it was sort of a turning point in my life. . . . Recently it has begun to make a little sense. I owe a debt, from a long time ago. Nicole, this must depress you. I've never told anybody of this thing, except my mother the nite I had that nitemare and she came in to comfort me but we never spoke of it after that. And I started to tell you one nite and I told you quite a bit of it before it became plain to me that you didn't want to hear it. There have been years when I haven't even thought much of it at all and then something (a picture of a guillotine, a headmans block, or a broad ax, or even a rope) will bring it all back and for days it will seem I'm on the verge of knowing something very personal, something about myself. Something that somehow wasn't completed and makes me different. Something I owe, I guess. Wish I knew.

Once you asked me if I was the devil, remember? I'm not. The devil would be far more clever than I, would operate on a much larger scale and of course would feel no remorse. So I'm not Beelzebub. And I know the devil can't feel love. But I might be further from God than I am from the devil. Which is not a good thing. It seems that I know evil more intimately than I know goodness and that's not a good thing either. I want to get even, to be made even, whole, my debts paid (whatever it may take!) to have no blemish, no reason to feel guilt or fear. I hope this ain't corny, but I'd like to stand in the sight of God. To know that I'm just and right and clean. When you're this way you know it. And when you're not, you know



that too. It's all inside of us, each of us—but I guess I ran from it and when I did try to approach it, I went about it wrong, became discouraged, bored, lazy, and finally unacceptable. But what do I do now? I don't know. Hang myself?

I've thought about that for years, I may do that. Hope that the state executes me? That's more acceptable and easier than suicide. But they haven't executed anybody here since 1963 (just about the last year for legal executions anywhere). What do I do, rot in prison? growing old and bitter and eventually work this around in my mind to where it reads that I'm the one who's getting fucked around, that I'm just an innocent victim of society's bullshit? What do I do? Spend a life in prison searching for the God I've wanted to know for such a long time? Resume my painting? Write poetry? Play handball? Eat my heart out for the wondrous love you gave me that I threw away Monday nite because I was so spoiled and couldn't immediately have a white pickup truck I wanted? What do I do? We always have a choice, don't we?

I'm not asking you to answer these questions for me, Angel, please don't think that I am. I have to make my own choice. But anything you want to comment on or suggest, or say, is always welcome.

God, I love you, Nicole.



August 1977

353 - ~~351~~ ³⁶²

1920

CHAPTER 22

Troth

1

Gary was so quiet over the next few days that it got ominous. Cahoon decided he was too morbid and needed company, so he moved over a prisoner named Gibbs from the main tank. They had both done so much time, they might get along.

Cahoon noticed that soon as he shut the bars, they started a conversation in jail talk. It was that gibberish talk. Use a word like figger to say nigger. Show the other fellow how many years you put in by carrying on a whole conversation. Cahoon didn't try to get it all. If they said lady from Bristol, that meant pistol, and he would have to get concerned, but Gilmore was talking of ones and twos, and those were shoes. "Yeah," said Gilmore to Gibbs, "A nice pair to go with my fleas and ants."

"You still got to think," said Gibbs, "of your bunny and boat."

"Fuck the goat," said Gilmore, "let me stroll in with a dickery dick."

"That's right, it could juice the chick."

Cahoon left. They were just doing time. He thought they made a cute couple. Both had Fu Manchu goatees. It was just that Gilmore was a lot bigger than Gibbs. Like cat and mouse. Hell, like cat and rat.

2

There were only three things in the world Gibbs could honestly say he had any feeling for: children, kittens, and money. Been on his own since he was 14. When 17, he wrote and cashed \$17,000 worth of checks in a month and bought himself a new car. Always had new cars.

By the time he was 14, Gilmore said, he'd broken into 50 houses. Maybe more.

First time Gibbs went to prison out here, he was behind a 2½-million-dollar forgery. He took, Gibbs said, 21 counts. Next time he went back was when he blew up a cop's car in Salt Lake. Captain Haywood's car.

Gave him 15 years when he was 22, Gilmore said. Did them at Oregon and Marion. Gibbs nodded. Marion had the credentials. Flat-tened 11 years consecutively, Gilmore told him. Probably 4 years altogether in Solitary. Gilmore showed real pedigree.

He was in for rubber rafts, Gibbs told him. Stole forty of them in two weeks out of J.C. Penney's in Utah Valley, Salt Lake Valley, \$139 apiece. Chain saws same way. Made two or three hundred bucks a day. Just couldn't manage his money, that's all.

My problem, too, allowed Gilmore. He had also done a little boosting at J.C. Penney's.

"Yeah," said Gibbs, "the only difference between you and me is when I do it, I have two shoulder men to run interference. If they come after, my big boys say, 'What are you chasing this guy for?'"

Gibbs could recognize that Gilmore didn't know any heavies out of Salt Lake. Didn't know the Barbaro brothers, Len Rails, Ron Clout, Mardu, or Gus Latagapolos. "You're talking heavies, then," said Gibbs.

Gilmore spoke of the Aryan Brotherhood and his connections
Gibbs could recognize some heavy names out of Oregon and

Atlanta, Leavenworth and Marion. Not legends, but still heavies. Gilmore carried himself like he was well regarded. Of course, Murder One gives a man standing. When they ask you, "What do you get for killing?" the answer is "self-satisfaction." Clears the mind.

His ring, Gibbs told Gilmore, had done outboard motors, inboard motors, house trailers, and trailer homes. Don't get nervous when they see you carrying the stuff. They had a laugh over this. "Half a million dollars' worth," said Gibbs, "going right down the Interstate."

3

"If you get out before me," said Gilmore, "can you bring back some hacksaw blades?"

"Anybody would, I probably would," said Gibbs. In fact, thought Gibbs, he might. He had as much loyalty in one direction as in the other. He was the man in the old saying. "You got blue eyes, one blew north, one blew south." Except it was Gilmore had the blue eyes. He liked Gilmore. A lot of class.

"Hey," said Gilmore, "if you could figure a way to get me out of here, I'd pull any job you want. Just keep enough money for me and my old lady to leave the country, and I'll give you the rest."

"If I wanted out of this jail," said Gibbs, "I'd have people come take me out."

"Well, around here, I don't know people," said Gilmore.

"If anybody would, I would," repeated Gibbs.

The cell they were in was divided into two parts, a small dining area with a table and benches, and to the back, away from the bars, a toilet, a sink, a shower, and six bunks. On the other side of the bars was a corridor that led to the next tank. That was used as the women's cell. When no women were there, it was the pen for drunks. Their first night, they had a drunk next door who kept yelling.

Gilmore answered as if he were the jailer. "What do you want?" he bellowed. The drunk said he had to make a phone call. Had to get bond. Gilmore told him no Judge would give it. Why, the little boy he

had hit in the trailer court died. What little boy, said the drunk? Those are your charges: drunk driving, auto homicide, hit and run. Gibbs loved it. The drunk believed Gilmore. Spent the rest of the night crying to himself, instead of yelling for the jailer.

Gilmore began to do his exercises. That was something, he told Gibbs, he did every night. Had to, in order to tire himself out enough to get a little sleep.

He did a hundred sit-ups, took a break, then did jumping jacks, clapping his hands over his head. Gibbs lay on his bunk and smoked and lost count. Gilmore must have done two or three hundred. Then he took another break and tried push-ups but could only get to twenty-five. His left hand was still weak, he explained.

Then he stood on his head for ten minutes. What's the purpose of that, asked Gibbs. Oh, said Gilmore, it gets the blood circulating in your head, good for your hair. He wanted, Gilmore added, to try to keep as much youthfulness in appearance as possible. Gibbs nodded. Every con he knew, including himself, had a complex about age. What the hell, the youthful years were all lost. "My personal opinion," Gibbs said, "is that you are a young-looking person for 35 years old. I am five years younger, and look five years older than you."

"It's your coffin nails," said Gilmore, sniffing the smoke. He had picked a top bunk as far away as possible from Gibbs, who was sleeping in the bottom bed across.

"You don't smoke?" said Gibbs.

"I don't believe in supporting any habit you have to pay for," said Gary. "Not if you spend your time in lockup. They had a cell in Isolation named after me."

The drunk in the next tank was whimpering piteously. Gilmore said, "Yeah, the Gary M. Gilmore Room," and they both laughed. Listening to the drunk cry was as comfortable as lying in bed on a summer night hearing trees rustle. Yes, Gilmore told him, he had put in so much time in Segregation that he almost never earned money from a prison job. And there sure wasn't money coming from outside. Any luxuries allowed in the can, he had learned to do without. "Besides," he said, "smoking is bad for your health. Of course, speaking of health . . ." He looked at Gibbs.

Speaking of health, he expected the death sentence.

"A good lawyer could get you Second Degree. They parole Second Degree in Utah in six years. Six years, you're on the street."

"I can't afford a good lawyer," said Gilmore. "The State pays for my lawyers." He looked down at Gibbs from his bunk and said, "My lawyers work for the same people that are going to sentence me."

4

"They keep taking me," said Gilmore, "to be interviewed by psychiatrists. Shit, they come up with the stupidest questions. Why, they ask, did I park my car to the side of the gas station? 'If I parked in front,' I said to them, 'you'd ask me why I didn't park to the side.'" He snorted at that. "I could put on an act, have them saying, 'Yeah, he's crazy,' but I won't."

Gibbs understood. That offended a true man's idea of himself.

"I am telling them that the killings were unreal. That I saw everything through a veil of water." Now they could hear the drunk moaning again. "'It was like I was in a movie,' I say to them, 'and I couldn't stop the movie.'"

"Is that how it came down?" asked Gibbs.

"Shit, no," said Gilmore. "I walked in on Benny Bushnell and I said to that fat son of a bitch, 'Your money, son, *and* your life.'"

They both cracked. It was funny as hell. Right there in the middle of the night, in this hot fucking two-bit asshole jail, with the drunk slobbering in his shit and counting his sins, they couldn't stop laughing. "Pipe down in there," said Gilmore to the drunk. "Save your crying for the Judge." The drunk was one wet sorrow. Like a puppy first night in a new house. "Hell," said Gilmore, "the morning after I killed Jensen, I called up the gas station and asked them if they had any job openings." Again they cracked.

Gilmore, tonight, would break off his arm if he could make a good joke. Cut off his head and hand it to you, if his mouth would spit nails. "What's your last best request when they're hanging you?" he asked, and answered, "Use a rubber rope." Pretended to be bounc-

ing on the end, he put his face in a scowl, and said, "Guess I'll be hanging around for a while."

Gibbs thought he'd piss his pants. "What," asked Gilmore, "is your last request when they put you in the gas chamber?" He waited. Gibbs wheezed. "Why," Gilmore said, "ask them for laughing gas."

"That is enough," said Gibbs, "to choke you up."

For that matter, he was almost strangling on his own phlegm. Smoking gave him a dozen oysters every meal. The kid with the phlegm-pot. Gilmore asked, "What do you say to the firing squad?"

"I," said Gibbs, "ask them for a bullet-proof vest." They laughed back and forth like an animal going in circles and getting weak. "Yeah," said Gibbs, "I heard that one."

Gilmore had a quality Gibbs could recognize. He accommodated. Gibbs believed he, himself, could always get near somebody — just use the side that was like them. Gilmore did the same. Around each other tonight, they were like boiler-plated farts. Filthy devils.

No sooner did he think this, than Gilmore got serious. "Hey," he said to Gibbs, "they're figuring to give me the death penalty, but I have an answer for them. I'm going to check into the State of Utah's hole card. I'm going to make them do it. Then we'll see if they have as many guts as I do."

Gibbs couldn't decide if the guy was a bullshitter. He couldn't visualize doing something like that.

"Yes," said Gilmore, "I'll tell them to do it without a hood. Do it at night if it's outside, or in a dark room with tracer bullets. That way I can see those babies coming!"

The drunk was screaming, "I didn't mean to kill the little boy, oh Judge, I'll never drive again."

"Knock it off," shouted Gilmore.

Yeah, he said to Gibbs, the only legitimate fear a man in his position could have while facing the firing squad was that one of the marksmen might be a friend or relative of one of the victims. "Then," said Gilmore, "they might shoot at my head. I don't like that. I have perfect twenty-twenty, and I want to donate my eyes."

This guy was a roulette wheel, decided Gibbs. Just depended which number came up. "I've made a lot of mistakes in my life," said Gilmore from the upper bunk, "and a great many errors in judgment the last couple of months, but this I will say, Gibbs. I am in my element now. I have never misjudged a person who has done time."

"I hope you have a favorable impression of me."

"I believe you are a good convict," said Gilmore.

On that high praise, no higher praise, they went to sleep. It was three in the morning. They would bullshit until three every morning.

5

September 9

I'm not a weak man. I've never been a punk, I've never been a rat, I've always fought — I ain't the toughest son of a bitch around but I've always stood up and been counted among the men. I've done a few things that would make a lot of motherfuckers tremble and I've endured some shit that nobody should have to go thru. But what I want you to understand, little girl, is that you hold my heart and along with my heart I guess you have the power to crush me or destroy me. Please don't. I have no defense for what I feel for you.

I can't share you with any other man or men Nicole. I'd rather be dead and burning in some hell than have any other man be with you.

I can't share you — I want all of you —

I have to go without fucking, you can too. Sorry to be crude but that's true. We love each other and belong to each other let's don't ever hurt each other Nicole let's don't ever hurt each other.

This pain paralyzes me. I keep thinking of you being with somebody. I can't help it. I have to chase the ugly pictures out of my mind. I don't want anybody to kiss you or hold you or fuck you. You're mine I love you.

You said on the last page of your letter that I will not have reason to hurt that way ever again — I'm 35 fucking years old been locked up more than half my life. I should be a tough son of a bitch, all the things that have happened to me.

September 9

360

1927

I'm not a weak man. I've never been a punk, I've never been a rat, I've always fought—I ain't the toughest son of a bitch around but I've always stood up and been counted among the men. I've done a few things that would make a lot of motherfuckers tremble and I've endured some shit that nobody should have to go thru. But what I want you to understand, little girl, is that you hold my heart and along with my heart I guess you have the power to crush me or destroy me. Please don't. I have no defense for what I feel for you.

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You said on the last page of your letter that I will not have reason to hurt that way ever again—I'm 35 fucking years old been locked up more than half my life. I should be a tough son of a bitch, all the things that have happened to me

But I can't take being away from you—I miss you every minute.

And I cannot stand the thought of some man holding your naked body and watching your eyes roll back sleeping in your arms.

I can't share you—I won't. You've got to be all mine. I don't care that you say you have this crazy heart that won't let you refuse any request to make another happy. I have a crazy heart too. And my crazy heart makes a request of your crazy heart—don't refuse my request to be only mine in heart mind soul and body. Let me be the next and only man to have you.

God I want you baby baby baby
fuck only me

don't fuck anybody else dont dont it kills me dont kill me
Am I demanding too much??

Write and tell me—

TELL ME
GODDAMN IT

TELL ME

TELL ME

Fuck shit piss God Nicole
Tell me.

Wednesday and Sunday are too far apart——why don't you
write me more!?

Nicole don't be with anybody else dont dont dont dont
dont

I'm really fucking this letter up

I've got to come to a conclusion and this is it. I've got to have all
of you! With nobody can I share you. I love you.

I LOVE YOU

I LOVE YOU

I LOVE YOU

I LOVE YOU

No, I ain't drunk or loaded or nothing this is just me writing
this letter that lacks beauty—just me Gary Gilmore thief and mur-
derer. Crazy Gary. Who will one day have a dream that he was a
guy named GARY in 20th century America and that there was
something very wrong . . . but what was it and is it why things are so
super shitty, to the max, as they used to say in 20th century Spanish
Fork. And he'll remember that there was something very beautiful
too in that long ago Mormon mountain Empire and he'll begin to
dream of a dark red haired sort of green eyed elfin fox whose eyes
rolled back and could swallow all of his cock and who laughed and
cried with him and didn't care that his teeth were fucked up forever
and who taught him how to fuck girls again instead of his hand and
pictures in Playboy.

Next night, they put a girl in the same tank where the drunk
had been. She was also crying and Gary hollered over, Hey, sister,
it can't be all that bad. She immediately quieted down.

Gary found out her name was Connie, and when she inquired
if he had a cigarette, Gibbs slid a pack down the hallway to her cell
and Connie thanked them.

361

1928

They kept trying to talk but you had to holler loud, so Gary wrote a note and slid it over. Told her he was rather handsome, liked young girls, western music, and yodeling. Especially, he liked to yodel. She wrote back that she'd seen his picture in the newspaper and agreed he was good looking. Thanked him for being kind and asked if he would yodel.

"Well, Tex," said Gibbs, "crank up." Gary could no more yodel than Gibbs could knit. So Gary just hollered over shucks he was lying, couldn't oo-lay, oo-lay-oo to save his butt. All three began to laugh. They had a good night sending notes back and forth. In the morning, she got out. Gary's depression was back.

6

September 11

I could not sleep for the third nite running. Somethings happening to me. I dozed briefly last nite and awoke in the middle of a dream about a severed head. I can hear the tumbrel wheels creaking again and the swift slide of the blade—in my dream I was being interviewed by a female Mont Court parole officeress or whatever, dreams take their own course, and pretty soon a doctor or the male Mont Court, or somebody, came back.

I've told you that I haven't slept lately—the ghosts have descended and set upon me with a force I didn't believe they possessed. I smack 'em down but they sneak back and climb in my ear and demons that they are tell me foul jokes, they want to sap my will, drink my strength, drain my hope leave me derelict bereft of hope lost empty alone foul demon motherfuckers with dirty furry bodies whispering vile things in the nite chortling and laughing with a hideous glee to see me toss sleepless in durance truly vile they plan to pounce on me in a shrieking mad fury when I leave with their hideous yellow long toe and finger claws teeth dripping with rank saliva and mucous thick yellow green. Dirty inhuman beasts jackals hyena rumor monger plague ridden unhappy lost ghostly foul ungodly things unacceptable creeping crawling red eyed bat eared soulless beasts.

They won't let the ol' boy have a nites sleep. God-damned lost motherfuckers.

I need our silver sword against them. They're slippery motherfuckers.

The demon ghosts

(end)

Jan 1978

901-910

CHAPTER 21

An Evening of Dancing and Light Refreshment

The Executioner's Song - II

Jan 1978

John and I went to the dance at the hotel on Jan 1978. John and I went to the hotel on Jan 1978 and stayed at the hotel on Jan 1978. John and I went to the hotel on Jan 1978 and stayed at the hotel on Jan 1978.

They were in the room for the night. The room was very nice and the service was excellent. After a while they learned that very few people were available to cover them.

It got dark, it got cold, but they conducted a religious service. Forty or fifty people had turned out, and they had a service by the altar. The service was very good and the people were very kind enough to tell their friends and relatives that the service was very good.

At John's suggestion, John had started his house for the night and brought it along for people who might show up. They had enough protection. Then the service began. John and I went to the service and stayed at the hotel on Jan 1978. John and I went to the service and stayed at the hotel on Jan 1978.

At the end of the afternoon, John and I went to the hotel on Jan 1978. John and I went to the hotel on Jan 1978 and stayed at the hotel on Jan 1978. John and I went to the hotel on Jan 1978 and stayed at the hotel on Jan 1978.

Jan 1978

901-916

1930

CHAPTER 31

An Evening of Dancing and Light Refreshment

Start

Julie Jacoby went out early to the vigil, and with her in the first car was Reverend John Adams who was an old hand at demonstrations and wanted to speak to the Salt Lake County Sheriff about protection for the vigilants.

Only trouble is they were not let inside the grounds. The State Police steered them over to an access road. After a while, they learned that very few reporters were available to cover them.

It got dark, it got cold, but they conducted a religious service. Forty or fifty people had turned out, and they read a litany by the illumination provided by a television crew who were kind enough to tilt their lights until the group making the responses could see the print.

At John Adams's suggestion, Julie had scoured her house for heavy clothing and brought it along for people who might show without enough protection. Then the minister borrowed her Subaru and kept ferrying new vigilants out from the Howard Johnson Motel in Salt Lake, a rendezvous point. Through the night he brought people back and forth.

At five in the afternoon when Toni went in to visit with Gary, the press already collected in the parking lot, crowded around her at the

gate leading to Maximum. It would be a lot worse when she came out. More press. Walking down that corridor between the wire fences over the snow with the wind coming in off the mountain, Toni was thinking of the first time she'd gone to see Gary at the prison, two days before his birthday. She hadn't known then whether she was ready to forgive him or never would but after seeing how tickled he was at her visit, she asked what she could send, and he wanted two dark sweat shirts with the sleeves cut off, extra large with the shoulders reinforced so that they would peak without sleeves. She had gone to visit him again after that. He would always greet her by saying "God, you're beautiful," which had her blushing.

This Sunday, however, was different. It was, of all coincidences, her own birthday, and Howard's family was coming for supper. So all the while that Toni had been planning her visit to the prison on this last evening, she also had been cooking the meal for the evening party, and worrying how she could visit Gary early enough so that she could get back by seven for Howard's folks.

It was ten of six before they even let her into the visiting room, and then she had to wait twenty minutes with the other guests. When they opened the door for Gary, he saw her first and put his arms around her and gave a hug as if he were cracking all the ice of winter with one squeeze, held her so hard and long, she didn't think he would ever let go. Her mother was right with her, and said, "Now, it's my turn." So Gary released Toni with one arm, and hugged Ida, but he never let go completely. In fact as soon as Ida stepped back, he lifted Toni till her feet came off the floor, and gave her a great big kiss on the lips. He was still holding her fifteen minutes later when she absolutely had to leave.

Gary said then, "You are coming back, aren't you?" That was the first Toni considered it. It was the look in his eyes. "Go home," he said, "and take care of your family, then come back." But it was going to be complicated. Not to mention her in-laws, this was also the solitary day Toni would have with Howard all week. He was working on a construction job in southern Utah and only got home on Sundays.

Before she could say yes or no, Gary gave her another big birthday kiss. Then Moody and Stanger took her mother and herself out along the corridor through the wire fences and the crowd which was

1932

now massive. Toni knew why they called them the press. They almost squeezed her to death. But that was no more weird than leaving this prison to go back to her birthday party.

3

Sunday had started for Bob Moody at six in the morning with a High Council meeting. That lasted until eight. At nine-thirty, he went to Priesthood meeting, came back to take his family to church, went out to the prison, and came back to pick up his family when Sunday School concluded at 1 P.M. Then, all of the Moody family went home to dinner. By 4 P.M. Ron Stanger and he were ready to drive to the prison.

In the parking lot were Vern and Ida, then Toni, and two middle-aged cousins of Gary's named Evelyn and Dick Gray. All of them, together with Father Meersman, were taken over to Maximum Security, and Lieutenant Fagan was cordial on this night and showed the facilities. The prisoners had been fed early, and the gates between the visiting room and the main dining room for Maximum Security were open so that they could pass back and forth between the two rooms during the evening. A considerable space altogether. Perhaps so much as a hundred feet of movement in the longest direction, half of that the other way, plus a couple of smaller extra rooms adjacent for more private conversations. Lieutenant Fagan's office was open, and the kitchen, and the booth with the glass window where formerly they talked with Gary.

All this was at the front of Maximum Security just back of the two sliding gates that separated them from the exterior. At the rear of the visiting room, also barred by a gate, was the long hallway through Maximum off which were set the various cell rows. Moody had never been back there, and was not familiar with the area, so much as respectful of it. It was like the hallway that led to the cellar stairs in a large oppressive old house. Just as you imagined you could hear groans in those old cellars, so from the cell blocks came cries and shouts and moans and slamming sounds clear up to the visiting room, but muted, as if under the rock.

Since they planned to be there through the night and wanted to save their good clothes for morning, Moody and Stanger had come with a change. They had also brought crackers and soft drinks which proved unnecessary, for the prison offered light refreshments all evening. Tang and Kool-Aid and cookies and coffee. Then, Father Meersman procured a TV set and plugged it in. Somebody had managed to bring a portable stereo with a few records, and what with the three or four guards circulating through the kitchen and dining room and visiting room, and, at various times, Father Meersman and Cline Campbell and the two lawyers and the cousins and Vern and Toni and Ida, it was almost enough people for a party. Not to mention the guard on duty all through the night in the bullet-proof glass-enclosed booth that overlooked the visiting room.

Every couple of hours somebody would come from the pharmacy with medication. As the evening went on, Bob Moody came to recognize they were giving Gary some kind of speed. Doubtless, the pharmacists saw it as a blessing and kept it coming, and in the early hours of the evening, Gary did keep getting happier and happier. In the beginning, he was so delighted to see Toni, and held her for so long, and kissed her with such cousinly gusto, that Bob and Ron and Vern and the others just sat back and waited, didn't want to interrupt when Gary was so obviously delighting in her visit. Besides, there were chores to accomplish. The guards had brought in a couple of cots with mattresses, and provisions were being laid out for the evening, and then Toni was hardly there very long before Ron and Bob had to take her down between the barbed-wire fences into the swarm of press. It was practically an operation. Until they got her into the truck, it felt like their eyes were being seared with strobe lights and their souls with the general mania. For they were magical to the press tonight. They had seen the man and could report on him.

They kept saying "No comment," and looked for Schiller, and talked enough to keep the media close up with their microphones and tape recorders. That gave Vern time to slip around and have a talk with Larry.

Moody and Stanger might have been temporarily satisfying the majority of these reporters, but there was a great deal of press, and

Larry and Vern also became the center of a swarm. In the squeeze, Vern could only whisper, "Have you got the liquor?" and Schiller said, "Yeah." "How," whispered Vern, "am I going to get it in?" "Put the little bottles under your armpits," said Larry, "and keep your elbows close." "Fine," said Vern, "but how do I get it under my coat?" The press was surrounding them as tightly as a crowd packed around two players of the winning team caught on the field after the game.

Schiller turned and shouted, "Can't you let this man have a little privacy? You're hounding him. Get back." Physically he pushed on the press a little, not laying on rough hands so much as using the mixture of pressure and slight hysteria that worked best with reporters. "Give him a little privacy," he repeated. They retreated two feet, maybe three, room enough for Vern to do something with the liquor. By the time Larry turned around, Vern was ready to go back to the glare of the lights in the visiting room with the record player going and the TV set, and Gilmore beginning to spend his last night on earth.

4

The little bottles went fast. Gary would dip into a back room and take a nip, then come out with a wink. Moody thought it was appropriate. If that was what the man wanted, then he ought to be able to enjoy a drink. It had been years since Moody had tasted alcohol, but this was a social event. If some corner of Moody's mind could hear the criticism that Gilmore was going to meet his maker in the morning, and that might be wiser on a sober head, still Moody thought, this is more like a last meal. If he wants to go out drunk, he has a right. He thought of how Gary had deliberately not requested his six-pack of Coors at the end because he did not want the world to think he would be unable to face it without something to help him. But now, the speed was coming in, and the booze.

Yet, at the sight of Gary's pleasure, and the way he enjoyed the feeling of slight intoxication, for he didn't get very drunk, it began as a nice evening. Gary even took one of the guards into one of the back offices and gave him liquor from the curved medicine bottles Schiller had also sent in.

Bob, himself, loved the idea that he was able to go up to Gary, shake hands with him, hold him, look at him for a second, face to face — it was unexpected how great a need had developed to do something as simple as that after all these weeks. In fact, this was the first face-to-face meeting without urgent business to discuss. So, it was a pleasure to see Gary become loose and grow to enjoy the night.

It was easy and it was relaxed. During the course of the hours, Ron or he would get up and walk out and get a soft drink in the kitchen, and Evelyn and Dick Gray would go back and forth, and Vern. There was not any terrible feeling of a clock or any sense that outside the prison, lawyers might be preparing to seek a Stay.

5

Early that evening when they first came into the room and Gary was there without a pane of glass between, actually able to go up and touch, Stanger greeted him warmly, shook hands, put his arm around his shoulder in kind of a semihug, a masculine hit on the shoulder. It was kind of a victory, if you will, thought Stanger, that they were together. He stayed in that sense of glow.

A little later, while the evening was still pleasant, Ron started talking about his boxing experience on the team at BYU, and Gary mentioned that he knew a little about it. They got up, and started sparring. Ron had assumed it would be a matter of throwing a mock punch or two, but Gary wanted to make it more of a contest. While he couldn't really box, he was a street fighter, and threw a lot of punches. Ron kept stepping aside to avoid getting hit, but, of course, that wasn't the purpose of the whole thing. Only Gilmore kind of got this glint. The harder he hit, the more there was to enjoy. Gary sure had his little mean streak. Hit with fists closed, Ron had to catch it on his shoulders and hands. At one point, like it was still in fun, Gary analyzed his own style, said, "I don't lead, I'm a counterpuncher," and threw a lead. Ron slipped it, turned his shoulder into Gary to tie him up, then bailed out and walked away. Gary kept pursuing. It

1936

wasn't like normal sparring where you go in, tap a man, then withdraw to show how you could have hit the guy hard. Gary was throwing one real bomb after another. A couple almost clobbered Ron good. Of course, for the first twenty or thirty seconds, Ron was still feeling beautiful. He was faster than Gary. It was just that after a minute, he began to count his age with every breath, and Gary was a couple of inches taller, and had longer reach. Soon, there was the same flavor Stanger would find whenever he walked into Maximum. All these cons worked out with weights, knowing they had bodies. Their presence leaned on you psychologically. It was as if their bodies said, "I got more right to be free than you, boy." So, Ron was glad when he found an opportunity to clinch with Gary, hug him, grin, and indicate it was over.

After the boxing, Gary began to make some phone calls. Ron could hear him on the line with the station that played Country-and-Western, and he kidded them about how bad they were and thanked them for playing "Walking in the Footsteps of Your Mind." Next, he went into Fagan's office to make a call to his mother. Of course, Ron didn't try to listen, but Gary came out all excited because he also was able to get a call in to Johnny Cash. Then he began to move around restlessly as if it bothered him that the record player was going, and there was nobody to dance with. Yet, things were still in a good mood. The boxing had set up a kind of intimacy between Gary and Ron. While ups and downs were beginning to appear in the evening, still, it was okay, and the mood was all right. Like any long night, there had to be peaks and valleys. During one of the lulls, Gary now came over to Ron and said he wanted to tell him something, wanted to be alone with him. They took a bench in a corner of the visiting room, away from the others.

Gary said he had \$50,000, and looked Ron right in the eye. His pale gray-blue eyes looked as deep as the sky on one of those odd mornings when you cannot tell by the light of dawn whether good or foul weather lies ahead. "Yes, Ron," he said, "I've got \$50,000, or to be exact about it, access to \$50,000, and I'll give it to you. All I want is that the next time you go outside, leave me the keys to your extra clothes." Those other clothes were in a locker back in one of the little rooms. "There's so much hubbub around here," Gilmore said, "that the guards won't know. Just leave your key."

"What do you have in mind?" Ron asked. Ron couldn't believe how stupid he was acting. "Well, what, really, Gary, do you have in mind?" he asked again, and then it hit him, and he felt doubly stupid. "Ron," said Gary, "if I can get through that double gate in your clothes, I'm out. There's nothing past there but the outside door, and that's always open. I'll just skin up the barbed wire and flip over the rolls at the top. That wire'll put a few holes in me, but it's nothing." "Then, you drop?" asked Ron. "Yeah," said Gilmore. "Then you drop, and start running. If I get out there, I'm gone. You leave those clothes, all right?"

Now Ron realized what had been going into those arduous calisthenics Gary had done every day. He forced himself to look back into Gary's eye, Ron would say that much for himself, and he answered, "Gary, when we started, part of our bargain was no hanky-panky." Then he made himself say, "I've grown very close to you. I'd do anything I could for you. But I'm not going to put my children and my family in jeopardy." Gary nodded. Acknowledged it all with that nod. Didn't seem discouraged so much as confirmed.

Ron was remembering that as Toni and Ida left, Gary had gone into a playful little scene where he put on Toni's hat and Ida's coat and pretended to get into the double door with them. All very funny at the time. Everybody was laughing, including the novice guard on the gate, a young kid Ron had never seen before, but all that guard would have had to do was, by mistake, open both doors at once. Gary would have been gone. Wow! It came over him. This guy meant what he said. If he had to stay in prison, he wanted to die. But if he could get outside, that was another game.

6

Sitting on a bench, trying to keep his thoughts above the pain in his knee, taking it all in with sorrow and fatigue and considerable churning at the core of his stomach, Vern was feeling pretty emotional. He knew his face was set like stone but it was getting hard to hold up. He almost busted out once — didn't know if it was to cry or laugh — when Gary said over the phone, "Is this the real Johnny Cash?" That was as crazy as you would want.

1938

Now, Gary was going around in the hat Vern had bought for him at Albertson's food store, a Robin Hood type of archer's hat, way too big. It had been the last one left. Vern had looked at Ida and said, "He wears funny things anyway, so I'll buy it." How could you love a guy because he wanted to wear a crazy hat? Ah, Gary was so full of love this night. Vern had never seen him this rich. The only thing in the world he could still get mad about was the prison, and he even had a funny attitude there. "My last night," he kept saying with his grin, "so they can't punish me anymore," and Vern came near again to that feeling he was going to cry. He remembered that day so many visits ago that Gary had said, "Vern, there's no use talking about the situation. I killed those men, and they're dead. I can't bring them back, or I would."

7

A little later, Stanger was feeling restless. Talking of escape with Gary hadn't exactly calmed him down, so he said, "Hey, let's get some pizza," and asked Lieutenant Fagan, "Can we get cleared?" Everybody liked the idea. Stanger only had six bucks on him, so Father Meersman kicked in a little and Fagan was good for two, and some of the guards pitched in. Then Vern came up out of a reverie and said, "Nobody contributes. I'm buying the pizzas. You just take care of getting them."

Fagan volunteered a car with a man to drive them, and then Ron and Bob and the guard went out and stopped in the parking lot big enough for Stanger to slip out of the car, walk around, find Larry, and tell him, "Gary wants to call you around one-thirty in the morning." Schiller said, "Okay, I'll go with you."

By now, the press wasn't on Schiller's ear and elbow anymore. The cold had gotten to everybody. People stayed in their vans drinking, and Schiller was able to stroll around the perimeter and get to the police car unobserved. The guard in the front seat said, "Who are you?" but Schiller only replied, "I'm supposed to be going out with

1939

you," and got in, and lay down in the back. Stanger, in the meanwhile, had gotten waylaid by a reporter. It took five minutes before he and Moody could return. Then they went up the road, and the outer gate swung open and they were out of the prison grounds. Schiller got off the floor and everybody started laughing.

If they drove Larry all the way back to Orem, the prison would wonder why the car had been gone so long. It was better they head north to the near outskirts of Salt Lake. From there, Schiller called his driver. With it all, he still got back to the motel before midnight. there to wait for Gary's call.

The Pizza Hut was the only place open, and they were the last customers, and ordered the stuff with ham, salami and pepperoni. Bob Moody thinking he'd hit everybody with the selection, and they picked up some beer in a grocery. Back at the prison, their car was searched, and the beer confiscated. It made them mad, but the guard examining them was a stiff, and said alcohol would not be tolerated on prison grounds. The irony was that he didn't even look at the pizza boxes. They could have hidden five pistols in there. Then they proceeded from the outer gate down the entrance road to the front of Administration and the guard at the top of the tower spoke down to them like God's voice coming out of a dark cloud to say there had been a ruling against the pizza. Not acceptable.

While they were still disputing that, new word came. They could walk in with the pizzas after all. It was just that Gary wouldn't be able to have any. He had not put it on the list for his last supper.

Moody could conceive of the scene in the Warden's office. One big heavy meeting. What? Food brought in from outside? Stop it! By the time they arrived at the door to Maximum, Bob and Ron were so angry they stood out there to eat their pizza in the cold, and by the time they went in, Lieutenant Fagan was very embarrassed over the situation, very. He was a small man, with white hair, a mustache, and a lean build, usually a crisp and pleasant man, but hangdog now over the way his superiors had reacted. After a while a guard came up and said Gary could have a piece, too. Of course, Gary wouldn't go near the stuff by then. Gave a look to blister paint, and said, "I hope everybody's enjoying my last meal."

1940

Meanwhile, Father Meersman kept entering and going out again. He kept them posted with what was going on in the Administration Building and, presumably, thought Bob, kept the administration posted on what was going on with them.

After this episode, there was a feeling of humiliation all over. Last night, Gary could have requested any of a hundred dishes. The Warden would have initialed the form and he could have had it tonight. Now, it was too late. A couple of pharmacists, however, came to give him more pills. He couldn't eat pizza, but they would feed him speed. Stanger decided the best word for the prison administration was "beautiful."

They also heard that Sterling and Ruth Ann Baker were not being let in to visit. The prison had run a check on Sterling and he had a record. Two traffic citations. A real big criminal record. Grotesque, Moody was muttering to himself. Stupid. Idiotic. Asinine.

8

At Toni's birthday party, there were dozens of phone calls from friends, so Toni didn't have to think about Gary. All the same, she kept saying to her mother, "I want to go back up," and Ida would reply, "Oh, hon, all those reporters know who you are now." Toni thought, "All right, I'll get up at five."

Her in-laws left early, and she and Howard just sat there talking. She knew he could feel how she wanted to be with Gary again. Of course, she also didn't want to leave Howard. Besides, that press! The lights in your eyes were frightening, and you could hear reporters' nerves snapping on every question. It was the first time she had ever felt like an animal in a cage with other animals.

Howard must have been reading her thoughts because he said, "Come on, honey, I'll get you through the reporters." So, they left a note for Ida, and took off. It was close to ten by the time they reached the prison and they must have used up forty-five minutes to get

through the gate. Security was tight by then. They were accustomed to her face, but Howard was new, and they wouldn't clear him. She had to go and talk to the Warden, and that did mean pushing through the reporters outside Administration by herself.

Sam Smith wouldn't let Howard in. Toni had the feeling the Warden would relent if she kept pushing, but Howard didn't want to. He just kept saying, "How can you sit and talk to someone who is going to die in a few hours?"

When they opened the double gate, there was Daddy and Gary sitting together on a cot. Vern was sleepy, and Gary was uptight, but they must have been used to people going in and out, because the first gate slammed behind her and they didn't even look up when the second gate opened. She was actually in the room before Gary saw her and jumped to his feet and held her in the air. He said, "I knew you'd come back. Thank God you came back."

He whirled her around and hugged her and gave her another big kiss. Vern said, "What are you doing back here? It's a long way from morning," but he left them alone.

They sat down and started to talk, and Gary just held on to her hands. He said, "I wish we had more time together." "I'm sorry too," said Toni.

"Well," he said, "maybe it's for a reason. Maybe if we'd developed a relationship earlier, tonight wouldn't mean so much." Then he asked if she wanted to see some pictures of Nicole, and got out a carton he had taped, and carefully unwrapped it, and showed Nicole as a child. "These," he added, "you don't have to look at, if you don't want to," but pulled out a couple of beautiful drawings of Nicole nude. Then a whole series of pictures taken on photo machines where you would get four shots for half a dollar. Nicole was showing her breasts. It was obvious these pictures meant a lot to Gary, and Toni thought they weren't foul. Really kind of meaningful. All the while, Gary kept bringing up more snapshots of Nicole when she was five, and eight, and ten, saying what a beautiful child she was.

Toni said, "She's a beautiful woman now." What was all this carrying on about how she looked as a child?

"I wish," said Gary, "I could have seen her one more time."

Then he taped up the carton again, and opened another box full of photographs of prison friends, and told her which institution they'd been in. Some officials came in with medication, and handed him the cup and said, "Take them *now*," and Gary said, "You sure don't trust me, do you?" When they left, Toni was still alone with Gary. He took the plaque that Annette had given him that long time ago, and said, "I want this given to Nicole." That was when Toni decided Gary must truly have been innocent. Otherwise, he would hardly leave it to Nicole.

The record player was going and Gary said, "Come on, I haven't danced in years." So, they got up. She had heard him sing once and he was a terrible singer, but she could see he was going to be even worse as a dancer. Yet, she enjoyed it. Sitting on the floor, looking through his things, she had felt so close. Like Brenda, Toni had been married four times, twice for only a few months. Her fourth marriage had been with Howard and that had lasted nine years. In less trouble now than ever, it was a good marriage, but Toni had never exactly felt the kind of special feeling she had now. It was like she'd known Gary for a lifetime in these couple of hours.

The music was fast. Gary put his funny hat on Toni, fluffed her hair, and they danced. She did her best to follow. When they finished, Gary said, "I never really was very good, but I haven't had much chance to go to dances," and they laughed, and he told her that he had talked to Johnny Cash on the phone but it was a bad connection. Still he had asked, "Are you the real Johnny Cash?" and right after the answer, hollered back, "Well, this is the real Gary Gilmore."

They sat down again, Gary said, "I have found something with you tonight that I knew with Brenda through all these years, and I wish I'd made things more equal between you and your sister." When Toni looked puzzled, he said, "I gave three thousand dollars for you and Howard, and five thousand to Brenda and Johnny. I'm sorry I did not make it equal. I never really knew you." She told him the money didn't mean anything.

He said, "You're so many people to me tonight. You're Nicole, and you're Brenda, and in a way, you're like my mother in the way I remember when she was young." Toni didn't know if she was reading his mind, but she thought he was feeling a strong urge to put his arms once more around his mother, and Toni thought of Brenda who had wanted to be with him so bad tonight and was now in the hospital, and Toni felt as odd as if she were both Brenda and herself, both of them there, dancing and holding his arms.

Every now and then a couple of guards would come in to shake hands with Gary, and he would say, "Do you want my autograph?" "Sure, Gary," they would tell him. So, he would borrow a pen and sign the pocket of their shirt or their cuffs and Toni thought they all acted like they really liked him. When the pharmacist came back, Gary said, "Here's this old boy who takes care of me," and the pharmacist grunted and said, "Yeah, you keep me pretty busy with all your shenanigans."

All the while, Toni was reminding herself that Howard was out there shivering in the parking lot. Finally, she told Gary, "Look, I'll bring Mother back by five," and Gary said, "I want you here in the morning with me," and put his arms around her to give another big hug and said, "Thank you, for tonight." He held her one more time, and said, "A cool, peaceful summer evening, a love-filled room. You just brightened my whole night, Toni, and filled it with love," and he cuddled her face in his hands, putting one hand on each cheek, and gave her a kiss on the forehead. "You brought my Nicole back to me tonight," he said. Then he gave her a big hug, and Toni said, "I'm going to have to go."

Gary walked her toward the gate. "I'll see you in the morning," he said. "Go home and take care of Ida." Then he added, "Tell Howard hello. It's so great that Howard came to try to see me." Toni went out letting him think that the only reason Howard had not been there was that the Warden would not let him. When the first gate closed behind her, Gary held the bars to watch until they opened the other gate and when that closed behind her, she put her coat on, and left. She never got to see him again.

1944

9

Up till then, despite the pizza, it had really been a party and everybody was feeling good, and there were no problems, except one so large it removed all sense of the others. But, now, after Toni was gone, Gary started to get mad about the pizza all over again. He became very solemn, very upset. Ron remembered how Gary always said, "I don't want a last meal, because they'll play games with me." Ron knew he didn't want to talk to Gary now.

Nor did Moody. A sense of death had come into the visitors' room. It had been there before, but it gave everyone strength. Now it was as if it came creeping like smoke beneath the door. It was getting late. Things had quieted. The record player was not going, and Vern had gone to sleep. Dick and Evelyn Gray were snoozing. Ron went to the kitchen to talk to the guards. It was then that Gary came over to Bob.

"You wouldn't change clothes with me, would you?" he said, and Bob answered, "No, I wouldn't." Gary began to describe how he could get out, if Bob would just give him the clothes. The guards were paying no attention. He could walk through those twin gates as Bob Moody, be out the door of Maximum and over that barbed-wire fence faster than you could ever believe. He would just climb up the wire, then do a forward roll over the roll of barbed wire at the top, pick up a hole or two in his skin, nothing, and be running, man. They would not find him. It was a somber moment. "I know," said Gary, "that I can get out of here if you will do it." Bob just had to get his clothing from the locker and put it over in the corner. If Bob wanted, it would also help if he took Gary's crazy Robin Hood hat and wore it for a while. That would be about all a sleepy guard would look for in the way of Gary Gilmore. "No," said Bob Moody, "I can't do it, Gary, and I won't do it."

Cline Campbell had been in and out all night so he saw the change in mood. For the first couple of hours you would have thought it was Christmas morning. But Campbell had to leave by 7:30 that evening to give a lecture in Salt Lake, and didn't get back until close to midnight. By then it had all changed. Earlier, a guard had been sit-

ting at the head of a cot, Gilmore in the middle, and Campbell at the foot. In the middle of talking away about nothing at all, Gilmore reached under the pillow and came up with a sample bottle of whiskey. "Oops," said Campbell and looked away. "I see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. But have at it, partner, just have at it." Gilmore laughed. That was earlier.

After the speaking engagement, Campbell rushed back to the prison without stopping to eat, and discovered everybody had gone through the pizza. There was none left. He and Gilmore were the only two with empty bellies. When they were alone, Campbell said, "It looks like this time will be it."

"It'll go through," said Gary. "They can't stop it now."

"You know," said Campbell, "we're to meet again. It will be the same for you and me, no matter what's on the other side." They were in Lieutenant Fagan's office and Gary was still wearing the hat with a feather that looked like it belonged to Chico Marx. "It doesn't matter," said Campbell, "whether what you feel, religiously, is right, or what I feel, either way, we're going to see each other again. In whatever form, Gary, I want you to know I think you're a good guy." It was awful, thought Campbell, the more time he spent with Gilmore the less he was able to remind himself that Gary was a man capable of murder. In fact, by now, most of the time, Gilmore looked not at all capable of that, at least not compared to most of the faces Cline Campbell saw every day in uniform and out.

Father Meersman said to Moody and Stanger that he had this advantage over almost everybody else that he'd been through two other executions. He explained to them how he succeeded in convincing the Warden and his staff that it was necessary to walk through the procedure on this night for every step ought to be taken equal to those steps which would be taken in the morning when the real execution took place, and they had done that. Some of the prison officials had agreed to a dry run and taken the steps so that it would be calm and dignified when they all participated. They had gone through the whole thing and somebody had a stopwatch and timed it, and that was a normal thing to do for such an important procedure. It was important to have a run-through of the whole mechanics of the execution.