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Introduction

In the early seventies there was a dramatic backlash against materialism & consumerism. A backlash from the upsurge of the sixties, it was a movement back to the land, to an overall simpler way of living. No one wanted another war. The shock wave created by the Nazis' still shook the moral foundations of nations. We were led to the brink of universal damnation. To we-- born shortly after this disaster-- how could we trust those in charge to not let it happen again. To some of us born within the gloom of the boom we had a responsibility to advance & enhance the moral condition or face the reality of doom. We wanted to change how things were done. The massacre our fathers had been forced to fight was fresh on all the minds of the baby boomer generation. This induced a degree of narcissism which was becoming epidemic. Though the mindset of the times was communal, the reality meant that the essence of freedom was up to the individual. Anything was possible. We'd won the war; a new world order was in store. Europe was dead, long live the next.

We were rushing life along like a freight train. We could do anything we want we thought. Naïve to day to day living in the name of utopian dreams. Get a job, a common phrase blanketed our hopes of living on peace & love. The job will come, now we just wanted to have fun. Learn about life at our own pace, which was fast, loose & hard. Wine, women & song spread out before us on a fancy table with a beautiful cloth; laden with life's goodies ripe for the taking.

To rebuild an economy collapsed, destroyed because of self absorption & rampaging egos was a job perfectly suited to the energy & ingenuity of the new world. Each of us had the opportunity for unlimited success, based on new dreams & utopian ideals.

We totally refused to accept life was a lot more complicated than we perceived. For every ying there is a yang & we had no idea where the balance began. In Canada we had no conscription

like in the States. We had no Vietnam to lose sleep about overnight. We had the luxury of directing all our energy into our own needs. For making our own way as we best thought fit. With the benefit of an explosion of new ways & means to achieve our dreams of utopian harmony.

A culture around drugs must be addressed. Marijuana was widely in use amongst a certain percentage of the youth. This put a lot of us in direct confrontation with those of the older generation who still saw smoking weed as the front door to disaster. The need for strict law enforcement was paramount & very much apart of the alternative lifestyles' day to day existence. It made everyone a rebel. Fuck the man for making it so hard for us to smoke our stuff. It created a sense of community amongst those who defied the law & smoked there weed, feeling like it was an us against them thing. It created criminals out of all & gave us a brothers in arms feel to the radical ideas emerging from the age. Cops were pigs. They weren't our friends & each one was seen out to bust & harass you. We felt we were breaking new ground, stretching the limits of a way of life which promoted one for all, all for one. The naivety of our beliefs sometimes defy logic. But that was not something we took into consideration. We arrogantly knew what we were doing, don't be busting our balls because we don't accept the status quo. It's too confining, we want to be free. Ideals of democracy, individual liberty stretching from sea to sea to sea. They're universal, common to us all; aren't they? Time would teach us that no matter what you believe, we all live within certain restrictions. But we wanted nothing of that. The sky was small compared to where we were at.

Toronto in the early seventies was ripe for our style of life. U of T, the largest university in Canada, had just opened Rochdale the most progressive idea to education since the catholic church. Free love, free classes, move at your own speed according to your own need. Open smoking pot right in front of the face of the man. Poetry & literature expanding the limits of convention. Stream of consciousness replacing well ordered thought. Anything goes. It doesn't have to make sense as long as it says what you feel. Share your thoughts in whatever way you choose. What is important is nothing. The world is what you make it, what you see & it differs from you to me. Don't listen to the old ways, create a new way free of pain & strife, make a new life you'll show them you're right.

Unfortunately, it must be noted; by the mid seventies the Rochdale experiment had fizzled out like a dying fuse & all that remained was a drug fueled hippie compound.

School was a tool the man used to deprive you of who you are. Just a means of making sure we're all alike. Robots to the greater cause. Punching us out like posters, graduating us like a flock of sheep. Sending us out into a world already made in the image of what they expected you to be. Who were they? They were the status quo, the pressure put on you to succumb to

their capitalist expectations. Forcing us to accept a way of life we had no interest in. If you had more than could fit in a suitcase, you had too much.

Illegal drugs fueled our fantasies. Weed from Mexico, sticks from Thailand, Malawi Red. Soft black hash from Afghanistan, blonde from Lebanon. Hard hash from Morocco & India, a lesser bang but good enough to get you where you wanted to go. LSD tripping us into an alternative dimension or so we were told. For most of us who weren't psychotic, LSD turned into just a cheap high. Speed the hard drug for the day. The drug of choice for bikers & hard core. Little did we know in our efforts to rebel, speed known as amphetamine, had also been the drug of choice for the Nazi masses. Everything illicit, everything spoken about in hushed tones, exchanges being made sneering at the law. Fuck the man for making us all criminals to partake in the things which brought us fun.

This was the time before gentrification changed the city. All the old houses from the twenties, thirties & forties were ripe for our needs. Cheap, rundown, lots of rooms, old toilet, old kitchens, questionable plumbing. They fueled our romantic images of living with less. Living a bohemian lifestyle amidst a world of excess.

Pursuit of knowledge on our own terms. Sick of the formal boxed approach eager to learn about life on our own time. Street versus book. Young people born & raised in the sterile servitude of the suburbs, anxious to learn about knowledge gained on the street. Romanticized in movies & books, stories about people fighting against all odds to make it on their own terms. Our culture glorified the estranged loner. Living & loving the hard way. Smokey bars & back-alley deals, creatures of the night sniffing out a living in spite of the cards they've been dealt. A young man raised in the wilderness of strict suburban structure peering over the edge into a world full of intrigue. The city beckoned you like a flower in bloom waiting to be sniffed. Full nostrils, wide open watering eyes, feeling the essence of the forbidden.

We had no idea that living the life of peace, poverty & pretension would come up against a Berlin Wall of reality.

Part 1

Pigs, Carts, Kelly & Maloney, all barely twenty, lived at 427 Mt Pleasant Road in North Toronto. A small townhouse facing the road, in a row of six, waiting to be torn down by developers. Just a small boulevard of stringy city poplar trees between it & the busy Mt Pleasant thoroughfare. A tiny front yard leading up to an old wooden porch that had seen better days. Always dusty. The year was 1972.

Every Friday night Maloney indulged in a take-out Kentucky Fried Chicken dinner--- for himself- from the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant just a block down the street. The Kentucky Fried odour from the grill pungently permeating the air, thick like a stinky mist. When the wind blew the wrong way; it would make you think you were living in a manure barn. Thus, the reason for the reasonable rent, which the four refugees from Willowdale-- a suburb of Toronto—split; thirty-five dollars a piece.

Pigs & Carts would be smoking a joint at the big old wooden table in the kitchen. Watching Maloney eat his chicken dinner, sneaking chips, Pigs & Carts mainstay was PB &J & grilled cheese. A long way from the homecooked meals they had been raised on. Maloney never seemed to eat except on Friday night when he treated himself. Kelly usually picked up something in the cab. Though Kelly was the one who cooked up feasts of spaghetti or chili when he had the time. Maloney, stabbing at Carts & Pigs fingers with a crooked plastic fork. Pigs & Carts laughing, feeling no pain. Both planning their next foray to challenge the dull ache of anticipation. Tired from a week of waiting for something to challenge their sanity.

Kelly slumping in & out of his chair at the table taking some time off from driving his cab. Stoned out of his tree. Peace, Love & Woodstock gone mad was Kelly's way of life. Taking a hit from the joint going around the room. He stood ready to leave at any moment, Kelly never really relaxed. Gotta grind he'd say. Firmly embracing his working-class catholic motto of God put you on this earth to work. Trying hard to put the private school regimentation in the rear-view mirror. Realizing his need for greed outweighed his rebel without a cause disposition.

The gang would start filtering in from the burbs around seven. It is important to note the two great causes for concern from an historical perspective & how this generation sought to redefine the social order dealt to them. The truth is they were paddling their canoe against the current. Religion & class division have been the major cause of death & destruction for the past two thousand years. More wars have been fought over religious beliefs & the egalitarian struggle than all other reasons combined. Money has always been at the core of the conflict. The priests demanding more & the poverty classes wanting their fair share. Ongoing conflicts have permeated for centuries. One religion refusing to acknowledge the existence of another.

The Crusades come to mind as a shining example of religious zeal. The two great revolutions of the twentieth century have stemmed from one class demanding an opportunity for a better life for themselves & family. Both religion & class conflict enmeshed in age old beliefs. Hitler overthrew the existing order to create an Aryan paradise. The Bolsheviks did the same in attempting to create a worker's paradise. Both revolutions initiated by one class of people who'd been unduly oppressed, seeking to at least even things out. Hitler of course went to far & the Bolsheviks got too caught up in their own ideology. Nevertheless, the great revolutions of the twentieth century inspired unheralded butchery & devastation. All because one group of people thought themselves superior to the other.

Hegel's great philosophy of the nineteenth century identified the inevitability that the masses, like a slow-moving movement-- an inevitable tide-- would eventually prevail. History is a record of the gradual greater disbursement of wealth as time marches on. Wealth, which began with the concept of time, has always been the private source of power for kings & priests. Since the Magna Carta in the thirteenth century & Luther's list posted in 1517 the discernment of wealth & access to money & land has gradually found its way to the masses. The massacre by the masses in 1789 France, was inspired by the anger at the extreme excess of a so-called privileged elite exploiting their position at the expense of the perceived rabble. It cost the excessive elite their heads, as the poor starving peasants said enough is enough. Take that you bastards as the opulent tierra crowned heads were dislodged at the neck, in the name of justice, liberty & equality. In other words, we want our fair share you pampered pricks.

With the advent of a democratic form of government more power was given to the individual & the first thing the masses sought, after all the rhetoric was said, was financial security. This was the one matter that eluded the idealism of the sixties. To be free, the status quo demanded you be like me. But they weren't going to open the till if you didn't comply, look like me, dress like me, think like me, work hard like me, then we'll open the vault & you can be anything you want. The inherent contradiction drove a generation insane. The whole idea was to break free from this restraint, fly free you were told, be your own man you were inspired, create your own world you were encouraged; but don't do it at my expense. This is what got everyone upset. Feeling like they had no control over their own destiny. This constant contradiction was no more apparent then at 427. The boys espoused rhetoric of wanting to free themselves of the values of the day & live life the way they want it to be. Yet to do so meant becoming one of them whom you scorn & succumbing to some of life's trivial realities; like having to get up in the morning to go to work, bowing to the man when he busts you, eating his food that he sells you, paying your rent that he demands of you. Play the game or go insane.

Casey & Densmore would usually arrive first. Friday night was their night to howl. Both came from strong catholic back grounds. Both were stretching the boundaries of catholic morality. Casey & Densmore were always on the make. Quite a pair. They were like a comedy team. Densmore the straight man, Casey the smart ass. Both dressed sharp right out of GQ. Razor creased black casual pants, nice shiny white shirt with a stylish casual sleek sweater. Sharp black patent leather shoes. In stark contrast to the usual construction boots, flannel shirts & jean attire, promoting a bohemian look the rest of the gang wore. Fighting back at the punched-out puppet attire of the private school & slick young mans look of the time. The two of them, Frick & Frack, would stop by this denizen of hedonism—which 427 represented—to get a buzz, on their way downtown to the bar. Pumped & feeling unrestrained, they'd go on their way to the downtown destination of some bar they'd heard of, which was bulging with chicks waiting to get laid. Inevitably they'd fail to satisfy their lust, but to no avail the fun is in the anticipation. Both of them tongue tied if one of their prey ever responded to their patented presentations,

'Hey good lookin' what ya got cooking,' was their entry line.

Followed by the usual response,

'Burnt toast you creep, get lost.'

Frick & Frack finding there's many a slip twixt cup & lip.

Pigs was ranting on about how you don't need money if you've got love. Densmore looked up from the fridge where he was getting himself a beer. He always brought a six pack. Casey never brought anything. He was always mooching. He was so cheap he squeaked. He was the guy at the bar that when it came around his time to pay a round, he would be found in the washroom taking a supposed leak. Densmore was a money man. He had his life planned down to the dollar. He was at business school & had his life mapped out. Get a degree, get a wife, buy a house, have some kids, prosper, live till you're old, then die in your grandsons' arms.

'That's bullshit. You can't live on love,' Densmore replied strongly to Pigs' comment.

'If you find love, all else will follow suit,' Pigs said back in a mystic tone.

'You need money to find your love,' Densmore, sarcastically with a curl of his lip & a sly little knowing smile, retorted.

'Now you're talking bullshit. If she is only attracted by your wealth, she isn't worth shit,' Pigs immediately responded. Pigs had gravitated over to the fridge & was watching Densmore take a

slug of beer as Cartan passed Pigs the joint going round. Everyone knew that Densmore only toked at the end of the night when he was drunk.

‘Possibly so. But its only human nature. A woman is attracted to a man who can look after her. Goes back to caveman times. She wants someone who can protect & provide for her. Its in her genes,’ Densmore talked sometimes like he knew all the answers.

‘That’s what I’m talking about,’ Pigs quickly said, ‘getting into those jeans.’

‘Very funny,’ Densmore took a long pull on his beer & placed it on the counter. He & Pigs were the only ones standing. Cartan & Maloney sitting slugged in their chairs, Kelly sitting on the edge of the kitchen table getting ready to go, Casey out in the living room inspecting the record collection.

‘You know what I mean. If a lady sees you haven’t got any money, she sees you as a loser. No matter how smart you think you are,’ Densmore threw that last jibe at us all. We all to a man thought we were smarter than everyone else.

‘You gotta show them that’s there’s more to life than money,’ Pigs was talking into the air.

‘Don’t do any good if you’re at the bar & can’t even pay for your beer,’ Densmore hit a sore spot with that one.

Just then Sib & Barbie were heard coming through the door. Sib was a good friend of Pigs. They’d just travelled through Africa the year before, (see *Slaying the Lion; African Adventures* by Jim White, unpublished) When Sib got back to Canada, he went straight to York university. This was very fortunate because within two months of attending classes he met Barbie. Barbie was studying to be a nurse, Sib, Political Science. They had been going out a couple of months by the time Pigs moved into 427. Sib would bring Barbie to ‘427’ like on a date. Sib & Barbie were starry eyed passionately joined at the hip. Though both, so fiercely independent, you wouldn’t know it to look at them together.

Sib had a bottle of wine & immediately started looking for a corkscrew. Maloney got up & offered Barbie his seat. Barbie politely declined, this was done almost like a ritual, everyone knew Barbie liked sitting on the kitchen counter.

‘What’s up,’ Pigs redirected his attention from Densmore to Sib. ‘Nothing,’ Sib replied, as he found his corkscrew & started strong arming the cork in the wine bottle. Pigs took a second, then handed Sib the joint going around. Sib greedily grasped it putting down the wine bottle, priorities indeed. Barbie occasionally took a pull, but she wasn’t overly impressed with weed.

Barbie was from the other side of the tracks. She came from a very well-off disposition. Both her parents were doctors, so she had lived a bit of a silver spoon existence. Yet she was so down to earth you couldn't help but love her. She was strong willed, independent, took no shit. She was one of us in spite of her exalted wealth. Plus, she had an old car which came in handy, especially for Sib. They would drive down from Willowdale to 427 for the entertainment & friendship 427 provided. They fit in like folks on a farm.

Sib was raised by his mother. His Dad, a professor, died when Sib was three. His mother taught school. Sib was smart & sincere.

He took a toke & handed Barbie a mug of wine while taking a glass for himself. Sitting himself down in Maloney's now vacant seat. Maloney moved like a snake standing beside Barbie. He had a crush.

'How's school,' Maloney asked in general, but directing his question to Barbie in particular. Maloney was painfully shy around girls. It made you wince to watch how uncomfortable he was. The universe just seemed out of kilter to see Maloney trying to be straight. He hated trivial talk, but he really stepped out of himself, trying to make like normal, when Barbie was around.

'It's ok,' Barbie replied politely. She knew what was happening & always played it cool. Trying her best not to put him down. That just wasn't her way. She smiled taking a sip of wine & immediately Sib stepped in,

'She's starting a practicum at Sick Kids. Pretty cool.'

Everyone around the table toasted Barbie's new venture.

'How bout bringing some of your nursing friends around here,' Kelly piped in. Half joking half serious.

'We'll see,' said Barbie. She was so cool, saying it with a sly snicker that maybe she just would.

Then like in a movie Brech appeared seemingly out of nowhere. Brech was Pigs friend, he'd been on the African Adventure (book by Jim White) with Sib & Pigs. He'd show up all the time just as the party was getting started, usually with a twelve pack. Brech was a mythical figure. All women thought him weird & kept their distance. All men couldn't figure out what was going on in his head. He would say some pretty far out things about space & relationships & would do weird things, like walking into a swimming pool with his clothes on & not say a word. Young & naïve he was still finding his way. Everyone thought he had a screw loose. One time in Africa, after being stoned on Uganda Red for a month straight, Brech said to Pigs that all life was; was trying to get back to your first high.

Brech came into the kitchen & cracked his case & handed out beers to those who wanted one, then putting the rest in the fridge. Pigs & Cartan greedily accepted, Kelly declined, 'gotta grind', Maloney hated Brech so he refused out of principle, but soon left Barbies side & reached into the fridge for a cold one.

Casey migrated to the kitchen when he heard free beer. Casey & Brech had a thing. Brech would torment Casey about being so cheap. Casey would throw back that Brech was just a space cadet & had a brain of soft soap. But Casey would drink Brech's beer gladly, just in spite.

Brech was from a strong prudish enlightened family. Both Mother & Father working professionals, one an engineer the other an accountant. Both worked for the government, no one ever could figure out what department. Brech had two sisters, he was the oldest. The golden boy who had become the darkest disappointment. His parents hated all Brech's friends & were all obscure when you phoned his house. Who knows what went on behind closed curtains in that home.

Brech for all his short comings was kind & overly generous. He could be hysterically funny when he decided to engage on an earthly plain, with us mere mortals.

Sib was talking about his classes to Cartan. Cartan always feigned interest. In reality he didn't really give a shit, but he was a guy who was in constant need of some sort of stimulation. Intellectual or psychedelic.

Maloney was gravitating over towards the table. Barbie had turned her attention to Kelly, who was pursuing this possibility of perhaps having a couple of nurses drop by in the near future, He of course would go & get them in his cab. Barbie was explaining that life just doesn't happen like that.

'Sounds like a bunch of socialist crap to me,' Maloney bellowed at Sib & Cartan, he'd been listening to their chatter, realizing that his presence didn't really matter that much in Barbies world. 'All that shit about equal effort & equal needs just doesn't cut it in the real world. We're all unique each one of us, you can't pigeon hole us with this commie clatter.'

'That's not what I'm saying,' Sib commented in a smooth, exaggerated controlled voice.

'What I'm saying is that. . .' now Sib turned his full attention to Maloney who was now leaning on the fridge. Cartan didn't mind he was growing bored at the topic anyways. He turned on his chair & started to roll a joint on the table.

'There is a form of socialism we should be aware of. African socialism.' Sib was emphatic making his point.

'How does African Socialism have anything to do with me,' Maloney was stubborn, a little drunk a little high & a little pissed that Barbie loved Sib & not him.

'African Socialism was conceived by Julius Nyerere,'

'Who the fuck is Julie Nyerere,' Maloney said into the fridge as he pulled out a beer.

'He was president of Tanzania for over twenty years.' Sib took a long sip of wine, almost a gulp, then when finished, took another one finishing off what was in the glass.

'Grab me a beer,' he said to Maloney who easily complied. Now they were just two guys drinking beer in a crowded kitchen talking politics.

'Socialism is for chumps. Guys too lazy or too scared to make it on their own,' Maloney was speaking clear, he might not be in university but he had thought these things through over a long time. Maloney was a student of the streets & a damn smart one at that.

'Its not about being lazy or making it on your own at all,' Sib was ardent at debate. 'African Socialism is about fulfilling your potential. Working hard & once you have enough for you, your family, your village, then sharing the rest of your wealth with those who don't have enough for whatever reasons.' Sib took a long pull on his beer & lit up a smoke. You could tell wine wasn't really his thing.

'Its like your catholic charities, without the church,' Sib kept on, 'If we all just had a social conscience strong enough so that once we had our own basic needs met, we would then extend these advantages to those who are still struggling to survive.'

'Why should I worry about someone who is just too lazy or too stupid to meet their & their children's needs,' Maloney growled.

'If you don't who will. Will these lazy stupid people just be left in the bush to die?' Sib took a controlled pull on his smoke & blew the smoky mist towards the ceiling.

'I'm not saying that,' Maloney was on the defensive. At heart he was salt of the earth & would give the shirt off his back to any homeless guy who asked. 'All I mean is that if you give a guy an excuse not to work, he's going to take it. He'll have no desire to reach his potential if someone's just going to hand him what he needs to survive. We'll all just become a bunch of slugs. No need to compete we can just sit on the couch & wait for our next meal. And how about the guy who wants more. The guy who works 24/7 to make a better widget & what's he get for it? Hey guys here you go I've just made everyone's life better except mine.'

'Well, he gets the satisfaction & the reassurance from himself that he has contributed in a substantial manner to the betterment of his fellow man.' Sib was losing the thread of his thought a little. That's what you get when you mix beer & wine while smoking weed.

'Fuck that,' Maloney stumbled from the fridge onto an empty chair, 'I want to get rich if I work for it. I want the embellishments of comfort, I want to swim in my own pool, I want someone to drive me around, I want to eat steak & chips & all the KFC I can stuff in my belly,' Maloney was getting carried away.

All of a sudden, a door slammed & a loud, 'Hey Hey Hey, what about love,' came from the front hall.

Trucks was in the house. The new guy who always brought beer & tokes. Just in from Saint Mary's University --where he was playing hockey on a scholarship-- he had hilarious stories. Trucks had known Pigs all his life, they had met in grade three. This past summer both had ended up in summer school, same class. Pigs, to finally complete his high school diploma, Trucks to upgrade his marks to get into university. They had immediately rebonded & both found out the other had an affinity for getting high. So, they stayed in touch & when Trucks was in town he'd hook up with Pigs. Trucks was a natural for 427. He hit it right off with Cartan, brother from another mother. Sib & Maloney always viewed Trucks with suspicion, they thought he was just a jock & didn't have much to contribute. Boy were they wrong. Sib, as well, was jealous of Truck's relationship with Pigs. Pigs & Trucks had an unsaid understanding, known only to two who have grown up from children to men. Regardless of first impressions Trucks grew on the gang, soon becoming a beloved valuable part of the scene. Tonight, Trucks came bearing gifts. A twenty-four of Molson's & a chunk a black hash. Let the party begin.

Now everything was chunked up a notch. Everyone had a beer. Even Kelly who was thinking maybe he'd just stay home tonight. Barbie refilled her mug & Brech & Casey were at it in the corner each hassling the other about cheapness & being a space cadet. Cartan had gotten up & changed the tunes. He came back to the kitchen like coming through the bathroom window, The Beatles Abbey Road was providing the ambiance to a gathering of friends.

The mood was jovial.' Hey Brian,' Kelly yelled always calling Maloney by his Christian name, they'd been friends for forever & Kelly always offered the proper respect. He & Maloney had a special mutual admiration bond.

'Brian, tell that story when the cops busted you for drunken driving & running around naked. I don't think Barbie's heard it.' All eyes turned to Barbie who immediately blushed at the attention saying,

'I don't believe I have,' Barbie said in a snobby high-end british accent. Everybody cracked up. Sib, who was holding his breath, hoping everyone wasn't embarrassing his girl, almost fell off his chair in laughter & relief.

Maloney grabbed the joint of hash going around the table & took a mammoth pull, one thing about Maloney, he had the lungs of an elephant. He exhaled a wall of smoke like in those tv shows where they throw in the tear gas. He then took a swig of beer to clear his throat & proceeded to tell the tale.

'Well, me & some guys from Brebeuf (the name of the private catholic school in Willowdale) were at my place drinking beer. My Mom was out playing bingo. Kelly you were there.'

'Yea, yea,' Kelly quipped.

'We were getting pretty drunk & had some weed which was a big deal. Our friend Utech was there. He'd just left Brebeuf to play football for a school in the city so we were asking him if he was getting any & what it was like. The beer was going down pretty good & we were running out. So, everyone gets on my ass to go get some more. I noticed my Mom had left her keys on the ring by the front door. She must've got a ride with one of the church ladies to bingo. I wasn't supposed to touch my Mom's car. If I wanted to drive, I could get a job & get my own car, was my Mom's way of thinking. But I figured she'd be gone for awhile, so what the hell.

'I grabbed the keys & headed out. No one else wanted to come for some reason. I pulled out of the underground garage onto Kenneth.' Maloney was interrupted, 'Were you in the apartments on Kenneth,' Trucks asked, 'Yea, 4D,' Maloney said, a bit perturbed to be interrupted.

'My uncle lives in 7B, he's a bookie I'm over there all the time,' Trucks was trying to show camaraderie, a friendly input but Maloney wasn't buying.

Maloney continued, 'Anyways I was turning left off Kenneth onto Shepherd & I missed the turn & ran off the road by that little bridge that's there.'

'Holy fuck'said Pigs, 'That's pretty fucked up. Did you go into the creek?'

'No, I only ended up about half way down the side, but I was fucked. I'm like sitting in the car, heart beating a ton & wondering how the fuck am I going to get the beer now. I tried to back out, but that just made it worse. The car started slipping down the slope towards the creek so I figured I better get out.'

'Oh, my word,' said Barbie, Sib said 'I know that creek, its pretty slimy.'

Maloney got up from his chair becoming quite animated. Acting out the story.

'It was then I heard the sirens. Someone must've seen me go over the edge. I jumped out of the car & started running. I figured if I took off my clothes the cops wouldn't be able to identify me. I was thinking crazy.'

'That's hilarious,' said Cartan, 'What a great idea,' Cartan had been chased by the cops many times for many reasons, obviously Maloney's idea of stripping down hit a nerve.

'I ran up the side of the river throwing off my pants & shirt & started cutting through backyards, in running shoes & gaunch.'

'Oh, my word did anyone see you,' Barbie was fascinated.

'I don't know but a couple of lights came on. I didn't really care it was actually quite a rush if I want to be honest. I figured the cops won't think its me driving if I'm naked, because why would you be naked & driving a car.'

'What happened?' Pigs asked always the pragmatist.

'Well, I ended up on the street & there were cop cars all over the place. I couldn't believe how many cops there were. By this time, I was running crazy. They chased me down & tackled me on some guy's lawn & threw me in the back of a cop car. Booked me for just being butt fuck crazy & I spent the night in jail.

'Some how they hooked me up with the car still hanging on the edge of the creek. I guess it was pretty easy to figure out,' Maloney mused in a contemplative manner. Living out past events had been exhausting.

'Well yea,' laughed Densmore. Everyone cracked up.

'I guess they tracked down my Mom. Hurricane of anger erupted when she saw me at the cop shop. Refused to take me home. Next day she kicked me out. Good riddance.'

'What happened to the car,' Sib asked.

'It was fucked. Insurance wouldn't cover it. I still owe on it. Whatever.' Maloney drained his drink & got another. Telling his story had actually made him step outside his comfort zone.

The kitchen was starting to fill up with smoke. The air was thick with dope smoke. Trucks had rolled a hash joint during Maloney's story & the sweet smell of black hash was covering the room like a blanket. Barbie reached over the sink & opened the window to try & get some relief. The party was moving like a slow freight train out of the station.

Casey snuck a beer from the fridge. Brech went into the living room where the Beats were just harmonizing out, in the end the love you give is equal to the love you get. Brech put on the Zappa Hot Rats disc. The iconic rift of Zappa's signature song brought up the energy level to a contemplative pitch.

'That's like the time when Cartan & I tried to fly,' Pigs was bringing the attention back to him.

'What do you mean tried to fly?' Brech coming back into the kitchen said mockingly.

'I told you about that,' Pigs replied sharply.' When Carts tried to launch his old volkswagen van over Willowdale creek in Hollywood Park.'

Carts looked up from the table. His eyes sparkling in a mischievous glow. Shining like headlights framed by his monstrous beard & long Jesus hair. His big six-foot two frame straightening up at the memory of an event that went horribly wrong.

Now all attention was turned to this obscure story.

'Carts & I were sitting in the middle of Hollywood Park, smoking a joint,' Pigs started up, 'feeling wild. Beautiful starlit summer evening, must've been about three in the morning. No one around.' Pigs got up from his chair & started talking with his hands,

'We were thinking crazy, eh Jim,' Pigs addressed Carts with his given name.

'Crazy is as crazy does,' said Carts. Pigs continued becoming more excited as the story grew.

'We were talking about movies & stupid shit you saw. So, we decided we wanted to vault the creek, like you see all the time in the movies. Talking 'Bullitt' stuff here.'

'Steve McQueen, my man,' piped in Kelly. Steve McQueen was his god.

'Yea like Steve. We figured we could fly over the creek. The creek has sort of a grass knoll on one side, we figured we launch from there like a draw bridge thing & we went for it.'

'Holy shit man that's crazy,' said Densmore.

'Yea it was. We got up some speed & launched the van over the creek,' Pigs made a rocket like motion with his arms.

'Thing was, we made it over the creek, but didn't clear the knoll on the other side. We buried the front end into the ridge like a rocket stuck into the side of a hill. Quite a rush, huh Jim.'

'Yea a real rush,' Cartan replied very sarcastically.'

'Well now we were stuck in there pretty good. Neither one of us feeling no pain.'

‘You weren’t,’ Cartan said,’ the steering wheel did a number on my gut.’

‘Anyways, what the fuck do we do now?’ Pigs said to the crowd as if he was acting out a play.

‘I’ll tell you what you did,’ Sib spoke up. ‘These two assholes came over to my house. Woke me & my mother out of a deep sleep. Fucking Pigs throwing rocks at my window.’

‘We were fucking stuck in the side of a hill. Not a situation you find yourself in often,’ Pigs jumped back in. ‘We tried backing out but that was stupid. We tried pushing but that was even dumber. I knew Sib lived just a couple of blocks away & he was really smart & would figure out some thing to do. We were at a loss. Fucking Laurel & Hardy in the bottom of a well.’

‘Don,’ Barbie called Sib his proper name,’ What in the world did your mother say?’

‘Well, she thought this was one of the most bizarre things she had ever heard,’ Sib spoke up, ‘after Pigs here told the story, she almost laughed herself out of her nightgown. She proceeded to offer Pigs a scotch, had one herself while me & Carts phoned a tow truck.’

‘Mrs. Sibbald is so cool,’ Barbie addressed the crowd from her perch on the kitchen counter.

Maloney looked her way like a sad puppy yearning for affection. Sib looked at Maloney like a wild wolf intent on protecting his own from prowlers.

They all took a communal pause after Pigs’ story. A mild hush fell like onion breath over the kitchen. Zappa was singing about, what sounded like nonsense, but in a true mysterious lyrical sense. You could see Casey & Densmore were ready to make a move. Trucks cracked another beer. Kelly went up to use the washroom. Maloney & Sib sat at either end of the kitchen table like two card players playing poker, neither ready to show their cards. Barbie balancing on the kitchen counter talking & laughing with Pigs over the highlights of the recently told story. Maloney’s escapades lost in the cigarette smoke sifting out the window. Cartan softening up some hash getting ready to roll.

The record player in the living room determined to spin on forever. Almost hypnotizing everyone into a land far past the reality of their every day lives. Their music was their porthole to their limitless imagination, their dreams, their loves, their loss. No matter what happened in their lives there was a song which soothed their anger, pain, frustration, the wailing out the agony of unfulfilled love, celebrating the true love of passionate youth. The Who, The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Frank Zappa, Neil Young, Bruce Cockburn, Leon Russel, Genya Raven, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Yes, Led Zeppelin, on & on & on. It was the early 70’s, music was blood, it had become such an intimate part of all their lives. It was like breathing.

Slowly like a wild beast rising from a slumber it came time to make a move. It was a Toronto Friday night, time to have some fun. Time to hit the Red Rooster a bar just down from 427 on desolate Davisville. A street well known to ancient Torontonians as the second stop on the new subway heading downtown, when Eglinton-- just a few blocks north-- was the final stop on the north south line. Eglinton in the north, Union station in the south. Toronto's first subway connection. Davisville it self at the time wasn't much of a street. Running east from Yonge St bordering some unused train tracks on the southside. Dilapidated old wooden houses on the north waiting to be torn down for gentrification dreams. A few shops still remained, little clusters of commerce. The Red Rooster had just opened & was a hole in the wall basement bar, serving up wine & jugs of beer. Sometimes a singer, usually just a jukebox to listen to.

Casey & Densmore would head out first. Casey with his leprechaun's twinkle, Densmore with an austere Arabic stare. Densmore's family was originally from Lebanon from way back when. They had prospered in Canada retaining The Arabic predisposition for being astute businessmen. The only hitch was Densmore's older brother Larry was butt fuck crazy. He was infamously attracted to any new age fad coming out of the sixties. Presently he was a Scientologist walking the streets of Toronto recruiting members.

The boys', Frick & Frack, spirits high & horny ventured forth. Both jiving each other on possible conquests. They went out to Densmore's old rickety Volkswagen. You could see the street right through the floor in his old heap. Off to pick up chicks, at some downtown bar. The Rooster wasn't their scene. Maloney sometimes went with them. But if Barbie was around, he'd hang back. Like a dog sniffing butt.

The rest of the gang would gradually get up & head for the door. Like a sluggish army not sure what was up. Someone always forgot something, usually Carts. Brech & Pigs would be insisting on bringing some beers for the walk. Yelling back at Carts to grab some stubbies as he inevitably returned to pick up whatever he forgot this time.

Carts would reappear on the porch where they were waiting---no beer. Sib would go back to grab the beer. Barbie would wait on the porch talking to Kelly who'd be out there smoking a joint. Trying to make a decision whether he should go back to work. Maloney peering through the sparse city bushes in the front yard, down by the road, acting weird, thinking he'll hang out with the gang. Trucks would be standing down on the sidewalk sipping a beer, smoking a joint, coming back up & share the joint with Kelly. Barbie would sometimes take a puff, but only if Sib was around. Anyways it was unlady like for a lady to be smoking outside. Trucks thinking, he should have gone with Casey & Densmore, who he sees just getting into Densmore's barely alive Volkswagen---you really could see the road right under your feet, & sometimes when the vehicle wasn't stopping as it should, you were actually very close to putting the old shoe to the

road & helping the process along like Fred Flintstone. Casey & Densmore heading out to meet some ladies. Objective-- to get laid. Trucks smiled a knowing smirk & stayed.

Finally, everyone was out the door & the trip to the bar was on. Casey & Densmore well on their way heading south down Mt Pleasant into the bowels of the beast. The gang all walking in comradery comfort across Mount Pleasant & west down Davisville. The street lights sparse. The pre spring air damp to the smell. The two lane slip of street deserted except for our friends, spread out across it like a wave. A last remnant of winter slush making you pay attention to your traction.

Sib with his arm around Barbies shoulder, both making sure neither slipped. Maloney straggling behind seemingly for some reason in a pout. Pigs, Carts & Trucks jostling each other like kids in a playground. Brech sipping his beer walking with Kelly (who'd decided to ditch the cab) in front, arguing about some irrelevant point concerning religion.

'How do you even know God exists,' Brech proclaims in Kelley's ear.

'You don't that's the point,' Kelly says back a little annoyed.

'I say there is no God. The Catholics just made him up to make money.' Brech is really into it, not noticing Kelly doesn't really care.

'Well,' Kelly says speaking to the air like a preacher 'Ya just gotta have faith.' He's really thinking about the money he's not making by going to the bar & how he'll have to make it up driving all day Saturday.

'Faith in something that doesn't exist,' Brech replied incredulously, trying to get Kelly's goat.

'Exactly,' Kelly said not biting on Brech's being a jerk.

Brech, disgruntled, stumbles a bit & loses his train of thought.

Maloney walking beside Sib now in silence. He wants so much to be the one Barbie wants, but it will never be & he knows it.

The walk to the Rooster only took about ten minutes. It wasn't long before they were upon the flickering neon Red Rooster sign beckoning them in. The wrought iron black handrail headed straight down, to anticipated devilish debauchery. The stairs slippery & stained.

They all went down tumbling & mumbling into the dimly lit Rooster. The Rooster was a quaint little denizen of delight that sometimes-had folksingers on the weekend. Discretely lit, little lanterns highlighting each little round table. About ten to twelve tables scattered about the room like randomly tossed poker chips. A curious little stand-up bar bordered with mahogany &

an old-fashioned foot rail, backed by a wall of wine & liquors, masking a mirror. Little TV set up high in a corner almost as an afterthought. Three stools seductively stood about waiting for bums.

A sincere one up wooden stage at one end for the erratic entertainment. An old jukebox from the sixties muddled on the far side wall. Full of Neil young, Joni Mitchel, Beatles & catchy pop rock tunes. Even a little Elvis for when things got steamy. Pigs & Carts always played Curtis Mayfield's 'Shaft' first off. It set a comfortable cool vibe that brought the curse of the city down into their little secret hideaway den. The gang always sat at the opposite end to the stage. Pulling two tables together, gathering round the stools. The whole scenario purveying a yuppie vibe as yet unknown. The beer served in jugs & mugs. They ordered two jugs to start the night on the way to their seats. They were known to all, so the transition was smooth. It was what they could afford for now. They were the worst spenders in the history of bar tales, so money was always an issue as they sat down at their tables. None of them ever had any money, but they made do with what they had & there was always a half full pitcher or two of beer on the table during the course of the evening.

Only a couple of other tables were occupied. One a guy drinking alone, trying to read a book, frustrated by the lack of light. A couple obviously on a date. He dressed in blazer & jeans, she in sweater & slacks, big bottle of wine between them. One guy standing at the bar watching 'Ironside' on TV. Everything was certainly low key. The gang came in like an invading army, but soon settled comfortably in their chosen spot.

The waitress, Bernie, was a treasure. A main attraction for a bunch of horny, would-be late in the day, hippies. Bernie was dressed in a Swiss maid outfit all the time, a tight fit reflecting the French maid sexually alluring fantasy, that we all had wet dreams about when young. The outfit highlighted her gorgeous bursting bosom. A cavernous cleavage which allured each one of us to be lost in thought. Bernie had beautiful coquettishly curled blonde hair, eyes as blue as the Mediterranean Sea the ancient poets used to write about. Just to watch her work was entertainment. Her legs were legendary, with thighs attracting leering eyes, inducing thought about pretty panties protecting forbidden fantasies.

Kelly was in love with Bernie. We all were in love with Bernie (even Barbie thought she was cool). Thus, one of the reasons we loved the Rooster.

Kelly was one of those guys who was in love with anything in a skirt. He fell in love with the girl selling deodorant in the flash of a commercial. He fell in love with girls driving by him on the street. He fell in love with female cashiers as they gave him back his change for a chocolate bar. They didn't even have to pay him the time of day. He could love em just as strongly in his head as in his bed.

The gang all took their places around the tables. Sib, Barbie & Kelly at one, Trucks, Pigs & Cartan round the other. Maloney sitting in between. Brech electing to stand & annoy both tables at once.

Kelly & Barbie would talk a lot. Kelly asking Barbie how to get into Bernie's pants. Barbie giving him a treasure trove of helpful hints. All the gang discretely listening in, snickering into their mugs of draft.

She might be a little old for you Barbie would say. Just feel her out. Talk to her about her job. I bet she has a kid. Don't push, she might be out of your league.

Kelly would never heed her advice & would always commence to make himself look foolish. Telling Bernie, she looked like a vision when she dropped down their beer.

'A vision of what,' Bernie inquired with a flick of her hips.

Kelly tongue tied & shy, would sheepishly reply,

'A vision of what I'd like to take home,' Kelly sometimes too much to the point. Bernie would laugh & throw back her hair,

'In your dreams,' as she walked away.

Bernie was great because at the end of the night as the rest of the bar emptied out, she would give the gang all that was leftover in the pitchers & wine bottles of others.

One night, they got a full bottle of some fancy wine which one of the pre yuppie couples had left behind. Major score. Usually just half empty jugs, or the remnants of unfinished carafes. Bernie made a point of looking after the boys.

Perhaps now is as good a time as ever to discuss the elephant in the story. It has obviously by now become apparent there is a definite lack of female companionship amongst our gang of rebels without a cause. Other than Sib & Barbie—a match made in heaven-- the lack of ladies in our tale must be perplexing to our readers. This like in all things has its reasons. Though for the most part they are only theories, because who in their right mind can explain the ways of the heart. It certainly was not, on the part of our boys, for lacking physical attraction. Each in their own right could lay claims to the features of an Adonis.

We'll start with Kelly. Now Kelly was a skirt chaser, but he was a lot like the dog chasing a car, once it stopped, he didn't know what to do with it. Kelly for all his pomp & ceremony was terrified of commitment & took strong measures to avoid it. With the girls he brought home for a fling he would consciously avoid any emotional commitment to the point that it was not uncommon to hear the feminine voice crying out, 'Fuck You,' & then the slamming of first a

bedroom door, then the clump clump clump of feet fleeing down the stairs & a finale of a front door closing rather rudely. Kelly was a cross section of his age. He spoke of love as if it was manufactured in a factory. His catholic upbringing bred hypocrisy & contradiction. Any perpetually unmentioned goings on between him & the priests --as an alter boy-- led to a human being enmeshed in one big emotional mess.

Maloney had ambition. No matter what happened in his youth, regarding his mother & dealings with the priests, something had resulted in the formation of one thick wall-- layered in self preservation-- protecting him from letting anyone in. His emotions were stone. He had a myriad of ideas & plans which he desperately kept concealed in the depths of his depravation. His hide was leather tough. For a woman to penetrate, sexual proclivity would never be enough.

Cartan was an untouchable. His disposition was so aloof that to get anywhere near him you needed a signed invitation. He hid his heart like a pirate with his gold. Woman who tried to get in were met with scorn & disbelief. Who knows what damage was done as he grew up amidst priests & parents who treated him as a spare part. Anyone who tried to tie him down, was left wondering what had they done to be so ignored. His love life was like a storm which always blew itself out.

Pigs was too much into himself. Insecurities flooded—like an ocean tsunami-- his emotional ability to attach. He masked this flaw by setting standards which were just unrealistic. No one was smart enough, pretty enough, strong enough to meet his stupid standards. He always had an excuse for not moving in & his best defense was an over indulgence in booze & psychedelics. Exaggerated hedonism meant he could skirt any attack on his heart.

Trucks was a pragmatist. One who was only interested in the traditional arrangements. In this age of enlightenment these girls were few & far between. As the female persuasion started to assert their independence, at the expense of those, who just wanted someone to stay home & never say no.

Brech was just a disaster when it came to women. His space cadet demeanor kept whatever women who might show the slightest interest, confused like a dry fire hydrant. It was a mystery why he was so weird when it came to women. Even Barbie made sure to keep him at arm's length. Was he a pervert, was often whispered. Who knows was concluded.

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A pebble in the pond would be all it would take to disrupt the calm. The boys wore their horny hearts like protective pledges, making oaths to -- what would turn out to be-- a fragile fraternity. One for all; all for one. Teetering on the edge, balanced for a fall.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

Tonight, they were all being entertained by the star-crossed couple sitting at the table on the other side of the room. The Rooster wasn't that big of a place, so pretty well what happened at one or another of the tables was happening within earshot.

The tentative lovers talking in that whisper, for only the other to hear. Except when you're in a bar everyone's straining their ear to hear your business. Especially when the cute young thing has all the boys salivating & Barbie looking around for distraction. You never know these things sometimes go side ways was Kelly's thought & he was always the one to step up & dry some tears, with his other hand exploring a distressed thigh. Kelly saw all women as potential, no matter what the real situation. Even ones on a date with another.

The young couple were sipping fat glasses of wine munching on some hors d'oeuvre, then ordering more of both. A blanket of lust covering their conversation. The boys commenting on she's getting wet, as they watched, Barbie good naturedly covering her ears. They were taking phantom bets on when the overheated love scene would start to become physical, it was all so funny,

'He's gotta have a hard on,' said Pigs, Maloney couldn't agree more & Sib was laughing so hard he almost fell on the floor.

'Wouldn't be surprised if he's already shot his wad,' Truck's commented

'Let's keep a sharp eye on his pants, see if they're wet,' Carts chirped in. This was crude & hilarious.

Loverboy finally making a move. He ended up over the table clutching at her, as she was grabbing for him, it was almost Shakespearian. It got time to either get a motel, or do it right here in the dim light of The Red Rooster rumpus room. Legs up, butt down on the wine-stained carpeted floor thought the gang. Bernie went over & discretely-- as only a well trimmed waitress can-- got the lovers attention that they were becoming an attraction. The Lothario by that time had his hand halfway through his dates—buttons askew—blouse. His body basically draped like a snake across the small rooster round table. Bernie ah hummed with just enough voice to get his attention & suggested very appropriately that the Red Rooster was not a hotel & the little round table not a bed. So, our two sheep in heat sheepishly got up & left—leaving Bernie a tip for the heads up & the gang got the unfinished remains of a well healed bottle of red. Which Bernie discretely retrieved & silently without speak, put it on the gang's table.

The gang had been enthralled with the show & toasted the lovers with the remnants of the left-over wine. There was just enough for each, as they passed the bottle round, each taking a sip, echoing their appreciation for the lucky ones in love & to Bernie for the gift.

The gang were all getting drunk. The sprinkle of wine mixed with the main course of beer had topped them well off. As Joni sang about paved parking lots, Sib & Maloney were hard at it.

‘I don’t need to go to college to get an education,’ Maloney was spewing off.

‘The only way to get work doing something worth doing is with a degree,’ Sib was disputing.

Both were on the edge of their seats. Faced off against each other. Neither ready to admit the fire behind their disagreement was sitting talking to Kelly. Barbie explaining to Kelly that just because Bernie gave us some wine doesn’t mean she loves you.

‘Formal education just makes you a stooge to the will of the man. You’re just repeating in rote what they want you to understand.’ Maloney always felt a little insecure when it came to college. Secretly he wanted to go, but he just couldn’t lose face & admit it.

‘Its not like that,’ Sib said, ‘You have free will. You don’t have to just regurgitate back to them, like you just took a pill.’

‘I can do just as well with what I learn on the street,’ Maloney smugly replied.

‘Like what?’ Sib had heard this shit before, but he secretly adhered to some of it making sense. He knew there was more to life than just getting a university degree.

‘You learn how to survive. How to thrive. How to handle yourself,’ Maloney started up, ‘how to think quick in a pinch. How to know when someone is stealing & just dealing you a load of crap. How to look after yourself when you’re in a jam, how to make sure someone’s got your back. How to go to sleep in a ditch & not be a snitch. How to know when you’ve had enough. How to know when to be tough & when to be mean. How to know how to stand in a room & not be seen.’ Maloney took a breath & a gulp of his beer.

‘All of that’s alright but none of that will pay the bills or get you a job,’ Sib was quick on the response, ‘some of that might even get you fired, it sure won’t get you hired. If you think all you need to get by in the world is a head full of street, then you’re going to be very surprised with how little you know. You’re gonna meet those who think you’re just soft in the head & downright lazy, because you thought it was more important to have some fun & go crazy. Rather than going to school & learning that no matter where you are, or who you are, you gotta follow some rules. They don’t necessarily have to be our rules or theirs, but they have to be there for us, to all live together, for life to be fair.’

'That's what I'm talking about,' Maloney was becoming drunkenly inflated. 'Rules are for chumps,' Maloney slumped forward almost falling off his stool, 'the only rule which is true is the one that says to have fun. Explore what's more, don't be penned in by what others think.'

'What does that even mean,' Sib questioned, 'We gotta at least understand what & why rules exist. We need context to understand what we're fighting against. At least with school you get to see what has been going on before & why certain decisions are made which don't make any sense.'

'I don't need to go to school to see that things are wrong. I learned from the priests that if you don't do what I say then you're on your way to hell & that's just bullshit. Half those people in the catholic church will burn in their hell for what they do in the name of belief.'

'I get it. But college is different. You're treated with no disillusion, if you don't do the work, it's on you. They don't care. They're trying to make you see that there are things worth learning about, if you have the right motivation,' Sib was being painfully sincere. To dish college was an affront to the honor of his deceased Dad.

'I don't need some stuck up professor to motivate me,' Maloney was almost insulted, 'if I don't want something in my life, I'm not going to let some ivory tower snob stick it down my throat.'

'University is supposed to teach you how to learn,' Sib was talking, quietly trying to control his feelings of rage, 'once you learn how to learn you can learn anything. Do anything, be anything you want.'

'I know how to learn, I'm not stupid,' Maloney was almost incensed. He knew he was smart, probably smarter than Sib & that was the problem. It bred frustration hearing that university was meant for guys just like him. Unfortunately, guys like Maloney most often thought they knew it all & didn't have to call on some pie in the sky institution to teach them what's right.

'I'm not saying that,' Sib was becoming contrite, 'all I'm trying to say is, by going to school you can challenge the norm just as well as by not attending. In the end the security a degree brings balances the scales-- for me anyways-- to attend.'

'Each to their own,' Maloney was dismissive. The conversation had run its course & Sib turned his attention to Barbie while Maloney poured himself another beer.

It was getting late; Neil Young was singing about stars & sunsets over mars. Bernie was sitting tired on a stool at the bar talking with an intoxicated patron trying to get him to leave, with no luck. You could see he was virtually pleading with her for a fuck.

The bartender finally stepped in, intervening dramatically, picking the drunk up by the collar & dragging him out & up the stairs. Presumably to throw him face down on the street. Bernie breathed a sigh of relief & walked in a slow Madonna shuffle over to the gang to see if they were ready to go. No free beer tonight she said, everyone here tonight might as well have been dead. She was ready to call it a shift & the gang got her drift. They started to rise from their stools one at a time. Each being a little unsteady on their feet.

Kelly of course was playing it slow. Hanging back to talk with Bernie as she cleaned the table. Kelly putting out a desperate flirt, hoping against hope that to night would be the one night his feelings wouldn't be hurt & Bernie would finally say alright. Let's go to the back room & you can pull down my panties & we will party, till we're both such a mess, they'll have to lift us out of here with a crane. Of course, this was insane, the only place where those thoughts existed were in the depraved imagination of Kelly's brain, who persisted to believe that women were just objects put on earth for him to please. Bernie cleaned up the glasses & took them up to the bar. Kelly following like a puppy craving food from its master. Bernie wasn't mean & tolerated his advances with furtive glances & exaggerated bent over stances. But eventually she just wanted to go home to her daughter, which proved Barbie right, & say good bye to another exhausting night. Kelly finally accepted inevitable defeat, crawled out through the door & up the stairs ready to meet up with the gang who were waiting right there.

'Hey,' Kelly said in his hang dog fashion.

'She gave you the heave ho again,' Sib said, tightening up his face trying not to snicker.

'Fuck Kelly when will you learn,' Maloney blurted & gave his friend who was hurting, a big bear hug.

Then Kelly would lie. He'd go into some story about Bernie telling him she had a kid & a live in boyfriend but she says they're not getting along. So, Kelly thinks if he just keeps working at it, she'll come around & when her & this boyfriend she hates, break up, it won't be too late for Kelly to be sitting right there, waiting perversely to pick up the pieces. It was the same old story Kelly spun, heard many times before regarding a variety of women. All these women tell Kelly something he doesn't want to hear. Thing is Kelly's not listening, he only hears in his head that if he sticks around his dick will be well fed. Its an illusion Kelly lives, but he's young, the insect within just can't stop spinning its web.

It was that awkward time of year. Early spring, the roads were sloshy & sidewalks damp. Chilly but certainly a lot warmer than winter & the snow had all but melted, but it certainly was still slippery in places. The streetlights on desolate Davisville glistened the ground. A certain beauty of the late city night scoured the terrain. The wet emitted a haze giving the whole scene an

eerie glow. The gang making their way with drunken hesitance, walking weird, like in a spooky scene over an asphalt moat.

Cartan always having to stop for a piss. The whole crew, except Barbie of course, would line up on the side of the curb & piss a glittering stream into the dark gutter. Steam rising like smoke. Barbie walking up ahead, as the gang zipped up leaving the last drippy drops sliding around inside their pants.

Mount Pleasant Road at this time of night was a poor reflection of the major artery it represented to Toronto for any one travelling into the heart of the city during the day. In the rush hour times there were lines going up & down of bumper-to-bumper cars. If it was a sea, they would all drown in the fumes, as the air would become thick with carbon vapour so heavy that it would hang like linen, before it would dissipate into another layer of the atmosphere, where it would hang around forever. Causing despair to animals & anything else trying to survive. Inflicting all alive to get down on their knees & pray for help which no longer existed. But tonight, a reprieve, just after midnight the mighty street was black & white, vacant. The street lights displayed a blank canvas devoid of all cars. The odd flash lighted beam twinkled a twilight scene, as a solitary passenger vehicle passed by carrying some late-night fare, to who knows where.

Our friends crossed Mt Pleasant without incident. Slipping & sliding, running & hiding making a game of what was usually an insane attempt to get across this strip of motor vehicle madness. But now in the dark it was merely a lark, to stand in the middle & make fun of all that wasn't there.

They all arrived back at 427 in full flight. The night was just beginning, they were all in a fuss to crack open a beer, light up a joint, let's listen to some music, turn it up loud, we have only ourselves to fear. Rowdy & wild, let all sense of who we are flee our mortal being & let loose & be the thing we all are seeing. That of a life without restraint, that of throwing off the tyranny of that what we're supposed to be & let out the true feelings of what's inside you & me.

Casey & Densmore would already be there sitting in the throwaway chair, lounging on the bed that was a couch. Listening to Jim Croce music, humming along when the gang burst in & the party was on. Carts & Pigs getting excited because the party was just getting started. Pigs rushed to the fridge & grabbed as many beers as he could handle, Carts sat right down at the kitchen table with Trucks & became an assembly line-- no less efficient than a Henry Ford building a car-- & started heating some hash & twisting tobacco to roll a couple of joints, which would crack the last bastions of anything real. Maloney & Kelly were lingering in the front room talking with Frick & Frack about the lack of women they've brought back. Casey was telling them a story of how they came close but no cigar, when the women they'd coaxed from the bar

stopped & turned when they saw Densmore's car. Sib & Barbie were lingering in the hall. Barbie wanted to go & Sib wanted to stay. Pretty straight forward. Barbie had had enough but not in a negative way; she was just tired & had a big day tomorrow. Sib was liquored & wanted more beer & especially one last toke.

Kelly gravitated to the kitchen smelling the hash. As Sib slipped into the kitchen for one last pull, Maloney taking his chance made an advance on Barbie waiting by the door.

'You going,' he slyly inquired.

'I've gotta get home & go to bed,' Barbie harshly replied.

'You don't want to stay instead?' Maloney stepping over the limit, like a drunk who won't take no for an answer.

'Its time to say good night,' Barbie replied, 'You look like you've had enough.'

'Yea you're probably right,' Maloney lied, as Sib stood guard-- like a decadent professor-- he was back from the kitchen & it was time to go. Sib was no dummy he knew when to listen to his woman & when to shut up.

Barbie yelled her see you later's to the goings on. Her long blonde hair & vacant blue eyes -- making you think of just jumping in & swimming to eternity-- turned to the door. She & Sib made their way down the stairs to her car. She'd had enough. Sib-- curly hair a flutter, glasses barely on his nose-- followed closely, ignoring the cat calls of the guys who were hiding their envy behind good times & beer.

Trucks & Kelly in the kitchen smoking a joint. Talking about who they were & what they were doing. Two men the same age who were coming from different polar regions. Trucks, at St Mary's playing hockey, Kelly driving a cab in the city. The one common factor both loving to get high. Kelly of proud Irish descent a product of private catholic school indoctrination. Trucks a working mans son, two generations away from the chaos of the Ukraine. Maloney joining them, jumping into the conversation. Sucking up the weed in his goliath lungs. Maloney the only one who came from a broken home. His life a tragic reflection of stubborn Irish pride integrating with the strain of suburban life. Parents who couldn't survive together, putting their personal feelings above the needs of their child.

What were they discussing who knows. Probably Trucks talking about how much fun it was down east. How the bars & babes in Halifax are just fucking wild. You guys should come down. Kelly talking bout his fares, how he just had to grind it to make a buck. Maloney sitting listening missing Barbie, imagining what it would be like.

Pigs & Carts were exploding in the living room. Talking bout crazy things they were going to do. Buy some land in the country, a cabin on a lake, have a music festival, start to live off the land, ditch the city it will all be grand.

Casey & Densmore would already be talking why they struck out. Densmore saying to Carts give me a pull on that. Casey having another beer thinking that maybe the reason is, he's queer. No that isn't it, he sits on the couch which is a bed, & figures that the ones who wouldn't even give him the time of day, are just stuck-up snooty snobs looking for guys to look after them while they play & Casey's too cheap for any of that. But boy he sure wanted to just fuck one till her eyes filmed over with tears, so the little Irish leprechaun can conquer his Irish fears, & proclaim himself a man. Ultimately, this was not to be tonight. Unfortunately, the type of girl Casey wants, exists only in his dreams. She who kisses softly in the night, likes to sit & knit round the hearth & in the morn checks the thatch for cracks ensuring everything's in tact. Keeping them warm & dry in their little Irish cottage. This type of girl can't be found at the bar today. In the modern world she's the one sitting at home on a Saturday night, watching movies eating popcorn, with her year-old son, snuggled under a nice warm blanket as her live-in boy friend is in the kitchen making Sanka. Casey knows he's delusional but he won't stop trying, its part of the Irish myth. He knows he's lying if he thinks he's ever gonna meet his Irish queen doing shots at the local barroom scene.

Densmore is more discrete. He is very particular to the girls he meets. He wants one with a head on her shoulders & ambition in her heart. Someone who is willing to forego the fun, in order to have a son. Sadly, at the bar the girls there are there for pleasure & not to meet your paternal needs. Perhaps down the line it will be fine & you will meet someone who will sweep you off your feet with whom you'll fall in love & have a family. But not tonight. Tonight, you struck out. No fuck for you, only a few beers with the boys, then home to bed.

No one had noticed that Brech was nowhere to be found. His absence had not been felt. A poor reflection on the essence of his ghostly presence. Brech was never there, yet he was never far away. He was only around when he wanted to be found. He liked to think he was a mysterious fellow who floated through the world in a cavity of mellow. He had no feelings, he had no heart, he just existed as a cold hard fart. Don't tell him that however, for he thinks he exists outside the mere mortal plain. He drifts on the edge of insane, experiencing this thing called humanity, through a different lens than you & me. Tonight, he was finally heard clomping down the stairs. As much as he wanted to be seen as being something mysterious & weird, he'd only been in the toilet; for an obscene length of time, doing who knows what.

Pigs & Carts had taken over the show. The room lit up all aglow in the energy they were emitting. Fitting it be that they were now in charge of the gang's insanity. Flying about in contagiously contorting Faustian revelry, celebrating the sealing of ones deal with the devil.

Brech passed through the room on his way to the kitchen. He was in a sombre mood, relishing his otherworldly thoughts as his friends went nuts.

By this time the music was Aqualung. The national anthem for all who wanted to step outside the norm & have some fun. Pigs & Carts worshipped the song as strong as any priest at the altar. Christ became a crazed old man-- white locks & beard as a Santa Claus-- snot running down his nose watching pretty panties run, as he crouched in the shadows oblivious to prying eyes. The melody drove our friends to a frenzy. They danced like a ballet in heat. Pounding out the rhythm as if they were part of the band. Pigs-- on the bed for a couch-- jumping as if on a trampoline. Cartan center stage in the living room floor, playing the guitar solo like a crazed maniac. Casey playing his knee like a drum. Densmore slapping a pillow into submission. The boys in the kitchen paying no heed. All their concentration intent, on just how high can they get.

The night wore on. Screaming, dancing on the bed they used as couch, bouncing back & forth from floor to ceiling, till they could do it no more. Dope smoked till lungs burst, screaming I'm sore. Beer drank by the gallon splashing & splashing on the floor. Eventually there just was no beer left. But wait Trucks has a stash, two hidden under the cupboard. All scream in delight & share the warm sweet nectar. By this time everyone crashing about, destination total exasperation. Collapse.

Densmore responsibly calling it a night & slipped away as a thief in the night. Casey close on his heels like a herder chasing a sheep. Brech is dancing with himself in the kitchen, beer in one hand roach in the other. Maloney & Kelly are talking business & chicks, exaggerating their exchange for the sake of their evil intent. The frenzy in the air is thick with crazy. No one knows when it all ends. Time has bypassed this motley crew.

Trucks ends up asleep on the bed for a couch. Kelly & Maloney reluctantly stagger up the stairs & crash head first on their respective beds like the dead. Brechin is fast unconscious on the oversized cushiony chair, no even realizes he is there. Carts is crumpled on the floor, in a fetal position, on the dull red throw rug they got from the garbage bin two weeks before. It had turned out to be an excellent, score. Cartan looking like an oversized hairy sasquatch, curled up like a baby. Pigs has fallen hard on his head in his bed in his room, which is just an extension of the space where all the frivolity took place.

Record silent, needle bouncing, scraping, shush, shush, shush. Sounds of waves lapping, crawling on deserted sand, splosh, splosh, splosh, dampening the depraved damned. Everything serene. Music's over. They're all dead.

Early the next morning all were awoken from their slumber by a hideous scream. Like someone was being stabbed.

Maloney had woken with a throbbing head, like he'd just been shot by the mob. He'd stumbled down the hall to the toilet trying not to fall. His bladder exploding, needing relief it was so full he could feel a sour taste in his teeth. To his consternation the lid was down which caused a frown. Upon lifting it a sight was beheld which caused him great grief. It looked like a baby without a head. A feces log the size of a hog was what he was looking at. What the hell, it looked like a headless baby to his fuzzy brain. He panicked down the stairs screaming insane.

The downstairs room was now awake. Pigs rolled off his bed thinking he heard something about a severed head. Cartan was aroused from his slumber like a buffalo beast. Brech jumped up from his chair like he was chopped by a machete. Maloney stood in the middle of the room looking like he'd seen a monster. Which in essence was true. A monster in the shape of an immense bowel movement.

It appears Brech was not just lingering last night in his time in the toilet. He'd left the vestiges of his last ten meals plugging the plumbing, making it unable to flush the bowl. Maloney was ready to crush Brech's head as he rushed by, out the back door, feeling if he didn't relieve himself immediately, he was going to burst. Cartan like a beaten warrior slumped up the stairs, anxious to find his bed. Pigs took charge & in an emphatic voice-- scaring the bejesus out of all who heard-- yelled at Brech to go & fix what disaster he had wrought.

Trucks mumbled & stumbled, what's happening, oh my fucking head. His clothes still clinging from the night before, it was time to go. No cops on the road now. Brech heard him rousing, as he unplugged the mess he'd made upstairs with a stick. Trucks wait up for me I need a ride home he yelled, as the fresh sounds of flushing rang out like a church bell. Trucks wasn't overly pleased to be imposed on such as this. Come on man. I ain't going up Yonge Street I'm going up Bayview. Well just take me to Bayview & Shepherd, Brech was saying in a mild tempered voice, as he came rushing down the stairs. No way man I'm getting the 401. Come on man it's right there. I know where it is, Trucks staring Brech down. Trucks scared Brech & he used to have fun with it. Plus, he always ended up giving him a ride. We all wondered at the snide silence filling the stopped car, as the two mortal enemies uncomfortably sat side by side yearning for the stoplight to turn green.

The next night they'd do it all again. Sure, sometimes some of them had other things to do. Sib & Barbie, Barbie had her own friends who'd they sometimes hang out with, Kelly had to work,

always grinding, in his taxi. Casey & Densmore sometimes had real dates. The rest of them just doing what came up. Pigs & Carts always on the edge. Trucks went back to school. Brech would just hang out trying to figure out what life was all about. Maloney always busy at doing nothing & dreaming big.

[illegible]

Toronto in the early 70's was a city is search of itself. Toronto historically known as hog town was a boring place. A strict WASP population was both the strength & weakness of the city. Strong laws dealing with liquor & hours of operation ensured that whatever fun was to be had was determined to be bad. Strong conservative values ensured that any progress would be at a slow regulated pace. Toronto was a manufacturing hub, known more for its toilet paper production than anything else which would encounter some risk. It was home to a continual grime, amplified by grit & grind. The lake upon which it stood as a pillar of progress, was tragically polluted. The fresh Canadian air of the north was thick with acid & dust. The rivers which bordered it's east & west, the Humber & the Don, were swirling cesspools of slime. Transportation around the city was exhausting due to tornados of exhaust, spewing from the big Detroit cars which filled the streets. Sometimes even obscuring the stop lights which were set up to control the movement of this mass concentration of poisoned convenience. If you grew up in Toronto you knew nothing different. You found it hard to believe that snow was actually white.

There was a slight hint of enlightenment. The city fathers had just built a brand-new city hall which was unique in design & quite outrageous in the minds of the conservative elite. Its approval took years, but now built, it was met with cheers. The Henry Moore out front signalled a new age was on its way. There was even mention of building a colossal structure, high to the the sky, but that was still in its formative stages.

There was however another dramatic shift of titanic dimensions which occurred in Toronto in the early seventies. A shift so subtle it bares to be mentioned. It most certainly won't be recorded in the history books as relevant like the Russian Revolution. Yet its affect on the people it effected was just as self empowering. The idealism of the sixties had struck a political chord. The youth of the country were standing up to be counted. They were breaking the reigns of perpetual indoctrination & shredding their fleece as shaven sheep. They were demanding a voice in determining the life they would live. To address this uprising of sorts the politicos decided to loosen the chains & lower the drinking age from twenty-one to eighteen. So, in June 1971(mark the date) Toronto reluctantly stepped into a new social terrain. Prior you had to be virtually through university before you could get a drink, now, they could serve you still in high

school. The bars & clubs which had previously been the exclusive sanctuary of the mob, the slob, the night out with the wife, the jeweled dancer, the pretty prancer, the playground for the rich, the sad alcoholic, the hell hole for the poor soul who lost all his life savings on an impulse bet, the domain for the insane throwing about their ideas as rain, drenched in drink. Now the doors were open for all, no matter how big, no matter how small.

Society as we knew it did not collapse. The old stalwarts of the committee sitting in their leather chairs with cigars & brandy could relax. The young did not rise up & crash all that they yearned to last. The young embraced the change & started to do what they'd been doing all along, now it was just on the other side of the wall. All legal was the cry, let's drink till we die. Well not quite, but it did extend the boundaries of our fun.

Toronto exploded with a dynamic bar scene. Every need was addressed in some sort of way, in some sort of transgression. It was like a whole generation of requests came out of the dark into the light.

For all its life Toronto had grown up & down Yonge Street. The north south artery which joined Toronto to the hinterland. Stretching from Lake Ontario to almost James Bay; longest street in the world according to Guinness. Along Yonge Street throbbed the heart of the city & the salvation way if you wanted to leave. Everything that was anything was within spitting distance of Yonge Street. So, the new energy generated by lowering the drinking age had a base from which to start. Drinking establishments which were strung up & down Yonge Street catering to an aged fleet, opened their doors to greet this new generation. The young eagerly grabbing, their share of, what previously they had just to peer in on, from the street. All the young people in Toronto already knew where to go, Sam the Record Man & A&A record store had been the focal point of music for their generation & they were smack square on Yonge Street right in the middle of downtown. Everyone who'd grown up in Toronto had bought their first 45 record at one of these stores. The music scene emanated from them like a bellowing beast. Now all the clubs & bars which had live acts within earshot could be accessed in person, instead of standing by the door waiting for it to open to catch a glimpse of your music hero. Le Coq D'Or, right beside Sam's, with its legendary history of being the birth place of The Band, was now an open door. Every kid who bought a record had passed it by, ears straining to catch a tune. Now you could go in, what a thrill. The Colonial just down the street, the place where jazz legends meet, was now more than a fancy sign outside advertising Gene Krupa playing tonight.

The number of bars were staggering & the musical diversity being displayed was dramatic. You had Jazz at the Colonial on Yonge & Georges Spaghetti House just down on Dundas. Grossmans on Spadina was in its infancy stage of becoming one of Toronto's premier blues haunts, attracting the newly formed Downchild Blues Band as one of its first acts. You had rock, at the Gasworks up by Yonge & Bloor to entertain its biker clientele. You had country at the

Horseshoe on Queen for those who liked it laid back. The El Mocambo across the street from Grossmans went from big band to rock to make some money with the new found spending power of Toronto's youth. At that time there was really no centralised gay community in the big TO. The gay village which grew up on Church just down from Maple Leaf Gardens (Canada's home of hockey) was just a seedling. But the gays had their bars & the St Charles on Yonge was their primary haunt. The Brunswick near Bloor & Bathurst was the place for good down-home fun. Dixie Band up top & green beer served in a vacuous draft parlour on St Patricks day. The Embassy down by Bloor & Bay was a hold out from the tumultuous hippie days when Yorkville was the place to go. But now all those young hippie kids could stop in for some suds. All these drinking spots fell within easy reach of the Yonge Street corridor.

It was another Saturday night & the gang at 427 were getting ready to fight. . . their way to the downtown core & take in a sight at the Embassy watching their favourite singer, Ronnie Hawkins perform with his new band Elephant. Hawkins went through bands like water running through rapids. He was the man who could sniff out talent like a hog looking for truffles. Pigs & Carts were big fans & the rest of their friends were always excited to come along to one of Ronnies dances, because a good time was guaranteed for all. Tonight, they were sitting around the old kitchen table smoking dope, drinking beer, getting psyched up for what was to come. Trucks was back from St Mary's for spring break with his father's car. He was going to drive, he was always the one to get behind the wheel, because for some unknown mystical reason he never got stopped by the cops. Not like Pigs & Carts, who were like magnets to prying police presence whenever they drove a car, with even a whiff of the evil liqueur on their lips. Brech of course was hanging about as usual, Maloney was all intent. Downtown was his place. Somewhere he could hide hidden in plain site of the human race. He was a student of human nature & all the freaks & hobgoblins which stirred in the bowels of the city brought him endless delight.

They all packed in Truck's Dad's Impala, Pigs in front, Cartan, Brech & Maloney in the back & headed down Mt Pleasant for a night of Ronnie. The Embassy was a huge warehouse of a draft parlour just a block from Yorkville. Yorkville was the street where the hippies hung out in the sixties. It was a sub culture of music & mayhem that became main stream. It helped put Toronto on the map for being cool. Now it was in the process of being gentrified. But the Embassy was still the place to go. An active drug scene was happening, plus people of all walks of life & color made it their place of pleasure.

The trick at the Embassy was to sneak in your own booze, the cost of buying jugs all night was very prohibitive. The boys made a point of stopping on their way downtown, at the Summerhill Liquors store, a Toronto landmark, it was an old train station upgraded, gentrified, to serve a more practical purpose. They bought a couple of mickies & away they went. You had to be sly

sneaking in the booze. The bouncers at The Embassy were the size of Big Foot. They eye spied each & every patron like a Godzilla looking down for something to eat. The boys made sure to tuck the tickling mickies down their pants close to their balls. Hoping that if the bouncer did take notice, they would presume they were just well endowed. They never got checked. The key wasn't in sneaking in your own booze, the trick was getting it into the jug without getting caught. The pretty little waitress' in short red frilly skirts & bland white blouses were a lot sharper then their barbie brain exterior let on.

The boys entered the bar as if they owned it. Cocky like at a carnival, neon bright white lights, everything in motion. They, self assured, stoned out of their tree. The Embassy was set up like a school gymnasium, with a huge raised stage at the far end from the entrance. Round rough tables spread out over the room like a tossed handful of cow pies. The place wasn't packed but it was filling up. It was still early enough that the band hadn't played. Ronnie usually liked to make his gigs late. Over the course of the evening the immense space would become transformed. Wall to wall people. The dance floor in front of the stage packed so tight it would be impossible to fall, no matter how inebriated the clientele.

The gang from 427 found tables up by the stage. They grabbed two & pushed them together making themselves comfortable, stretching out. Carts especially enjoyed this as his long legs were cramped from sitting in the back of the car. A couple of jugs were immediately called for. A little flirt with the pretty girls serving beer & the night was on. The jugs were more expensive than expected, but the pretty girl explained the cost was cover for the band. The boys slyly winked, as the bouncing bum of the waitress exited their table. Now it was just a matter of getting the whiskey discreetly out of their jeans; without looking like that they were playing with themselves.

They immediately filled their glasses with draft, drank them down & filled them again. Now there was enough room in the jugs to pour in the whiskey. Maloney & Trucks were the lookouts, Brech told just don't do anything stupid to attract attention to the table. Pigs & Carts pulled the mickeys from their places. Squishing down a bit much in their chairs to avoid any curiosity stares. They were always the ones earmarked to take chances. Pigs because he would do anything once he'd had a few drinks, Cartan because he was up for anything that bred bravado. At one point Maloney spoke up saying, 'be cool, be cool,' Pigs was caught looking like a fool. If any body had bothered to notice, the tip of the whiskey mickey was sticking out the top of his jeans, like a prick. But Maloney back tracked & said 'false alarm,' as the pretty young server turned & went the other way. Now the mickeys were out, Pigs & Carts clutching them under the table. Trucks passed each one a jug. With the finesse of a Hollywood actress, each one slid the jug between their knees & turned the top off the whiskey, careful not to drop the cap--that would be a catastrophe-- & gently-- like filling a sleeve with an explosive device--

poured the whiskey into the jug. Then returning the jug to the table at the nod from Maloney, who was taking his job as lookout quite serious, like in a James Bond movie.

Jugs back out in full view. Beer looking a little flat but they could all handle that. Glasses filled again all around. None for Trucks he'd stick to just beer, after all he was driving. All the rest put the drinks to the test. Each almost barfing, as they were quaffing what went from five percent to forty in the downward descent. The spiked beer spread fiery distress down their throat, firing up their stomach lining. Destination in sight, all systems go, headed in free flight to the illusive halleluiah.

It was time to sit back & take it all in. The Embassy was a tough place. If you got out of order here, you'd have to look out for yourself, because if you didn't someone would look after you. The place was full of hippies, thieves & straights & all the different types of women who were drawn to the wild side of living. The boys were particularly attracted to the tables where the women in mini skirts & jeans so tight you could see the outline of their muff, were being especially loud & showing no inhibitions to an outside intrusion into their midst. Unfortunately, as usual, by the time anyone of the boys got up the nerve to take a walk over to the ladies table, some other guy with sleek hair & a look of no shame had beaten them to the punch. This went on thru the night & finally by the time one of them got up the courage to just go for it, he was too drunk & unstable to look like anything but a drunken fool.

Eventually the band came on with a few tunes. Then the star of the show emerged in all his glory. Ronnie Hawkins-- a legend in his own story-- put down the beat & the whole place went into a frenzied heat. The boys were nodding their heads in time, Cartan even stood up & started clapping in rhythm which was cool. He was getting drunk any fool could see.

Just after Ronnie started singing a commotion was heard at the door. Pigs & Brech looked over & watched as a contingent of bikers wearing full colors, Hell's Angels Detroit, emblazoned on the back of their weather worn leathers, made a red-carpet entrance, attracting all eyes to their presence. They all proceeded to sit down at a group of empty tables, which appeared to be reserved, in the middle of the room. They acted like royalty had arrived. The music even softened & Pigs would swear he even saw Ronnie give them a nod. There was a universal hush for just a split second & then the joint went back to rockin.

Brech, who was definitely feeling no pain, leaned over to Pigs & gave a nod to the new arrivals, 'Do you think they believe in God,' he asked.

'What in the world are you talking about,' replied Pigs obviously distracted, in the middle of a meditation, listening to Ronnie's 'Who Do You Love' playing like a house on fire to a 'Bo Diddly' beat.

'Those guys over there. Those bilkers do you think they're going to hell,' Brech was musing in that philosophers tone he got when he had too much to drink

'What do I care,' Pigs said, turning his gaze away from the stage, 'how do you even know hell exists' Pigs countered. 'What in the world does believing in God have to do with it anyways,' Pigs picked up his mug & took a slug.

'Well, if they believe in God they must believe in Heaven & if they believe in Heaven they must believe in Hell.' Brech was getting all serious. Almost confrontational.

'Why do they have to believe in God to believe in Hell,' Pigs said, now turning his full attention onto Brech. Ronnie had finished his set in a flurry & the band was taking a break.

'Well Heaven & Hell are where the Devil & God exist,' Brech persisted, 'So, if they believe there's a God, they must believe there's a Hell.'

'Why do you think you need a God to have a Heaven,' Pigs looked Brech right in the eye which wasn't easy, as Brech's head was stumbling on his neck. 'For that matter why does there have to be a Devil for there to be a Hell.'

'What are you talking about,' Brech responded as if he'd been shot. You could see this direction of thought had Brech in confused. You could hear in his voice; this was a new perspective to be processed.

'What if man makes his own Heaven & Hell & it has nothing to do with a God,' Pigs gave a little smirk. Brech didn't know if he was being sincere or just fuckin with him. 'Anyways each person chooses his own path.' Pigs said in a thoughtful tone, almost trying to talk himself into this belief.

'Some choose Heaven, some choose Hell, some choose somewhere in between.' Pigs thought to himself.

Now during the course of their conversation Cartan had decided to take a trip to the toilet. In the Embassy there was absolutely no smoking drugs in the bar. If you lit up, the bouncers pounced like panthers & away you went out the door. Most people who chose to abide by the rules frequented a foray to the foyer & stepped outside the side door to sneak a toke. Some of the patrons as well who didn't want to get cold & wet, preferred to imbibe in the comfort of the washroom. Pigs was very in tune with this & Cartan was really drunk, so he knew to keep an eye on his friend to make sure he came back in a reasonable timely manner.

Everything in the bar was in motion. It was electric with the clatter of chatter. Voices were bouncing off walls, ceilings & each other. It seemed everyone in the place had something to say.

All were animated in each their own way. Some were standing to make a point; others were off to smoke a joint. Some were sipping their beer as if their mother was near, others were doing shots like the world was going to end. The pretty barmaids were darting about like enchanted tinkler bells. Little butterfly's, trying desperately not to spill their trays; as they made like ballet dancers flitting in & out, having trouble making their way. The overhead neon lights were turned up full now that Ronnie had left the stage. A cloud of silky grey hung overhead, everyone smoked in those days & the air was almost obscene. The panorama of life was on display, a scene that was even too Babylon for a movie.

The boys were taking it all in. They had been in & out all night indulging in the delirium, so their minds were set on hysteria, as they took in the show. Too stoned to talk, too drunk to walk, they sat back in their chairs & watched. All they needed was popcorn & a screen to complete the scene. Then in an instant; a sudden gasp-- as in a horror flick when the monster of grotesque proportions is revealed-- a howl is heard, absurd.

All attention turns to Trucks who's become quite animated. All eyes follow his gaze. All minds turn into his train of thought. All fears of disaster are shared in an instant.

'Holy Fuck.' Trucks booms as he sees his friend Cartan headed for doom.

Carts is coming from the toilet, weaving like a big fir in the breeze. Wobbling, his knees are like jelly, his head twitching like a corkscrew digging a ditch. It won't stay still, its on a swivel. He's slide striding down the aisle devoid of style-- oblivious to his condition-- like a kamikaze pilot out of control. He's headed straight for our biker buddies' tables who are oblivious to the carnage headed their way.

Now these guys are just having some fun not bothering no one. Just up from Detroit they've stopped in for a beer & to hear some music. They're sitting quietly-- as quietly as bikers can-- doing their shots with their tables heavily laden with beer. It looked like each had their own jug & a table full of glasses. They were most likely up in Toronto on a business trip. A lot of illicit trade made its way up & down the 401 HWY corridor. They most certainly were not up here looking for trouble. It was all so innocent almost serene.

Then it turned surreal.

Trucks & Pigs were watching the whole disaster unfold. They poked Brech & Maloney-- who were encouraging a group of girls at a table next to them to lift up their blouses & show em their boobs-- to direct their attention to the unfolding scene. Like watching a rock roll down the mountain in slow motion. Carts in his stride & because of his height looked out over the heads of the tables & caught the sight of the boys from 427. He managed a snotty smirk & at that instant a pretty little waitress with a tray full of empties was heading his way, moving her hips

in motion, intent on nothing but passing him by. Cartan in an exaggerated gesture, tried to bend down his six-foot two lanky frame in a perverted bow in the young ladies' honor, as if being presented to a beautiful princess. Well, this did not go well. He tripped & stumbled as if he fell off a bike. The boys looked on in horror. It was as if a huge cedar tree was crashing down in the forest, the last cut being made & the lumberjack stepping back & hollering TIMBRE. Cartan fell face first right onto the biggest biker's table. The crash was heard throughout the room. A bomb going off in the middle of mayhem. Glasses & jugs flew askew as if a mighty whale had just dropped from the sky on their table. Cartan had crashed so hard his belly was now resting atop a mixture of draft beer, sprawled glasses, cigarette butts & empty jugs. His head hanging over the edge of the table bobbing like an apple in a bucket of water.

To make matters worse Cartan had fallen right over the biggest biker in the group. The guy must've been at least four hundred & fifty pounds, huge monster of a man. His belly so big his weathered leather vest was loosely open not a hope of sticking those buttons. His huge form looking like a brick bowling ball sitting stuffed into a chair made for the size of a mere mortal, muscle hanging out all over the edge. Belly flopped over his belt, so gross it was almost resting on his knees. Obscuring the slick engraved-- 'Detroit'-- highlighted on his prized belt buckle to any who would bother to notice. Now he was up & agitated like a Buddha disturbed. Brushing himself off of beer & glass, eyes in a fury ready to kill. The rest of the Detroit gang started to rise as one. Each one starting to stand like an apparition rising up from a pond. All with a glare that would silence a god. Cartan was doomed, it was in the air.

Now Cartan surprisingly enough didn't appear to take notice of his vulnerable predicament. After the crash he immediately righted himself like a boxer in the ring. Using the table for leverage. It was a miracle he wasn't covered in glass shards & beer but as he stood all the remnants of his fall dispersed to the floor. The boys from 427-- now all alert as one-- taking it in. Should they leap up to his aid, heroes crashing through the bar to save their friend. Or should they just sit still & let the scene play out.

By now the human bowling ball was erect & he & his mates were stringing together a line of curses that would make a New Orleans whore blush. Their comfortable sojourn as guests in our great nation was certainly compromised.

Cartan immediately started apologizing. As any good Canadian would.

'Sorry, sorry man, sorry,'

'What the fuck man, what the fuck,' the bowling ball was furious, smoke coming out of his engorged nostrils, like Seabiscuit after a race.

'Sorry, sorry man,' Cartan was soberly sincere.

Now this whole episode took but a flash in time. It was like a heightened degree of activity that was added unexpectedly to a Shakespearian drama. Yet in the space of the blink of an eye the whole place was in distress. It was immediately obvious this young drunken man had perpetrated an intolerable mess. If something wasn't done there was the chance the whole place could explode like an overheated furnace. By the look & manner of the boys from Detroit they were going to break up the bar, itching for someone or something to hit for causing them such duress.

The Embassy bouncers were on it in the speed of light. The crash had their ears perked like frogs in a creek. Though large in size all to a one could be up to speed to meet the need. The beer glasses had barely hit the floor before the bouncers sprung into action. Converging from all angles they responded as one. They rushed right into the eye of the storm, unabashedly courageous. They immediately grabbed a hold of Cartan, who by now was back drunk as a cow, almost pleading to the boys of the Hells' Angels for merci. The brutal bouncers whisked Cartan away using a little too much force but that was their way. The boys from Detroit gave the bouncers the eye & the bouncers stared right back. There was a bit of a showdown in threatening gazes, but the guests knew their place. The bouncers, once the dagger looks had ceased from their faces, started to help clean up the disgrace of debris. Meanwhile their colleagues had Cartan in a containment hold & were marching his ass as quickly as possible straight out the door. Cartan's feet weren't even touching the floor. Cartan's eyes rolling back in his head certain that once outside he'd be dead. But the bouncers had no time to inflict pain, they tossed him to the curb leaving Cartan a rag muffin with no shame.

The boys from 427 had, of course, watched it all. They all to a one figured Cartan was dead. If the bouncers hadn't arrived, they were prepared to watch Cartan being slayed alive. There was no time for them to be courageous & even if they were it would have been outrageous, just requiring a bigger grave for more bodies. They watched as Cartan was marched off the premises, relieved that the menace he presented was dealt with without any blood & gore. He was their friend & they were loyal to the end, but boy could he ever get himself into trouble.

Trucks & Pigs gave each other the look & up they got. They headed for the door to see how their friend was faring. They were concerned the bouncers may have laid on a beating, or Cartan might just pass out in a vulnerable space. Brech got up as well, he was eager to hear the story Cartan would tell. Maloney wasn't moving. He figured he had a shot at one of the girls at the next table & he was all caught up in talking about what a hot shot he was & would one of them like to go out back & stuff their face with his cock. Pigs & Steve took the long way around the tables, careful to avoid any eye contact with the agitated contingent from Michigan. They wanted no part of whatever those boys were feeling towards that drunk (their friend) who had disrupted their night. Brech slinked behind as if this was all pretend.

Cartan was standing by himself outside the door-- leaning against a wall-- smoking a cigarette when they arrived. One leg bent up at the knee, boot flat on the wall behind him, the other leg, long & balanced so he wouldn't fall, looking a bit like a stork in a storm. The light overhead gave him a cool film noir appeal. All he needed was a nineteen thirties hat.

'What's up?' Pigs inquired.

'Nothing, how bout for you.' Cartan replied, cool as a cucumber.

'Nothing.' Pigs knew what was going down.

'Fuck man, you almost got your ass kicked in there.' Trucks spoke up sincerely concerned.

'No problem I had it handled.' Carts looked up & they all laughed.

'Yea well, whatever,' Steve pulled out a joint & they stood around & smoked.

It was cold. An unseasonal Artic wind was blowing through their eyes. Tears of sting mixed with tears of relief.

The incident inside had sobered Cartan right up. He was his old self, joking about how it was a good thing the bouncers arrived when they did. He pantomimed he was ready to rumble. We all sarcastically agreed, yea it looked like he had things well in hand.

Trucks commented that one guy looked like Andre the Giant. 'No problem,' Carts replied,

'I would've cut him down at the knees,' Carts joked. 'Yea right,' said Brech, 'more like you'd have been on your knees praying.' 'I don't think Jesus himself would have been much help' said Pigs, 'The fat guy looked like he was going to rip your head right off your neck.'

They were all joking around now punching each other in the arm. Trucks shadow boxing with Cartan making like a clown. They moved the party around to the side. They knew the bouncers would eventually return from dealing with the chaos Cartan created. If they found them at the front door smoking dope it wouldn't go well.

The side door was adrift with other party goers. Some commented on Carts' escapades. Some said it was pretty wild. Could've turned into a brawl was heard. Yea we would've kicked their Yankee ass was slurred by some idiot, who looked like he just stepped out of the bush.

'I'm going to head'er man.' Trucks was ready to go. Call it a night.

'I'm good with that, Carts you coming?' Pigs agreed. He'd had his full of Ronnie & the Embassy scene.

'No, I think I'll stick around.' Carts said lighting another smoke.

'Are you kidding,' Pigs couldn't believe his ears, 'what do you have? A death wish. I don't even think they'll let you back in.'

'I'll be fine. They won't care,' Carts rationalized thinking the bouncers were dunces.

'Brech, what are you doing,' Pigs asked, he knew Trucks wasn't too keen on giving Brech a ride.

'I'll stay with Carts. I want to catch the last set.' Pigs knew he just wanted to finish off what was left in the jugs on the table. Brech always had an ulterior motive for his decisions. He never gave a straight answer. Probably thought that maybe just maybe those girls would show him their tits. In your dreams Pigs thought.

Pigs & Trucks made their way back to 427. Trucks made sure he took all the backroads & side streets staying on the edge of the Yonge Street corridor. This was why he never got stopped by the cops. Always on the fringe, on the edge of main street never making a splash, as the dash was on to just make it home without police interference.

They were talking about Cartan & how that was fucked up what he'd done.

'Wasn't his fault, he was drunk,' Pigs said.

'He didn't have to come back to the table through the biker stable,' Trucks replied.

'You know Carts. I think he saw it as a challenge & fucked up. Like he was going to go over & be cool. Be a Toronto welcome wagon.' Pigs laughed at his little joke.

'Yea, a wagon crash,' Trucks chuckled & he & Pigs both broke out in a big ear to ear grin.

'Yea welcome to Toronto, with a beer shower,' Pigs mimed, jostling Trucks like he was sprinkling drips.

'Watch it I'm driving,' Trucks wasn't really perturbed.

'Do you think we shoulda gone over to his rescue when it looked like there was gonna be a fight?' Pigs was getting conversational.

'Yea, if they started wailing on him, we would've had to jump in for sure. Gotta stick up for your friends even if they are acting like a fool.' Trucks was the strong man of the gang. He'd grown up tough & fast. Always the biggest guy on the playground, someone always trying to knock him on his ass. He'd learned early on to hit first, don't wait. He was all peace & love but to a point. Kelly was peace, love & Woodstock no matter what. Trucks had his limits. He knew there was time for talk & understanding, but if that didn't work then he was not immune to drop the

gloves & defend yourself with your fists. Of all the guys, he was probably the one who would be the first to man the barriers as the hordes drew within range.

'You're right. It would've been a helluva fight.' Pigs ever the optimist. Pigs was no coward & would have been right there if the situation had exploded. He was the type that he wouldn't start the fight & would do everything to avoid it, but if all else failed he would face the reality of the situation; & jump in swinging.

Trucks almost laughed so hard his hands fell off the wheel. 'Pigs my man,' he said, 'if we had had to get involved, we would've got our ass kicked.'

'Probably right,' said Pigs, 'but I would've loved to have punched that fat guy right in the gut.'

'If you had done that,' Trucks said to the windshield, 'he would have picked you up & thrown you so far you'd still be up there in the stratosphere.'

'Like a flying Pig.' Pigs threw in. They both howled over that.

'Thank god for bouncers, I guess,' Pigs lamented.

'You gotta believe that,' Trucks countered, 'it would've got crazy if the bouncers were just lazy bums & stood back to watch the dance.'

'It certainly wouldn't have bin no ballet.' Pigs muttered to himself watching the ancient houses of clapboard & brick, the old Toronto neighbourhood haunts, pass by like on a train.

'Is that rain coming at us,' Pigs asked, switching his gaze back to the road. They were on Mt Pleasant now passing through the Mt Pleasant cemetery. Toronto's oldest. It made the drive dark & dreary.

'Yea a bit, its like spit really. No problem we're almost there.' Truck was expressing relief. Another night, another safe landing devoid of cops.

A few hours later Trucks & Pigs were in the middle of solving the world's problems listening to Ten Wheel Drive with Genya Ravan, in the living room at 427. It was quiet, around one thirty. Kelly still out cabbng, the rest of the gang out doing their thing. Trucks was going on about St Mary's & how the hockey team was like a band of brothers. How all the sports team at the college were integrated with each other. It was cool because they were treated special in the town & at the school. They all had a lot of pride & all liked having fun. They partied at the Lighthouse on Barrington down by the docks. The locals mingling with the boys from the ivory tower. Trucks was saying how the locals were a colorful bunch. The nick names, Big Guy, Beaner, Booger, Windows, Big Red, Jimmy the Waiter who never changed his socks, just bought a new pair when the old ones wore out. The down & outs, the crooks & dodgers all making the

local sports heroes feel they were one with the regulars who had been in Halifax forever. There was something about the maritime way of life that really appealed to Trucks. There was a certain flavour to the maritime mentality that tingled his taste. He was even thinking about moving down, once his hockey adventure had run its course. Come on down Pigs you'll fit right in. Everyone likes to party & some of the stories; you could write a book. You could work at the docks like my friend Bernie Benson. Make five dollars an hour to start. Pigs was in the midst of giving this opportunity some serious thought, when all of a sudden there was a slamming bang & loud angry voices were heard in the hall.

Pigs & Trucks, totally startled, looked round,

Both exclaiming at the same time, disturbed from their sombre mood into a state of confusion,

'What the fuck!'

It was Carts & Maloney back from the bar. Screaming & yelling at each other like a couple of terrified mothers looking for their kids. Each blaming the other for being a tool.

Maloney comes into the room yelling over his shoulder,

'It was your own fault you fool. You just couldn't keep your moth shut,'

Cartan's voice from the hall,

'Fuck that, they had no right.'

Pigs & Trucks thought the boys must have got into a fight when they went back into the bar. No surprise there.

Then Carts comes into the room. Staggering unsure on his feet. His tall lanky form like a flag in the wind. His face covered in blood. His long Jesus hair matted, sticky like glue. His nose looking like something from outer space. His eyes wild & insane like Charlie Manson straining in the rain. Lightning charges, flashing like beacons of light, as he kept blinking back the blood from the cut on his forehead.

'What the fuck happened to you,' Pigs said sincerely startled. Getting up to check out his friend.

'He just couldn't shut up,' Maloney whined & went into the kitchen for a beer.

Cartan inched his way in like a beaten fighter looking for his stool & sat himself down on the bed used as a couch & growled,

'Fucking cops.'

Maloney returned chugging his beer & Pigs inquired,

‘What’s he talking about?’

Trucks was taking a serious closer look at Cartan’s face; he had taken a few pucks in the nogging & knew when a cut in the head needed treating.

‘You might need stitches,’ Trucks said to Cartan who waved it off as a blind man being offered riches.

‘No fucking way,’ Cartan said, but it hurt him to talk.

Maloney sat down beside the injured party, Cartan wincing in pain as the bed which was a couch sagged with the weight of Maloney.

‘Did you guys get into a fight at the bar?’ Pigs queried.

‘No,’ Maloney said much to everyone’s surprise. ‘The bar was cool, Brech & Carts came sneaking back in, no one took notice. The band was playing, everyone was dancing. I was trying to get into that girls’ pants but she was having none of me.’

‘Too bad, she was hot,’ Trucks threw that in.

‘We all left together, just after closing. Carts was playing the fool screaming he wanted to beat the shit out of those biker guys, who were just ignoring him. Carts was pretty drunk.’

Cartan on hearing his name abruptly lifted his head. He was starting to nod off, it’d been a big night.

‘We grabbed the subway. We got off at Davisville, Brech stayed on, he went home.’ Maloney took another drink from his beer.

‘Roll a joint their Slick,’ he said to Trucks knowing he’d never be so insulting if he wasn’t so stoned. Maloney always started talking like a gangster when he ‘d had too much. So, Trucks took it for what it was & warmed up some hash.

‘We were walking down Davisville minding our own business,’ Maloney started in on the story. ‘I’m pretty well carrying Carts when a cop car pulled up yelling at us out their window, ‘what are you guys doing?’ Nothing I told em. We’re fine. ‘Don’t look fine to me,’ the cop shot back & his partner pulled the cop car over, cutting us off. I said ‘what the fuck’ & they threw us in the backseat of the cruiser. They started asking us question like we were common criminals. Being real snarky & accusing like. Carts was all of a sudden, all alert. He told them we were just going down the road, what’s it to you. The cops took offence to his tone & grew agitated. His partner

at the wheel turned & said 'we don't like fucking hippies, running round on our beat'. On hearing that I knew we were in trouble. The other cop went on about 'hippies are just a bunch of no-good lazy slackers & trouble makers. Always stoned, you guys got any drugs on you,' he stupidly asked. No, I quickly said. 'I'm inclined to throw both of you in jail.' For what? I was getting scared. 'For just being assholes,' he grinned back at me.'

Readers we must remember, this was during the time when the division between love & hate was extremely polarized. We hated cops. Cops were the enemy. A lot of us had no use for the police. Some of us thought we'd be better off without them. Let us just be & look after our own shit. It was almost like a war & they were the enemy. The cops represented a way of life which we resented. Their presence restricted our freedom; was the pervading philosophy of the day. No one had more of hate on for the cops than Cartan. He'd been busted & roused regularly, a lot of it was just because of the way he looked. Big tall hippie guy with a smart mouth & no respect. He posed a threat in their minds to a way of life; they were being paid to protect.

Maloney was aware of all this. There was certainly no love lost between him & the police. But he was smart enough to know that cops could really fuck you up & were answerable to no one but their own beliefs. Pigs & Trucks listening to the story, knew what was coming next.

'So, everything was quiet in the car,' Maloney continued, 'You could cut the tension with a tit. I was just hoping, praying, that Cartan was aware enough to keep his mouth shut. But he didn't. Cartan says out of the side of his mouth loud enough for the cops to hear, 'Fucking Pigs,' We all know cops hate being compared to the snout nosed animals who rummage in garbage,' Maloney chuckled at his metaphor.

'Well yea,' Pigs replied sarcastically. 'Anyone with any sense would never call them that to their face.' Pigs said with a touch of duh & stole a glance at Carts, who smiled a touch.

'Well Carts put it out there.' Maloney responded. 'Carts what were you thinking,' said Trucks, he was the only one of the group who still had a healthy respect for authority.

Carts just sat on the edge of the bed which was a couch & muttered, 'Fuck it, if they can't take a joke.'

'Anyways,' Maloney hesitated, taking a long pull on the joint Trucks passed to him, blowing a massive amount of smoke smothering his face, 'all became tense, stone silent, in the car. The cop was stewing, you could feel the anger building like watching a storm coming at you over a lake. You knew something bad was coming down.'

'What was Carts doing?' Pigs asked.

'Just sitting looking like a goof. He had no idea what was in store. So, the cop in the passenger side slowly turns his full attention on Cartan. He's sitting there just staring. Carts opens his mouth again, looks him in the eye & says, 'What you gonna do about it, Pig,' I swear I saw steam come off of the cops' head, like a puff of pollution. His eyes went bright red & smoke came out of his ears like he was ready to explode. I heard the cop say, 'Fuck it,' & he hauled back his fist & punched Cartan-- like an anvil coming down-- right on Carts' nose. Carts face exploded from white to red just like that. Then the other cop behind the wheel got out of the car & opened the door & grabbed Cartan & threw him to the curb, like a crumpled dish cloth onto the floor. Cartan's head bounced off the cold concrete & he just lay there, I thought he was dead. Then the other one, his knuckles dripping red, says to me 'get the fuck out,' I scrambled out the still open door, like a rat fleeing the light. Then the one, who had laid on the punch, rolls down his window & yells, 'hippie scum,' & they drive off leaving us battered & beaten. Well Cartan anyways.'

Pigs & Trucks give each other a look & get up for a beer. Then as they rise Cartan starts talking insane. Dead man talking.

'Those fucking cops I'm going to sue the fuck out of em. They can't do this to me. I wasn't doing anything. What the fuck.' He tries to get up but falls back on the bed that's a couch, sprawling about, no coordination, probably a concussion but in those heady days no one really was tuned in to such things. He lay on his back ranting & raving about rights, liberties, & the pursuit of doing what you want when you feel like it.

Maloney looked on with disdain. He had done all he could, had his say, he didn't really care anyway. He just wanted to sleep. He finished his beer & went upstairs to sleep off what had proved to be a traumatic event. Sometimes there's only so much you can take.

Cartan, covered in blood, was still on the bed which was used as a couch when Pigs & Trucks got back from the kitchen with their beer. He was a mess. They thought he'd passed out, but no, he was still mumbling about greedy bastards & other nonsensical things. Then he sprang up like someone had just given him a needle & declared he had to go to the toilet. So up the stairs he sprang & from that moment on they didn't see him again.

Pigs & Trucks clinked their beers together & said in voices thick like leather, 'fuck it,'

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Weekdays were workdays or at least looking for work days. Kelly had his cab, learning to grind. Maloney, smartest of the lot, had a potter's wheel & kiln in the basement which he never used, Cartan was delivering drugs for a Kendall's pharmacy in his old Toyota which had seen better days, Pigs was going to the D/T library pretending he was Lenin.

Things were going smooth. But of course, that can't last too long. I guess it depends on what you consider long. When you're just starting out in life, long is forever.

Then one Friday night about two weeks after Cartan's beat down by the police 427 was raided. Ironically Carts, Pigs & Maloney were sick that very evening. I mean deathly ill. Kelly was out working. The boys had blankets around their shoulders, tea on the burner. No one was around, word was out the boys were down. It was early evening & they were all off to their respective rooms to suffer in peace. Coughing & sneezing to beat the band. Handfuls of soggy snot rags sprinkled like snowflakes across the living room floor.

Outside, a couple of plain undercover cop cars screeched to a halt. Doors threw open & half a dozen cops poured out & up the steps, bursting in like a bombardier. The cops invaded 427 like nazi troopers. No knocking here, it was like the KGB had come to Canada.

What luck! If it had been any other Friday night, half the gang would have been their drinking & smoking illegal weed to beat the bell. Sometimes sick is good.

Maloney was the first to act. Though still young, Maloney already had some legendary run ins with the law. This was one of his claims to fame, he sincerely was crazy. He flew out of his room when he heard the commotion. Crashing down the stairs, clinging to a blanket slung over his shoulders, baggy white boxers, he resembled some mad monk from the movies. He immediately stood right in their faces, attempting to block the cop's intrusion, as they made their way into 427. The whole house smelling of Vaseline & cough syrup. Certainly not the sweet smell of weed that was expected.

The town house resembling a hospital scenario, everyone sick & sniffing. This didn't deter the cops' determination to search the place for illegal drugs. Cartan reluctantly made his way down from his room. He didn't even have the energy to tell them all to fuck off. We're telling them we don't have anything, we're sick. Cartan & Pigs sitting on the bed which was a couch. Coughing & sneezing, chills of ill, running like electric currents up & down their spines. The boy's medical morass was emphasized by their attire. Pyjamas & blankets, socks & runny noses. The cops probably thought they were faking. Once again reinforcing the lack of communication between hippie & cop. They paid no heed to the boy's distress, edging in, peeking around the house, like rats after cheese. Into the living room, the kitchen, a couple of them wandering upstairs sniffing around. Sniffing behind them Maloney wouldn't let them out of his sight.

Following them everywhere they went, answering no questions, 'who's room is this?' 'I don't know.' 'How many people live here?' 'I don't know.'

Cartan went back to bed thoroughly refusing to be a part of this keystone operation. Pigs settled onto the bed which was a couch, coughing & sneezing, pleading, 'come on guys there's nothing here.'

Then right in the middle of their search, their friend Weasel is seen coming up the front path looking for a Friday night party. Weasel was actually a drug dealer & was Cartan & Maloney's friend from high school. He had ambitiously gone into dealing drugs as a career path. He really did look like a Weasel, wiry black hair, long pointed nose, black eyes which glowed in the dark.

Maloney immediately reacts to Weasel coming up the steps to the front door. He's seen him out of the corner of his eye & does a casual but dramatic dash to the door, & steps outside. Emphatically, yet quietly, explaining to Weasel tonight was not a good night. Trying to tell Weasel he's got to go; Now. Split second silence as everything slowed down between Weasel's cluing in & if the cops were going to notice what's happening on the front porch.

The cops were too intent on finding the cheese, in some hidden space, to pick up on what was happening outside the door.

Maloney won. Weasel caught on quick, clued in by the fire in Maloney's eyes. Maloney was jerking his head over his shoulder directing Weasel's gaze to what was happening in the house. Weasel acknowledged, quietly excused himself & turned to go, just like he was a neighbour who had come over to borrow a cup of sugar. The cops never wavered from their mission to bust the boys at 427. They totally overlooked the real criminal in their midst who had popped by to visit & maybe sell some primo. No one ever said that the cops at the time were stupid, but they sure weren't smart.

The cops finally left, with nothing. It was like an exercise in futility. They left, traipsing down the stairs off the porch like spoiled children who'd been refused a treat & now had nothing to eat. Grumbling, mumbling to themselves that it isn't over. We'll get you yet, threats to our peace & safety were heard.

At the coffee shop that night the proud policeman of the city sprayed their manure filled disdain about, like petals of self-righteous pity. 'These no-good hippies are out to lure our innocent children into a life of vice & immoral behavior. Why I even heard they slept with young women on the first night. I heard they suck each others cock & fuck anything with paws.' These were the obscenities spoken. Rumours, filled with wanting to believe exaggeration. Spilling about the coffee shop, inspiring the cops of the day to make their pay.

The boys at 427 breathed a phlegm filled sigh of relief, watching the cops go back to their pack of parked unmarked cars. The neighbours must have thought we were having a party thought Pigs, as he watched the forlorn parade drive away, like a neon snake. Maloney went into the kitchen & made himself more tea. Pigs stretched out on his own bed, in the front which made for his room, & tried to dispatch his mind to more comfortable places.

Eventually as the night wore on the boys were required to rally. Everyone later that evening were encouraged by the return of the Weasel to get the hell up & smoke. He came back seeing the cops were gone & indeed had quite a quantity of excellent hash which he wanted to share. Knowing the boys were needing to relax a bit after their brush with the constabulary, he was generous to indulge. Always with an eye to a sell, he'd indulge the boys to a point & then it was, what the hell, how much do you want to buy. He was a businessman afterall.

Weasel liked hanging out at 427 because he got to play his Pink Floyd albums. A few in the crowd took Pink Floyd to be just stoner music. This was pre Dark Side days when Floyd was turning its back on mainstream & were exploring the boundaries of musical mayhem with albums which were having a hard time selling. Even the boys at 427 took them with a grain of salt, Led Zeppelin & Robert Fripp were meeting 427's progressive musical needs. Cartan & Maloney, though, enjoyed Floyd, but not all night & a full album tended to trend one to sleep. Its funny how things turn out, Floyd eventually becoming the overwhelming commercial success that they professed to always resist.

Kelly rolled in about 11 & everyone was sitting around the kitchen table, pretty high, Atom Heart Mother on the turntable. Weasel & Maloney arguing about some mute point. Cartan finally up having tea & tokes, Pigs was on his third beer. Brech, having previously arrived, in the living room zoning out to the tunes. Its amazing how your chills & sniffles go away when friends arrive with good cheer & beer.

Boy did they have a story to tell Kelly. He of course took it in absolute fright, reacting as if we just told him his father had been shot. On hearing the details, he dashed up the stairs to his room to check on his stash. This was like the gold miner of old being told the bandits had been by to steal his treasure. We heard a cry of relief from upstairs, Kelly's stash was still there, safe & untouched. Hidden in a spot where the devil himself couldn't find it. When he came back down the stairs to the kitchen, his eyes were swelled & swollen in relief, his precious stash was intact.

Kelly always had weed; he was peace love & Woodstock. Life was just one helluva good time for him. A hard worker always grinding. He had a job driving cab where he could smoke as much weed as he wanted & make money. Perfect. He always had a positive swing on every last thing. When things were going bad, he had that irritating disposition that made you mad.

Always looking on the bright side, refusing to acknowledge the dark side of life, which you know visited him every night. Kelly had built up a wall of superficial enlightenment. He had demons & devils which never surfaced, he kept them down deep, hidden from everyone except himself, never to be revealed to anyone, except Maloney. Maloney & Kelly always talked like they shared a secret. One so deep it could never be told, one so intense it would survive while they grew old. You never knew with Kelly, whether you wanted to kiss him or belt him. He always stayed just out of one's emotional reach.

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As in all things spring took hold, bringing bold thoughts of love as if ordained from above.

Many an evening was spent with Pigs lying on his bed in his room in the front, watching the seasons change out the big bay window. Listening to the dreams & ambitions of Kelly & Maloney. As they sat in the kitchen, discussing the intricacies of making a million dollars & having a good time doing it. They would lull Pigs to sleep with their outrageous plans over & over, night after night. Every plan they came up with always had one hitch, they needed money to make money & they didn't have any.

Kelly & Maloney were capitalists. Though both professed a love of freedom to do what they pleased & a profound distaste for material acquisition, yet both desired wealth unfettered. Enough money to rule the world. To make enough money to sit back & relax & let the problems of the day sort themselves out, without having to parlay either one of them into the throng. To be rich & be objective, to have opinions about which nobody cares. 'I think the Ostrich should be our national bird because whenever something bad occurs it sticks its head into the ground & utters no sound.' 'I think everyone who doesn't own a car should have to wear bells on their ears so we can hear them coming from a far & know its not a car.' Crazy things like this would be said as they visualized themselves sitting in their bed of roses with maids wearing nothing but a pout, pouring wine from a spout. Eating big legs of KFC, dripping in grease with naked nymphs sprouting about with velvet napkins to clean their teeth. Wearing long silk gowns like the pope & watching over a barrel of nuns as they go up in smoke. These are the dreams of weed inspired millionaires who have no cares. Who see the real world as a cartoon, nothing to touch, each motion too much. Who'd much rather lay in bed & just go crazy, because they're too lazy to pick up a hammer & stay out of the slammer. All thoughts & dreams of the young are sung with a touch of that. That which proves they're undoing, that which means getting up out of bed & swinging some lead. That which must be done, that which is no fun. That is the work, which is what is required to get what is desired.

Pigs & Carts were socialists. They talked of a world devoid of need, a world where there is no greed. They talked of working the land, taking a stand, against what, they still hadn't figured that out. Of making love in the green glen like in a Robbie Burns world, where all is for love & none else doth matter. They dreamed of working the land with their hands, of coming home for lunch & making love with their wench on the corner of the bench they kept outside, to sit on holding each other tight at night & dream of dancing on mars & living like stars. They dreamed of a world where all was one & nothing need done. No responsibilities, all looked after each other & shared possibilities. Where, if it can be imagined; it can be, no need for worry, no need to hurry. Everything done at a natural pace everything done without a race. This they imagined would all turn to real, like a horn honking seal, when the circus came to town & without a frown, they found themselves running away from a world where they just couldn't stay. To a world of fun & merriment which existed only in their hearts & certainly had no place in a space filled with corruption, greed & seduction. Where money ruled all & those who didn't fall in line fell far behind. Each to their own, all for one, one for all. They as well as their friends Maloney & Kelly, were crashing towards a mighty fall.

The days grew longer & the sun grew stronger. The dust on Mount Pleasant was getting thicker & the cars getting louder. Shallow buds started sprouting on the withered city trees along the boulevard & the odd city hardened robin made its way back to the old nest.

The birds were singing, the sky was blue, the sun was shining. The thoughts of all healthy able-bodied boys, on the edge of responsibility; turned to horny.

Kelly was a womanizer, strict catholic boy always chasing something in skirts. The cab was the perfect place to work his charms. He really was a smooth Casanova type. Always showing an interest in their dreams & ambitions & a caring ear for their troubles. Bringing em home, sloshing away on his water bed in his room. He was very proud of this bed & many a young feline was lured to share its pleasures. Kelly used it as a calling card. Leave them smiling was his way & it seemed to work.

Kelly, Cartan & Maloney were all strict catholic boys. All went to Brebeuf High School, a private all male catholic school in Willowdale. Priests, fathers & nuns were their teachers. All three had been alter boys at one time or another. This was before everyone realized the catholic church was just a front for paedophilic behavior; engaged in an environment which, though not encouraging the sexual assault of young boys by sexually frustrated priests & nuns, certainly provided a culture of protection for those who indulged their sexual fantasies without restraint. Kelly, Maloney & Cartan never talked of being abused, all were too macho for such self reflection. Yet one is led to reflect that their rebellious behavior & contempt for the church that

raised them, must have had something to do with some unwanted advances. After all-- as time would tell-- it was contagiously encouraged within that environment of church forgiveness. No matter how perverse & damaging the behavior, one can always be forgiven. This works especially well for even those cons dying in cells, knowing if they believe in Christ, they can avoid hell; preached to all as the penalty for our demonic deeds, inspired by the devil, condemned by the lord.

The three young boys as students at the alter in their day to day, were isolated from the ways of the opposite sex. It stood to raise their curiosity when talk came to sex. Surely the secret, hidden, orgasmic behavior of outlandish nuns & priests had nothing to do with the love they saw portrayed in the movies. What made them feel dirty & confused-- taught by their church that must be wrong-- of this there certainly was no song. Not like the Beatles who sang of the sweet touch of a woman. Who sang of love so strong it can change the world. The only women the boys ever saw at their school was the old secretary in the office, to whom Kelly was constantly directing his puppy eyes to for attention. Even the nurse, was a nun out of uniform. Other than that their constant companions were men of the cloth & teaching nuns who themselves were victims by their own choosing.

The fantasies of teen age boys sitting in English class running rampant. As the poems of Byron & Shelley talked of a love so sweet it made you weep. Horny hands were imagined sliding underneath the long black nun gowns, moving slowly up silky, pale, virgin thighs, higher & higher, ever searching out the glory of glories. They all looked forward to the words of Shakespeare once a day, taught by the young passionate nun with seductive eyes, fresh from the convent. Who, not much older than themselves, talked of Romeo & Juliet while they wept quietly to themselves, as the machine in their groin grew wider & wider.

‘Nuns don’t have cunts like regular women.’ Maloney would say as they’d all be outside sneaking smokes,

‘Come on that’s bullshit.’ Kelly just couldn’t believe it. It went against nature.

‘Well Father Brown said that nuns are born special. That’s why they have a life dedicated to God, because they don’t have the same female equipment of ladies who aren’t nuns.’ Maloney was just trying to pull Kelly’s leg. He knew Kelly, of all of them, envisioned himself with his hand up the smock touching the holy box.

‘Father Brown’s full of shit. If you believe that you’re a moron,’ Kelly replied getting mad. ‘Come on man don’t destroy the dream.’ He almost pleaded.

Maloney laughed like a tyrant, knowing he’d hit a sore spot.

They buttoned up their nice white shirts, tightened their ties, tossed their cigarette butts into the snow, staining the blank white black & yellow, & went back to class.

Each one of them, on their own accord, managed to get, kicked out, flunked out, suspended, expelled, from this cataclysmic Catholic culture. They were rebels, or at least they saw themselves as such. Cartan kicked out, for drawing sexually explicit pictures in his bible. Maloney suspended, for telling a nun to go fuck herself. Kelly expelled, for just not doing the work. All had embarrassed their parents with their behavior. All of them condemned by the church to go to hell. All of them free to turn their back on a way of life proven perverse.

There was something about being raised catholic that just encouraged the soul to go crazy. It motivated one to madness, once one turned their back on the scriptures. Let loose on the general population one becomes, as a caged wolf loosed in a field of cattle. All is new, all is wonderful, all is their own. Ideas, dreams, feelings. Not what the church has told them what they have to be. Making their own decisions, living their own lives their own ways. Free to make their own mistakes, to celebrate their own victories. A transformation from the caves of ancient Jerusalem into the explosion of reason, sanity & beyond.

Pigs was the odd man out, the public-school protestant golden boy. Pre destined for a life promoting the status quo, the good life. The only life as set forth in the rules & regulations of the dominant presiding order. It was as much an effort to shed those shackles as the catholics theirs.

Carts & Kelly were going at it in the kitchen. It was a quiet Wednesday night. Maloney upstairs in his room reading Joyce's Ulysses. Maloney was a proud Canadian of Irish descent & he believed it was his duty to read the work of Irelands greatest writer. Pigs was lying on his bed in the front room, cut off from the rest by the barnboard wall which served to give him some privacy, watching 'Green Acres' on the small black & white TV they all used when they had nothing to do. He was startled by how loud Carts & Kelly were talking.

'How can you possibly say the church has any credibility,' Cartan was saying.

'I just said you need something to believe in & the Catholic church has shown over the last two centuries it is something humanity can get behind.' Kelly was getting defensive; he was being sincere. His belief in the sanctity of the church had been nurtured all his life by a strong Catholic mother.

'All organized religion is a sham. You gotta know that,' Cartan was getting aggressive. Pigs knew when Carts' voice was trembling it meant he had a point to make & wouldn't easily abide with a point of view that didn't agree with his.

'You have to believe in something,' Kelly replied, 'Its what sets us apart from the animals. Its what gives us a sense of hope. The church is the vehicle you drive to keep us alive.' Kelly laughed at his stupid rhyme, but it didn't deter Cartan from pressing on.

'You don't need the church to set you apart from animals. Just because we are conscious of our own consciousness does not mean we have to set up a set of rules & regulations to keep us in check.' Cartan was getting extremely philosophical. Pigs knew Cartan was deep & had a lot of things figured out that not too many people had thought through. He was wondering what had triggered Carts to step outside his safety zone & get into it with Kelly.

'I'm not talking about needing a babysitter to look after me,' Kelly replied 'I'm just saying having some faith in an entity larger than life gives me some hope that maybe what we're doing here on earth has some worth.'

'I don't need somebody else looking after me,' Carts dramatically replied, 'I am quite capable of knowing right from wrong without some Disneyland fantasy from some old desert dust induced story to keep me civil.' Very poetic Pigs thought. Nice reference to the holy lands, Carts is really reaching back for this.

'The church doesn't look after me,' Kelly was emphatic, 'it gives me guidance when I have to deal with stuff that confuses or scares me. Mother always said, look to God if you're in a pinch. He'll give you the answer if you ask him.'

'That's bullshit & you know it,' Cartan almost screamed.

'Ya, I know,' Kelly smiled, 'just wanted to get you going. But seriously I do think that the church shows us, Jesus anyways, that love is the universal answer & without love there will be chaos.'

'I'll give you that,' Cartan nodded, 'but without the church & Jesus. I can know love without the church's playbook.'

'The church doesn't have a playbook. It has the bible.' Kelly had been holding this point deep in the duffel bag of a brain which held his arsenal of opinions.

'The bible is a book of fairy tales. Vomited up by a bunch of old guys sitting in a tent trying to figure out a way to make money. Your church. . .' Cartan started up, but Kelly jumped right back in cutting him off,

'Don't call it my church. Just because I gotta believe in something doesn't mean I have any sense of ownership regarding the catholic church. I have just as much disgust for what its done as you, my friend.' Kelly's voice was heightened & he was getting as close to mad as he ever got, which still was pretty mild.

'Listen,' Cartan started out passionately, 'The catholic church, any religion for that matter, is a house of cards. They are built on three principles; Mystery, Miracles, Authority. The mystery of Moses, the miracle of him parting the Red Sea, the authority endowed upon him by the Ten Commandants. The mystery of the birth of Christ to a virgin. The miracles he performed in his life. The authority bestowed on him as the son of God. Its all just myths & legends. None of it is real. We are being asked to follow a hope born out of someone's need to lead, to assert power, to satisfy a nagging greed. It just doesn't work for me. I need something real, tangible, something I can cling to with my fingers, some song that wakes me up in the morning & some peace of mind that puts me to sleep at night. I want to breath without constraint, live without fear, love with unlimited passion, believe in the one person who can make this happen. The only person I can trust to make all this happen is me. I am God, I am Christ. I am what all the others think exists outside of who you are, when in truth who you are is what you seek. I turn my back on all the preachers & priests. I sneer at their talk of love, belief & faith. I have faith in myself & that's good enough for me. I need something real, something I can feel.'

'That might be good for you,' Kelly was getting anxious to get back to grinding, 'but for me I need someone to give me some help. Someone to guide me, so when I slip up there's something there to catch me. I can't just rely on me to know what the right thing to do is all the time. I need something larger than life to believe in. I need faith in something intangible to give me hope. The church has its drawbacks, but here right now, it's the only thing which is giving me answers to questions I hesitate to ask.'

'The church has run its course,' Cartan countered, 'its apocalyptic vision is dead, the Rapture's in ruin. It's a dinosaur in a world of wild horses.'

The grilled cheese in the pan was starting to smoke. Pigs could smell the burnt cheese. He'd had that sensation of smelling something out of control before, but usually it was late at night when they were cooking up a stoners feast.

'Holy Christ,' exulted Cartan, as a little flame shot up from the burner. Ironical thought Pigs, he still calls on the Christian deity in times of duress.

Kelly was on his way out. Cartan took his meal from the pan. A little crispier than he would've liked.

This was the early seventies. The excess' of the sixties in the rear-view mirror. Now was the time to turn your back on the status quo & carve out a way of life taking the best & creating the rest. A way of life within reach which held promise of peace & love & freedom for which the previous generations had fought & sacrificed so hard. We had a responsibility to make sure their ultimate sacrifices were not in vain. But life's truths kept holding us back, like a horse biting at the bit only to be restrained by its reins. There was no getting around a guy needed money to live. No matter how much you itched to thrive; you couldn't survive if you can't pay for a meal. There was also the matter of natural instinct to address. Healthy young males needed a mate & even though they were having fun the boys at 427 knew in their hearts something was missing. How many times can you dance to a song before you start thinking, this is going on to long. Surely there must be more to life than this, smoking dope, drinking beer, hanging out with friends, surely this is going to end. Then where will we be at the far end of young, now long in the tooth with nothing to touch, but a well-worn memory of all we haven't done. Not that there was any rush to push life forward. Its just that life has a way of catching up to those who are no work & all play.

It was well past Easter heading deep into May. Maloney got a job driving a diaper truck, more of a van, boy did it stink. Maloney couldn't believe he was so belittled, had fallen so far that he was driving around in a car full of dirty diapers that stank so much, his head felt at all times, like a bowl of feces. Cartan's car had finally died, he'd just abandoned it at some bar downtown one late Saturday night. When he went out to start it, it sounded like a bull mouse in heat & then a fatal thud as the transmission just fell off & shattered. Pigs' money, borrowed for school, finally ran out & with it his intention of spending every day in the library pretending he was unconventional. His dream of figuring out how to make this world better, detoured to the reality of having to eat. He & Cartan both got jobs digging swimming pools. Hard physical labour, which meant having to get up early & work late. It was seasonal work but it made them tough & got them in shape. Kelly just kept driving his cab, even that was becoming more of a grind in more ways than one.

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Part II

It was a soft spring evening. The sun was hanging surprisingly low in the sky as if stuck. Or perhaps hanging specifically around to not miss the fireworks of what was to happen next. The day had been like many other for the boys at 427. Maloney had spent the day swaddled in diaper stink, Pigs & Cartan had spent their daylight hours at the bottom of a hole digging out dirt, so some needy greedy rich guy could sit around a pool this summer, flirt with his wife & drink martinis. No One knew where Kelly was, but that was nothing new.

A pebble takes on many forms. Some the norm, as a rock dropped in the middle of a calm pond, making circles wide & long. Some pebbles take on a combative nature, causing the glass surface of the water to sprawl out like an army on patrol. Some take on the style of a splashing heathen, making nature's way a living nightmare. Sometimes the pebble resembles a beautiful woman, who slides softly into the scene, the pond serene & smooth as ice, cracked by the needs & hidden intents of an intimate intruder.

Everyone was sitting around the kitchen table having a cold one. The atmosphere was lively with chatter & laughter. Everyone relieved the week was done & now the W/E, time to have some fun. Sib & Barbie had just arrived & Trucks was putting beer in the fridge. Brech was in the living room listening to David Bowie. Space cat for a space cadet.

All of a sudden, they heard a clatter. It was coming from upstairs but that didn't matter. Kelly must be home was heard amongst the chatter. Then the sound on the stairs became a nuisance. No one could discern what it might be. The sound of footsteps or the sound of change. The aura in the kitchen became blue, as the feeling amongst all was, prepare for something new. To say a hush descended on the gang would be like using slang. The kitchen kept quiet for the longest of time, as everyone pondered what was happening next. Time seemed to have stopped, yet the clock kept on ticking; as if something beyond thought was in the works. Its inevitable, sometimes forces beyond your control, ominously occur when least expected. The ascent of noise from the stairs stopped. It was like the globe ceased turning &

everything you had ever learned turned to black. There was a tidal change on its way & everyone felt faint, but no one had any idea what to say. The record in the living room came to an end. It was like David Bowie had sung his last song & now all was quiet. Brech rushed into the kitchen in oblivious delirious fear. All sensing, something sinister was near. Sib & Barbie grasped each other by the hand. Trucks stopped loading in mid motion. Looks of confusion clouded their fright. Pigs & Carts locked eyes in a bewildered gaze, dazed with forethought that all that was right was going to turn wrong. Maloney sniffed his hand for the hundredth time. The smell of diapers clouding his mind.

The sound of foot on the ground grew louder. Whatever it was, was coming in. Invading their space like a marauder. Taking the place of all that remained, of what was once a utopian dream, slowly melting into a sea of chowder.

Kelly comes in first, big smile on his face. Then next came that which was set to test each & everyone of them down to the core of who they are. What does love have to do with it, when it becomes the overwhelming emotion in a dreamer's den. Into the room with a face for the angels entered the devil herself. Everyone gasped at the sight of this blonde-haired sphinx of a dame who followed Kelly into the kitchen. Swaggering hips, cute prominent nose, long lasting lips, breasts which were perky & a smile which was smoky. She entered the room taking every inch in, every eye retreated as she defiantly stood in the middle of the room looking like evil, smelling of sin; all fell under her voluptuous view. A shiver went up & down the 427 crowd & from that moment on everything changed.

Kelly introduced Delilah to the room. He was obviously busting out of his chops at this conquest. She was really something else. Delilah was not another one of his girls, we all thought. She had a spark previously unseen, like on a long line of fuse, set alight sizzling slowly toward the huge keg of TNT. It surprised us as Kelly was normally grinding it in his cab at this time of day. Friday night at dinner was usually his prime time for making hay. He must've found something special, to sacrifice grinding in the cab for grinding in the sheets. He'd obviously been upstairs rippling the waves.

Story was Kelly's cab was in for repairs & he'd been hitchhiking down Yonge Street when Delilah pulled over at York Mills in her brand new—top down-- TR6 convertible. He was standing just across from the Jolly Miller pub. A popular north Toronto watering hole which had been one of the original taverns on the Toronto to Richmond Hill run, back in the day of the covered wagon. They'd got talking-- Kelly of course had a joint to smoke-- and one thing led to another, & she ended up partying it up with Kelly on his big beautiful chick magnet water bed.

This wasn't the first time Kelly had introduced us to one of his girls but usually they just said hello & left. Kelly walking them to the door promising to see them again.

Delilah stayed.

She was impervious to our curious stares. Pretty in her own way, nice short blonde hair unnatural Jewish nose, infectious startling laugh, big blue clear sparkling eyes which demanded attention, a little chunky but not bad. She answered whatever questions were presented & seemed to be particularly enamoured to weed. She was direct & looked you right in the eye when you passed her the joint. She stood --back to the kitchen counter-- didn't sit & sort of just hung & swayed to the tunes. Pigs—always the gentleman-- offered her a beer & a chair which she sexily accepted. When asked what music she liked she said Joplin, said she had actually partied with Joplin at a concert in Florida. That was cool. She had a little Joplin swag which was quite appealing. Especially to Pigs who worshipped Joplin like a religious icon.

Barbie was cold to her, seeing through her right off. She was the anti Barbie. A Jewish Princess, short blonde hair to Barbies long blonde flowing locks. Delilah's funky face a little like a Kentucky Derby winner, the way Julie Roberts resembles a palomino, to Barbies perky California Jane Fonda swank. A touch hippy, in her dress, but it looked more posing than sincere. A dramatic uptown sense of snotty smug. Delilah's overwhelming confidence; her most out their quality. She presented as though we were the ones visiting her house.

She was never intimidated, no matter what the scenario. Here she was, in a kitchen full of smoke, beer & intimate camaraderie, talking, hanging out as if she deserved to be there. No moral compromise that she had just fucked Kelly one hour after meeting him. Kelly not quite knowing what to make of the whole situation. He had never had one stay this long before.

Delilah challenged the group in a manner that they could either, deal with it, or show them up for posers. Professing to believe in values & issues which were based on inclusion, understanding & being kind to your fellow man. Here was this girl showing genuine interest in what was happening. The challenge was, were they sincere enough to accommodate an outsider.

She stayed as if she belonged.

She smoked, drank beer, joined in on the conversation, laughed at the right moments, was silent when needed. That night when they went to the bar she came along. Kelly didn't really know how to take her prolonged presence. He wasn't sure how to act, he wasn't much into dating. Delilah hung out at The Rooster, Bernie was quite respectful & quite surprised when Delilah paid for a jug. Delilah stayed late that night, coming home with the boys. Barbie & her were polite but cold. Each of them coming from money, each of them with an air of indifference, each of them not quite sold on the other. As the hours grew to late & the party was in full swing back at the house Delilah silently disappeared, Kelly was so plastered he never knew that she left. But Pigs noticed her leaving, watched her slip out the door & followed her

path looking out the front window, peeking through the confederate flag they used as a curtain. Watched as a spy, as she snuggled down into her brand new TR6 & drove off into the night, to wherever it was she lived.

Delilah became a fixture at 427. She started to come around regularly. She was Kelly's girl but acted like she was everyone's. She showed interest in all & she soon started coming by; even when Kelly was working. It was awkward at first, but eventually her company was tolerated & then enjoyed. She was a snarky spoiled little rich girl slumming. Its not that everyone didn't know this, its that everyone did & she just carried on like it was the natural thing to do. She didn't really bring anything to the table, it wasn't like she bought the boys beer & weed & showered them with the finer things in life. None of that. She'd just show up unexpectedly & unannounced & hung around. Sit with the guys while they watched TV, have a beer with the boys on a Saturday night, smoke a joint behind the bar if they were out for a fling. Let whoever want, drive her car, if they needed smokes.

Kelly would be here & there. If he was around, he tried to make it like she was his girl. But to anyone who took notice, she couldn't have cared less. Kelly had a need for speed. His dream was to drive race cars. Delilah's TR6 filled the spot when he wanted to get hot on the road & go for a spin at the max. That seemed to be the only thing they shared together. They never talked, never went out for dinner & a movie. Neither either took the other home to meet the folks. They did quite regularly slosh the bed, that was one thing that made Kelly happy. Delilah was even aloof to that. Seeming to be indifferent whether it happened or not. It was certainly never discussed around the kitchen table. Kelly didn't brag, if he did you knew she was able to make him shut his mouth with a look of-- shut your mouth you fool. It was like she did what she had to do to make 427 her home away from home. If it meant fucking Kelly, so she could come around, she saw no harm in that.

Delilah had friends who she would bring around. One being a small incredibly overweight pimply faced female best friend. Melanie, who just wanted to engage in sexual activities with anyone who was willing. Melanie had a pot belly & a long ugly nose which stretched to her toes. She had two enormous tits which would challenge the largest of lips. She was small & squat like a donut hole. She wore flimsy whimsy summer dresses, which rode up her thigh when she sat, letting you have a view of her twat & all of that. She had no shame & would share the crudest of jokes & put herself into the most hilarious of abominations. She was always the hit of the party & when she decided she wanted you, you had better be fleet of foot, or else she would smother you into indignation. Once within her grasps it was impossible to flee, for the rest of the night you were anything but free. You couldn't explain you didn't like her that way, because she just wouldn't listen to what you'd say. It always happened when you were too

drunk to speak & too stoned to care; about the stares of your friends, as she led you hand in hand, up the stairs to an available bed.

Cartan, much to the amusement of the group, did participate in carnal pleasures with Melanie (such an innocent name for one who glorified in being the town slut). The night would be well past normal duration time & all inhibitions were an afterthought. Melanie would lure a drunken stoned Cartan up to his room & do nasty things with him. Cartan was always quite remorseful the next day, vowing never again & how could he screw a girl who had the sex appeal of a fat chimp. But next week, drunk again, away he'd go with Melanie for another repulsive romp.

The following dawn Delilah, who usually slept over in Kelly's room whether he was there or not, would drive herself & Melanie home as the sun was rising over the eastern high-rises. It was getting warm enough that they'd have the top down. It was never known of what they talked. Was it about Melanie once again satisfying her sexual needs by ravishing a poor innocent handsome hippie boy. Or was it Delilah telling Melanie her scheme, her reason for hanging out. What goes through a woman's mind when she is after something that just isn't there. How does she mould the scenario to her liking, so that in the end she gets what she wants. Does she share such plots of intrigue with her friend, as they're driving home from a night out on the town. Wind blowing in their hair, not a care, wild & free. Knowing they are in control of their own destiny.

Cartan to everyone's dismay was easy prey. He had been expelled from seminary school for writing dirty words in his bible. Probably just an excuse the Fathers' needed to run his blasphemous ass off the campus. Cartan was always searching for something he couldn't have. He was adopted, but soon after the papers were signed his new Mom & Dad miraculously conceived in traditional fashion; two healthy happy brilliant-- apple of their parent's eyes-- children. Cartan became the odd man out in his own home. He embraced all alternatives to the social norms he could think of.

He was the first of his age to move out & get his own place, the original party place. A dirty old basement flat in a suburban split level. Pigs immediately was attracted to Cartan's ways. His free-wheeling style, his fuck you attitude, his propensity for excess & his love of music. Thus, it was when Cartan moved into 427 with Kelly, Maloney & Mickey the Madman, Pigs was intrigued. Every w/e he would travel down from Peterborough, where he was attending university, & party it up. Finally, Mickey moved out or went back to jail & Pigs quit school & moved in. Cartan & Pigs were a team. Maloney & Kelly were a team. Two teams joined up to make a supergroup. Like Cream.

Cartan attracted women like flies with his Cary Cooper swagger. But no girl was willing to stay long-- no matter how good looking-- with a guy who had no sense of normality. Who was so

caught up in his own emotional failings he had no time to let anyone else in. Everything was a party & everyone was a friend. Cartan was a truly gorgeous confused individual.

He was oblivious to Melanie's obvious preying allures. He had no sense of shame & she just wanted it. He was tall & lanky, beard like Jesus, face like an angel. Soft spoken, warm heart, wouldn't hurt a fly even if it flew into his eye. For Melanie she hit the mother lode. She was used to blowing scum, not someone who looked so cool & wasn't cruel.

Maloney wanted nothing to do with any of it. He saw the insipient subtle intrusions these girls were penetrating on the group. He was the smartest & the wildest. The most innocent of all of them. The world had not gone the way it was supposed to for Maloney. His parents split when he was old enough to know. This went against all the teaching of his fancy school & religion, which preached divorce is a sin, yet here he was a product of it. He'd gone crazy in high school, driving drunk, getting busted, cracking up cars, owing tons of money, life was not so sunny. Tall, handsome, slight frame, big bold brown natural curly haired afro, he was every parent's nightmare. Girls to him were a commodity, something to partake in as an alternative to indulging in self flagellation. He had no idea what a relationship consisted of, nor did he care. Life was a curse, so live it free, live it wild &, if possible, never come down.

Kelly was oblivious to what was happening around him as long as he was getting laid. Cartan was getting more & more confused with his bodily needs, as opposed to his lofty ideals. Casey & Densmore were horny but they were terrified of Melanie. Her free love activities pushed their good catholic values right off the page. It was Hail Mary's & Sunday confession for the sinful thoughts-- this obese temptress from hell-- brought forth in their quiet time, lying alone in their beds, hand pounding the sheets to thoughts of forbidden erotic sin. Neither Frick nor Frack could conceive in their world of moral conformity, that girls like Delilah & Melanie could exist. Delilah scared the shit out of em & Melanie was just from another dimension. Trucks watched the goings on like a fan at a game. Sometimes all he needed was a box score & a beer, as he sat in the kitchen watching this play of the macabre, unfold before his face. Brech was a mess. He had a hard time with women as it were & Delilah played him like a fish on a line. Giving hints of attention which made him sweat & than pulling back leaving him flat, like a child, all alone in the playground holding his hat, wondering where everyone was at. Barbie & Sib still came by, but things had changed & Barbie knew exactly why.

Meanwhile Delilah watched & waited to make her move. Melanie, as in all young girls who are using their sexuality to try & fill the emotional voids of a family gone wrong, faded from view after a few weeks. Cartan was relieved, Delilah was non committal. When anyone asked what happened to Melanie, she just avoided the question. Casey & Densmore breathed easier, thanks be to Jesus the evil temptress was no longer within reach, of their sinful longings.

The story would be amiss without one last foray into Melanies wiles. One night after everyone had called it a night, Cartan had taken flight for the evening & had faded from sight. Delilah was up doing her thing with Kelly, leaving Pigs all alone in his bed in the front room, while Melanie swooned, she wouldn't be getting any this evening. She was lounging on the bed which served as a couch lamenting how it just didn't seem right that she should be left so all alone tonight & hey Pigs what's with you. Are you impervious to some sexual dalliances. No one will know let's give it a go. Pigs was unrelenting he needed sleep. Come on it won't take long, as Melanie made her way across the room to his bed. Come on Melanie let it go you've got nothing to prove. Well, Melanie replied it just doesn't seem right that a young man in his sexual prime can say no to giving it a go. She was now standing at the head of his bed. Pigs had a problem just looking at her. She started to raise her skirt, as if this would make a difference. Pigs gave a peek & even though he wanted nothing to do with what was occurring, he couldn't stop himself from growing hard. Melanies pounced like a panther on a mouse & took him greedily into her mouth. Pigs was beyond saying no, it wasn't humanely possible for him to retract. So, in a time less than a twelve-bar phrase of a song, Melanie had Pigs' dong in her mouth & Pigs filled her cheeks with the sweet cream we are all, much too reluctant to swallow. Just as the two anti christs, embroiled in the not so nice, a creak was heard on the top of the stairs. For some reason unknown to mortal man Pigs knew it was Delilah. Now what should it matter to him if he was found out having engaged in fellatio with her best friend. She was Kelly's girl what's it to her if Pigs had a twirl. But for reasons known only to monks sitting in caves, Pigs knew this act of sexual travesty must be kept a secret. He sternly told Melanie to leave his room & keep her mouth shut about what just happened. Melanie smiled down at him with a Madhatter grin, specs of white framing her lips, put her finger to her lips & slipped away as if nothing ever happened. Pigs could hear her washing her mouth in the kitchen as Delilah came walking round the corner, softly calling her name.

As May faded to June, Kelly & Delilah became more a convenience than a couple. Kelly certainly was the last one to make any sort of commitment, other than to regular sex. He had his family, good catholic home in the suburbs, hard working father stay at home mother, brother who was the prize of the family, the chosen one, off to university, big plans, big hopes. Kelly the drop out driving a cab, he spent a lot of time trying to prove himself to his Dad, straining for the love which just wasn't to be had. The irony of the whole scenario was that he who worshipped at the altar of peace, love & Woodstock, was totally incapable of love, feeling, relationships, commitment, other than the odd party on the bed.

Introducing Delilah to 427 was bringing a python into a cage of white mice. She was patient, pondering, intelligent, deceitful, blonde, rich, with eyes that one could drown in. Bright, alert, curious, when her gaze turned to you, she was interested & responsive. Always the flirt, always just a hint that perhaps at the right place at the right time she could be available to you.

Kelly didn't care about love. Love to him was just a phrase. A catchword in the catechism which had to be memorized along with the rest. Love was as passing as a mist on a day after rain. To try & grab hold & squeeze it tight would be like riding a rainbow at night. It doesn't exist. Its just a myth to be told, so teenagers will grow old, thinking there's hope at the end of the tunnel of all this muddle. Enticing you to believe one day you'll find the one, settle down, take your place under the sun, in some small quiet town, with a wife & a family. Kelly was too much a cynic to hold out for love. He lived for day to day & was perfectly happy with whatever came his way. He had a short attention span & the self esteem of a ham. The world was one big party, but life was hard & mean.

Slowly, with subtle forethought, Delilah started to turn her attention to Pigs. It had been a long time coming. Turns out, as Delilah would later explain, she knew from the first time she walked into the kitchen & laid her eyes on Pigs, that he was the one she wanted.

What was unexpected, is that Pigs, started looking back. He was as surprised-- as much as the rest of the gang were disappointed.

It began innocently enough, Delilah lingering behind after everyone left, waiting for Pigs to get his jacket. Asking him about what, where was everyone going. Pigs naïve & stupid replying to the bar of course. When the beer was running low Delilah making soft suggestions that she'd go pick up some more, Pigs want to drive? Who could turn that down, pretty exciting for someone who was used to hitchhiking as his major mode of transportation. Once in the TR6 Delilah encouraging Pigs to have some fun with it. Pigs taking full advantage, being the man, top down his long hair flying in the wind like a wild pony on the range. Pigs' idealism didn't mix, as he indulged in the fine lines of driving a brand-new TR6.

Delilah, it turns out, was the product of a very broken Jewish home. Living with her mother & incestuous brother, in a big home in the upper echelons of Toronto real estate. Father who can't lavish enough gifts & presents on her trying to buy a cynical affection. Mother who is enraged over her husband's philandering ways, bitter he left her. He paying all the bills, it could never be enough.

Delilah resenting her mother for driving her Daddy away. Hating her for not being emotionally available, as she endured the teen age humping hormonal needs, of a socially inept brother. Mother oblivious, 'work it out yourself,' finally tossing the brother out. Delilah so damaged that she continues to visit him at college until finally he meets someone his own age & is out of her life. Delilah then hooks herself up with an abusive boyfriend at a tender age. Who throws her out of his car in a rage, in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the night. Delilah hitchhiking home alone, in a desolate dark place. Gets picked up by two yahoos who rape her. She--

fighting tough-- gets them charged & testifies at the trial, staring them both down like the scum they are. Daddy feeling responsible, supporting her anger all the way, trying to allay his guilt.

Daddy buying his Princess a nice new sports car on her eighteenth birthday. She not really overly impressed, but smart enough to know it can accommodate her needs.

Putting forth a strong independent rebelling presence. But behind the façade, a confused, angry, vulnerable child of her age. Damaged & shunned by everyone in her class, no one to talk to, no one close. She wanted to be an artist like her mother, only thing was her mother was a tenth-tier painter who hadn't sold a painting in ten years, & that was to family. But Daddy paid the bills, as he lived in a swanky townhouse & had a new girlfriend every time Delilah visited. Delilah was a young girl running wild, riding a wave of disdain for all who knew her, trying to burst that bubble of privilege for something that is real, something she can feel.

Pigs believed in love; he was an abject romantic. His mother had showered him with it. She had always said Love is just around the corner. She was very clear that Pigs' Dad & her were a lover's fairytale. That their time together would last forever, no matter what befell them & it did. Her love for Pigs' Dad never faltered. Pigs grew up seeing that her love, for his Father past, was sentimentally surreal. Pigs' life was rock solid, built on a tragic foundation. His father had died when he was five, barely alive. His mother had smothered him ever since with love & affection making him feel he was special, every second of his life.

High School had been a high point for Pigs. Sports star, drummer supreme, grades good enough to get by, girlfriends never a problem. He gave up all of that, to seek out an alternative to the pigeon-holed existence he had been groomed for. With sacrifice comes pain & Pigs was in pain. His new life style did not attract the female companionship he had been used to. The financial & emotional hardships of living on love, without love or money, tended to be trying. He was insecure enough to need someone to be with so he could believe his life had reason. Alone he tended to be a mess. Always high, always dreaming of changing the world but never with any substance for his stance. Always challenging traditional beliefs, but never having any foundation of his own. Always needing someone to love so that he could move ahead with his life. But love was hard to come by when you were always drunk & stoned. Too shy to get by with just anyone & too picky to fall too fast. Standards which were way too high for such an average guy. But don't tell Pigs that, he was on his way to being remembered & all will be honored who tag along riding his coattails of brilliance.

He was ripe for Delilah, who was becoming starry eyed over him.

Delilah was tough, she'd had her share of disastrous relationships. High School for her was a horror. Pudgy faced, chubby, mean & envious, she had a tough time making friends. This explained her unexplained loyalty to one such as Melanie. But she, as many, took on a stoic

approach to her perceived inadequacies, smoothing out the rough edges with tough talk & a rebellious attitude. As she grew & matured her scruffy blonde hair became luscious, her lumpy body took on some attractive curves & her Jewish nose got trimmed down at her tearful bequest to her Daddy. She had seductive appeal which had a foreign tint. Her attitude was belligerent, her behavior benign. Her disposition imposing, her manner aloof. When she looked at you, she looked past, as if looking at something over your shoulder. She always appeared disinterested in what you were saying, right up until the time came, to touch. Even then it was with a distracted reaction, she reacted to a soft seductive touch as if, she & she alone, was the one human being alive who didn't thrive or thrill or experience a chill when one was caressing her, trying, calling her name softly. Trying your best to make her feel safe, she maintained a distance, in a world where only herself existed.

Now with her TR6 convertible & money to pay for clothes, beer at the bar & a freewheeling demeanor she challenged every healthy male within range. Her self esteem was improving & her power over men was real. She knew she could steal any man's heart on a whim. To her it was a game, she had no shame, ready to shed her clothes for any man willing to take a chance & give her a go.

'I want to be with you,' Delilah said, an attractive direct quality. She knew what she wanted & was prepared to do what was needed to get it.

'You're with Kelly.' Pigs replied as a matter of fact.

'That's nothing.' She brushed off that remark like a spider on her shoulder.

'Well, you still appear to be sleeping with him.' Pigs comment was slathered with sarcasm, to the point that he was almost making fun of her.

'That means nothing, just something to do.' Delilah let Pigs' attitude ride. She didn't care about his insecurities. She wanted to be with him.

'Yea, well tell that to Kelly.' Pigs' fortitude was waning. She was so dismissive about her sleeping with Kelly it was almost like it wasn't really happening.

'I've wanted to be with you from the moment I saw you, that first night, sitting at the kitchen table.' Delilah was pulling out the big guns now. She was prepared to bypass the bullshit & get right to what was real.

'Yea right.' Pigs was a little taken aback by this. He didn't know whether to believe it, which would pump up his ego, or just shrug it off like any small lying talk.

'No really, I knew you were the one.' Delilah was trying desperately to show sincerity. Her cynical, dismissive behavior of the past month wasn't really her. She was trying to say, she wanted to be with Pigs from the very first day.

'Well, you had a funny way of showing it, sleeping with Kelly all this time.' Pigs was showing his immaturity. Almost saying this in a whine. Yet at the same time implying that if this was the case, why did she do this? It didn't make sense.

'I didn't know what to do.' Delilah finally showed a crack in that iron exterior. Portraying a vulnerable side which showed she didn't have the answer for everything.

'Well, your first clue could have been to stop sleeping with Kelly,' Pigs was sensing he was gaining the upper hand. He sensed she was now on the defensive & if she was sincere & not just talking, then now was the time to start making some decisions.

'Believe me it's nothing, something to keep me coming back so I could see you.' Delilah was getting desperate for him to believe her. Even she was having a hard time just saying; it was easier to sleep with Kelly than to leave him.

'Now that's just crazy.' Pigs was now starting to doubt her. Concerned she's just playing a game. Trying to just shuffle things up at 427. Bed hopping to please her ego, with no remorse for the hearts she'll hurt.

'Whatever, it's the truth, what can I do so that you'll believe me?' Delilah sensed she was losing him. She wanted so desperately to prove she was a woman of substance. A woman who could love & feel & be good to a man. Not just some tramp in a fancy car, who was so narcissist that no else's feelings mattered but hers.

'Well stop sleeping with Kelly for a start.' In matters of love Pigs was very pragmatic. Very black & white. 'If you care for me here's what you have to do, starting right this moment. Don't talk to me about feelings or obligations, take action, it's the only way I'll believe you.' Pigs was firm.

'OK I'll tell him right now.' Delilah was resolute. So strong was her reply that Pigs tended to believe her. But was hesitant to make a commitment to himself. You see Pigs was in love with Delilah, but certainly up to now he wasn't going to show it. She was Kelly's girl & Pigs' feelings for Delilah were his own solitary stone.

'Could be hard he's working.' Pigs sharply shot back. Delilah was unlike any woman Pigs had ever met. She broke the mould of his idea of what a woman was. Pigs was as confused with his feelings as a duck landing in muck. In high school he was extremely possessive of any girl he dated. He was so jealous that to even catch them wearing a see-through blouse in the halls threw him into hysterics. He was a traditional lover & couldn't stomach the girls he went with

being with anyone else. Even if it had been before he met them, the thought of the woman he's with, being with another man drove him crazy, like a loon let loose in a zoo. Yet here he was falling in love with someone sleeping with his friend, right in front of his face, it was unbearable. He hid his horror like a criminal covering his intent.

'I'll tell him when he gets back.' Delilah responded as if for her it was no big deal. She presented she would do what was asked, in order to get what she wanted.

'You have no idea when he'll be home.' Pigs' sarcasm smothered him like a blanket. It covered his conversation like syrup. Could he trust this girl who had rocked his world. Did she have any integrity, did she have any grit. Or was she just stringing him along like a prawn in a net. He had his loyalties to protect. They at 427 were like a band of brothers walking through a maze of transition. Their whole thing was loyalty & having each other's back. Pigs was very aware that if this thing with Delilah was not conducted with dignity, the whole thing the gang at 427 had been trying to build, would crumple like concrete on silt.

'I'll wait.' Delilah said resolutely. She was telling Pigs the truth. She had to show him. She really had fallen for him; he was sincerely the one she was after. She saw in him the wild, mixed with the mild. She saw in him that he was one she could rely on & have some good times with. With his quick to laugh & his mind a mystery. Plus, it didn't hurt he was extremely good looking with his long blonde hair & wrestlers build & his eyes hid a secret she just couldn't figure out.

'Whatever.' Pigs shrugged his shoulders. He was growing tired of talk.

Delilah was like a dog with a bone. She wouldn't let go. She sat back stubbornly in the old chair which was leaking lint from its arms & stuffing from the back. It actually puffed with dust she sat back so hard.

What now? They were alone in the living room. Everybody had already left for the bar. Abbey Road was on its last track. They'd held back because Delilah had told Pigs she had something she wanted to say to him. Pigs lingered on the bed which was a couch, knowing he should just leave, but he had stayed to hear her out. He had an idea of what was up, he wasn't stupid he'd sensed the signs. But he knew he would pay it no time; until he asked Kelly if it was OK with him. At least that was the plan.

Delilah was like a woman from another planet. She was bewitching. Powers at play beyond the laws of man. How does she have this hold on me Pigs thought. Its something naught of this world, its some secret power she has over love. Why do I sit here & talk, when I know it doesn't matter that I talk of loyalty & comradery, when all it amounts to is idle chatter. I'm going to do what my heart dictates & my dick directs; that I know. All the rest is just a show. So, I can say to my friends I did the right thing, when I know it's misleading. I should've just walked out the

door when I first felt these feelings. Yet I lingered knowing they were only going to get me in trouble. Well, here I am, she's cast her spell. I've fallen for her, freefall, like down a well. I can't stop my fall, I'm in free flight. Whatever happens; happens tonight.

The anti cheerleader just sat & smiled; she knew what Pigs was thinking. She was quite sure that she would have her way. To hell with all this boyish bullshit about loyalty & pals. She knew what really mattered was the bulge in his pants. Pigs looked her in the eye & held a firm resolve, no matter what voodoo hex she had placed on him he had to be strong to resist her charm; like an alcoholic holding back from taking a drink.

'Look I'm going to the bar.' Pigs had to leave, he had to put some distance between himself & this trance.

'Want to take the car?' always the temptress, Delilah smiled like a snake. The end of her lips curled up like a clown at the circus.

'No, I'll walk, they're just down at the Rooster. What are you going to do?' That was redundant. Pigs just wanted to ask one more time to assess her sincerity.

'I'll wait here for Kelly; tell him I'm not going to sleep with him anymore.' She repeated it so matter of fact, like she was ordering a chicken dinner. It really meant nothing to Delilah. She knew Kelly wouldn't care. Sure, his horny hen might blow in the wind for awhile but he'll get over it. She knew that as much to be true, as the sun rising over the morning dew.

'You going to tell him that you want to be with me.' Pigs thought this would be the right thing. All honor, above board & all of that.

'Not really, what's it to him?' Delilah's response was a little surprising. But only to Pigs. She had no need to give Kelly a reason. They had their fun, time to move on, she had no need to explain in any detail her reasons.

Pigs left her sitting alone in the living room, sitting on the soiled chair with puffs of stuff peaking out the corners of the cushion. The solitary dim light, sitting on a chest highlighting the record machine, was strobing her pretty profile. Casting a shadow on the wall behind her. A shadow not of a human being, but of a dark, confusing contusion.

Later that night they all rolled in from the Rooster. All spirits high, laughter the tonic for the night. Cartan, Brech, Maloney, Barbie & Sib, Pigs straggling behind. Trucks coming in last he had to get something from his car. Pigs was walking on crackling ice, so thin he could feel his heart in overload. To say he was full of trepidation would be underestimating his situation. How would the events of this evening unfold?

Kelly's cab was out front, Delilah's car behind it. No one had noticed but Pigs. He knew the stage was set for a confrontation. Everyone else was extremely preoccupied with what Cartan & Brech were arguing about. They'd started the discussion at the bar & it was spilling over into 427.

Cartan was saying as they crashed through the door,

'I'm telling you its selling out. When an artist performs just to make money, he's an artist no more.'

'That's bullshit. Everyone has to make a living,' said Brech bringing up the rear.

'Yea, but money makes mediocrity. Artists don't aspire to be mediocre. They aspire to be free of all that bullshit. Crack the mould. Show the world what's in their soul.' Cartan was going off on a tangent.

They exploded into the living room racing for the records.

'Here let me play Emerson, Lake & Palmer to show you what I mean.' Cartan said. 'They play for the music not the money,' Cartan rushed to find his record before Brech could try & muscle past him.

' 'O Lucky Man' that song was a number one hit, made ELP lots of money. I didn't hear about them turning down the checks.' Brech was starting to go off. He was drunk & starting to exaggerate as we all do.

Good point thought Pigs. He was distractedly listening. A diversion to the hammer pounding through his chest.

'Of course not, you idiot,' Carts shot back, 'they're not fools, they're musicians dedicated to their craft. If a little money comes their way during their pursuit of excellence, more power to them.'

Pigs right off noticed Delilah & Kelly were nowhere in sight. He listened hard tuning out Carts & Brechs rhetoric & heard rustling & muffled voices upstairs. His heart was in his throat. The anticipation of what was in store was melting his mind. He still wasn't sure whether he could believe Delilah or whether she was just some Svengali weaving a web of deceit for her own

amusement. He didn't let it show, but those who loved him-- which were all-- could sense something was twisting their friends head into a knot.

Cartan threw on Emerson, Lake & Palmer & they all headed to the kitchen for tokes & beer. The party was on quite a roll. Sib & Barbie threatening to leave, 'just one more beer. OK but come on Don I've got to get home. You can stay if you want. . . No, OK. No just one more & then we go I promise.' Maloney & Trucks talking about drugs, 'where did you get it? From someone at work, it's not bad eh,' Trucks sparking up & handing it over. Brech distracting Pigs arguing about who was the better drummer,

'Rock music is extending the limits of percussion, look at Keith Moon, John Bonham, Carl Palmer,' Brech said, in a slur.

'Still not touching the speed & finesse of Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Jack DeJohnette,' Pigs replied, just throwing out the standard response, really not interested at all in getting into it.

Brech getting up, going to change the record, he'd had this argument with Pigs a million times before. He was drunkenly determined to prove his point.

'Don't you dare change that record,' Cartan yelled, 'just let it play.'

Brech quickly sat back recognising Cartan's tone, 'Fuck him;' Brech thought to himself, just waiting for his chance to pounce & change the tunes to play something that would prove his point; like Frank Zappa.

Meanwhile upstairs in Kelly's room a cone of silence had descended on Kelly & Delilah sitting on a sloshing water bed. But this time the sloshing was being caused by frustration not sexual satisfaction. Delilah had told Kelly she didn't want to have sex & that had taken him aback. Sort of, ok what do we do now.

Kelly spoke first, 'What do you mean, are you on your period.'

'No, I mean I don't want to have sex with you anymore,' Delilah said cold & hard.

'Why not?' Kelly was totally at a loss; this really didn't happen to him. He was king of the sack, any girl worth her shit was his prey. They never said no.

'Why, you doing someone else?' Kelly was cool if she was, he lied to himself. One of his things was, no ties no commitment. At least that's the façade he presented. In real life it hurt him like a knife to the heart to ask that question. Fearing to hear the answer.

'None of your business,' Delilah responded like a statue, not missing a beat.

Kelly was at an impasse. Now what? He sat on his bed rolling with the waves. His sharp Irish features crinkled up in a most unhandsome way. Kelly was a typical Irish Catholic Canadian. Long knife-like nose, pursed snappy lips, deep set wild Irish eyes (always sparkling except now they'd lost their twinkle), long lanky wiry frame. His most appealing quality, the one that got him the girls was his long-- down the back-- fiery red hair, which he kept immaculately in place combing & buffering it up just like a movie star. Like at the Oscars as she gets out of her car, & tosses her hair with a smile so bright it lights up the night. Now his long red hair hung like spaghetti strips framing his face hiding his disgrace. He knew she was interested in another man, he didn't know however, what was her plan. He always figured she'd be around, maybe it wasn't love that he had found, but this chick knew how to move in the hay & she didn't need any gay display of affection to make it happen. She was certainly not the one he was going to spend the rest of his life with, but he had grown to admire her spirit, her ability to not care about the least important of things. Her no need to talk, her persistent ability to be here & there without a care, with no real outpour of affection. Plus, he really liked driving her car.

Kelly started to stand but she grabbed his hand & pulled him back. He landed back down on the bed with a swish, pop & flop.

'Don't go mad,' she said. 'Come on let's have a hug, lets be nice to each other. We're still friends, aren't we?' Delilah wasn't totally without feelings. Though to her it was all milk-calf mush. It was just easier keeping them inside. A display of affection to her was only appropriate with her cats. Human beings were too complicated to let them know how you feel. If you take a chance, you could get hurt & in her young life she'd been hurt enough. She'd put up a wall that was not going to fall at the least little touch, or a kind approving word, or an extravagant gift. That's why her overture to Pigs was so out of character. She had actually put herself out there, into the air without a care, parachuting down to the ground, taking a chance that there might be romance to be found; in this guy who had the weird name. She had once before asked Kelly why do they call that guy Pigs, & he answered; its because of the way he eats spaghetti.

She didn't dislike Kelly. She found his wild abandoned out there ways rather charming. But he had no substance, no long-term attraction. His loose morals appealed to her at first. The wild uninhibited attitude towards sex was extremely exciting. She saw in Pigs a guy she could be with. A guy with a future. She was ok slumming it with Kelly but she wanted more & Pigs was the guy who would up the score. She knew it would be uncomfortable for all involved. But she didn't give a shit about what other people think. She was just focused on her own needs & fuck what little Barbie or Maloney thought. Yea it stinks for Kelly, but for me, I will have got what I want.

So, they hugged on the bed, which was awkward because they kept sliding in, getting closer. Kelly gave it a last go & reached in for her thigh & she whispered in his ear, don't even try. He gathered himself as they loosened the clutch. She helping him to his feet.

'Better go,' he said as he reached for the door, 'get back at it, make some money.' He left the door ajar.

She sat on the bed & listened to the stairs creaking, knowing he was leaving. She smiled a gritty grin. She had completed the first step in her plan. She was by no means sad, on the contrary she was glad Kelly was gone. Now onto phase two of her intent.

The stairs groaned; the noise quietened the screeching lead in Pigs' head. He was on the edge of a knife wondering who was going to appear. Like waiting for the creature from the deep, emerging dramatically from the garish slimy green pond. It was Kelly who came round the corner & into the kitchen. He was seemingly agitated. Barbie noticed some sad in his face. Maloney sensed something was fuck'd up. Pigs tried desperately to look him in the eye, but it was not to be. Maloney offered him a pull on the joint he was smoking, 'You Ok man,' he asked as he passed him the hash. Kelly didn't answer just accepted the toke, took a pull, 'Gotta go, gotta grind em, see you later,' he said, smoke flowing like a rapid river from his nose & he left.

Only Brech spoke out, 'That was weird' he said. 'Whatever,' Cartan mumbled, grabbing another beer from the fridge.

Just as the noise level was rising again & guffaws of laughter started bouncing off the walls, Delilah descended & walked boldly into the kitchen. Everything went quiet. Like everyone inhaled at once, sucking the air right out of the room.

SILENCE

'Can I talk to you,' Delilah whispered in Pigs' ear. Pigs looked around; everyone heard it, they all knew what was up. All in the room felt the tension. Everyone knew something was happening which they had no control over. No matter how much they loved, & cared for the one who it was happening to, sometimes you just had to keep your opinions to yourself.

Pigs got up clumsily & went through the door into the living room. Delilah followed.

'Let's go into my room,' Pigs said.

Pigs room was at the front of the living room. Separated by a wall of barn board that they'd all pilfered on a midnight ride in the country.

When he had moved in the deal was that Cartan wanted the big bedroom to himself. He'd been sharing it with Mickey the Mad Man & he needed some piece of mind. The problem was solved when one wild night they all piled into Kelly's father's old side board Ford station wagon & drove out to the country looking for barn board. It was Maloney's idea. It was wild, middle of the night, ripping old planks off a long since abandoned barn. They'd had some good laughs.

Maloney built the wall, no door though. It was cool. Gave 427 a rustic appeal.

They sat down on the side of Pigs' bed, side by side. Delilah with one foot curled up under her knee, Pigs feet firmly on the floor. Pigs had a head board pressed up against the barn board wall, which didn't heighten the illusion of privacy at all. Though it did give a sense of security.

Everyone started leaving. Sib & Barbie first, Trucks & Brech, I guess Trucks had been talked into giving him a ride. He really didn't trust Brech. No one seemed to. Brech was his own man, they broke the mould after they made him, it was just such a pity no one ever knew what he was talking about, Trucks was a smart guy, it made him mad that Brech just wouldn't talk sense sometimes.

Maloney & Carts left sitting alone with their thoughts in the kitchen, eventually Maloney went up to bed. 'Night', he said as he made his way up the stairs. Sarcastic bastard, Pigs thought. Carts silently followed soon after.

Only sound in the house the final musical phrasing of, 'O What A Lucky Man' playing itself out on the record player. Even that didn't last & the needle jumped back to its cradle. Leaving 427 breathing a slow beat of anticipation; as it waited in hesitation for what was to happen next.

'So, what's up?' Pigs asked as if ordering a hamburger. He was at a total loss of right & wrong. Stuck like a singer in the middle of a song. Delilah had the floor; he was totally at her mercy. In his mind he couldn't figure out how it turned into this. It just didn't make any sense. They were all having such a good time in their lives & then-- to Pigs' surprise-- it turned on a dime, like they were being watched by a bunch of spies; who finally decided it was time to burst their bubble. He truly didn't know what she would answer.

'I told him.' Delilah watched to see how Pigs reacted to her answer. She knew to be discrete. Don't say too much, keep him guessing. It was the only way to reel in her man.

'What did he say.' Pigs was flapping like a fish on the end of a line. Anxious for an answer. He knew that if Kelly didn't get it their would-be hell to pay. Kelly had to step aside for this to happen. If Kelly balked, this charade would be over. Pigs had decided if this be the case, he would take his lumps, step away & exit this play. His whole being tottering on a precipice awaiting a response.

'No problem.' Delilah was being intentionally obscure. Pigs instantly relieved, reeled himself back, from a tragic demise.

Delilah knew the cure to ending this drama, was that Pigs had to commit to her being in control. This was the only way she liked her men. Right from the start it had nothing to do with the heart, but had everything to do with her-- as a spoiled child-- getting everything she wanted. She knew how to play the line slowly refined, just give a little slack to get a lot back. Then reel him in vulnerable & exhausted like a sad eyed seal.

'Did you tell him about me.' Pigs asked directly, shyly. Slyly trying to regain the edge he felt was slipping away.

'No,' Delilah quickly replied as if it was a stupid question. Delilah adjusted her seating; she was now sitting full on the bed in a lotus position giving all her attention to her pending intent. She leaned in & playfully smiled. A smile of sultry intent, a smile which spoke like a speech without words. Don't worry about him, lets think about us it said.

'Well, that's going to be a problem.' Pigs was trying his hardest not to be seduced. He knew what the right thing to do was to wait. Keep things under control. He felt a genuine loyalty to his friend & didn't want to act like a sleaze. Like a guy who was all talk, but when push comes to shove, friendship flies in the breeze & he goes weak in the knees. Bros before hoes was the rule, don't be a fool. He pathetically resisted the burning in his blood.

'Why?' Delilah was playing it absolutely coy. She knew the power she had. She knew being of the female persuasion that guys were all talk. When it came time to fuck, she had the keys to the vault.

'Cause I gotta talk to him before we go any further, make sure he's cool with it, loyalty gotta respect loyalty.' Pigs was desperately trying to stick to his guns. He was terribly torn. He wanted her like a thumb to a thorn. He was fighting it hard in his mind to try & make all he believed in real. Though on the other side feeling the fire flaming down below was going to be hard to ignore. Whatever happened to his lofty ideals of comradery & communion, when all it takes is the attention of a woman, to make it all turn so trivial.

They were both sitting coy; Pigs still resisting submission. Her knees almost touching his aching thigh. Both in traditional hippie garb. Blue jeans, loose blouse, Pigs in his socks, Dalilah running shoes slipped off scattered on the floor. The old stand-up lamp Pigs had on his headboard shone down a dull yellow glow giving everything a feeling of surreal. The single light from the living room drifted like a dull snow through Pigs' barn board door, giving a dull gleam to his uncarpeted floor. Everything seemed grey. Nothing bright. Everything seemed trying to flee the night. Outside Pigs' front room window, the cars on Mt Pleasant had absented themselves for

the evening. It was sullen & silent. The odd car whizzing by was a novelty to the emptiness of the night. The streetlights cowering over the road crowded the black. The vacant sounds of the city were silent. All were settled in.

No one was interested, no one cared, about the monumental movement of passion & despair occurring right this moment in the little front room of 427. Everything felt very dreary. As if Pigs & Delilah were alone in this world. A scene from the Twilight Zone, no one around to notice the shifting values of a maturing age.

Delilah was not going to be denied. She was like a general on a mission. Delilah had started silently, sensually, caressing Pigs' thigh with her left hand, strategically moving in on the prize. She was being very patient, very reserved. A woman can take her time with love, where a man just jumps in, like off a dock into a lake.

'I know but really, he's alright with it. Don't worry.' Delilah was whispering now, bending over, close enough so that her seductive breath softened the room, like a sweet-sounding lake loon in the early morning. It tickled Pigs' ear & enhanced his fancy. It made Pigs shiver. A thrill went up & down his back. The bulge grew exponentially inside his pants. He was losing it he knew. He could still pull away, maintain his sense of dignity, sense of decorum. He was still in control he felt. But we all know his sense of doing the right thing was slowly slipping away.

Delilah moved in for the kill. Words were fruitless. They'd talked enough. She softly said, 'enough' in a breath of romance & pushed her fingers hard into Pigs' privates. She touched it. He almost blew on the spot. A rush of reasoning burst threw his body & out of his head. All that he'd read about, the higher attributes of life, were now about to fall. The abyss of pleasure & passion was the dimension where life really exists. Everything else is just words & ideas spent in rhetorical musings; real life is just not that confusing. A life's work out the window as Pigs reached over & unbuttoned her blouse, firmly committed to satisfying his aroused lusting libido.

They made love. Delilah didn't move. She just lay there. The mind of a woman is a mysterious thing. After it was over, she didn't say anything, didn't move, a lifeless lump of clay. They lay side by side, Pigs trying to figure out what just happened. It certainly wasn't appealing, during the whole thing her mind seemed to be on something else. Hating to say it, but she presented as the whole thing was boring.

Pigs heard the outside door open & close. Must be Kelly finishing his shift he thought as he heard Kelly clomp up the stairs. To his absolute astonishment she lied & said she had to pee. She jumped up, pulled on her panties, squeezed into her jeans & went straight up to Kelly's room. Pigs knew this because instead of the toilet flush he heard Kelly say,

‘What’s up.’

Pigs was aghast. What the fuck, he figured he’s just been the victim of some elaborate prank. He tried to sleep but he couldn’t. He just lay there listening to the traffic, & there really wasn’t even any of that. His mind was on fire. His whole body ached with desire to lash out at some inanimate foe. He just felt like a fool. His conscience wouldn’t shut down. It was like a runaway train. He imagined a hundred scenarios in his head; which were all taking place in Kelly’s bed.

Finally, his mind ran its course & he started to doze. But his mind was a frozen freeze frame on her lying naked under Kelly & both of them laughing at what a dupe he’d been. He was starting to sleep, that type of sleep where you’re conscious of what’s going on around you, but really its only in your head. Then Delilah came back down. She sat on the bed. Pigs sat up alert like he’d just been shot. Leaning back on the head board—under total control— he asked,

‘Did you fuck him?’ aggressively, accusingly, trying-- with the strength of Hercules-- to hide his apprehension. His hurt.

‘No. I told him we did it. I told him I just lay there & didn’t move.’ Delilah for the first time showed a chink in the armour. She showed a sensitive side which presented as sincere. Sorta like telling someone your dog died. She started to cry a little. She genuinely felt compassion for Kelly. Maybe a little guilty. She knew at that moment she was moving on & it hurt. There was nothing the matter with that & if it upset Pigs well man up, she thought.

‘What did he say?’ Pigs asked sheepishly. He got it. He had to get past his ego & remind himself that we were dealing with human feelings here. Of course, she would feel hurt at what she had done. Maybe a little ashamed. She had made a move & hurt someone who at one time she did care for. No matter how superficial.

‘He said I shoulda moved. If you’re going to party you might as well have a good time doing it.’

Epilogue

Summer was bearing down pretty dramatically. Toronto in the summer is not somewhere you want to be. Thus, the mad exodus every Friday night to the lakes & rivers an hour north. The humidity from Lake Ontario is fried by an unrelenting sun. You move around like pieces of fruit in a boiling punch bowl, everything's sticky & syrupy. Rivulets of sweat drip from private places unseen. Toronto in the summer is mean.

At 427 the bubble had burst. It just wasn't the same. The passion was passing. Pulverized by the intrusion of unforeseen events outlined above. The mood was sultry, quiet, little laughter. Passing forms, words unsaid. Quiet looks stolen, avoiding. More about me than about us.

Kelly was driving 80 hours a week, never around, gotta keep on grinding. His dynamic flash had fallen into a world of pursuit for cash. Cartan, who had been made a supervisor at work, collapsed under the pressure. The strain of putting in pools & living with fools proved to much for his delicate sensitive constitution. The party-- that he was very much responsible for starting-- was now just farting in the breeze. He ended up on the psyche ward at Sunnybrook. This was total shock & revelation for Pigs; who loved Cartan dearly. Carts family had stepped in when Cartan went home stoned for dinner & got him committed. They wouldn't even let his friends visit. Maloney decided he was going to Vancouver. Toronto was just too tense. The dream faded, now it was all just too real. By the end of July, they'd all gone their own way.

Pigs became a different fella. Yea he was still the wild & crazy philosopher type spewing theories day & night. Now though, when Delilah was around, Pigs changed into an obsessive possessive guy who was quite offensive to be with. He was always after Delilah about where she'd been, what she'd been doing. If they were at the bar, he was Othello jealous of any guy who tried to catch her eye. He totally freaked when she purposely responded to the unsolicited attention she drew in a crowd. He was no longer the fun-loving guy who would do anything for a laugh. His friends started to avoid him; if Delilah was going to be there.

Pigs & Delilah took a trip to West Virginia in August, on Daddy's buck in the TR6. They fought all the way there & back. Pigs got so drunk in New Hampshire that they threw him in the drunk tank & then told him to never come back. Delilah, to commemorate the scene, stole a license plate off a cop car: New Hampshire; Live Free or Die. They lasted a year together. Breaking up & making up as regular as the sun coming up & going down. Finally, it totally collapsed. Delilah stepped out of her safe shell she'd found with Pigs & had an affair with (would you believe) Cartan (who was out of the hospital & living in Guelph, with Pigs, of course; but that's another story, Zappa by Jim White, as yet unpublished). It was just a one-night dalliance but that was enough for Pigs to send Delilah & her TR6 on their way, never to be seen again.

The gang from 427 are all still friends. No one person or incident could put that to an end. Yet now when they get together wearing suits & leather there is that lost feeling of together forever. Oh yea, they still hoot & howl, smoke weed, drink beer, dance & sing. But there is that one thing they know; no one can really say, how life will go.

THE END