

FINITE JEST

An radically abridged version of *Infinite Jest* in two parts

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Part I

The Enfield Tennis Academy

MONDAY NOV 2 1992

Here's Hal Incandenza, age seventeen, with his little brass one-hitter, getting covertly high in the Enfield Tennis Academy's underground Pump Room and exhaling palely into an industrial exhaust fan. It's the sad little interval after afternoon matches and conditioning but before the Academy's communal supper. Hal is by himself down here and nobody knows where he is or what he's doing.

Hal likes to get high in secret, but a bigger secret is that he's as attached to the secrecy as he is to getting high.

A one-hitter, sort of like a long FDR-type cigarette holder whose end is packed with a pinch of dope, gets hot and is hard on the mouth—the brass ones especially—but one-hitters have the advantage of efficiency: every particle of ignited pot gets inhaled; there's none of the incidental secondhand-type smoke from a party bowl's load, and Hal can take every iota way down deep and hold his breath forever, so that even his exhalations are no more than slightly pale and sick-sweet-smelling.

Total utilization of available resources = lack of publicly detectable waste.

The Academy's tennis courts' Lung's Pump Room is underground and accessible only by tunnel. E.T.A. is abundantly, embranchingly tunnelled. This is by design. Plus one-hitters are small, which is good, because let's face it, anything you use to smoke high-resin dope with is going to stink. A bong is big, and its stink is going to be like commensurately big, plus you have the foul bong-water to deal with. Pipes are smaller and at least portable, but they always come with only a multi-hit party bowl that disperses nonutilized smoke over a wide area. A one-hitter can be wastelessly employed, then allowed to cool, wrapped in two baggies and then further wrapped and sealed in a Ziploc and then enclosed in two sport-socks in a gear bag along with the lighter and eyedrops and mint-pellets and the little film-case of dope itself, and it's highly portable and odor-free and basically totally covert.

As far as Hal knows, colleagues Michael Pemulis, Jim Struck, Bridget C. Boone, Jim Troeltsch, Ted Schacht, Trevor Axford, and possibly Kyle D. Coyle and Tall Paul Shaw, and remotely possibly Frannie Unwin, all know Hal gets regularly covertly high. And Hal's brother Mario knows a thing or two. But that's it, in terms of public knowledge. And but even though Pemulis and Struck and Boone and Troeltsch and Axford and occasionally (in a sort of medicinal or touristic way) Slice and Schacht all are known to get high also, Hal has actually gotten actively high only with Pemulis, on the rare occasions he's gotten high with anybody else, as in in person, which he avoids. He'd forgot: Hal's oldest brother, Orin, mysteriously, even long-distance, seems to know more than he's coming right out and saying, unless Hal's reading more into some of the phone-comments than are there.

Hal's mother, Mrs. Avril Incandenza, and her adoptive brother Dr. Charles Tavis, the current E.T.A. Headmaster, both know Hal drinks alcohol sometimes, like on weekend nights with Troeltsch or maybe Axford down the hill at clubs on Commonwealth Ave.; The Unexamined Life has its notorious Blind Bouncer night every Friday where they card you on the Honor System. Mrs. Avril Incandenza isn't crazy about the idea of Hal drinking, mostly because of the way his father James Incandenza Himself had drunk, when alive, and reportedly his father's own father before him; but Hal's academic precocity, and especially his late competitive success on the junior

circuit, make it clear that he's able to handle whatever modest amounts she's pretty sure he consumes — there's no way someone can seriously abuse a substance and perform at top scholarly and athletic levels, the E.T.A. psych- counselor Dr. Rusk assures her, especially the high-level-athletic part—and Avril feels it's important that a concerned but un-smothering single parent know when to let go somewhat and let the two high-functioning of her three sons make their own possible mistakes and learn from their own valid experience, no matter how much the secret worry about mistakes tears her gizzard out. And Charles supports whatever personal decisions she makes in conscience about her children. And God knows she'd rather have Hal having a few glasses of beer every so often than absorbing God alone knows what sort of esoteric designer compounds with reptilian Michael Pemulis and trail-of-slime-leaving James Struck, both of whom give Avril a howling case of the maternal fantods. And ultimately, she's told Drs. Rusk and Tavis, she'd rather have Hal abide in the security of the knowledge that his mother trusts him, that she's trusting and supportive and doesn't judge or gizzard-tear or wring her fine hands over his having for instance a glass of Canadian ale with friends every now and again, and so works tremendously hard to hide her maternal dread of his possibly ever drinking like his father or James's father, all so that Hal might enjoy the security of feeling that he can be up-front with her about issues like drinking and not feel he has to hide anything from her under any circumstances.

Dr. Tavis and Dolores Rusk have privately discussed the fact that not least among the phobic stressors Avril suffers so uncomplainingly with is a black phobic dread of hiding or secrecy in all possible forms with respect to her sons.

Avril and C.T. know nothing about Hal's penchants for high-resin Bob Hope and underground absorption, which Hal obviously likes a lot, on some level, though he's never given much thought to why.

E.T.A.'s hilltop grounds are traversable by tunnel. Avril I., for example, who never leaves the grounds anymore, rarely travels above ground, willing to hunch to take the off-tunnels between Headmaster's House and her office next to Charles Tavis's in the Community and Administration Bldg., a pink-bricked white-pillared neo-Georgian thing that Hal's brother Mario says looks like a cube that has swallowed a ball too big for its stomach. One large tunnel of elephant-colored cement leads from just off the boys' showers to the mammoth laundry room below the West Courts, and two smaller tunnels radiate from the sauna area south and east to the subbasements of the smaller, spherocubular, proto-Georgian buildings (housing classrooms and subdormitories B and D). Then two even smaller tunnels are in turn connected to E.T.A.'s Lung-Storage and Pump Rooms via a pargeted tunnel hastily constructed by the TesTar All-Weather Inflatable Structures Corp., which erects and services the inflatable dendriurethane dome, known as the Lung, that covers the middle row of courts for the winter indoor season. The crude little rough-sided tunnel between Plant and Pump is traversable only via all-fours-type crawling and is essentially unknown to staff and Administration, popular only with the Academy's smaller kids' Tunnel Club, as well as with certain adolescents with strong secret incentive to crawl on all fours.

The Lung-Storage Room is basically impassable from March through November because it's full of intricately folded and dismantled sections of flexible ducting and fan-blades, etc. When the courts' Lung is down and stored, Hal will descend and walk and then hunch his way in to make sure nobody's in the Physical Plant quarters, then he'll hunch and crawl to the P.R., gear bag in his teeth, and activate just one of the big exhaust fans and get secretly high and exhale palely through its blades into the vent, so that any possible odor is blown through an outtake duct and expelled through a grille'd hole on the west side of the West Courts.

During winter months, when any expelled odor would get ducted up into the Lung and hang there conspicuous, Hal mostly goes into a remote sub-dormitory lavatory and climbs onto a toilet in a stall and exhales into the grille of one of the little exhaust fans in the ceiling; but this routine lacks a certain intricate subterranean covert drama. It's another reason why Hal dreads the approach of the WhataBurger Classic and Thanksgiving and unendurable weather, and the erection of the Lung.

Recreational drugs are more or less traditional at any U.S. secondary school, maybe because of the unprecedented tensions: post-latency and puberty and angst and impending adulthood, etc. To help manage the intra-psychic storms, etc. Since the place's inception, there's always been a certain percentage of the high-caliber adolescent players at E.T.A. who manage their internal weathers chemically. Much of this is good clean temporary fun; but a traditionally smaller and harder-core set tends to rely on personal chemistry to manage E.T.A.'s special demands—dexedrine or low-volt methedrine before matches and benzodiazapenes to come back down after matches, with Mudslides or Blue Flames at some understanding Comm. Ave. nightspot or beers and bongos in some discreet Academy corner at night to short-circuit the up-and-down cycle, mushrooms or X or something from the Mild Designer class—or maybe occasionally a little Black Star, whenever there's a match- and demand-free weekend, to basically short out the whole motherboard and blow out all the circuits and slowly recover and be almost neurologically reborn and start the gradual cycle all over again...this circular routine, if your basic wiring's OK to begin with, can work surprisingly well throughout adolescence and sometimes into one's like early twenties, before it starts to creep up on you.

But so some E.T.A.s—not just Hal Incandenza by any means—are involved with recreational substances, is the point. Like who isn't, at some life-stage, in the U.S.A., in these troubled times, for the most part. American experience seems to suggest that people are virtually unlimited in their need to give themselves away, on various levels. Some just prefer to do it in secret.

An enrolled student-athlete's use of alcohol or illicit chemicals is cause for immediate expulsion, according to E.T.A.'s admissions catalogue. But the E.T.A. staff tends to have a lot more important stuff on its plate than policing kids who've already given themselves away to an ambitious competitive pursuit. The administrative attitude under first James Incandenza and then Charles Tavis is, like, why would anybody who wanted to compromise his faculties chemically even come here, to E.T.A., where the whole point is to stress and stretch your faculties along multiple vectors. And since it's the alumni prorectors who have the most direct supervisory contact with the kids, and since most of the prorectors themselves are depressed or traumatized about not making it into the Show and having to come back to E.T.A. and live in decent but subterranean rooms off the tunnels and work as assistant coaches and teach laughable elective classes—which is what the eight E.T.A. prorectors do, when they're not off playing Satellite tournaments or trying to make it through the qualifying rounds of some serious-money event—and so they're morose and low on morale, and feel brfaded about themselves, often, as a rule, and so also not all that surprisingly tend to get high now and then themselves, though in a less covert or exuberant fashion than the hard-core students' chemical cadre, but so given all this it's not hard to see why internal drug-enforcement at E.T.A. tends to be flaccid.

The other nice thing about the Pump Room is the way it's connected by tunnel to the prorectors' rows of housing units, which means men's rooms, which means Hal can crawl, hunch, and tiptoe into an unoccupied men's room and brush his teeth with his Oral-B and wash his face and apply eyedrops and Old Spice and a plug of wintergreen Kodiak and then saunter back to the

sauna area and ascend to ground level looking and smelling right as rain, because when he gets high he develops a powerful obsession with having nobody — not even the neurochemical cadre— know he's high. This obsession is almost irresistible in its force. The amount of organization and toiletry-lugging he has to do to get secretly high in front of a subterranean outtake vent in the pre-supper gap would make a lesser man quail. Hal has no idea why this is, or whence, this obsession with the secrecy of it. He broods on it abstractly sometimes, when high: this No-One-Must-Know thing. It's not fear per se, fear of discovery. Beyond that it all gets too abstract and twined up to lead to anything, Hal's brooding. Like most North Americans of his generation, Hal tends to know way less about why he feels certain ways about the objects and pursuits he's devoted to than he does about the objects and pursuits themselves. It's hard to say for sure whether this is even exceptionally bad, this tendency.

NOV 1992

EARLY MORNING

Another way fathers impact sons is that sons, once their voices have changed in puberty, invariably answer the telephone with the same locutions and intonations as their fathers. This holds true regardless of whether the fathers are still alive.

Because he left his dormitory room before 0600 for dawn drills and often didn't get back there until after supper, packing his book bag and knapsack and gear bag for the whole day, together with selecting his best-strung racquets—it all took Hal some time. Plus he usually collected and packed and selected in the dark, and with stealth, because his brother Mario was usually still asleep in the other bed. Mario didn't drill and couldn't play, and needed all the sleep he could get.

Hal held his complimentary gear bag and was putting different pairs of sweats to his face, trying to find the cleanest pair by smell, when the phone sounded. Mario thrashed and sat up in bed, a small hunched shape with a big head against the gray light of the window. Hal got to the phone on the second ring.

His way of answering the phone sounded like 'Mmmyellow.'

'I want to tell you,' the voice on the phone said. 'My head is filled with things to say.'

Hal held three pairs of E.T.A. sweatpants in the hand that didn't hold the phone. He saw his older brother succumb to gravity and fall back limp against the pillows. Mario often sat up and fell back still asleep.

'I don't mind,' Hal said softly. 'I could wait forever.'

'That's what you think,' the voice said. The connection was cut. The person on the phone had been Orin.

'Hey Hal?'

The light in the room was a creepy gray, a kind of nonlight. Hal could hear the clank of janitorial buckets down the hall.

'Hey Hal?' Mario was awake. It took four pillows to support Mario's oversized skull. His voice came from the tangled bedding. 'Is it still dark out, or is it me?'

'Go back to sleep. It isn't even six.' Hal put the good leg into the sweatpants first.

'Who was it?'

Shoving three coverless Dunlop widebodies into the gear bag and zipping the bag partway up so the handles had room to stick out he said, 'No one you know, I don't think.'

MONDAY NOV 9 1992

ETA PLAY

The Enfield Tennis Academy has an accredited capacity of 148 junior players—of whom 80 are to be male—but an actual population of 136, of which 72 are female. Charles Tavis and Co. are wanting to fill all twelve available spots with males—they wouldn't exactly mind, is the general scuttlebutt, if a half dozen or so of the better girls left before graduation and tried for the Show, simply because housing more girls means putting some in the male dorms, which creates tensions and licensing- and conservative-parent-problems, given that coed hall bathrooms are not a good idea what with all the adolescent glands firing all over the place. A.M. drills have to be complexly staggered, the boys in two sets of 32, the girls in three of 24.

Matriculations, gender quotas, recruiting, financial aid, room-assignments, mealtimes, rankings, class v. drill schedules, prorektor-hiring, accommodating changes in drill schedule consequent to a player's movement up or down a squad. It's all the sort of thing that's uninteresting unless you're the one responsible, in which case it's cholesterol-raisingly stressful and complex. The stress of all the complexities and priorities to be triaged and then weighted against one another gets Charles Tavis out of bed in the Headmaster's House at an ungodly hour most mornings, his sleep-swollen face twitching with permutations. He stands in leather slippers at the living-room window, looking southeast past West and Center Courts at the array of A-team players assembling stiffly in the gray glow, carrying gear with their heads down and some still asleep on their feet, the first bit sun protruding through the city's little skyline far beyond them, Tavis's hands working nervously around the cup of hazlenut decaf that steams upward into his face, forehead up against the window's glass so he can feel the mean chill of the dawn just outside. The A-team's array keeps shifting and melding as they await Schtitt.

Tavis watches the boys stretch and confer and sips from the cup with both hands, the concerns of the day assembling themselves in a sort of tree-diagram of worry. Charles Tavis knows what James Incandenza could not have cared about less: the key to the successful administration of a top-level junior tennis academy lies in cultivating a kind of reverse-Buddhism, a state of Total Worry. So the best E.T.A. players' special perk is they get hauled out of bed at dawn, still crusty-eyed and pale with sleep, to drill in the first shift.

Dawn drills are of course alfresco until they erect and inflate the Lung, which Hal Incandenza hopes is soon. His circulation is poor because of tobacco and/or marijuana, and even with his DUNLOP-down-both-legs sweatpants and a turtleneck and thick old white alpaca tennis jacket that had been his father's and has to be rolled up at the sleeves, he's sullen and chilled, and by the time they've run the pre-stretch sprints up and down the E.T.A. hill four times, swinging their sticks madly in all directions and making various half-hearted warrior-noises, Hal is both chilled and wet, and his sneakers squelch from dew as he hops in place and looks at this breath, wincing as the cold air hits the one bad tooth.

By the time they're all stretching out, lined up in rows, flexing and bowing, genuflecting to nothing, changing postures at the sound of a whistle, the sky has lightened to the color of Kaopectate. All the lesser players are still abed. Hal's breath hangs before his face until he moves through it. Sprints produce the sick sound of much squelching; everyone wishes the hill's grass would die.

Twenty-four girls are drilled in groups of six on four of the Center Courts. The 32 boys are split by rough age into fours and take a semi-staggered eight of the East Courts. Schtitt is up in his little observational crow's nest, a sort of apse at the end of the iron transom players call the Tower that extends west to east over the centers of all three sets of courts and terminates w/ the nest high

above the courts. He has a chair and an ashtray up there. Sometimes from the courts you can see him leaning over the railing, tapping the edge of the bullhorn with his weatherman's pointer; from the West and Center Courts the rising sun behind him gives his white head a pinkish corona.

Except during periods of disciplinary conditioning, alfresco A.M. drills work like this. A prorektor is at each relevant court with two yellow Ball-Hopper-brand baskets of used balls, plus a ball machine, which machine looks like an open footlocker with a blunt muzzle at one end pointed across the net at a quartet of boys. Hal hops up and down in his capacious jacket and plum turtleneck and looks at his breath and tries to focus very intently on the pain of his tooth without judging it as bad or good.

Each quartet starts at a different court and rotates around. Corbett Thorp lays down squares of electrician's tape at the court's corners and they are strongly encouraged to hit the balls into the little squares. Hal hits with Stice, Coyle with Wayne. Hal's tooth hurts and his ankle is stiff and the cold balls come off his strings with a dead sound like *chung*. Tiny bratwursts of smoke ascend rhythmically from Schtitt's little nest. Hal and Coyle, both sucking wind after twenty and trying to stand up straight, feed lobs to Wayne and Stice, neither of whom is fatiguable as far as anyone can tell. Overhead, Schtitt uses an unamplified bullhorn and careful enunciation to call out for everyone to hear that Mr. revenant Hal Incandenza was letting the ball get behind him on overheads, fears of the ankle maybe. To hang in past age fourteen here is to become immune to humiliation from staff. Coyle tells Hal between the lobs they send up he'd love to see Schtitt have to do twenty Tap & Whacks in a row. They're all flushed to a shine, all chill washed off, noses running freely and heads squeaking with blood. The watching prorektors stand easy with their legs apart and their arms crossed over their racquets' faces. The same three or four booger-shaped clouds seem to pass back and forth overhead, and when they cover the sun people's breath reappears. Stice blows on his racquet-hand and cries out thinly for the inflation of the Lung. Mr. A.F. deLint ranges behind the fence with his clipboard and whistle, blowing his nose. The girls behind him are bundled up, their hair rubber-banded into little bouncing tails.

Then, blessedly, physically undemanding Finesse drills. Drops, drops for angles, topspin lobs, extreme angles, drops for extreme angles. Touch- and artistry-wise nobody comes close to Hal. By this time Hal's turtleneck is soaked through under the alpaca jacket, and exchanging it for a sweatshirt out of the gear bag is a kind of renewal. What wind there is down here is out of the south. The temperature is now probably in the low 10's C.; the sun's been up an hour. The sky is going a glassy blue.

No (tennis) balls required on the final court. Wind sprints. Probably the less said about wind sprints the better. Then more Gatorade, which Hal and Coyle are breathing too hard to enjoy, as Schtitt comes slowly down from the transom. It takes a while. You can hear his steel-toed boots hit each iron step. There is something creepy about a very fit older man, to say nothing of jackboots w/ Fila warm-ups of claret-colored silk. Schtitt's crew cut and face are nacreous as he moves east in the yellowing A.M. light. This is sort of the signal for all the quartets to gather at the Show Courts.

Coyle — he of the weak bladder and suspicious discharge—gets excused to go back into the eastern tree-line and pee, so the other three get a minute to jog over to the pavilion and stand with their hands on their hips and breathe and drink Gatorade out of little conic paper cups you can't put down til they're empty. Schtitt stands at a sort of Parade Rest with his weatherman's pointer behind his back and shares overall impressions with the players on the morning's work thus far. Certain players are singled out for special mention or humiliation. Then more wind sprints.

Schtitt has a stopwatch. There's a janitorial bucket placed in the doubles alley by the finish point, for potential distress.

The cardiovascular finale is Side-to-Sides, demonic in its simplicity. What's potentially demonic about Side-to-Sides is that the duration of the drill and pace and angle of the fungoes to be chased down from side to side are entirely at the prorector's discretion. A very unpleasant drill fatigue-wise, and for Hal also ankle-wise, what with all the stopping and reversing. Hal wears two bandages over a left ankle he shaves way more often than his upper lip. Over the bandages goes an Air-Stirrup inflatable ankle brace that's very lightweight but looks a bit like a medieval torture-implement. It was in a stop-and-reverse move much like Side- to-Sides that Hal tore all the soft left-ankle tissue he then owned at fifteen, at Atlanta's Easter Bowl, in the third round, which he was losing anyway. Dunkel goes fairly easy on Hal, at least on the first two go-arounds, because of the ankle. Hal's going to be seeded in at least the top 4 at the WhataBurger Inv. in a couple weeks, and woe to the prorector who lets Hal get hurt.

It is 0720h. and they are through with the active part of dawn drills. Schtitt shares more overall impressions as minimum-wage aides dispense Kleenex and paper cones, pacing back and forth with about-faces at every tenth step, stopwatch around his neck, pipe and pouch and pointer in his hands behind his back, nodding to himself, clearly wishing he had a third hand so he could stroke his white chin, pretending to ruminate. All the older boys' eyes are glazed with repetition. Hal's tooth gives off little electric shivers with each inbreath, and he feels slightly unwell. When he moves his head slightly the monitor-glass bits' glitter shifts and dances along the opposite fence in a sort of sickening way.

'Put a lid on it about the fucking cold,' says deLint, with his clipboard under his arm and his strangler-sized hands in his pockets, hopping a little in place. Schtitt is looking around. Like most Germans outside popular entertainment, he gets quieter when he wants to impress or menace. (There are very few shrill Germans, actually.) 'It can be arranged for you gentlemen not to leave, ever, this world inside the lines of court. You can stay right here.' The pointer is pointed at the spots they're standing at breathing and blotting their faces and blowing their noses. 'Sleep bags. Meals brought to you. Never across the lines. Never leave the court. Study here. A bucket for hygienic needs. At Gymnasium Kaiserslautern where I am privileged boy whining about cold wind, we live inside tennis court for months. Very lucky days when they bring us meals.'

Hal very subtly shoots in a small plug of Kodiak. Aubrey deLint has his arms crossed over the clipboard and is looking around beadily like a crow. Hal Incandenza has an almost obsessive dislike for deLint, whom he tells Mario he sometimes cannot quite believe is even real, and tries to get to the side of, to see whether deLint has a true z coordinate or is just a cutout or projection. The kids of the next shift are walking downhill and sprinting back up and walking down, warrior-whooping without conviction. The other male prorectors are drinking cones of Gatorade, clustered in the little pavilion, feet up on patio-chairs.

'Simple,' Schtitt shrugs, so that the upraised pointer seems to stab at the sky. 'Hit,' he suggests. 'Move. Travel lightly. Occur. Be here. Not in bed or shower or over baconschteam, in the mind. Be here in total. Nothing else. Learn. Try. Drink your green juice. Perform the Butterfly exercises on all eight of these courts, please, to warm down. Gentlemen: hit tennis balls. Fire at will.'

Schtitt sweeps the pointer in an ironic morendo arc and laughs aloud:

'Play.'

OCTOBER 1992

Four times per annum, in these chemically troubled times, the Organization of North American Nations Tennis Association's Juniors Division sends a young toxicologist with cornsilk hair and a smooth wide button of a nose and a blue O.N.A.N.T.A. blazer to collect urine samples from any student at any accredited tennis academy ranked higher than #64 continentally in his or her age-division. Competitive junior tennis is meant to be good clean fun. It's October. An impressive percentage of the kids at E.T.A. are in their divisions' top 64. On urine-sample day, the juniors form two long lines that trail out of the locker rooms and up the stairs and then run agnate and coed across the E.T.A. Comm.-Ad. Bldg. lobby with its royal-blue shag and hardwood panelling and great glass cases of trophies and plaques. It takes about an hour to get from the middle of the line to your locker room's stall-area, where either the blond young toxicologist or on the girls' side a nurse whose severe widow's peak tops her square face with a sort of bisected forehead dispenses a plastic cup with a pale-green lid and a strip of white medical tape with a name and a monthly ranking and 10-15-1992 and *Enf.T.A.* neatly printed in a six-pt. font.

Probably about a fourth of the ranking players over, say, fifteen at the Enfield Tennis Academy cannot pass a standard North American GC/MS urine scan. These, seventeen-year-old Michael Pemulis's nighttime customers, now become also, four times yearly, his daytime customers. Clean urine is ten dollars a cc.

'Get your urine here!' Pemulis and Trevor Axford become quarterly urine vendors; they wear those papery oval caps ballpark-vendors wear; they spend three months collecting and stashing the urine of sub-ten-year-old players, warm pale innocent childish urine that's produced in needly little streams and the only G/M scan it couldn't pass would be like an Ovaltine scan or something; then every third month Pemulis and Axford work the agnate unsupervised line that snakes across the blue lobby shag, selling little Visine bottles of urine out of an antique vendor's tub for ballpark wieners, a big old box of dull dimpled tin with a strap in Sox colors that goes around the back of the neck and keeps the vendor's hands free to make change.

'Urine!'

'Clinically sterile urine!'

'Piping hot!'

'Urine you'd be proud to take home and introduce to the folks!'

Trevor Axford handles cash-flow. Pemulis dispenses little conical-tipped Visine bottles of juvenile urine, bottles easily rendered discreet in underarm, sock or panty.

'Urine trouble? Urine luck!'

Quarterly sales breakdowns indicate slightly more male customers than female customers for urine. Tomorrow morning, E.T.A. custodial workers—sullen and shifty-eyed residents from Ennet House, the halfway facility at the bottom of the hill in the old VA Hospital complex, hard-looking and generally sullen types who come and do nine months of menial-type work for the 32 hours a week their treatment-contract requires—will empty scores of little empty plastic Visine bottles from subdorm wastebaskets into the dumpster-nest behind the E.T.A. Employee parking lot, from which dumpsters Pemulis will then get Mario Incandenza and some of the naïver of the original ephebic urine-donators themselves to remove, sterilize, and rebox the bottles under the guise of a rousing game of Who-Can-Find,-Boil,-And-Box-The-Most-Empty-Visine-Bottles-In-A-Three-Hour-Period-Without-Any-Kind-Of-Authority-Figure-Knowing-What-You're-Up-To, a game which Mario had found thumpingly weird when Pemulis introduced him to it three years

ago, but which Mario's really come to look forward to, since he's found he has a real sort of mystical intuitive knack for finding Visine bottles in the sedimentary layers of packed dumpsters, and always seems to win hands-down, and if you're poor old Mario Incandenza you take your competitive strokes where you can find them.

Hal's older brother Mario—who by Dean of Students' fiat gets to bunk in a double with Hal in subdorm A on the third floor of Comm.-Ad. even though he's too physically challenged even to play low-level recreational tennis, but who's keenly interested in video- and film production, and pulls his weight as part of the E.T.A. community recording assigned sections of matches and drills and processional stroke-filming sessions for later playback and analysis by Schtitt and his staff—is filming the congregated line and social interactions and vending operation of the urine-day lobby, apparently getting footage for one of the short strange Himself-influenced conceptual films the administration lets him occupy his time making and futzing around with down in the late founder's editing and f/x facilities off the main sub-Comm.-Ad. Tunnel.

They do brisk business.

Michael Pemulis, wiry, pointy-featured, phenomenally talented at net but about two steps too slow to get up there effectively against high-level pace—so in compensation also a great offensive-lob man—is a scholarship student from right nearby in Allston MA—a grim section of tract housing and vacant lots, low-rise Greek and Irish housing projects, gravel and haphazard sewage and indifferent municipal upkeep—an Inner City Development Program tennis prodigy at ten, recruited up the hill at eleven. Cavalier about practice but a bundle of strangled nerves in tournaments, the rap on Pemulis is that he's way lower-ranked than he could be with a little hard work. Pemulis, whose pre-E.T.A. home life was apparently hackle-raising, also sells small-time drugs of distinguished potency at reasonable retail prices to a large pie-slice of the total junior-tournament-circuit market. Mario Incandenza is one of those people who wouldn't see the point of trying recreational chemicals even if he knew how to go about it. He just wouldn't get it. His smile, below the Bolex camera strapped to his large but sort of withered-looking head, is constant and broad as he films the line's serpentine movement against glass shelves full of prizes.

M.M. Pemulis, whose middle name is Mathew (*sic*), has the highest Stanford-Binet of any kid on academic probation ever at the Academy. Hal Incandenza's most valiant efforts barely get Pemulis through Mrs. I's triad of required Grammars (Prescriptive Grammar, Descriptive Grammar, Grammar and Meaning) and Soma R.-L.-O. Chawaf's heady Literature of Discipline, because Pemulis, who claims he sees every third word upside-down, actually just has a born tech-science wienie's congenital impatience with the referential murkiness and inelegance of verbal systems. His early tennis promise quick-peaking and it's turned out a bit dilettantish, Pemulis's real enduring gift is for math and hard science, and his scholarship is the coveted James O. Incandenza Geometrical Optics Scholarship, of which there is only one, and which each term Pemulis manages to avoid losing by just one dento-dermal layer of overall G.P.A., and which gives him sanctioned access to all the late director's lenses and equipment, some of which turn out to be useful to unrelated enterprises. Mario's the only other person sharing the optic-and-editing labs off the main tunnel, and the two have the kind of transpersonal bond that shared interests and mutual advantage can inspire. Mario and his brother Hal both consider Pemulis a good friend, though friendship at E.T.A. is nonnegotiable currency.

Hal Incandenza for a long time identified himself as a lexical prodigy who—though Avril had taken pains to let all three of her children know that her nonjudgmental love and pride depended in no way on achievement or performance or potential talent—had made his mother proud, plus a really good tennis player. Hal Incandenza is now being encouraged to identify

himself as a late-blooming prodigy and possible genius at tennis who is on the verge of making every authority-figure in his world and beyond very proud indeed. He's never looked better on court or on monthly O.N.A.N.T.A. paper. He is erumpent. He has made what Schtitt termed a 'leap of exponents' at a post-pubescent age when radical, plateaux-hopping, near-Show-caliber improvement is extraordinarily rare in tennis. He gets his sterile urine gratis, though he could well afford to pay: Pemulis depends on him for verbal-academic support, and dislikes owing favors, even to friends.

Hal is, at seventeen, judged *ex cathedra* the fourth-best tennis player under age eighteen in the United States of America, and the sixth-best on the continent, by those athletic-organizing bodies duly charged with the task of ranking. Hal's head, closely monitored by deLint and Staff, is judged still level and focused and unswollen/-bludgeoned by the sudden *éclat* and rise in general expectations. When asked how he's doing with it all, Hal says Fine and thanks you for asking.

If Hal fulfills this newly emergent level of promise and makes it all the way up to the Show, Mario will be the only one of the Incandenza children not wildly successful as a professional athlete. No one who knows Mario could imagine that this fact would ever even occur to him.

Orin, Mario, and Hal's late father was revered as a genius in his original profession without anybody ever realizing what he really turned out to be a genius at, even he Himself, at least not while he was alive, which is perhaps bona-fidely tragic but also, as far as Mario's concerned, ultimately all right, if that's the way things unfolded.

Certain people find people like Mario Incandenza irritating or even think they're outright dead inside in some essential way.

Michael Pemulis's basic posture with people is that Mrs. Pemulis raised no dewy-eyed fools. He wears painter's caps on-court and sometimes a yachting cap turned around 180°, and, since he's not ranked high enough to get any free-corporate-clothing offers, plays in T-shirts with things like *ALLSTON HS WOLF SPIDERS* and *CHOOSY MOTHERS* and *THE FIENDS IN HUMAN SHAPE TOUR* or like an ancient *CAN YOU BELIEVE IT THE SUPREME COURT JUST DESECRATED OUR FLAG* on them. His face is the sort of spiky-featured brow-dominated Feenian face you see all over Irish Allston and Brighton, its chin and nose sharp and skin the natal brown color of the shell of a quality nut.

Michael Pemulis is nobody's fool, and he fears the dealer's Brutus, the potential eater of cheese, the rat, the wiretap, the pubescent-looking Finest sent to make him look foolish. So when somebody calls his room's phone and wants to buy some sort of substance, they have to right off the bat utter the words 'Please commit a crime,' and Michael Pemulis will reply 'Gracious me and mine, a crime you say?' and the customer has to insist, right over the phone, and say he'll pay Michael Pemulis money to commit a crime, or like that he'll harm Michael Pemulis in some way if he refuses to commit a crime, and Michael Pemulis will in a clear and I.D.able voice make an appointment to see the caller in person to 'plead for my honor and personal safety,' so that if anybody eats cheese later or the phone's frequency is covertly accessed, somehow, Pemulis will have been entrapped.

Secreting a small Visine bottle of urine in an armpit in line also brings it up to plausible temperature. At the entrance to the male stall-area, the ephebic-looking O.N.A.N.T.A. toxicologist rarely even looks up from his clipboard, but the square-faced nurse can be a problem over on the female side, because every so often she'll want the stall door open during production. Pemulis also offers, at reasonable cost, a small *vade mecumish* pamphlet detailing several methods for dealing with this contingency.

James Orin Incandenza—the only child of a former top U.S. jr. tennis player, a father who somewhere around the nadir of his professional fortunes apparently decided to go down to his Raid-sprayed basement workshop and build a promising junior athlete the way other fathers might restore vintage autos or build ships inside bottles, or like refinish chairs, etc. — James Incandenza proved a withdrawn but compliant student of the game and soon a gifted jr. player who used tennis scholarships to finance, on his own, private secondary and then higher education at places just about as far away from the U.S. Southwest as one could get without drowning. The United States government's prestigious O.N.R. (Office of Naval Research, U.S.D.D.) financed his doctorate in optical physics, fulfilling something of a childhood dream. His strategic value as more or less the top applied-geometrical-optics man in the O.N.R. designing neutron-scattering reflectors for thermo-strategic weapons systems, then in the Atomic Energy Commission, translated, after an early retirement from the public sector, into a patented fortune in rearview mirrors, light-sensitive eyewear, holographic birthday and Xmas greeting cards, videophonic Tableaux, homolosine-cartography software, nonfluorescent public-lighting systems and film-equipment; then the opening a U.S.T.A.-accredited and pedagogically experimental tennis academy, and conceptual-film work too far either ahead of or behind its time—although a lot of it was admittedly just plain pretentious and unengaging and bad, and probably not helped at all by the man's very gradual spiral into crippling dipsomania. (*See Footnote 1)

The tall, ungainly, socially challenged and hard-drinking Dr. Incandenza's May-December marriage to one of the few bona fide bombshell-type females in North American academia, the extremely tall and high-strung but also extremely pretty and gainly and teetotaling and classy Dr. Avril Mondragon, the only female academic ever to hold the Macdonald Chair in Prescriptive Usage at the Royal Victoria College of McGill University, whom Incandenza'd met at a U. Toronto conference on Reflective vs. Reflexive Systems, was rendered even more romantic by the bureaucratic tribulations involved in obtaining an Exit- and then an Entrance-Visa for Professor Mondragon. The birth of the Incandenzas' first child, Orin, had been at least partly a legal maneuver.

It is known that, during the last five years of his life, Dr. James O. Incandenza liquidated his assets and patent-licenses, ceded control over most of the Enfield Tennis Academy's operations to his wife's half-brother and devoted his unimpaired hours almost exclusively to the production of documentaries, technically recondite art films, mordantly obscure and obsessive, leaving behind a substantial (given the late age at which he bloomed, creatively) number of completed films, some of which have earned a small academic following for their technical feck and for a pathos that was somehow both surreally abstract and melodramatic at the same time.

Professor James O. Incandenza, Jr.'s untimely suicide at fifty-four was held a great loss in at least three world. President J. Gentle, acting on behalf of the O.N.R., conferred a posthumous citation. Cornell University Press announced plans for a festschrift. Certain leading young quote 'après-garde' and 'anticonfluentia' filmmakers employed certain oblique visual gestures that paid the sort of deep-insider's elegaic tribute no audience could be expected to notice. And those of E.T.A.'s junior players whose hypertrophied arms could fit inside them wore black bands on court for almost a year.

MONDAY NOV 2 1992

'Hal?'

'Yes Mario?'

'Are you asleep?'

'Booboo, I can't be asleep if we're talking.'

'Boy were you on today. When he hit that one down the line and you got it and fell down and hit that drop-volley Pemulis said the guy looked like he was going to be sick all over the net.'

'Boo, I kicked a kid's ass is all. End of story. I don't think it's good to rehash it when I've kicked somebody's ass. It's like a dignity thing. I think we should just let it sort of lie in state, quietly. Speaking of which.'

'Hey Hal?'

'It's late, Mario. It's sleepy-time. Close your eyes and think fuzzy thoughts.'

'You think I think fuzzy thoughts all the time. You let me room with you because you feel sorry for me.'

'Booboo I'm not even going to dignify that. I'll regard it as like a warning sign. You always get petulant when you don't get enough sleep. And here we are seeing petulance already on the western horizon, right here.'

'When I asked if you were asleep I was going to ask if you felt like you believed in God, today, out there, when you were so on, making that guy look sick.'

'Really don't think midnight in a totally dark room with me so tired my hair hurts and drills in six short hours is the time and place to get into this, Mario. You ask me this once a week.'

'You never say, is why.'

'So tonight to shush you how about if I say I have administrative bones to pick with God, Boo. I'll say God seems to have a kind of laid-back management style I'm not crazy about. I'm pretty much anti-death. God looks by all accounts to be pro-death. I'm not seeing how we can get together on this issue, he and I, Boo.'

'You're talking about since Himself passed away.'

'Mario, you and I are mysterious to each other. We countenance each other from either side of some unbridgeable difference on this issue. Let's lie very quietly and ponder this.'

'Hey Hal? How come the Moms never cried when Himself passed away? I cried, and you, even C.T. cried. I saw him personally cry.'

'...'

'Hey Hal, did the Moms seem like she got happier after Himself passed away, to you?'

'...'

'It seems like she got happier. She seems even taller. She stopped travelling everywhere all the time for this and that thing. The corporate-grammar thing. The library-protest thing.'

'Now she never goes anywhere, Boo. Now she's got the Headmaster's House and her office and the tunnel in between, and never leaves the grounds. She's a worse workaholic than she ever was. And more obsessive-compulsive. When's the last time you saw a dust-mote in that house?'

'Hey Hal?'

'Now she's just an agoraphobic workaholic and obsessive-compulsive. This strikes you as happification?'

'Her eyes are better. They don't seem as sunk in. They look better. She laughs at C.T. way more than she laughed at Himself. She laughs from lower down inside. She laughs more. Her jokes she tells are better ones than yours, even, now, a lot of the time.'

'...'

‘How come she never got sad?’

‘She did get sad, Booboo. She just got sad in her way instead of yours and mine. She got sad, I’m pretty sure.’

‘Hal?’

‘She’s plenty sad, I bet.’

VERY LATE OCTOBER 1992

Hal Incandenza had this horrible new recurring dream where he was losing his teeth, where his teeth had become like shale and splintered when he tried to chew, and fragmented and melted into grit in his mouth; in the dream he was going around squeezing a ball and spitting fragments and grit, getting more and more hungry and scared. Everything in there loosened by a great oral rot that the nightmare's Teddy Schacht wouldn't even look at, saying he was late for his next appointment, everyone seeing Hal's crumbling teeth and looking at their watch and making vague excuses, a general atmosphere of the splintering teeth being a symptom of something way more dire and distasteful that no one wanted to confront him about.

WEDNESDAY NOV 4, 1992

CAMBRIDGE

From Cambridge’s Latinate Inman Square, Michael Pemulis, nobody’s fool at all, rides one necessary bus to Central Square and then an unnecessary bus to Davis Square and a train back to Central. This is to throw off the slightest possible chance of pursuit. At Central he catches the Red Line to Park St. Station, where he’s parked in an underground lot he can more than afford. The day is autumnal and mild, the east breeze smelling of urban commerce and the vague suede smell of new-fallen leaves. The sky is pilot-light blue; sunlight reflects complexly off the smoked-glass sides of tall centers of commerce all around Park St. downtown. Pemulis wears button-fly chinos and an E.T.A. shirt beneath a snazzy blue Brioni sport-coat, plus the bright white yachting cap that Mario Incandenza calls his Mr. Howell hat. The hat looks rakish even when turned around, and it has a detachable lining. Inside the lining can be kept portable quantities of just about anything. Having indulged in 150 mg. of very mild ‘drines, post-transaction. Wearing also gray-and-blue saddle oxfords w/o socks, it’s such a mild autumn day. The streets literally *bustle*. Vendors sell hot pretzels and tonics and those underboiled franks Pemulis likes to have them put the works on. You can see the State House and Common and Courthouse and Public Gardens, and beyond all that the cool smooth facades of Back Bay brownstones. The echoes in the underground Park PL garage—PARK—are pleasantly complex. Traffic westward on Commonwealth Avenue is light (meaning things can move) all the way through Kenmore Square and past Boston U. and up the long slow hill into Allston and Enfield.

After intricate third-party negotiations, Michael Pemulis finally landed 650 mg. of the vaunted and elusive compound DMZ. The incredibly potent DMZ is apparently classed as a para-methoxylated amphetamine but really it looks to Pemulis from his slow and tortured survey of MED.COM more similar to the anticholinergic-deliriant class, Way more powerful than mescaline or MDA or DMA or TMA or MDMA or DOM or STP or the I.V.-ingestible DMT (or Ololiuqui

or datura's scopolamine, or Bufotenine) or Ebene or psilocybin; DMZ resembling chemically some miscegenation of a lysergic with a muscimoloid, but significantly different from LSD-25 in that its effects are less visual and spatially-cerebral and more like temporally-cerebral, with some sort of manipulated- phenylkylamine-like speediness whereby the ingester perceives his relation to the ordinary flow of time as radically (and euphorically) altered. The incredibly potent DMZ is synthesized from a derivative of fitviavi, an obscure mold that grows only *on other molds*, by the same ambivalently lucky chemist at Sandoz Pharm. Who'd first stumbled on LSD while futzing around with ergotic fungi on rye. DMZ's discovery was the tail-end of the 960s. A substance even just the accidental-synthesis of which sent the Sandoz chemist into early retirement and serious unblinking wall-watching, the incredibly potent DMZ has a popular-lay-chemical-underground reputation as the single grimmest thing ever conceived in a tube. It is also now the hardest recreational compound to acquire in North America after raw Vietnamese opium, which forget it.

DMZ is sometimes also referred to in some metro Boston chemical circles as *Madame Psychosis*, after a popular very-early-morning cult radio personality on M.I.T.'s student-run radio station WYYY-109, 'Largest Whole Prime on the FM Band,' which Mario Incandenza listens to almost religiously.

The day-shift Ennet House kid at the booth who raises the portcullis to let him onto the grounds had a couple times in October approached Pemulis about a potential transaction. Pemulis has a rigid policy about not transacting with E.T.A. employees who come up the hill from the halfway house, since he knows some of them are at the place on Court Order, and knows for a fact they pull unscheduled Urines all over the place down there; and his basic attitude with these low-rent employees is one of unfoolish discretion and like why tempt fate.

The East Courts are empty and ball-strewn when Pemulis pulls in; most of them are still at lunch. Pemulis, Troeltsch, and Schacht's triple-room is in subdorm B and superjacent to the Dining Hall, from which through the floor Pemulis can hear voices and silverware and can smell exactly what they're having. The first thing he does is phone Mario's room, where Hal is sitting in windowlight with the Riverside Hamlet he told Mario he'd read and help with a conceptual film-type project based on part of, eating an AminoPal® energy-bar and waiting very casually, the phone already out lying ready on the arm of the chair with two SAT-prep guides. Hal deliberately waits till the third ring.

'Mmyellow.'

'The turd emergeth.' Pemulis's clear and digitally condensed voice on the line. 'Repeat. The turd emergeth.'

'Please commit a crime,' is Hal Incandenza's immediate reply.

'Gracious me,' Pemulis says into the phone tucked under his jaw, carefully de-Velcroing the lining of his Mr. Howell hat.

Michael Pemulis has this habit of looking first to one side and then over to the other before he says anything. It's impossible to tell whether this is unaffected or whether Pemulis is emulating some film-noir-type character. It's worse when he's put away a couple 'drines. He and Trevor Axford and Hal Incandenza are in Pemulis's room, stroking their chins, looking down at Michael Pemulis's yachting cap on his bed. Lying inside the overturned hat are a bunch of fair-sized but bland-looking tablets of the allegedly incredibly potent DMZ.

Pemulis looks all around behind them in the empty room. ‘This, Incster, Axhandle, is the incredibly potent DMZ. The Great White Shark of organo-synthesized hallucinogens. ‘The gargantuan feral infant of—’

Hal says ‘We get the picture.’

‘The Yale U. of the Ivy League of Acid,’ says Axford.

‘Your ultimate psychosensual distorter,’ Pemulis sums up.

‘Think you mean psychosensory, unless I don’t know the whole story here.’

Axford gives Hal a narrow look. Interrupting Pemulis means having to watch him do the head-thing all over again each time.

‘Hard to find, gentlemen. As in very hard to find. Last lots came off the line in the early 70s. These tablets here are artifacts. Certain amount of decay in potency probably inevitable. Used in certain shady CIA-era military experiments.’

Axford nods down at the hat. ‘Mind-control?’

‘More like getting the enemy to think their guns are hydrangea, the enemy’s a blood-relative, that sort of thing. Who knows. The accounts I’ve been reading have been incoherent, gistless. Experiments conducted. Let’s just say things got out of control. Potency judged too incredible to proceed. Subjects locked away in institutions and written off as casualties of peace. Formula shredded. Research team scattered, reassigned. Vague but I’ve got to tell you pretty sobering rumors.’

‘These are from the early 70s?’ Axhandle says.

‘See the little trademark on each one, with the guy in bell-bottoms and long sideburns?’

‘Is that what that is?’

‘Unprecedentedly potent, this stuff. The Swiss inventor they say was originally recommending LSD-25 as what to take to come down off the stuff.’ Pemulis takes one of the tablets and puts it in his palm and pokes at it with a callused finger. ‘What we’re looking at. We’re looking here at either a serious sudden injection of cash—’

Axford makes a shocked noise. ‘You’d actually try to peddle the incredibly potent DMZ around this sorry place?’

Pemulis’s snort sounds like the letter K. ‘Get a large economy-size clue, Axhandle. Nobody here’d have any clue what they’d even be dealing with. Not to mention be willing to pay what they’re worth. Why, there are pharmaceutical museums, left-wing think tanks, New York designer-drug consortiums I’m sure’d be dying to dissect these. Decoct like. Toss into the spectrometer and see what’s what.’

‘That we could get bids from, you’re saying,’ Axford says. Hal squeezes a ball, silently looking at the hat.

Pemulis turns the tablet over. ‘Or certain very progressive and hip-type nursing homes. Or down at Back Bay at that yogurt place with that picture of those historical guys Inc was saying at breakfast was up on the wall.’

‘Ram Das. William Burroughs.’

‘Or just down in Harvard Square at Au Bon Pain where all those 70s-era guys in old wool ponchos play chess against those little clocks they keep hitting.’

Axford’s pretending to punch Hal’s arm in excitement.

Pemulis says ‘Or of course I’m thinking I could just go the sheer-entertainment route and toss them in the Gatorade barrels at the meet with Port Washington Tuesday, or down at the WhataBurger—watch everybody run around clutching their heads or whatever. I’d be way into watching Wayne play with distorted senses.’

Hal puts one foot up on Pemulis's little frustum-shaped bedside stool and leans farther in. 'Would it be prying to ask how you finally managed to get hold of these?'

'It wouldn't be prying at all,' Pemulis says, removing from the yachting cap's lining every piece of contraband he's got and spreading it out on the bed, sort of the way older people will array all their valuables in quiet moments. He has a small quantity of personal-consumption Lamb's Breath cannabis (bought back from Hal out of a 20-g. he'd sold Hal) in a dusty baggie, a little Saran-Wrapped cardboard rectangle with four black stars spaced evenly across it, the odd 'drine, and it looks like a baker's dozen of the incredibly potent DMZ, Sweet Tart-sized tablets of no particular color with a tiny mod hipster in each center wishing the viewer peace. 'We don't even know how many hits this is,' he muses quietly. There's sun on the wall and an enormous hand-drawn Sierpinski gasket. In one of the three big mullioned west windows there's an oval flaw that's casting a bubble of ale-colored autumn sunlight from the window's left side to elongate onto Pemulis's tightly made bed (one of the prorectors' tasks is to go around to different Subdorm floors and check for things like are the beds made up drum-tight, with unpleasant little extra drills added to the regimens of bed-making and toothpaste-cap-replacing slackers, though few of the prorectors have the combination anality and drive actually to go around to their assigned rooms with a checklist, the exception being Aubrey deLint, who's got the Pemulis/Troeltsch/Schacht suite under extremely beady scrutiny at all times). He moves everything his hat's got into the brighter bubble, going down on one knee to study a tablet between his forceps (Pemulis owns stuff like philatelic forceps, a loupe, a pharmaceutical scale, a postal scale, a personal-size Bunsen burner) with the calm precision of a jeweler. 'The literature's mute on the titration. Do you take one tablet?' He looks up on one side and then back around on the other at the boys' faces leaning in above. 'Is like half a tab a regulation hit?'

'Two or even three tablets, maybe?' Hal says, knowing he sounds greedy but unable to help himself.

'The accessible data's vague,' Pemulis says, his profile contorted around the loupe in his socket. 'The literature on muscimole-lysergic blends is spotty and vague and hard to read except to say how massively powerful the supposed yields are.'

Hal looks at the top of Pemulis's head. 'Did you hit a medical library?'

'I went back and forth and up and down through MED.COM. Plenty on lysergics, plenty on methoxy-class hybrids. Vague and almost gossip-columnny shit on fitviavi-compounds. To get anything you got to cross-key Ergotics with the phrase muscimole or muscimolated. Only a couple things ring the bell when you key in DMZ. Then they're all potent this, sinister that. Nothing with any specifics. And jumbly polysyllables out the ass. Whole thing gave me a migraine.'

'Yes but did you actually go to a real med-library?' Hal's his mother Avril's child when it comes to databases. Axford now really does punch him once in the shoulder, albeit the right one. Pemulis is scratching absently at the little hair-hurricane at the center of his hair. It's close to 1430h., and the flawed bubble of light on the bed is getting to be the slightly sad color of early winter P.M. There are still no sounds from the West Courts outside, but there's high song of much volume through the wall's water-pipes—a lot of the guys who are drilled past caring in the A.M. don't get to shower until after lunch, then sit through P.M. classes with wet hair and different clothes than their A.M. classes.

Pemulis rises to stand between them and looks around the empty three-bedded room again, with neat stacks of three players' clothes and bright gear on shelves and three wicker laundry hampers bulging slightly. There is the rich scent of athletic laundry, but other than that the room

looks almost professionally clean. Pemulis and Schacht's room makes Hal and Mario's room look like an insane asylum, Hal thinks.

Pemulis still has his cheek screwed up to keep the loupe in as he looks around. 'One monograph had this toss-off about DMZ where the guy invites you to envision acid that has itself dropped acid.'

'Holy *crow*.'

'One article talks about how this one Army convict at Leavenworth got allegedly injected with some massive unspecified dose of early DMZ as part of some Army experiment in Christ only knows what and about how this convict's family sued over how the guy reportedly lost his mind.' He directs the loupe dramatically at first Hal and then Axford. 'I mean literally lost his mind, like the massive dose picked his mind up and carried it off somewhere and put it down someplace and forgot where.'

'I think we get the picture, Mike.'

'Allegedly the guy's found later in his Army cell, in some impossible lotus position, singing show tunes in a scary deadly-accurate Ethel-Merman-impression voice.'

The slackening of a cheek lets the loupe fall out and bounce off the drum-tight bed, and Pemulis gets it to rebound into his palm without even looking. 'I think we can err on the side of not dicking the Gatorade barrels, anyway. This soldier's story's moral was proceed with caution, big time. The guy's mind's still allegedly AWOL. An old soldier, now, still belting out Broadway medleys in some secretive institution someplace. Blood-relatives try to sue on the guy's behalf, Army apparently came up with enough arguments to give the jury reasonable doubt about if the guy can even be said to legally exist enough to bring suit, anymore, since the dose misplaced his mind.'

Axford feels absently at his elbow. 'So you're saying let's proceed with care why don't we.'

Hal kneels to prod one of the tablets up against the dusty baggie's side. His finger looks dark in the elongated bubble of light. 'I'm thinking these look like two tablets are possibly a hit. A kind of Motrinish look to them.'

'Visual guesswork isn't going to do it. This is not Bob Hope, Inc.'

'We could even designate it "Ethel," for on the phone,' Axford suggests.

Pemulis watches Hal arranging the tablets into the same general cardioid-shape as E.T.A. itself. 'What I'm saying. This is not a fools-rush-in-type substance, Inc. This show-tune soldier like left the planet.'

'Well, so long as he waves every so often.'

'The sense I got is the only thing he waves at is his food.'

'But that was from a massive early dose,' Axford says.

Hal's arrangement of the tablets on the red-and-gray counterpane is almost Zen in its precision. 'These are from the 70s?'

Over the course of the next academic day—the incredibly potent stash now wrapped tight in Saran and stashed deep in the toe of an old sneaker that sits atop the aluminum strut between two panels in subdorm B's drop ceiling, Pemulis's time-tested entrepot — over the course of the next day or so the matter's hashed out and it's decided that it's really Pemulis and Axford and Hal's right — duty, almost, to the spirits of inquiry and good trade practice — to sample the

potentially incredibly potent DMZ in predeterminedly safe amounts before unleashing it on any unwitting civilians. Pemulis's mark-up isn't anything beyond accepted norms, and there's always room in Hal's budget for spirited inquiry. Hal's one condition is that somebody verify that the compound is both organic and nonaddictive, which Pemulis says a physical hands-on library assault is already down in his day-planner in pen, anyway.

Pemulis finally nixes the notion of performing the spirited controlled experiment here in Enfield, where Axford has to be at the A squad's dawn drills every morning at 0500, and also Hal. Pemulis posits that a solid 36 hours of demand-free time will be advisable for any interaction with the incredibly potent you-know-whatski. That also lets out the inter-academy thing with Port Washington tomorrow, for which Charles Tavis has chartered two buses, because so many E.T.A. players are getting to go and do battle in this one—Port Washington Academy is gargantuan, the Xerox Inc. of North American tennis academies, with over 300 students and 64 courts—so many that Tavis will almost surely go ahead and bus them all back up from Long Island just as soon as the post-competition dance is over, rather than shell out for all those motel rooms without corporate support. This E.T.A.-P.W. meet and buffet and dance are a private, inter-academy tradition, an epic rivalry almost a decade old. Plus Pemulis says he'll need a couple weeks of quality med-library-stacks-tossing time to do the more exacting titration and side-effects research Hal agrees the soldier's sobering story seems to dictate. So, they conclude, the window of opportunity looks to be 11/20-21—the weekend right after the big End-of-Fiscal-Year fundraising exhibition, before Thanksgiving week and the WhataBurger Invitational in sunny AZ, because this year in addition to Friday 11/20 they also get Saturday 11/21 off, as in from both class and practice, then the E.T.A.s will get Saturday to rest and recharge before starting both the pre-WhataBurger training week and the bell-lap of prep for 12/12's Boards, meaning late Friday night-Sunday A.M. will give Pemulis, Hal, and Axford enough time to psychospiritually rally from whatever meninges-withering hangover the incredibly potent DMZ might involve...and Axford predicted it would be a witherer indeed, since even just LSD alone left you the next day not just sick or down but utterly empty, a shell, void inside, like your soul was a wrung-out sponge. Hal wasn't sure he concurred. An alcohol hangover was definitely no frolic in the psychic glade, all thirsty and sick and your eyes bulging and receding with your pulse, but after a night of involved hallucinogens Hal said the dawn seemed to confer on his psyche a kind of pale sweet aura, a luminescence. Halation, Axford observed.

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The phone sounded from somewhere under the hill of bedding as Hal was on the edge of the bed with one leg up and his chin on its knee, clipping his nails into a wastebasket that sat several meters away in the middle of the room.

'Mmmyellow.'

'Mr. Incredenza, this is the Enfield Raw Sewage Commission, and quite frankly we've had enough shit out of you.'

'Hello Orin.'

'How hangs it, kid.'

'Interesting you should call just now. Because I'm clipping my toenails into a wastebasket several meters away.'

'Jesus, you know how I hate the sound of nail clippers.'

‘Except I’m shooting seventy-plus percent. The little fragments of clipping. It’s uncanny. I keep wanting to go out in the hall and get somebody in here to see it. But I don’t want to break the spell.’

‘The fragile magic-spell feel of those intervals where it feels you just can’t miss.’

‘It’s definitely one of those can’t-miss intervals. It’s just like that magical feeling on those rare days out there playing. Playing out of your head, deLint calls it. Being in The Zone. Those days when you feel perfectly calibrated.’

‘Coordinated as God.’

‘Some groove in the shape of the air of the day guides everything down and in.’

‘When you feel like you couldn’t miss if you tried to.’

‘These can’t-miss intervals make superstitious natives out of us all, Hal-lie. You don’t know true bug-eyed athletic superstition till you hit the pro ranks. Jock straps unwashed game after game until they stand up by themselves in the overhead luggage compartments of planes. Bizarrely ritualized dressing, eating, peeing. Then there are the NFL players who write down exactly what they say to everybody before a game, so if it’s a magical can’t-miss-type game they can say exactly the same things to the same people in the same exact order before the next game.’

‘The phone’s no longer wedged under my jaw. I can even do it one-handed, holding the phone in one hand. But it’s still the same foot.’

‘I can hear those clippers. Quit with the clippers a second.’

‘This is the big moment. I’ve totally exhausted the left foot finally and am switching to the right foot. This’ll be the real test of the fragility of the spell.’

‘This all wasn’t even why I originally called. Let me ask you a couple questions. Hallie, I’ve got somebody from *Moment* fucking magazine out here doing a quote soft profile.’

‘You’ve got what?’

‘A human-interest thing. On me as a human. *Moment* doesn’t do hard sports, this lady says. They’re more people-oriented, human-interest. It’s for something called quote People Right Now, a section.’

‘*Moment*’s a supermarket-checkout-lane-display magazine. It’s in there with the rodneys and gum. It’s all over C.T.’s waiting room. They did a thing on the little blind Illinois kid Dymphna that Thorp thought so well of.’

‘Hallie, this physically imposing *Moment* girl’s asking all these soft-profilesque family-background questions.’

‘She wants to know about Himself?’

‘Everybody. You, the Mad Stork Himself, the Moms. It’s gradually emerging it’s going to be some sort of memorial to the Stork as patriarch, everybody’s talents and accomplishments profiled as some sort of refracted tribute to el Storko’s careers.’

‘He always did cast a long shadow, you said.’

‘Of course and my first thought is to invite her to go piss up a string. But *Moment*’s been in touch with the team. The office’s indicated a soft profile would be positive for the team.’

‘The strained quality is me trying to speak and pick caromed toenail-parings up off the floor at the same time.’

‘This girl’s immune to most of your standard conversational distractions.’

‘Let’s hope her prose is better than whoever did that human-interest thing on the blind kid last spring.’

‘Listen. You of all people should know I have zero intent of forthrightly answering any stained-family-linen-type questions from anybody, much less somebody who takes shorthand. Physical charms or no.’

‘You and tennis, you and the Saints, Himself and tennis, the Moms and Quebec and Royal Victoria, the Moms and immigration, Himself and annulation, Himself and Lyle, Himself and distilled spirits, Himself killing himself, you and Joelle, Himself and Joelle, the Moms and C.T., you v. the Moms, E.T.A., nonexistent films, et cetera.’

‘But you can see how it’s all going to get me thinking. How to avoid being forthright about the Stork material unless I know what the really forthright answers would be.’

‘Everybody said you’d regret not coming to the funeral. But I don’t think this is what they meant.’

‘For example the Stork took himself down before C.T. moved in upstairs at HmH? or after?’

‘This is you asking me?’

‘Don’t make this appalling for me, Hal.’

‘I wouldn’t dream of even trying.’

‘...’

‘Immediately before. Two, three days before. C.T. had had what’s now deLint’s room, next to Schtitt’s, in Comm.-Ad.’

‘And Dad knew they were...?’

‘Very close? I don’t know, O.’

‘You don’t know?’

‘Mario might know. Like to chew the fat with Booboo on this, O.?’

‘Don’t make this like this Hallie.’

‘And Dad . . . the Mad Stork put his head in the oven?’

‘The microwave, O. The rotisserie microwave over next to the fridge, on the freezer side, on the counter, under the cabinet with the plates and bowls to the left of the fridge as you face the fridge.’

‘A microwave oven. Nobody ever said microwave.’

‘I think it came out generally at the funeral.’

‘I keep getting your point, if you’re wondering.’

‘...’

‘So where was he found, then?’

‘20 for 28 is what, 65%?’

‘It’s not like this is all that —’

‘The microwave was in the kitchen I already explained, O.’

‘All right.’

‘All right.’

‘So OK now, who would you say speaks most about the guy, keeps his memory alive, verbally, the most now: you, C.T., or the Moms?’

I think it’s a three-way tie.’

‘So it’s never mentioned. Nobody talks about him. It’s taboo.’

‘But you seem to be forgetting somebody.’

‘Mario talks about him. About it.’

‘Sometimes.’

‘To what and/or who all this talking?’

‘To me, for one, I suppose.’

‘And so you do talk about it, but only to him, and only after he initiates it.’

‘Orin I lied. I haven’t even started on the right foot yet. I’ve been too afraid to change my angle of approach to the nails. The right foot’s a whole different angle of approach. I’m afraid the magic is left-foot-dependent. I’m like your superstitious lineman. Talking about it’s broken the spell. Now I’m self-conscious and afraid. I’ve been sitting here on the edge of the bed with my right knee up under my chin, poised, studying the foot, frozen with terror. And lying about it to my own brother.’

‘Can I ask you who it was who found him? His—who found him at the oven?’

‘Found by one Harold James Incandenza, thirteen going on really old.’

‘You were who found him? Not the Moms?’

‘Listen, may I ask why this sudden interest after four years 216 days, and with two years of that not even once even calling?’

‘I’ve already said I don’t feel safe not answering Helen’s questions if I haven’t got a handle on what I’m not saying.’

‘Helen. So you did.’

‘Is why.’

‘I’m still frozen, by the way. The self-consciousness that kills the magic is getting worse and worse. This is why Pemulis and Troeltsch always seem to let a lead slip away. The standard term is Tightening Up. The clippers are poised, blades on either side of the nail. I just can’t achieve the unconsciousness to actually clip. Maybe it was cleaning up the few that missed. Suddenly the wastebasket seems small and far away. I’ve lost the magic by talking about it instead of just giving in to it. Launching the nail out toward the wastebasket now seems like an exercise in telemachry.’

‘You mean telemetry?’

‘How embarrassing. When the skills go they go.’

‘Listen.’

‘You know, why don’t you go ahead and ask me whatever standard ghoulish questions you want not to answer. This may be your only shot. Usually I seem not to talk about it.’

‘Was she there? The P.G.O.A.T.?’

‘Joelle hadn’t been around the grounds since you two split up. You knew about that. Himself met her at the brownstone, shooting. I’m sure you know way more about whatever it was they were trying to make. Joelle and Himself. Himself went underground too. C.T. was already doing most of the day-to-day administration. Himself was down in that little post-production closet off the lab for like a solid month. Mario’d bring food and ... essentials down. Sometimes he’d eat with Lyle. I don’t think he came up to ground level for at least a month, except for just one trip out to Belmont to McLean’s for a two-day purge and detox. This was about a week after he came back. He’d flown off somewhere for three days, for what the impression I get was work-related business. Film-related. If Lyle didn’t go with him Lyle went somewhere, because he wasn’t in the weight room. I know Mario didn’t go with him and didn’t know what was up. Mario doesn’t lie. It was unclear whether he’d finished whatever he was editing. Himself I mean. He stopped living on April First, if you weren’t sure, was the day. I can tell you on April First he wasn’t back by the time P.M. matches started, because I’d been around the lab door right after lunch and he wasn’t back.’

‘He went in for another detox you say. In what, March?’

‘The Moms herself emerged and risked exterior transit and took him herself, so I gather it was urgent.’

‘He quit drinking in January, Hal. It was something Joelle was real specific about. She called even after we’d agreed not to call and told me about it even after I said I didn’t want to hear about him if she was going to still be in his things. She said he hadn’t had a drop in weeks. It was her condition for letting him put her in what he was doing. She said he said he’d do anything.’

‘Well, I don’t know what to tell you. By this time it was hard to tell whether he’d been ingesting anything or not. Apparently at a certain point it stops making a difference.’

‘Did he have film-related things with him when he flew somewhere? A film case? Equipment?’

‘O., I didn’t see him leave and didn’t see him come back. He wasn’t around by match-time, I know. Freer beat me badly and fast. It was 4 and 1, 4 and 2, something, and we were the first ones done. I came around HmH to do an emergency load of laundry before dinner. This was around 1630. I came over and came in and noticed something right away.’

‘And found him.’

‘And went to get the Moms, then changed my mind and went to get C.T., then changed my mind and went to get Lyle, but the first authority figure I ran into was Schtitt. Who was irreproachably brisk and efficient and sensible about everything and turned out to be just the authority figure to go get in the first place.’

‘I didn’t even think a microwave oven would go on unless the door was closed. What with microwaves oscillating all over, inside. I thought there was like a refrigerator-light or Read-Only-tab-like device.’

‘You seem to be forgetting the technical ingenuity of the person we’re talking about.’

‘And you were totally shocked and traumatized. He was asphyxiated, irradiated, and/or burnt.’

‘As we later reconstructed the scene, he’d used a wide-bit drill and small hacksaw to make a head-sized hole in the oven door, then when he’d gotten his head in he’d carefully packed the extra space around his neck with wadded-up aluminum foil.’

‘Sounds kind of ad hoc and jerry-rigged and haphazard.’

‘Everybody’s a critic. This wasn’t an aesthetic endeavor.’

‘...’

‘And there was a large and half-full bottle of Wild Turkey found on the counter not far away, with a large red decorative giftwrappish bow on the neck.’

‘As in he hadn’t been sober after all.’

‘That would seem to follow, O.’

‘And he left no note or living-will-type video or communique of any kind.’

‘O, I know you know very well he didn’t. You’re now asking me stuff I know you know, besides criticizing him and making sobriety-claims when you weren’t anywhere near the scene or the funeral. Are we just about through here? I’ve got a whole long-nailed foot waiting for me here.’

‘As you reconstructed the scene, you just said.’

‘Also it just hit me I’ve got a library book I was supposed to return. I’d forgotten all about it. Kertwang.’

‘“Reconstructed the scene” as in the scene when you found him was somehow... deconstructed?’

‘You of all people, O. You know that was the one word he hated more than —’

‘So burned, then. Just say it. He was really really badly burned.’

‘...’

‘No, wait. Asphyxiated. The packed foil was to preserve the vacuum in a space that got automatically evacuated as soon as the magnitron started oscillating and generating the microwaves.’

‘Have you for example, say, ever like baked a potato in a microwave oven? Did you know you have to cut the potato open before you turn the oven on? Do you know why that is?’

‘Jesus.’

‘The B.P.D. field pathologist said the build-up of internal pressures would have been almost instantaneous and equivalent in kg.s.cm. to over two sticks of TNT.’

‘Jesus Christ, Hallie.’

‘Hence the need to reconstruct the scene.’

‘Jesus.’

‘Don’t feel bad. There’s no guarantee anybody would have told you even if you’d popped in for, say, the memorial service. I for one wasn’t exactly a jabberjaw at the time. I seemed to have been evincing shock and trauma throughout the whole funeral period. What I mostly recall is a great deal of quiet talk about my psychic well-being. It got so I kind of enjoyed popping in and out of rooms just to enjoy the quiet conversations stopping in mid-clause.’

‘You must have been traumatized beyond fucking belief.’

‘Your concern is much appreciated, believe me.’

‘...’

‘Trauma seems to have been the consensus. It turns out Rusk and the Moms had begun interviewing top-flight trauma- and grief-counselors for me within hours after it happened. I was shunted directly into concentrated grief- and trauma-therapy. Four days a week for over a month, right in the April-May gearing-up-for-summer-tour period. I lost two spots on the 14’s ladder just because of all the P.M. matches I missed. I missed the Hard Court Qualies and would have missed Indianapolis if...if I hadn’t finally figured out the grief- and trauma-therapy process.’

‘But it helped. Ultimately. The grief-therapy.’

‘The therapy ended up taking place in that Professional Building right up Comm. Ave. past the Sunstrand Plaza, the one with bricks the color of Thousand Island dressing we all run by four days a week. Who was to know one of the continent’s top grief-men was right up the street.’

‘The Moms didn’t want the process going on too far from the old web, if need be, I’m sure.’

‘This grief-counselor insisted I call him by his first name, which I forget. A large red meaty character with eyebrows at a demonic-looking synclinal angle and very small nubbly gray teeth. And a mustache. He always had the remains of a sneeze in his mustache. I got to know that mustache very well. His face had that same blood-pressure flush C.T.’s face gets. And let’s not even go into the man’s hands.’

‘The Moms had Rusk shunt you to a top grief-pro so she wouldn’t have to feel guilty about practically sawing the hole in the microwave door herself. Among other little guilt and antiguilt operations. She always did believe Himself was doing more with Joelle than work. Poor old Himself never had eyes for anybody but the Moms.’

‘This was one tough hombré, O., this grief-counselor. He made a Rusk-session look like a day on the Adriatic. He wouldn’t let up: “How did it feel, how does it feel, how do you feel when I ask how it feels.”

‘Rusk always reminded me of a freshman fumbling with some Subject’s bra, the way she’d sort of tug and fumble at your head.’

‘The man was unsatisfiable and scary. Those eyebrows, that ham-rind face, bland little eyes. He never once turned his face away or looked away at anything but right at me. It was the most brutal six weeks of full-bore professional conversation anybody could imagine.’

‘With fucking C.T. already moving his collection of platform shoes and unconvincing hairpieces and StairMaster in upstairs at HmH already.’

‘The whole thing was nightmarish. I just could not figure out what the guy wanted. I went down and chewed through the Copley Square library’s grief section. I read Kübler-Ross, Hinton. I slogged through Kastenbaum and Kastenbaum. I read things like Elizabeth Harper Neeld’s *Seven Choices: Taking the Steps to New Life After Losing Someone You Love*, which was 352 pages of sheer goo. I went in and presented with textbook-perfect symptoms of denial, bargaining, anger, still more denial, depression. I listed my seven textbook choices and vacillated plausibly between and among them. I provided etymological data on the word acceptance all the way back to Wyclif and 14th-century langue-d’oc French. The grief-therapist was having none of it. It was like one of those final exams in nightmares where you prepare immaculately and then you get there and all the exam questions are in Hindi. I even tried telling him Himself was miserable and pancreatic and out of his tree half the time by then anyway, that he and the Moms were basically estranged, that even work and Wild Turkey weren’t helping anymore, that he was despondent about something he was editing that turned out so bad he didn’t want it released. That the . . . that what happened was probably kind of a mercy, in the end.’

‘Himself didn’t suffer, then. In the microwave.’

‘The B.P.D. field pathologist who drew the chalk lines around Himself’s shoes on the floor said maybe ten seconds tops. He said the pressure buildup would have been almost instantaneous. Then he gestured at the kitchen walls. Then he threw up. The field pathologist.’

‘Jesus Christ, Hallie.’

‘But the grief-therapist was having none of it, the at-least-his-suffering’s-over angle that Kastenbaum and Kastenbaum said is basically a neon-bright sign of real acceptance. This grief-therapist hung on like a Gila monster. I even tried telling him I really didn’t feel anything.’

‘Which was a fiction.’

‘Of course it was a fiction. What could I do? I was panic-stricken. This guy was a nightmare. His face just hung there over his desk like a hypertensive moon, never turning away. With this glistening mucoidal dew in his mustache. And don’t even ask me about his hands. He was my worst nightmare. Talk about self-consciousness and fear. Here was a top-rank authority figure and I was failing to supply what he wanted. He made it manifestly clear I wasn’t delivering the goods. I’d never failed to deliver the goods before.’

‘You were our designated deliverer, Hallie, no question about it.’

‘And here was this authority figure with top credentials in frames over every square cm. of his walls who sat there and refused even to define what the goods here would be. Say what you will about Schitt and deLint: they let you know what they want in no uncertain terms. Flottman, Chawaf, Prickett, Nwangi, Fentress, Lingley, Pettijohn, Ogilvie, Leith, even the Moms in her way: they tell you on the very first day of class what they want from you. But this son of a bee right here: no dice.’

‘You must have been in shock the whole time, too.’

‘O., it got worse and worse. I dropped weight. I couldn’t sleep. This was when the nightmares started. I kept dreaming of a face in the floor. I lost to Freer again, then to Coyle. I went three sets with Troeltsch. I got B’s on two different quizzes. I couldn’t concentrate on anything else. I’d become obsessed with the fear that I was somehow going to flunk grief-therapy.’

That this professional was going to tell Rusk and Schtitt and C.T. and the Moms that I couldn't deliver the goods.

'I'm sorry I couldn't be there.'

'The odd thing was that the more obsessed I got, the worse I played and slept, the happier everybody got. The grief-therapist complimented me on how haggard I was looking. Rusk told deLint the grief-therapist'd told the Moms that it was starting to work, that I was starting to grieve, but that it was a long process.'

'Long and costly.'

'Roger. I began to despair. I began to foresee somehow getting left back in grief-therapy, never delivering the goods and it never ending. Having these Kafkaesque interfaces with this man day after day, week after week. It was now May. The Continental Clays I'd gotten all the way to the fourth round of the year before were coming up, and it became quietly clear that everybody felt I was at a crucial stage in the long costly grieving process and I wasn't going to get to go with the contingent to Indianapolis unless I could figure out some last-ditch way to deliver the emotional goods to this guy. I was totally desperate, a wreck.'

'So you schlepped on down to the weight room. You and the forehead paid a visit to good old Lyle.'

'Lyle turned out to be the key. He was down there reading Leaves of Grass. He was going through a Whitman period, part of grieving for Himself, he said. I'd never gone to Lyle before in any kind of supplicatory capacity, but he said he took one grief-stricken look at me flailing away down there working up a gourmet sweat and said he felt so moved by my additional suffering on top of having had to be the first of Himself's loved ones to experience the loss of Himself that he'd bend every cerebral effort. I assumed the position and let him at the old forehead and explained what had been happening and that if I couldn't figure out some way to satisfy this grief-pro I was going to end up in a soft quiet room somewhere. Lyle's key insight was that I'd been approaching the issue from the wrong side. I'd gone to the library and acted like a student of grief. What I needed to chew through was the section for grief-professionals themselves. I needed to prepare from the grief-pro's own perspective. How could I know what a professional wanted unless I knew what he was professionally required to want, etc. It was simple, he said. I needed to empathize with the grief-therapist, Lyle said, if I wanted to spread a broader breast than his own. It was such a simple obversion of my normal goods-delivery-preparation system that it hadn't once occurred to me, Lyle explained.'

'Lyle said all that? That doesn't sound like Lyle.'

'But a sort of soft light broke inside me for the first time in weeks. I called a cab, still in my towel. I jumped in the cab before it had even stopped at the gate. I actually said, "The nearest library with a cutting-edge professional grief- and trauma-therapy section, and step on it." Et cetera et cetera.'

'The Lyle my class knew wasn't a how-to-deliver-the-goods-to-authorities type.'

'By the time I hit the grief-therapist's the next day I was a different man, immaculately prepared, unfazable. Everything I'd come to dread about the man — the eyebrows, the multicultural music in the waiting room, the implacable stare, the crusty mustache, the little gray teeth, even the hands — did I mention that this grief-therapist hid his hands under his desk at all times?'

'But you got through it. You grieved to everybody's satisfaction, you're saying.'

'I went in there and presented with anger at the grief-therapist. I accused the grief-therapist of actually inhibiting my attempt to process my grief, by refusing to validate my absence of

feelings. I told him I'd told him the truth already. I used foul language and slang. I said I didn't give a damn if he was an abundantly credentialed authority figure or not. I called him a shithead. I asked him what the cock-shitting fuck he wanted from me. My overall demeanor was paroxysmic. I told him I'd told him that I didn't feel anything, which was the truth. I said it seemed like he wanted me to feel toxically guilty for not feeling anything. Notice I was subtly inserting certain loaded professional-grief-therapy terms like validate, process as a transitive verb, and toxic guilt. These were library-derived.'

'The whole difference was this time you were walking on-court oriented, with a sense of where the lines were, Schtitt would say.'

'The grief-therapist encouraged me to go with my paroxysmic feelings, to name and honor my rage. He got more and more pleased and excited as I angrily told him I flat-out refused to feel iota-one of guilt of any kind. I said what, was I supposed to have lost even more quickly to Freer, so I could have come around HmH in time to stop Himself? It wasn't my fault, I said. It was not my fault I found him, I shouted; I was down to black street-socks, I had legitimate emergency-grade laundry to do. By this time I was pounding myself on the breastbone with rage as I said that it just by-God was not my fault that —'

'That what?'

'That's just what the grief-therapist said. The professional literature had a whole bold-font section on Abrupt Pauses in High- Affect Speech. The grief-therapist was now leaning way forward at the waist. His lips were wet. I was in The Zone, therapeutically speaking. I felt on top of things for the first time in a long time. I broke eye-contact with him. That I'd been hungry, I muttered.'

'Come again?'

'That's just what he said, the grief-therapist. I muttered that it was nothing, just that it damn sure wasn't my fault that I had the reaction I did when I came through the front door of HmH, before I came into the kitchen to get to the basement stairs and found Himself with his head in what was left of the microwave. When I first came in and was still in the foyer trying to get my shoes off without putting the dirty laundry-bag down on the white carpet and hopping around and couldn't be expected to have any idea what had happened. I said nobody can choose or have any control over their first unconscious thoughts or reactions when they come into a house. I said it wasn't my fault that my first unconscious thought turned out to be —'

'Jesus, kid, what?'

“That something smelled delicious!” I screamed. The force of my shriek almost sent the grief-therapist over backwards in his leather chair. A couple credentials fell off the wall. I bent over in my own nonleather chair as if for a crash-landing. I put a hand to each temple and rocked back in forth in the chair, weeping. It came out between sobs and screams. That it'd been four hours plus since lunchtime and I'd worked hard and played hard and I was starved. That the saliva had started the minute I came through the door. That golly something smells delicious was my first reaction!'

'But you forgave yourself.'

'I absolved myself with seven minutes left in the session right there in full approving view of the grief-therapist. He was ecstatic. By the end I swear his side of the desk was half a meter off the floor, at my grief-therapist-textbook breakdown into genuine affect and trauma and guilt and textbook earsplitting grief, then absolution.'

'Christ on a jet-ski, Hallie.'

'...'

‘But you got through it. You really did grieve, and you can tell me what it was like, so I can say something generic but convincing about loss and grief for Helen for *Moment*.’

‘But I’d omitted that somehow the single most nightmarishly compelling thing about this top grief-therapist was that his hands were never visible. The dreadfulness of the whole six weeks somehow coalesced around the issue of the guy’s hands. His hands never emerged from underneath his desk. It was as if his arms terminated at the elbow. Besides mustache-material-analysis, I also spent large blocks of each hour trying to imagine the configurations and activities of those hands under there.’

‘Hallie, let me just ask and then I’ll never bring it back up again. You implied before that what was especially traumatic was that Himself’s head had popped like an uncut spud.’

‘Then on what turned out to be the last day of the therapy, the last day before the A squads were picked for Indianapolis, after I’d finally delivered the goods and my traumatic grief was professionally pronounced uncovered and countenanced and processed, when I put on my sweatshirt and got set to take my leave, and came up to the desk and put out my hand in a trembly grateful way he couldn’t possibly have refused, and he stood and brought out the hand and shook my hand, I finally understood.’

‘His hands were disfigured or something.’

‘His hands were no bigger than a four-year-old girl’s. It was surreal. This massive authoritative figure, with a huge red meaty face and thick walrus mustache and dewlaps and a neck that spilled over the rim of his shirt-collar, and his hands were tiny and pink and hairless and butt-soft, delicate as shells. The hands were the capper. I barely made it out of the office before it started.’

‘The cathartic post-traumatic-like-reexperience hysteria. You reeled out of there.’

‘I barely made it to the men’s room down the hall. I was laughing so hysterically I was afraid all the periodontists and C.P.A.s on either side of the men’s room would hear. I sat in a stall with my hands over my mouth, stamping my feet and beating my head against first one side of the stall and then the other in hysterical mirth. If you could have seen those hands.’

‘But you got through it all, and you can thumbnail-sketch the overall feeling for me.’

‘What I feel is myself gathering my resources for the right foot, finally. That magic feeling’s back. I’m not lining up the vectors for the wastebasket or anything. I’m not even thinking. I’m trusting the feeling. It’s like that celluloid moment when Luke removes his high-tech targeting helmet.’

‘What helmet?’

‘You know, of course, that human nails are the vestiges of talons and horns. That they’re atavistic, like coccyges and hair. That they develop in-utero long before the cerebral cortex.’

‘What’s the matter?’

‘That at some point in the first trimester we lose our gills but are now still now little more than a bladdery sac of spinal fluid and a rudimentary tail and hair-follicles and little microchips of vestigial talon and horn.’

‘Is this to make me feel bad? Did this fuck you up, me probing for details after all this time? Did it reactivate the grief? I can call back when you’re more yourself.’

‘I’ll be right here. I’ve got a whole foot to yield to the magic with. I’m not going to alter the smallest particular. I’m just about ready to bear down on the clippers. It’s going to feel right, I know. And the word is asphyxiated, O. The next sound you hear will be unpleasant,’ Hal said, holding the phone down right next to the foot, his expression terrifically intense.

FRIDAY NOV 6 1992 PORT WASHINGTON

White halogen off the green of the composite surface, the light out on the indoor courts at the Port Washington Tennis Academy is the color of sour apples. To the spectators at the gallery's glass, the duos of players arrayed and moving down below have a reptilian tinge to their skin, a kind of seasick-type pallor. This annual meet is mammoth: both academies' A and B teams for both Boys and Girls, both singles and doubles, in 14 and Unders, 16 and Unders, 18 and Unders. Thirty-six courts stretch out down away from one end's gallery under a fancy tri-domed system of permanent all-weather Lung.

A normal meet between two junior teams is the best out of nine matches, whereas this mammoth annual early-November thing between E.T.A. and P.W.T.A. will try to be the best out of 108. The meet's always down on Long Island because P.W.T.A. has indoor courts out the bazoo. Each year the academy that loses the meet has to get up on tables at the buffet supper afterward and sing a really silly song. An even more embarrassing transaction is supposed to take place in private between the two schools' Headmasters, but nobody knows quite what. Last year Enfield lost 57-51 and Charles Tavis didn't say one word on the bus-ride home and used the lavatory several times.

But last year E.T.A. didn't have John Wayne, and last year H. J. Incandenza hadn't yet exploded, competitively. John Wayne, of Montcerf, Quebec, formerly the top-ranked junior male in Canada at sixteen as well as #5 overall in the Organization of North American Nations Tennis Association rankings, was finally successfully recruited by Gerhardt Schtitt and Aubrey deLint. John Wayne is currently ranked #3 in the O.N.A.N.T.A.'s Boys' 18's and #2 in the U.S.T.A. and has reached the semis of both the Junior French and Junior U.S. Opens, and has lost to exactly nobody American in seven meets and a dozen major tournaments. He trails the #1 American kid, an Independent down in Florida, Veach, by only a couple points, and they haven't yet met in sanctioned play this year, and the kid is well known to be hiding out from Wayne, avoiding him, staying down in Pompano Beach, allegedly nursing a like four-month groin-pull, sitting on his ranking. He's supposed to show at the WhataBurger Invitational in AZ in a couple weeks, this Veach, having this year taken three out of four legs of the Junior Grand Slam, the first time anybody's done that since a sepulchral Czech kid named Lendl, who retired from the Show and suicided.

And it's been established that Hal Incandenza, last year a respectable but by no means to-write-home-about 43rd nationally, has made a kind of quantumish competitive plateaux-hop such that this year Incandenza is 4th in the nation. These competitive explosions happen sometimes. Nobody at the Academy talks to Hal much about the explosion, sort of the way you avoid a pitcher who's got a no-hitter going. Hal's delicate and spinnny, rather cerebral game hasn't altered, but this year it seems to have grown a beak. No longer fragile or abstracted-looking on court, he seems now almost to hit the corners without thinking about it.

Hal's game involves attrition. He'll probe, pecking, until some angle opens up. He'd rather run his man ragged, wear him down. Three different opponents this past summer had to go to oxygen during breaks (the junior tour allows court-side oxygen ever since an unfortunate embolism in Raleigh, NC). His serve, suddenly, after four summers of thousand-a-day serves to no one at dawn, is suddenly supposed to be one of the best left-handed kick serves the junior circuit has ever

seen. Schtitt calls Hal Incandenza his 'revenant,' now, and sometimes points his pointer at him in an affectionate way from his observation crow's nest in the transom, during drills.

Most of the singles' A matches are under way. Hal's muscular but unquick opponent is bent over trying to get his breath while Hal stands there and futzes with his strings. Tall Paul Shaw on 6 bounces the ball eight times before he serves. Never seven or nine.

John Wayne's without question the best male player to appear at Enfield Academy in several years. He'd been spotted first by the late Dr. James Incandenza at age six, eleven summers back. On 1, with John Wayne up at net, Port Washington's best boy throws up a lob. It's a beauty: the ball soars slowly up, just skirts the indoor courts' system of beams and lamps, and floats back down gentle as lint: a lovely quad-function of fluorescent green, seams whirling. John Wayne backpedals and flies back after it. You can tell just by the way the ball comes off a guy's strings whether the lob is going to land fair. There's surprisingly little thought. Coaches tell serious players what to do so often it gets automatic. John Wayne's game could be described as having a kind of automatic beauty. When the lob first went up he'd backpedaled from the net, keeping the ball in sight until it reached the top of its flight and its curve broke, casting shadows in the tray of lights hung from the ceiling's insulation. The spectators' glass panel is at ground level, and the players play below it on courts that have been carved out of a kind of pit, dug long ago. The panel is like an aquarium's glass, thick and clean, and traps noise behind it, and to the gallery it seems that 72 well-muscled children are arrayed and competing in total silence in the pit. Almost everyone in the gallery is wearing tennis clothes and bright nylon warm-ups.

John Wayne's backward inertia has carried him into the heavy black tarpaulin that hangs several meters behind both sides of the 36 courts on a system of rods and rings not unlike a very ambitious shower-curtain, the tarps hiding from view the waterstained walls of puffy white-wrapped insulation and creating a narrow passage for players to get to their courts without crossing open court and interrupting play. Wayne hits the heavy tarp and kind of bounces off, producing a boom that resounds. The sounds on court in an indoor venue are huge and complex; everything echoes and the echoes then meld. In the gallery, Tavis and Nwangi bite their knuckles and deLint squashes his nose flat against the glass in anxiety as everyone else politely applauds. Schtitt calmly taps his pointer against the top of his boot at times of high stress. Wayne isn't hurt, though. Everybody goes into the tarp sometimes.

The boom of the tarp sounds bad down below, though. The boom rattles Teddy Schacht, who's kneeling in the little passage right behind Court 1, holding M. Pemulis's head as Pemulis down on one knee is sick into a tall white plastic spare-ball bucket. Schacht has to haul Pemulis slightly back as Wayne's outline bulges for a moment into the billowing tarp and threatens to knock Pemulis over, plus maybe the bucket, which would be a bad scene. Pemulis, deep into the little hell of his own nauseous pre-match nerves, is too busy trying to vomit w/o sound to hear the mean sound of Wayne's winner or the boom of him against the heavy curtain. It's freezing back here in the little passage, up next to insulation and I-beams and away from the infrared heaters that hang over the courts. The plastic bucket is full of old bald Wilson tennis balls and Pemulis's breakfast. There is of course an odor. Schacht doesn't mind. He lightly strokes the sides of Pemulis's head as his mother had stroked his own big sick head, back in Philly.

Schacht sees John Wayne walk to the net-post as he and his opponent change sides. Wayne never even sits down to take the 60 seconds he's allowed on each change of sides. The Port Washington boy sits in his little canvas director's chair and towels the sweat off his arms and looks briefly up at the gallery behind the panel. The thing about Wayne is he's all business. His face on court is blankly rigid, with the hypertonic masking of schizophrenics and Zen adepts. He

tends to look straight ahead at all times. He is about as reserved as they come. His emotions emerge in terms of velocity. Intelligence as strategic focus. His play, like his manner in general, seems to Schacht less alive than undead. Wayne tends to eat and study alone. Schacht figures Wayne figures is destined for the Show; he will be an all-business entertainer, citizen of the world, everywhere undead, endorsing juice drinks and liniment ointment.

Pemulis has nothing left and is spasming dryly over the bucket, his covered Dunlop gut-strung sticks and gear tumbled just past Schacht's in the passage. They are the last guys to get out on court.

'Are you okay?'

Pemulis says 'Blarg.' He wipes at his forehead in a gesture of completion and submits to being hauled to his feet and stands there on his own with his hands on his hips, slightly bent.

Schacht straightens and pulls some wrinkles out of the bandage around the brace on his knee. 'Take maybe another second. Wayne's already way up.'

Pemulis sniffs unpleasantly. 'How come this happens to me every time? This is not like me.'

'Happens to some people is all.'

'This hunched spurting pale guy is not any me I ever recognize.'

Schacht gathers gear. 'Some people their nerves are in their stomachs.'

'Teddy brother man I'm never *once* hung-over for a competitive thing. I take elaborate precautions. Not so much as a whippet. I'm always in bed the night before by 2300 all pink-cheeked and clean.'

As they pass the plastic window behind Court 2 Schacht sees Hal Incandenza try to pass his serve-and-volley guy with a baroque sideways slice down the backhand side and miss just wide. Schacht gives a little toodleoo-wave that Hal can't see to acknowledge. Pemulis is in front of him as they go down the cold passage.

'Hal's way up too. Another victory for the forces of peace.'

'Jesus I feel awful,' Pemulis says.

'Things could be worse.'

'Expand on that, will you?'

'This wasn't like that Atlanta stomach-incident. We were enclosed here. No one saw. Nobody heard thing one. Our guys'll think we were back here butting heads to get enraged or something. Or we can tell them I got a cramp. That was a freebie, in terms of stomach-incidents.'

Pemulis is a whole different person before competitive play. 'I'm fucking inept.'

Schacht laughs. 'You're one of the eptest people I know. Get off your own back.'

'Never remember getting sick as a kid. Now it's like I make myself sick just from worrying about getting sick.'

'Well then there you go. Just don't think anything thoracic. Pretend you don't have a stomach.'

'I have no stomach,' Pemulis says. His head stays still when he talks, at least, negotiating the passage. He carries four sticks, a rough white P.W.T.A. locker-room towel, an empty ball-can full of high-chlorine Long Island water, nervously zipping and unzipping the top stick's cover. Schacht only ever carries three sticks. His don't have covers on them. Except for Pemulis and a couple others who favor gut strings and really need protection, nobody at Enfield uses racquet-covers; it's like an antifashion statement. A similar point of careful nonpride is never having their shirts tucked in. Ortho Stice used to drill in cut-off black jeans until Schtitt had Tony Nwangi go over and scream at him about it. Each academy has its own style or antistyle. The P.W.T.A. people,

more or less a de facto subsidiary of Wilson, have unnecessary light-blue Wilson covers on all their courtside synthetic-strung sticks and big red Ws stencilled onto their Wilson synth-gut strings. You have to let your company of choice spraypaint their logo on your strings if you want to be on their Free List for sticks, is the universal junior deal. Schacht's orange Gamma-9 synthetic strings have AMF-Head Inc.'s weird Taoist paraboloid logo sprayed on. Pemulis isn't on Dunlop's Free List but gets the E.T.A. stringer to put Dunlop's dot-and-circumflex trademark on all his stick's strings, as a kind of touchingly insecure gesture, in Schacht's opinion.

'I played your guy in Tampa two years ago,' Pemulis says, sidestepping one of the old discolored drill-balls that always litter passages behind indoor tarps. 'Name escapes.'

'Le-something,' says Schacht. 'One of those names that start with Le.' Mario Incandenza, in a pair of E.T.A. drill-sweats, is lurching noiselessly some ten m. behind them in the passage, framing Schacht's back in a three-cornered box with his thumbs and long fingers, simulating the view through a lens. Mario's been authorized to travel with the squads to the WhataBurger Invitational for final footage for his short and upbeat annual documentary — brief testimonials and lighthearted moments and behind-the-scenes shots and emotional moments on court, etc. — that every year gets distributed to E.T.A. alumni and patrons and guests at the pre-Thanksgiving fundraising exhibition and formal fete.

They emerge through flaps in the tarp with hands upraised in slight apology to their opponents, walk out onto the warmer courts, the slow green eraserish footing of indoor composite. Their ears dilate into all the sounds in the larger space. Gasps and thwaps and pocks and sneakers' squeaks. Courts 13 to 24 are Girls' 18's A and B, all bobbing ponytails and two-handed backhands and high-pitched grunts. Pemulis can't tell whether the very muffled applause way down up behind the gallery-panel is sardonic applause at his finally appearing after several minutes of vomiting or is sincerely for Coyle on Court 3, who's just smashed a sucker-lob so hard it's bounced up and racked the tray of hanging lights. Except for some rubber in his legs Pemulis feels stomachless and tentatively OK. This match is an all-out must-win for him in terms of the WhataBurger.

The infra-lit courts are warm and soft; the heaters bolted into both walls above the tarp's upper hem are the deep warm red of little square suns.

The Port Washington players all wear matching socks and shorts and tucked-in shirts. They look sharp but effete, a mannequinish aspect to them. Most of the higher-ranked E.T.A. students are free to sign on with different companies for no fees but free gear. Coyle is Prince and Reebok, as is Trevor Axford. John Wayne is Dunlop and Adidas. Schacht is Head Master sticks but his own clothes and knee-supports. Ortho Stice is Wilson and all-black Fila. Keith Freer is Fox sticks and both Adidas and Reebok until one of the two companies' NNE reps catches on. Troeltsch is Spalding and damn lucky to get that. Hal Incandenza is Dunlop and lightweight Nike hightops and an Air Stirrup brace for the dicky ankle. Shaw is Kennex sticks and clothes from Sergio Tacchini's Big St Tall line. Pemulis's entrepreneurial vim has earned him complete freedom of choice and expense, though he's barred by deLint and Nwangi from shirts that mention Sinn Fein or that extol Allston MA in any way, in competition.

Before going back to the baseline and warming up groundstrokes Schacht likes to take a little time courtside futzing around, hitting his heads' frames against strings and listening for the pitch of best tension, arranging his towel on the back of his chair, and then he prefers to sort of snuffle around his baseline for a bit, checking for dustbunnies of ball-fuzz and little divots or ridges from cold-weather heave, adjusting the brace on his ruined knee, putting his thick arms out cruciform and pulling them way back to stretch out the old pecs and cuffs. His opponent waits patiently, twirling his poly-butylene stick; and when they finally start to hit around, the guy's

expression is pleasant. Schacht always prefers a pleasant match. He really doesn't care all that much whether he wins anymore, since first the Crohn's and then the knee at sixteen. He'd probably now describe his desire to win as a preference, nothing more. What's singular is that his tennis seems to have improved slightly in the two years since he stopped really caring. It's like his game stopped having any purpose beyond itself and got fuller, looser, its edges less jagged, improving even faster. Schtitt's warmed to him, though, since the knee and the loss of any urge beyond the play itself, and treats Schacht now almost more like a peer than an experimental subject with something at stake. Schacht is already in his heart committed to a dental career, and he even interns twice a week for a root-specialist over at the National Cranio-Facial Pain Foundation, in east Enfield, when not touring.

It strikes Schacht as odd that Pemulis makes such a big deal of stopping all substances the day before competitive play but never connects the neurasthenic stomach to any kind of withdrawal or dependence. He'd never say this to Pemulis unless Pemulis asked him directly, but Schacht suspects Pemulis is physically dependent or something. It's not his business.

Though Schacht buys quarterly urine like the rest of them, it seems to Pemulis that Schacht ingests the occasional chemical that way grownups who sometimes forget to finish their cocktails drink liquor: to make a tense but fundamentally OK interior life interestingly different but no more, no element of relief; a kind of tourism; and Schacht doesn't even have to worry about obsessive training like Inc or Stice or get sick so often from the physical stress like Troeltsch or suffer from thinly disguised psychological fallout like Inc or Struck or Pemulis himself. The way Pemulis and Troeltsch and Struck and Axford ingest substances and recover from substances and have a whole jargony argot based around various substances gives Schacht the creeps, a bit, but since the knee injury broke and remade him at sixteen he's learned to go his own interior way and let others go theirs. Like most very large men, he's getting comfortable early with the fact that his place in the world is very small and his real impact on other persons even smaller — which is a big reason he can sometimes forget to finish his portion of a given substance, so interested does he become in the way he's already started to feel. He's one of these people who don't need much, much less much more.

Schacht and his opponent warm up their groundstrokes with the fluid economy of years of warming up groundstrokes. They take turns feeding each other some volleys at net and then each take a lobs, hitting loose easy overheads, slowly adjusting the idle from half-speed to three-quarter-speed. The knee feels fundamentally all right, springy. Slow indoor composite surfaces do not like Schacht's hard flat game, but they are kind to the knee, which after some days outside on hard cement swells to about the size of a volleyball. Schacht feels blandly happy down here on 9, playing in private, way down past the gallery's panel. There is a nourishing sense of pregnable space in a big indoor club that you never get playing outside, especially playing outside in the cold, when the balls feel hard and sullen and come off the stick's strung face with an echoless *ping*. Here everything cracks and booms, the grunts and shoe-squeaks and booming *pocks* of impact and curses unfolding across the white-on-green plane and echoing off each tarp. Soon they'll all go inside for the winter. Schtitt will yield and let them inflate the E.T.A. Lung over the sixteen Center Courts; it's like a barn-raising; it's communal and fun. Schtitt and deLint will let the younger E.T.A.s get the infrared indoor heaters out of the corrugated shed, while the 18s get to sit on canvas chairs and kibitz because they did their leaf-cutter Lung-raising bits already. And that first night after Inflation, traditionally the fourth Monday of November, all the upperclass 18s so inclined will crank up the infrareds and get high and eat low-lipid microwave pizza and play all night, sweating magnificently, sheltered for the winter atop Enfield's levelheaded hill.

The warm-up routine has become automatic and requires no attention. Way up on #1, Schacht sees John Wayne just plaster a backhand cross-court. Wayne hits it so hard a little mushroom cloud of green fuzz hangs in the air where ball had met strings. Their cards were too far to read in the sour-apple light, but you could tell by the way Port Washington's best boy walked back to the baseline to take the next serve that his ass had already been presented to him. In a lot of junior matches everything past the fourth game or so is kind of a formality. Both players tend to know the overall score by then. The big picture. They'll have decided who's going to lose. Competitive tennis is largely mental, once you're at a certain plateau of skill and conditioning. Schtitt'd say *spiritual* instead of *mental*, but as far as Schacht can see it's the same thing. As Schacht sees it, Schtitt's philosophical stance is that to win enough of the time to be considered successful you have to both care a great deal about it and also not care about it at all. Schacht does not care enough, probably, anymore, and has met his gradual displacement from E.T.A.'s A singles squad with an equanimity some E.T.A.'s thought was spiritual and others regarded as the surest sign of dicklessness and burnout. Only one or two people have ever used the word *brave* in connection with Schacht's radical reconfiguration after the things with the Crohn's Disease and knee. Hal Incandenza, who's probably as asymmetrically hobbled on the care-too-much side as Schacht is on the not-enough, privately puts Schacht's laissez-faire down to some interior decline, some doom-gray surrender of his childhood's promise to adult gray mediocrity, and fears it; but since Schacht is an old friend and a dependable designated driver and has actually gotten pleasanter to be around since the knee, Hal in a weird and deeper internal way almost somehow admires and envies the fact that Schacht's stoically committed himself to the oral professions and stopped dreaming of getting to the Show after graduation. Schacht consents w/o protest to pay retail for clean quarterly urine, and doesn't say a word about Hal's devolution from occasional tourist to subterranean compulsive, substance-wise, with his Pump Room visits and Visine, even though Schacht deep down believes that the substance-compulsion's strange apparent contribution to Hal's eruptive explosion up the rankings has got to be a temporary thing, that there's like a psychic credit-card bill for Hal in the mail, somewhere, coming, and is sad for him in advance about whatever's surely got to give, eventually. Though it won't be the Boards. Hal'll murder his Boards.

The gallery is barely even applauding Wayne and Incandenza anymore; at a certain point it becomes like Romans applauding lions. All the coaches and staff and P.W.T.A. parents and civilians in the overhead gallery wear tennis outfits, the high white socks and tucked-in shirts of people who do not really play.

SATURDAY NOV 7 1992

They returned from Long Island bearing their shields rather than upon them, as they say. John Wayne and Hal Incandenza lost only five total games between them in singles. The A doubles had resembled a spatterpainting. And the B teams had surpassed themselves. The whole P.W.T.A. staff and squad had had to sing a really silly song. Pemulis's storky intense two-hands-off-both-sides opponent had gotten weirdly lethargic and then disoriented in the second set after Pemulis had lost the first in a tie-break. After the kid had delayed play for several minutes claiming the tennis balls were too pretty to hit, P.W.T.A. trainers had conducted him gently from the court, and the Peemster got 'V.D.,' which is jr.-circuit argot for a Victory by Default. Schacht was in too

much knee-pain to remark on much of anything, and Schtitt had E.T.A.'s Barry Loach inject the big purple knee with something that made Schacht's eyes roll up in his head.

Then during the post-meet dance Pemulis's defaulted opponent ate from the hors d'oeuvres table without using utensils or at one point even hands, did a disco number when there wasn't any music going, and was finally heard telling the Port Washington Headmaster's wife that he'd always wanted to do her from behind. Pemulis spent a lot of time whistling and staring innocently up at the pre-fab ceiling.

The bus for all the 18's squads was warm and there were little nozzles of light over your seat that you could either have on to do homework or shut off and sleep. Troeltsch, left eye ominously nystagmic, pretended to recap the day's match highlights for a subscription audience, speaking earnestly into his fist. Hal and Tall Paul Shaw were each reading an SAT prep-guide. A good quarter of the bus was yellow-highlighting copies of E. A. Abbott's inescapable-at-E.T.A. book *Flatland* for either Flottman or Chawaf or Thorp. An elongated darkness with assorted shapes melted by, tall Interstatish lamps laying down cones of dirty-looking sodium light. The ghostly sodium lamplight made Mario Incandenza happy to be in his little cone of white inside light. Mario sat next to Coyle and they played rock-paper-scissors for two hundred clicks or more, not saying anything, engrossed in trying to locate patterns in each other's rhythms of choices of shapes. Charles Tavis sat way in the back with John Wayne and beamed and spoke nonstop in hushed tones to Wayne as the Canadian stared out the window. The bus was Schtittless: Schtitt always found a private mysterious way back, then appeared at dawn drills with deLint and elaborate work-ups of everything that had gone wrong the day before. He was particularly shrill and insistent and negative after they'd won something. The luggage rack over everyone's heads bristled with grips and coverless strings, and liniment and tincture of benzoin had been handed out and liberally applied, so the warm air became complexly spiced. Everybody was tired in a good way.

The homeward ride's camaraderie was marred only by the fact that someone near the back of the bus started the passing around of a Gothic-fonted leaflet offering the kingdom of prehistoric England to the man who could pull Keith Freer out of Bernadette Longley. Freer had been discovered by prorector Mary Esther Thode more or less Xing Bernadette Longley under an Adidas blanket in the very back seat on the bus trip to the East Coast Clays in Providence in September, and it had been a nasty scene, because there were some basic Academy-license rules that it was just unacceptable to flout under the nose of staff. Keith Freer was deeply asleep when the leaflet was getting passed around, but Bernadette Longley wasn't, and when the leaflet hit the front half where all the females now had to sit since September she'd buried her face in her hands and flushed even on the back of her pretty neck, and her doubles partner came all the way back to where Jim Struck and Michael Pemulis were sitting and told them in no uncertain terms that somebody on this bus was so immature it was really sad.

The whole mammoth travelling squad, three buses' worth, got to stop and have the Mega-breakfast at Denny's, over next to Empire Waste, at like 0030, when they got in.

SATURDAY NOV 7 1992

Each of the eight to ten prorectors at the Enfield Tennis Academy teaches one academic class per term, usually a once-a-week Saturday thing. This is mostly for certification reasons, plus all but one of the prorectors are low-level touring professionals, with low-level professional tennis

players in general being not exactly the most candent stars in the intellectual Orion. Because of all this, their classes tend to be not only electives but Academy jokes, and the E.T.A. Dean of Academic Affairs regards prorektor-taught classes — e.g., in Fall, Corbett Thorp's 'Deviant Geometries,' Aubrey deLint's 'Introduction to Athletic Spreadsheets,' or the colon-mad Tex Watson's 'From Scarcity to Plenty: From Putrid Stuff Out of the Ground to the Atom in the Mirror: A Lay Look at Energy Resources from Anthracite to Annular Fusion,' etc. — as not satisfying any sort of quadrivial requirement.

But the older E.T.A.s, with more latitude credit- and elective-wise, still tend to clamor and jostle for spots in the prorektor's seminars, not just because the classes can be passed by pretty much anybody who shows up and displays vital signs, but because most of the prorektor's are (also like low-level tennis pros as a genus) kind of bats, and their classes are usually fascinating the way plane-crash footage is fascinating. E.g., although any closed room she's in soon develops a mysterious and overpowering vitamin-B stink he can just barely stand, E.T.A. senior Ted Schacht has taken Mary Esther Thode's perennially batoid 'The Personal Is the Political Is the Psychopathological: the Politics of Contemporary Psychopathological Double-Binds' all three times it's been offered. M.E. Thode is regarded by the upperclassmen as probably insane, by like clinical standards, although her coaching proficiency with the Girls' 16's is beyond dispute. Last spring's airless and B-redolent section of Thode's psycho-political offering, 'The Toothless Predator: Breast-Feeding as Sexual Assault,' had been one of the most disorientingly fascinating experiences of Ted Schacht's intellectual life so far, outside the dentist's chair, whereas this fall's focus on pathologic double-bind-type quandaries was turning out to be not quite as compelling but weirdly — almost intuitively — easy: E.g., from today's:

The Personal Is the Political Is the Psychopathological: The Politics of
Contemporary Psychopathological Double-Binds
Midterm Examination
Ms. THODE
November 7, 1992

KEEP YOUR ANSWERS *BRIEF AND GENDER NEUTRAL*

ITEM 1

(1a) You are an individual who, is pathologically kleptomaniacal. As a kleptomaniac, you are pathologically driven to steal, steal, steal. You must steal.

(1b) But, you are also an individual who, is pathologically agoraphobic. As an agoraphobic, you cannot so much as step off your front step of the porch of your home, without undergoing palpitations, drenching sweats, and feelings of impending doom. As an agoraphobic, you are driven to pathologically stay home and not leave. You cannot leave home.

(1c) But, from (1a) you are pathologically driven to go out and steal, steal, steal. But, from (1b) you are pathologically driven to not ever leave home. You live alone. Meaning, there is no one else in your home to steal from. Meaning, you must go out, into the marketplace to satisfy your overwhelming compulsion to steal, steal, steal. But, such is your fear of the marketplace that you cannot under any circumstances, leave home. Whether your problem is true personal psychopathology, or merely marginalization by a political definition of 'psychopathology,' nevertheless, it is a Double-Bind.

(1d) Thus, respond to the question of, what do you do?

Schacht was just looping the d in mail fraud when Jim Troeltsch's pseudo-radio program, backed by its eustachian-crumpling operatic soundtrack, came over 112 West House's E.T.A.-intercom speaker up over the classroom clock. When no away- tournaments or meets were going

on, WETA student-run radio got to broadcast E.T.A.-related news, sports and community affairs for ten or so minutes over the closed-circuit intercom every Tuesday and Saturday during the last P.M. class period, like 1435-1445h. Troeltsch, who's dreamed of a tennis-broadcast career ever since it became clear (very early) that he would be in no way Show-bound, has been doing the sports portion of WETA's weekly broadcast since four months after the late E.T.A. Headmaster's *felo de se*, when the flags were still at half-mast and everybody's bicep was banded in black cotton.

The sports portion of WETA's broadcast is mostly just reporting the scores of whatever competitive events the E.T.A. squads have been in since the last broadcast. Troeltsch, who approaches his twice-a-week duties with all possible verve, feels like the hardest thing about his intercom-broadcasts is keeping things from getting repetitive. His quest for synonyms for beat and got beat by is never-ending and serious and a continual source of irritation to his friends. Mary Esther's exams were notorious no-brainers and automatic A's if you were careful with your third-person pronouns, and Schacht was already on the test's third item, which concerned exhibitionism among the pathologically shy. 11/7's broadcast results were from E.T.A.'s 71-37 rout of Port Washington's A and B teams at the Port Washington annual thing.

'John Wayne at A-1 18's beat Port Washington's Bob Francis of Great Neck, New New York, 6-0, 6-2,' Troeltsch says, 'while A-2 Singles' Hal Incandenza defeated Craig Burda of Vivian Park, Utah, 6-2, 6-1; and while A-3 K. D. Coyle went down in a hard-fought loss to Port Wash's Shelby van der Merwe of Hempstead, Long Island 6-3, 5-7, 7-5, A-4 Trevor "The Axhandle" Axford crushed P.W.'s Tapio Martti out of Sonora, Mexico, 7-5, 6-2.'

The only really challenging prorected class ever for Hal Incandenza is turning out to be Mlle Thierry Poutrincourt's 'Separatism and Return: Québécois History from Frontenac Through the Age of Independence,' which to be candid Hal finds difficult and annoying but surprisingly less and less dull as the semester wears on, and is actually developing something of a layman's savvy for Canadianism and politics, topics he'd previously found for some reason not only dull but distasteful. The rub of this particular class's difficulty is that Poutrincourt teaches only in Québécois French, which Hal can get by in but has never all that much liked, particularly sound-wise, Québécois being a gurgly, glottal language that seems to require a perpetually sour facial expression to pronounce.

Saluki-faced Thierry Poutrincourt leans back in her chair and closes her eyes and presses her palms hard against her temples and stays like that all the way through every WETA broadcast, which always interrupts her last-period lecture and puts this section slightly and maddeningly behind Separation & Return's other section, resulting in two required lesson-preps instead of one. The sour Saskatchewanese kid next to Hal has been making impressive schematic drawings of automatic weaponry in his notebook all semester, yet the Skatch kid always finishes quizzes in like five minutes.

Most of the early-Quebec stuff Hal'd found dry and repetitive, the wig-and-jerkin gentlemanly warfare stilted and absurd, like slow-motion slapstick, though everyone'd been sort of queasily intrigued by the way the English Commander Amherst had handled the Hurons by dispensing free blankets and buckskin that had been carefully coated with smallpox variola. Hal found the Québécois-Separatism mentality almost impossibly convoluted and confused and impervious to U.S. parsing, plus was both com- and repelled by the fact that the contemporary insurgence stuff provoked in him a queasy feeling, not the glittery disorientation of nightmares or on-court panic but a soggy, more furtively nauseous kind of sense, as if someone had been reading mail of Hal's that he thought he'd thrown away.

TUESDAY NOV 10 1992

The following things in the room were blue. The blue checks in the blue-and-black-checked shag carpet. Two of the room's six institutional-plush chairs, whose legs were steel tubes bent into big ellipses, which wobbled, so that while the chairs couldn't really be rocked they could be sort of bobbed in, which Michael Pemulis was doing absently, which produced a kind of rapid rodential squeaking that gave Hal Incandenza the howling fantods as he sat there kitty-corner from Pemulis, also waiting. Each chair had a 105-watt reading lamp attached to the back on a flexible metal stalk that let the reading lamp curve out from behind and shine right down on whatever magazine the waiting person was looking at, but since the curved lamps induced this unbearable sensation of somebody feverish right there reading over your shoulder, the magazines (some of whose covers involved the color blue) tended to stay unread, and were fanned neatly out on a low ceramic coffeetable. The carpet was a product of something called Antron. Hal could see streaks of lividity where somebody'd vacuumed against the grain.

Though the magazines' coffeetable was nonblue — a wet-nail-polish red with E.T.A. in a kind of gray escutcheon — two of the unsettlingly attached lamps that kept its magazines unread and neatly fanned were blue. Dr. Charles Tavis liked to say that you could tell a lot about an administrator by the decor of his waiting room. The Headmaster's waiting room was part of a little hallway in the Comm.-Ad. lobby's southwest corner. The premie violets in an asymmetrical sprig in a tennis-ball-shaped vase on the coffee-table were arguably in the blue family. And also the overenhanced blue of the wallpaper's sky, fluffy cumuli arrayed patternlessly against an overenhancedly blue sky, incredibly disorienting wallpaper that was by an unpleasant coincidence also the wallpaper in the Enfield offices of a Dr. Zegarelli, D.D.S which Hal's just come back from, after a removal: the left side of his face still feels big and dead, with this persistent sensation that he's drooling without being able to feel or stop it. No one's sure what C.T.'s choice of this wallpaper is supposed to communicate, especially to parents who come with prospective kids in tow to scout out E.T.A., but Hal loathes sky-and-cloud wallpaper because it makes him feel high-altitude and disoriented and sometimes plummeting. There was a nautical-blue border of braid around the bill of Michael Pemulis's jaunty yachting cap. Hal was confident Pemulis would remove the insouciant hat the minute they were called in on what was presumably going to be the carpet.

Neither Hal, continually checking his chin for drool, nor Pemulis, scanning and bobbing, are in the mood for this right now, awaiting what they presume to be some kind of administrative fallout. The two different-sized offices that open off the waiting room belong to Dr. Charles Tavis and to Mrs. Avril Incandenza. Tavis's office's outer door is real oak and has his name and degree and title in (nonblue) letters so big that it crowds the door's margins. There's also an inner door.

Avril, whose feelings about enclosure are well known, has no door on her office. Her office is bigger than C.T.'s, though, and has a seminar table it's obvious he covets. Avril's office's blue-and-black-checked shag is deeper than the waiting room's shag, so that the border between the two is like a mowed v. unmowed lawn. Avril serves (pro bono) as E.T.A.'s Dean of Academic Affairs and Dean of Females. Avril has vividly white hair — as of the last few months before Himself's *felo de se* — that looks like it never went through the gray stage and legs whose taper T. Axford is appraising with the frankness of adolescence as she paces a bit in front of the crowded seminar table, in full view of the people in the waiting room. Though it's not technically in the waiting room with Hal, the plastic fine-tip felt pen Avril taps professionally against her incisors as she paces and considers is: blue.

Hal declines to share his Rusk-being-in-there-with-Tavis worries with Michael Pemulis, not just because Hal avoids ever mentioning Rusk's name but also because Pemulis loathes Rusk with a hard and gem-like flame, and though he'd never admit it is already clearly nauseated with worry that he's going to get the lion's share of the blame and not only receive corrective on-court discipline but maybe get denied a spot on the trip to Tucson's WhataBurger, or worse.

Avril Incandenza's voice is higher on the register than one would expect from a woman so imposingly tall. It is high and sort of airy. Oddly insubstantial, is the E.T.A. consensus. Orin says one reason Avril dislikes music is that whenever she hums along she sounds insane. The absence of a door to the Moms's office means you might as well be in there, in terms of being able to hear what's going on. She has little sense of spatial privacy or boundary, having been alone so much when a child. Avril eschewed an office door for simple enclosure-reasons. Recrossed legs and closer inspection reveal that Trevor Axford's left sock, though not his right sock, is blue.

Sinistral, his right hand missing digits from a fireworks accident three Independence Days past, Axhandle is several cm. shorter than Hal Incandenza and is a true redheaded person, with copper-colored hair and that moist white freckle-choked skin that reddens and peels, plus there's the matter of the enormous and forever chapped lips; and as a tennis player he is like a less effective version of John Wayne — he does nothing but blast from the baseline, w/o discernible spin. He's a junior from Short Beach CT and under enormous family pressure to continue the male Axford tradition of attending Yale and is academically so marginal that he knows his only chance to go to Yale is to play tennis for Yale, which would effectively blow any chance at a Show-level future, and is high-ranked but has set his competitive sights on nothing past a Ride-offer to Yale. The only real thing Axford and Hal have in common on the court is a curious habit of refusing to ask for help from other courts when their balls go astray.

Hal can see one of his Moms's stockinged legs, terminating in a trim ankle and a very white Reebok, extruding from stage-right into the frame of the empty doorway, the Reebok tapping patiently, and one arm crossed over Avril's chest, and the other arm's elbow resting on that arm and fluttering in and out of view as Avril taps at her teeth with a blue pen.

Hal knows the register and inflections of his mother's voice so well it almost makes him uncomfortable. His left ankle gives a sick squeak when he flexes it. Cords in his left forearm stand out and subside as he squeezes his tennis ball. The left side of his face feels like something far away that means him harm and is coming gradually closer. He can make out just the whistly fricatives of Charles Tavis's distant voice from behind his double office doors; it sounds somehow like he's speaking to more than one person in there. Charles Tavis's office's inner door also has the I.D. DR. CHARLES TAVIS on it, and below that his E.T.A. motto about the man who knows his limitations having none.

Things out in the waiting room right now are comparatively silent. Things are so quiet because the anxiety level in Tavis's waiting room is high.

'You're all in for some serious Pukers is my prediction,' Ann Kittenplan had said to Pemulis as they all first answered the intercom's summons, which was also about the time that Pemulis started in with the rodential chair-squeaking that made one half of Kittenplan's face spasm.

One of the tricky and sinister things about corrective discipline at a tennis academy is that punishments can take the form of what might look like straight-out athletic conditioning. Q.v. the drill sergeant telling the recruit to drop and give him fifty, etc. This is why Gerhardt Schtitt and his proectors are feared. It's not just that Schtitt's corporal reputation preceded him here. It's that Schtitt and deLint make out the daily schedules for A.M. drills and P.M. matches and resistance-

training and conditioning runs. But especially the A.M. drills. Certain drills are well known to be nothing more than attitude-adjusters, designed to do nothing but dramatically lower life-quality for a few minutes. Too brutal to be assigned on the daily basis that would contribute to genuine aerobic conditioning, drills like the disciplinary version of Tap & Whack are known to the kids simply as Pukers. Puker-drills are really meant to do nothing but hurt you and make you think long and hard before repeating whatever you did to merit them; but they're still to all outward appearances exempt from any kind of VIII-Amendment protest or sniveling calls home to parents, insidiously, since they can be described to parents and police alike as just drills assigned for your overall cardiovascular benefit, with all the actual sadism completely sub rosa.

Hal has no idea what it might signify that the Headmaster's summons hasn't come for almost 48 hours. It might be odd that it hadn't once occurred to him to see Tavis personally, or to go to HmH and ask the Moms for intercession or info. It's not like he had the urge but resisted it; it hadn't even occurred to him.

For somebody who not only lives on the same institutional grounds as his family but also has his training and education and pretty much his whole overall *raison-d'être* directly overseen by relatives, Hal devotes an unusually small part of his brain and time ever thinking about people in his family qua family-members. Hal's maternal half-uncle Charles Tavis is a little like the late Himself in that Tavis's C.V. is a back-and-forth but not indecisive mix of athletics and hard science. A B.A. and doctorate in engineering, an M.B.A. in athletics administration; he'd been in his own small way a minor pioneer in polymer-reinforced cement and mobile fulcra. He'd been on design teams for stadia and civic centers and grandstands and micological-looking superdomes.

For Hal, the general deal with his maternal uncle is that Tavis is terribly shy around people and tries to hide it by being very open and expansive and wordy and bluff, and that it's excruciating to be around. Mario's way of looking at it is that Tavis is very open and expansive and wordy, but so clearly uses these qualities as a kind of protective shield that it betrays a frightened vulnerability almost impossible not to feel for. Either way, the unsettling thing about Charles Tavis is that he's possibly the openest man of all time. Orin's view was always that C.T. was less like a person than like a sort of cross-section of a person.

But so the point is that Tavis is an odd and delicate specimen, both ineffectual and in certain ways fearsome as a Headmaster, and being a relative guarantees no special predictive insight or quarter. This odd blankness about his family might be one way to manage a life where domestic and vocational authorities sort of bleed into each other. Hal squeezes his tennis ball like a madman, right palm against his left cheek and elbow hiding his mouth, wanting very much to go first to the Pump Room and then to brush vigorously with his portable collapsible Oral-B. A quick chew of Kodiak is out of the question for several reasons.

The only other time this year that Hal was officially summoned to the Headmaster's waiting room had been in late August, right before Convocation and during Orientation period, when new kids were coming in and wandering around clueless and terrified, etc., and Tavis had wanted Hal to take temporary charge of a nine-year-old kid, Dymphna, coming in from somewhere called Philo IL, who was allegedly blind, the kid, and apparently had cranium-issues, from having originally been one of the infantile natives of Ticonderoga NY evacuated too late, and had several eyes in various stages of evolutionary development in his head but was legally blind, but still an extremely solid player, which is all kind of a long tale in itself, given that his skull was apparently the consistency of a Chesapeake crabshell but the head itself so huge it made Booboo look microcephalic, and the kid apparently had on-court use of only one hand because the other had to pull around beside him a kind of rolling IV-stand appliance with a halo-shaped metal brace welded

to it at head-height, to encircle and support his head; C.T, now figured the kid would need to say the least some extra help getting oriented (literally), and he wanted Hal to be the one to take him in hand (again literally). It turned out a couple days later that the kid had some kind of either family or cerebro-spinal-fluid crisis at home in rural IL and wasn't matriculating now till the Spring term.

August had been when Hal's chronic left ankle had been almost the worst it's ever been, after an erumpent but grueling summer tour of getting to at least the Quarters of just about everything, mostly on hard asphalt, and he could feel his pulse in the vessels in the raw ligaments of the ankle as he sat flipping the shiny pages of a new World Tennis and watching the little ad-cards fall out and flutter.

Like many gifted bureaucrats, Hal's mother's adoptive brother Charles Tavis is physically small in a way that seems less endocrine than perspectival. His smallness resembles the smallness of something that's farther away from you than it wants to be, plus is receding. This weird appearance of recessive drift, together with the compulsive hand-movements that followed his quitting smoking some years back, helped contribute to the quality of perpetual frenzy about the man, a kind of locational panic that it's easy to see explains not only Tavis's compulsive energy — he and Avril, pretty much the Dynamic Duo of compulsion, between them, sleep, in their second-floor rooms in the Headmaster's House — separate rooms — tend to sleep, between them, about as much as any one normal insomniac — but maybe also contributes to the pathological openness of his manner, the way he thinks out loud about thinking out loud.

C.T. as Headmaster always has a number of introductory questions for matriculants, and Hal, now, in November, can't remember which one of these Tavis opened with with Echt, but he remembers seeing the little girl's sucker-stick sweep the air and a plastic Mr. Bouncety-Bounce no-pierce earring swing wildly as she shook her head. Hal'd marvelled at her size. How high could somebody this little be ranked, even regionally, in 12's?

Looking discreetly in, Hal had felt an involuntary rush of affection for C.T. His maternal uncle's hair was straight and very precisely combed over, and his little mustache was never quite symmetrical. One eye was also set at a slightly different angle than the other. Hal's involuntary grin is lopsided and only half-felt, now, remembering. The Axhandle's sitting there slumped, with his fist to his chin, a posture that he thinks makes him look meditative but that really makes him look *in utero*, and Kittenplan is chewing at her knuckles' tattoos, which is what she does instead of washing them off.

Tavis was saying 'What actually we do for you here is to break you down in very carefully selected ways, take you apart as a little girl and put you back together again as a tennis player who can take the court against any little girl in North America without fear of limitation. A little girl now who can regard the court as a mirror whose reflection holds no illusions or fear for you. One possible way of couching it is to choose to say that we will take apart your skull very gently and reconstruct a skull for you that will have a highly developed bump of clarity and a slight concave dent where the fear-instinct used to be. I'm doing my best to cast all this in terms the you can be comfortable with, Tina. Though I need to tell you I feel uncomfortable adjusting a presentation toward or down toward anyone in any way, since I'm terribly vain, both as a man and an educator, about my reputation for candor,' Tavis said. The audible smile. 'It is one of my limitations.'

Hal had been flexing the ankle and watching the swelling shift slightly under the multiple socks. He stood and put his weight on the ankle experimentally a couple times and then sat back down and flexed it, watching the swelling very intently. He knew suddenly that he was going to go down and get high in secret in the Pump Room before showering. His viscera were putting out

the sound of one of those teakettles that doesn't have a whistle and so just rumbles as it boils. A competitive athlete cannot skip meals without terrific metabolic distress.

After a little while Avril Incandenza, E.T.A.'s Dean of Academic Affairs, had lowered her head under the waiting room's jamb and come in, looking fresh and totally untouched by the heat. She had one of the Orientation packets in its customary red- and-gray binder.

The Moms always had this way of establishing herself in the exact center of any room she was in, so that from any angle she was somehow in the line of all sight. It was part of her, and so to that extent dear to Hal, but it was noticeable and kind of unsettling. His brother Orin, during a late-night round of Family Trivia, had once described Avril as The Black Hole of Human Attention. Hal had been pacing, rising up on the toes of the left foot, trying to gauge the exact level of physical discomfort he was feeling. That's when she'd come in. Hal and the Moms always greeted each other kind of extravagantly. When Avril entered a room, any sort of pacing reduced to orbiting, and Hal's pacing became vaguely circular around the waiting room's perimeter as Avril rested her tailbone on the receptionist's desk and crossed her ankles and produced her cigarette case. Her manner always became very casual and almost sort of male when she and Hal were alone in a room.

She watched him walk. 'The ankle?'

He hated himself for exaggerating the limp even slightly. 'Tender. Sore at the very worst. More like tender.'

'No, now, now no need to *cry*,' C.T. was exclaiming as he knelt at the side of the chair from which little legs dangled and were spasming around. 'I didn't mean *literally* break, as in break open your *head*, Tina. Please let me acknowledge that this is totally my fault my dear for presenting what we'll be up to here in just *exactly* the wrong sort of light.'

Avril had casually produced a 100-mm. rodney from the flat brass case and tamped it on an unlined knuckle. Hal produced no lighter. Neither of them had looked toward Tavis's office's maw. Avril's smock-type dress was blue cotton, with a kind of scalloped white doily around the shoulders and white stockings and painfully white Reebok cross-trainers.

'I am *horrified* that I've made you cry like this.' Tavis's voice had assumed that stressed character of issuing from the end of a long corridor. 'Just please know that a totally unthreatening lap is available if you want a lap, is all I can think of to say.'

Avril always smoked with her smoking-arm up and elbow resting in the crook of the other arm. She would frequently hold a rodney just this same way without lighting it or even putting it in her mouth. She permitted herself to smoke only in her E.T.A. office and HmH study and one or two other venues outfitted with air-filtration equipment. Her posture, that night, with her coccyx against something and looking down the length of her legs, was awfully close to the way Himself used to stand around. She indicated C.T.'s door with her head.

'I gather he's been in there a while.'

'I've been waiting here coming up on an hour.'

She looked pained for him as her tiny eyebrows (unplucked, just naturally tiny and arched) went up. 'You've had nothing to eat, then, yet?'

'I was *summoned*.'

Tavis's voice in there: 'I'll invite you right here and now to sit in my lap and let me make such soothing sounds as There There There.'

'Want my Mommy and *Daddy*.'

Avril said, 'That's the old turn making those sounds then, and not the air conditioner?' with that smile that was also a kind of wince. An apple appeared from a deep pocket in her smock. 'Happen to have a spare Granny Smith here, to tack body to soul while we wait.'

He smiled tiredly at the big green apple. 'Moms, that's your apple. That's all you're going to eat between 12 and 23, I happen to know.'

Avril made a distended gesture. 'Stuffed. Huge lunch with a set of parents not three hours ago. I've been staggering around since.' Looking at the apple like she had no idea where it'd even come from. 'I'll probably pitch this out.'

'You will not.'

'Please,' rising from the desk's edge without seeming to use muscles, apple held out like something distasteful, cigarette down at her side where it would be putting a hole in the smock if lit. 'You'd be doing us both a favor.'

'You know this drives me bats.'

Orin and Hal's term for this routine is Politeness Roulette. This Moms-thing that makes you hate yourself for telling her the truth about any kind of problem because of what the consequences will be for her. It's like to report any sort of need or problem is to mug her. Orin and Hal had this bit, during Family Trivia sometimes: 'Please, I'm not using this oxygen anyway.' 'What, this old limb? Take it. In the way all the time. Take it.' 'But it's a gorgeous bowel movement, Mario — the living room rug needed something, I didn't know what til right this very moment.' The special fantodish chill of feeling both complicit and obliged. Hal despised the way he always reacted, taking the apple, pretending to pretend his reluctance to eat her supper was a pretense. Orin believed she did it all on purpose, which was way too easy. He said she went around with her feelings out in front of her with an arm around the feelings' windpipe and a Clock 9 mm. to the feelings' temple like a terrorist with a hostage, daring you to shoot.

The Moms held the red binder out to Hal without moving. The apple was good-sour but perfumy from the pocket of the Moms's smock, and it stimulated a torrent of saliva. The binder had different little informal and action photos from the waiting-room walls, and offprints of clippings, and three rings for the packet of guidelines and Honor-Code pledges, all done up in a Gothic ital.

Hal looked up from the binder, indicating C.T.'s office with his head. 'You're taking the girl around yourself?'

'We're encouragingly short-staffed.' She leaned way forward and looked in at C.T. so he could see she was out here. She smiled.

Hal followed her look. 'The girl's name's Tina something and she'll come up to about your knee.'

'Echt,' Avril said, looking at something on a printout.

Hal looked at her while he chewed. 'You don't like her already?'

'Tina Echt. Pawtucket. Father apparently some sort of unleavened baker, mother a public relations person for the Red Sox A.A.A. baseball there.'

Hal had to wipe his chin as he smiled. 'Triple-A. Not A.A.A.'

Avril was leaning forward at the waist with the binder to her breast the way females hold flat things, still trying to catch the Headmaster's eye.

Hal said 'Lord she is a small one isn't she.'

'I can't see her being more than maybe five.'

‘Oh golly let’s see: age seven, high I.Q., somewhat impoverished-looking M.M.P.I., played out of Providence Racquet and Bath in East Providence. Ranked thirty-first in Eastern 12’s as of June.’

‘She can’t be much taller than her damn stick out there, when she plays. Schtitt’s going to keep her here what, twelve years?’

‘The girl’s father has been calling about admission for her for over two years, Charles said.’

‘He was doing that thing about taking skulls apart and she yelled bloody murder.’

Avril’s laugh’s onset was high-pitched and alarming and distinctive, so now at least C.T. would for sure know the Moms was out here waiting and would wind things up and maybe get to Hal so Hal could go get high in secret. ‘Well good for her,’ Avril said. Every time his left foot came down he either dipped down or raised up briefly to tip-toe, flexing the ankle. ‘Ten years here and she’ll lose her mind. If she starts at seven she’ll either be ready for the Show at fourteen or by fourteen she’ll start getting that burned-out look that makes you want to wave your hand in front of her face.’

There was the sound of Tavis’s squeaky right Nunn Bush pacing faster, which meant real conclusion. ‘I’m going to predict it’s probably hard to see yourself as a great athlete at this stage, Tina, not being able to see over the net yet, but possibly even harder to see yourself as providing entertainment, engaging people’s attention. As a high-velocity object people can project themselves onto, forgetting their own limitations in the face of the nearly limitless potential someone as young as yourself represents.’

The apple generated tremendous amounts of saliva. ‘He’ll put her in the Show before menses, and then by fourteen she’ll be like old coal in the bottom of a backyard grill.’

The Moms was snapping her fingers silently and working her forehead. ‘There’s some term for coals reduced to residue after all day in a grill. I’m trying to think.’

Hal hates this. ‘Clinkers,’ he said instantly. ‘From klinker low German and klinckaerd old Dutch, to sound, ring, nominated to substantive around 1769: a hard mass formed by the fusion of the earthy impurities of like coal, iron ore, limestone.’ He hated it that she could even dream he’d be taken in by the aphasiac furrowing and finger-snapping, and then that he’s always so pleased to play along. Is it showing off if you hate it?

‘Clinker.’

‘A grill wouldn’t have clinkers. Charcoal’s refined to burn right down to dust. Clinkers are sort of metallic, I think. See for example the ring-dash-sound etymology.’

‘I like to suspect this is why so many of our older players like to project me into this carnival-barker persona with tiny balance sheets revolving in my eyes, that I’m up-front with every incoming addition to our family that this is where the resources come from for professional tennis, and for the North American junior development system for gifted children who want to scale the heights to professionalism or to a competitive college career, and so ultimately for an Academy like this one’s considerable operating expenses, and for scholarships like the partial one we’re so happy to be able to offer your parents Tina.’

‘So then perhaps you’d care to join us for dinner. We’ll also have Ms. Echt if she can stay up that long.’

The core made a very-muffled-cymbal sound in wastebasket. ‘I can’t get out of dawns. Wayne and I are supposed to play Slobodan and Hartigan at some corporate-spectacle thing at Auburndale right after lunch.’

‘Have you had Barry speak to Gerhardt about the ankle not getting better?’

‘The clay’ll be good to it. Schtitt knows all about the ankle.’

‘Well best of British luck to you both.’ Avril’s purse looked more like soft luggage than like a purse. ‘May I lend you the key to the kitchen, then.’

It’s always the Mom’s left shoulder Hal looks over, whenever he orbits, and his plans emerged between Avril’s invitations to accept some sort of politeness-act. ‘The Darkness and I were going to blast down the hill and grab something if and when I ever get out of here.’

‘Oh.’

‘Maybe Pemulis too, I think Pemulis said.’

‘Well do not, under any circumstances, enjoy yourself.’

Echt and Tavis were both standing, now, in there. Their handshake looked, for the first split-second he looked, like C.T. was jacking off and the little girl was going Sieg Heil. Hal thought he was maybe starting to lose his mind. Even the meat of the Granny Smith smelled like perfume.

Charles Tavis is not a buffoon. The thing that’s keeping things so tensely quiet out here amid all this waiting-room blue is that there are historically at least two Charles Tavis, the three older boys know. The openly cross-sectional and free-associating and dithering hand-wringing Total-Worry persona is really Tavis’s version of social composure, his way of trying to get along with you. But just ask Michael Pemulis, whose sneakers have been on Tavis’s carpet so often they’ve left an unvacuumable impression in the checked Antron: when Tavis loses his composure, when the integrity or smooth function of the Academy or his unquestioned place at the E.T.A. tiller is God forbid threatened, Hal’s openly adjustable uncle becomes a different man, one not to be fucked with. It’s not necessarily pejorative to compare a cornered bureaucrat to a cornered rat. The danger-sign to watch out for is if Tavis suddenly gets very quiet and very still. Because then he seems, perspectively, to grow. He seems, sitting there, to rush in at you, dopplering in at a whisper. Almost looming over you from across the huge desk. If shit meets administrative fan, kids coming out of his mandible-doored office come out pale and rubbing their eyes, not from tears but from this depth-perspective skewing that C.T. suddenly effects.

Hal keeps checking for jaw-drool with the back of his hand. Pemulis, in a Cyrillic-lettered T-shirt, takes off the hat and looks around himself and makes reflexive tie-straightening movements, taking one last look at his lines on the printout while Axford stands there needing three tries to work the outside door’s knob. Ann Kittenplan, on the other hand, wears an expression of almost regal calm, and precedes them through the inner door like someone stepping down off a dais.

And it also seems somehow sinister that she’s apparently been in here all this time, this Clenette person, one of the nine- month temps from down the hill, pretty-eyed and so black she’s got a bluish cast, with hair ironed straight and then pinned up and the standard E.T.A.-custodial teal-blue zip-upable jumpsuit, emptying Tavis’s personal brass wastebaskets into her big cart with its gray canvas sides. The way she stares at a point just to the side of Hal’s own stare as she and her cart wait at C.T.’s inner door for Hal and the others to be ushered through. The cart has a crazy wheel, and clatters a bit even buried in shag, trying to maneuver around as she reverses back along the vestibule’s wall. Neither Schtitt nor deLint is in here, but from the hiss of Pemulis’s inhale Hal can tell that Dr. Dolores Rusk is in the room even before he takes his eyes from C.T. who’s sitting pulsing with swollen proximity in his seagrass swivel-chair and almost done bending a giant paper clip into a sort of cardioid or sloppy circle: Tavis’s window-lit shadow now reaches all the way past the StairBlaster to the red-and-gray-fabric ottoman along the east wall, sure enough in which sits Rusk, her hose laddered and face betraying nothing. Pemulis is just finishing moving his feet precisely into their familiar impressions in the office carpet when C.T., seeming direly to rise from his chair without getting up, quietly asks the room’s last occupant — the scrubbed young button-

nosed urologist in an O.N.A.N.T.A. blazer, severely underdue at E.T.A., seated back in the shadow of the corner, so he's hidden right behind them from the start and there's the opportunity for this stagy incriminating-type whirl-and-kertwang-face from Axford and Hal as they hear Charles Tavis addressing the urine expert behind them, asking him very quietly please to close both doors.

SUNDAY NOV 8, 1992

THE MEDUSA VS THE ODALISQUE

Like most young people genetically hard-wired for a secret drug problem, Hal Incandenza also has severe compulsion-issues around nicotine and sugar. Because smoking will simply kill you during drills, Hal tries to mollify as the nicotine craving best he can by dipping Kodiak Wintergreen Smokeless Tobacco several times daily, spitting into either a cherished old childhood NASA glass or the empty can of Spiru-Tein High Protein Breakfast Beverage. Hal's more serious problem is with sucrose because he craves it always but finds now lately that any sugar-infusion above a 56-gram AminoPal High Energy Bar induces odd and unpleasant emotional states that don't do him one bit of good on court.

Himself went through this subphase of being obsessed with the idea of audiences' relationships with various sorts of shows. One was called *'The Medusa v. The Odalisque'* and was a film of a fake stage-production at Ford's Theater in Wash. DC. The extras are a well-dressed audience of guys in muttonchops and ladies with paper fans who fill the place from first row to the rear of the balcony's boxes, and they're watching an incredibly violent little playlet called *'The Medusa v. The Odalisque,'* the plot of which is that the mythic Medusa, snake-haired and armed with a sword and well-polished shield, is fighting to the death against L'Odalisque de Ste. Thérèse, a character out of old Québécois mythology who was so inhumanly gorgeous that anyone who looked at her turned instantly into a human-sized precious gem. A pretty natural foil for the Medusa, obviously, the Odalisque has only a nail-file instead of a sword, but also has a well-wielded makeup mirror, and she and the Medusa are each trying to position just right so that the other gets a glimpse of its own reflection and gets instantly petrified or gemified or whatever. In the film it's pretty clear from their milky-pixeled translucence and insubstantiality that they're holograms, but it's not clear whether the audience is supposed to see them as ghosts or wraiths or 'real' mythic entities or what. The theater's audience is clearly entertained to the gills, because they keep spontaneously applauding...except as the shield and little mirror get whipped around and brandished at various strategic angles, certain members of the playlet's well-dressed audience eventually start catching disastrous glimpses of the combatants' fatal reflections, and instantly get transformed into ruby statues in their front-row seats. The cartridge goes on like this until there's nobody left in the Ford's Theater seats animate enough to applaud, and it ends with the two foils still rumbling like mad before an audience of varicolored stone. *'The Medusa v. The Odalisque's'* own audience ends up feeling teased and vaguely cheated, and the thing had only a regional release, and it's now next to impossible to find.

But that wasn't by any stretch of the imagination the James O. Incandenza film that audiences hated the most. The most hated Incandenza film, a variable-length one called *The Joke,*

had only a brief theatrical release. The art-film theaters' marquees and posters and ads for the thing were all required to say something like *'THE JOKE': You Are Strongly Advised NOT To Shell Out Money to See This Film*, which art-film habitues thought was cleverly ironic, and so they'd shell out for tickets and file in in their sweater vests and tweeds and dirndls and tank up on espresso at the concession stand and find seats and sit down and make those little pre-movie leg and posture adjustments, and look around with that sort of vacant intensity. The patrons figured the big cameras down by the red-lit EXITS on either side of the screen were there for like an ad or a behind-the-scenes documentary or something. That is, until the lights went down and the film started up and what was on the screen was just a wide-angled shot of the art-film theater's audience filing in with espressos and finding seats and sitting down and looking around and getting adjusted and saying knowledgeable little pre-movie things to their dates about what the cameras probably signified, artistically, and settling in as the lights dimmed and facing the screen (i.e. now themselves) with excited smiles, smiles which the screen's projection now revealed as just starting to drop from the faces of the audience as the audience saw row after row of itself staring back, with less and less expectant and more and more blank and then puzzled and then eventually pissed-off facial expressions.

The Joke's total running time was exactly as long as there was even one cross-legged patron left in the theater to watch his own huge projected image gazing back down at him with the special distaste of a disgusted and ripped-off-feeling art-film patron. Incandenza had confessed that he'd loved the fact that *The Joke* was so publicly static and simple-minded and dumb, and that those rare critics who defended the film by arguing that the simple-minded stasis was precisely the film's aesthetic thesis were dead wrong, as usual.

WEDNESDAY NOV 11, 1992

MIDNIGHT

Mario Incandenza's nineteenth birthday will be Wednesday 25 November, the day before Thanksgiving. His insomnia worsens. For a couple nights in the HmH living room he tries falling asleep to WODS, an AM-fringe outfit that plays narcotizing orchestral arrangements of old Carpenters songs. It makes things worse. It's weird to feel like you miss someone you're not even sure you know.

He gets a serious burn on his pelvis leaning against a hot steel stove talking to Mrs. Clarke. His hip is swaddled in bandages under Orin's old corduroys, and there's a sucking sound of salve when he walks, late at night, unable to sleep. The birth-related disability that wasn't even definitively diagnosed until Mario was six and had let Orin tattoo his shoulder with the red coil of an immersion heater is called Familial Dysautonomia, a neurological deficit whereby he can't feel physical pain very well. A lot of the E.T.A.s kid him about they should have such problems, and even Hal's sometimes felt a twinge of envy about it, but the defect is a serious hassle and actually very dangerous, see for instance the burnt pelvis, which wasn't even discovered until Mrs. Clarke thought she smelled her eggplant overcooking.

At HmH he lies on the air mattress in a tight down bag on the edge of the violet plant-light with the wind rattling the big east window, listening to buttery violins and what sounds like a zither. There's sometimes a scream upstairs, shrill and drawn out, from where C.T.'s and the Moms's rooms are. Mario listens closely for whether the sound ends up as Avril laughing or Avril

screaming. She gets night terrors, which are like nightmares but worse, and which afflict small children and apparently also adults who eat the day's biggest meal right before bed.

Hal had asked him when he'll start coming back to their room to sleep, which made Mario feel good.

He can't tell if Hal is sad. He is having a harder and harder time reading Hal's states of mind or whether he's in good spirits.

This worries him. He used to be able to sort of preverbally know in his stomach generally where Hal was and what he was doing, even if Hal was far away and playing or if Mario was away, and now he can't anymore. Feel it. This worries him and feels like when you've lost something important in a dream and you can't even remember what it was but it's important. Mario loves Hal so much it makes his heart beat hard.

He hadn't told the Moms he was going to walk around after he left her office after their interface: Avril usually tries in a nonintrusive way to discourage Mario from taking walks at night, because he doesn't see well at night, and the areas around the E.T.A. hill are not the best neighborhood, and there's no skirting the fact that Mario would be easy prey for just about anybody, physically. And, though one perk of Familial Dysautonomia is a relative physical fearlessness, Mario keeps to a pretty limited area during insomniacal strolls, out of deference to Avril's worry. He'll sometimes walk around the grounds of the Enfield Marine P.H.H. at the bottom of the hill's east side because they're pretty much enclosed, and he knows a couple of the E.M. Security officers from when his father got them to portray Boston police in his whimsical *Dial C for Concupiscence*; and he likes the E.M. grounds at night because the different brick houses' window-light is yellow lamplight and he can see people on the ground floors all together playing cards or talking. And a lot of the people in the different brick houses are damaged or askew and lean hard to one side or are twisted into themselves, through the windows, and he can feel his heart going out into the world through them, which is good for insomnia. A woman's voice, calling for help without any real urgency — not like the screams that signify the Moms laughing or screaming at night — sounds from a darkened upper window. And across the little street that's crammed with cars is Ennet's House, where the Headmistress has a disability and had had a wheelchair ramp installed and has twice invited Mario in during the day for a Caffeine-Free Millennial Fizzy, and Mario likes the place: it's crowded and noisy and none of the furniture has protective plastic wrap, but nobody notices anybody else or comments on a disability and the Headmistress is kind to the people and the people cry in front of each other. The inside of it smells like an ashtray, but Mario's felt good both times in Ennet's House because it's very real; people are crying and making noise and getting less unhappy, and once he heard somebody say God with a straight face and nobody looked at them or looked down or smiled in any sort of way where you could tell they were worried inside.

People from the public can't be in there after 2300, though, because they have a Curfew, so Mario just totters past on the broken sidewalk and looks in the ground windows at all the different people. Every window is lit up with light and some are slid partly open, and there is the noise of being outside a house full of people. From one of the upstairs windows facing the street comes a voice going 'Give it here, give it here.' Someone is crying and someone else is either laughing or coughing very hard. An irritable man's voice from a kitchen window at the side says something to somebody else that just said something like 'So get dentures,' followed by curse words. Another upstairs window, over at the side by the wheelchair ramp and the kitchen window, has a billowing lengthwise flag for a curtain and an old bumper sticker on the glass half scraped off so it says ONE DAY A in cursive.

A hard east wind blows Mario's thin hair straight back off his head. His standing angle is 50°. A female in a little fur coat and uncomfortable-looking bluejeans and tall shoes clicks past on the sidewalk and goes up the ramp into Ennet's back door without indicating she saw somebody with a really big head standing outside the kitchen window. The lady had had on so much makeup she'd looked unwell but the wake of her passage smells very good. For some reason Mario felt like the person behind the flag in the window was also a female.

A lot of people are appearing out of the dark and walking by to go in for the Curfew. They all seem afraid and scowl to pretend they're not shy. The men have their hands in their coat pockets and the females have their hands at their coats' throats, keeping them shut. Mario is suddenly so sleepy he's not sure he can get up the hill to go home.

Mario's forward list is perfect for walking up hills. His pelvis's salve makes a sound but doesn't hurt. In the big protruding window of Ennet's House's Headmistress's office that the window overlooks the Avenue and the train tracks and the Ngs' clean Father and Son Grocery, where they give Mario yellow tea in the A.M. when he comes by when it's cold, the last thing Mario can see, before the hillside's trees close behind him, is a wide square-headed boy bent over something he's writing at the Headmistress's black desk, licking a pencil-end and hunched all uncomfortably with one arm curled out around what he's writing in, like a slow boy over a class theme at Rindge and Latin Special.

WEDNESDAY NOV 11 1992

EVENING

1810h., 133 kids and thirteen assorted staff sitting down at suppertime, the E.T.A. dining hall taking most of the first floor of West House, a sort of airy atrium-like commons, broad and knotty-pine-panelled, with ceiling fans high overhead circulating the rich and slightly sour smell of bulk-prepared food, the oceanic sound of 20 different tables' conversation, the flat clink of utensils on plates, much chewing, the clank and tinkle of the dishwasher's conveyor belt behind the tray-bus window with its sign saying YR MOTHER DOES NOT LIVE HERE; BUS YR TRAY, the muffled shouts of kitchen workers. The top upperclassmen get the best table, an unspoken tradition, the one nearest the gas fireplace in winter and the AC venting in July, the one whose chairs' seats and backs have thin corduroy cushions in E.T.A. red and gray. The prorectors have their own permanent table near the carbs bar.

The players can all do some very serious eating, some of them still in sweaty sweats with salt-stiff hair, too hungry after P.M.s to shower before refueling. Coed tables are quietly discouraged. Ortho ('The Darkness') Stice, E.T.A.'s 16's A-1, has just this P.M. gone three sets with Hal Incandenza, seventeen, taking Hal all the way to 7-5 in the third in an off-record exhibitionish engagement Schtitt had them play out on the West Courts that afternoon for reasons no one has yet pinned down. The match's audience had grown steadily as other challenges got done and people came up from the weight room and showers. News that Stice had very nearly beaten Inc has made its way around the tables, and lots of younger kids keep looking to the best table and Stice, sixteen, crew-cutted and still in his black Fila sweats with no shirt under the unzipped top, assembling a complex sandwich on his plate, and they let their eyes widen to communicate awe: rank has its privileges.

Stice, oblivious, bites into his sandwich like it's the wrist of an assailant. The only sound at the table for the first few minutes is of forkwork and mastication and the slight gasping sounds

of people trying to breathe while they eat. You rarely speak for the first few minutes here, eating. Supper is deadly-serious. Some of the kids even start in on their trays while still in line at the milk dispenser. Coyle bites in. Wayne has made his entree into a sandwich and lowers and bites. Keith Freer's eyes are half closed as his jaw muscles bulge and slacken. Some of the players' inclined heads are hard to see over the height of their food. Struck and Schacht, side by side, bite in sync and chew. The only one at the table not eating like a refugee is Trevor Axford, who as a small child back in Short Beach CT once fell off his bike onto his head and received a tiny lesion-type brain injury after which all food everywhere tastes horrible to him. His clearest explanation of the way food tastes to him is that it tastes the way vomit smells. He's discouraged from speaking at meals and holds his nose while he eats and eats with the neutral joyless expression of somebody dispensing fuel into his car.

Hal Incandenza dismantles the stelliform-mold shape E.T.A. mashed potatoes come in, mixing baby-boileds in with the mashed. Jim Troeltsch keeps holding a clear tumbler of milk up to the ceiling's full-spectrum lights and swirling the milk around in the light, looking at it. Pemulis chews with his mouth open, producing moist noises, a habit so family-of-origin-ingrained no amount of peer pressure can break him of it.

Ortho Stice loves his folks to distraction, but not blindly, and every holiday home to Partridge KS he memorizes highlights of their connubial battles so he can regale the E.T.A. upperclass-men with them, mostly at meals, after the initial forkwork and gasping have died down and people have returned to sufficient levels of blood-sugar and awareness of their surroundings to be regaled. Ortho Slice's flattop crew cut and penchant for cuff-rolled bluejeans and button-down short-sleeves with a checkered pattern are strictly from hick. Some of them listen, drifting in and out. Troeltsch and Pemulis are arguing about whether E.T.A.'s kitchen staff has started trying to slip them powdered milk on the sly. Freer and Wayne are still hunched and chewing, very intent. Struck keeps both elbows on the table at all times and utensils in his clenched fists like a parody of a man eating. Pemulis always listens to Stice's tales, often repeating little phrases, shaking his head in admiration.

Hal's made an intricate fortification-structure of his food, complete with turrets and archer-slits, and even though he's not much eating or drinking his six cranberry juices he keeps swallowing a lot, studying his structure. As the eating slows down at the best table the more observant of them give Hal tiny sideways looks, the players' different CPUs humming through Decision Trees on whether a still-publicly-undiscussed but much-rumored showdown with Dr. Tavis and the urology guy, plus now this near-loss to Ortho Stice, might not have shaken Inc along some psychic competitive fault-line. A terrible kind of community energy in the whole dining hall, a kind of anxious sound-carpet under the surf of voices and the tinkle of flatware, and The Darkness is at some vague center of this energy, somehow, you can feel.

Struck, Pemulis, Schacht and Freer have all had sexual intercourse. Coyle's a probable, but reticent. Axford has trouble even publicly showering, much less submitting nude to a female's inspection. Hal is maybe the one male E.T.A. for whom lifetime virginity is a conscious goal. And with Wayne and Stice the question seems somehow beside the point.

Jim Troeltsch and sex: no way. Troeltsch's never come close to even dating anybody. Some guys here never do. Troeltsch, Shaw, Axford: any sort of sexual tension makes them feel like they need more oxygen than is available right then. It's the same at all the academies, this asexual contingent. Some junior players don't have the emotional juice left over after tennis to face what dating requires. E.T.A. is mostly a comparatively unsexual place, surprisingly so considering the

constant roar and gurgle here of adolescent glands, the emphasis on physicality, the fears of mediocrity, the back- and-forth struggles with ego, the loneliness and close proximity.

The tendency at E.T.A. is to take the entree and to take wheat bread and make it a sandwich, for the extra carbs. The Academy's wheat bread is bicycled in by guys in Birkenstock sandals from Bread & Circus Quality Provisions in Cambridge, because it's got to be not only sugarless but low in glutens, which Tavis and Schtitt believe promote torpor and excess mucus. With supper they can choose milk or else cranberry juice, that most carb-caloric of juices, which froths redly in its own clear dispenser by the salad bar. The milk dispenser stands alone against the west wall, a big huge 24-liter three-bagger, the milk inserted in ovaloid mammarial bags into its refrigerated cabinet of brushed steel. There's two levers for skim and one for supposedly high-lecithin chocolate skim, which every new E.T.A. tries exactly once and discovers tastes like skim with a brown crayon melted into it. There's a sign in a kitchen-staffer's crude black block caps taped to the milk dispenser's facade that says MILK IS FILLING; DRINK WHAT YOU TAKE.

The line for seconds on entrees now stretches out past the milk dispenser. The best thing about satiation and slowing down on the eating is leaning back and feeling autolysis start in on what you ate and tending to your teeth while you gaze around the airy room at crowds and clumps of kids, observing behaviors and pathologies with a clear and sated head. The littler kids running in tight circles trying to follow the shadow of the ceiling fan. Girls laughing crumpled against their seatmates' shoulders. The blurred sexuality and indecisive postures of puberty. Two marginal male 16's have their heads directly in the bowls in the salad bar, and some of the surrounding females are commenting. In the front of the Seconds line is a little boy who's tearing at a bagel with great violent movements of head and neck.

Hal's mouth feels like it's overflowing with spit. He should by all rights have lost to Stice today, and he knows it. Stice was in physical control of the third set. Stice choked it away only because he didn't believe he could beat Hal yet, deep down, since Hal's competitive explosion. But now it's a whole new Hal, a Hal who does not get high, or hide, a Hal who in 29 days is going to hand his own personal urine over to authority figures with a wide smile and exemplary posture and not a secretive thought in his head. Hal had played with a wide-eyed but unfocused look of a tennis player right on the verge of falling apart out there, and yet strangely affectless, as if deep inside some well of his own private troubles.

A girl with bangs rises and tings her tumbler with a spoon to make an announcement; nobody pays any attention.

Stice wills himself again not to wonder what had passed with the Headmaster and the O.N.A.N.T.A. urologist, whose lab-equipped van's unscheduled appearance in the E.T.A. parking lot yesterday afternoon had caused a tsunami of panic just before supper, especially since Pemulis and his supply of lab-ready Visine bottles were nowhere to be found. If you could open Stice's head you'd see a wheel inside another wheel, gears and cogs being widgeted into place.

Little 14-C Bernard Makulic, two tables over from the dispenser and constitutionally delicate and not long for E.T.A., throws up in a silky tan cataract onto the floor by his chair, and there is the shriek of the feet of other chairs being scooted away in a star pattern away from the table, and the protracted vowels of repulsed children.

The sad pretty sunset out over the hilltops of Newton cannot be seen because the room's big windows face east, out over the hillside. A couple of the black girls who work kitchen and custodial day-shifts can be seen against the shadowy tree-line, making their way down the steep hillside's unauthorized path back down to the halfway-house thing for wretched people who come up here to work short-time. The girls' bright cheap jackets are vivid in the shadow and trees' tangle.

Starting with the mysterious and continuing fall of acoustic ceiling-tiles from their places in the subdorms' drop ceilings, inanimate objects had begun to be moved, out of nowhere appearing in wildly inappropriate places around E.T.A. for the past couple months in a steadily accelerating and troubling cycle. Last week a grounds-crew lawnmower sitting clean and silent and somehow menacing in the middle of the dawn kitchen gave Mrs. Clarke the fantods and resulted in Eggplant Parmesan for two suppers in a row, which sent shock waves. Yesterday A.M. there'd been a cannesque ball machine — no small feat to move around anywhere or get through doors — in the Females' Sauna, which some of the upperclass girls had found and screamed at when they went in for the dawn saunas that help alleviate some vague female-type problem that none of the guys quite fathom. And two black girls on the breakfast crew reportedly found a set of squeegees on the dining hall's north wall, several meters up and hung crossed in a kind of saltire, placed there by parties unknown. The A.M. groundsmen reportedly took the things down, and now they're leaning by the fireplace. The inappropriate found objects have had a tektitic and sinister aspect: none of the cheery odor of regular pranksterism; they're not funny. To varying degrees they've given everyone the fantods.

First thing after supper Hal drops around to Schtitt's room off the Comm.-Ad. lobby to go through the motions of getting some input on just what had gone so terribly wrong against Stice. Also to get maybe some kind of bead on why he'd had to play *The Darkness* publicly in the first place, so close to the WhataBurger. I.e. like what the exhibition might have signified. This endless tension among E.T.A.s about how the coaches are seeing you, gauging your progress — is your stock going up or down.

But A. deLint's the only one in there, working on some sort of oversized spreadsheetish chart, lying prone and shirtless on the bare floor with his chin in his hand and a pungent Magic Marker, and says Schtitt has gone off somewhere after confections. Hal's subjected to several minutes of deLint's take on the match, complete with stats out of the prorektor's head. DeLint's back is pale and constellated with red pits of old pimples, though the back's nothing compared to Struck's or Shaw's back. There's a cane chair and a wood chair. DeLint's laptop screen pulses grayly on the floor next to him. Schtitt's room's overlit and there's no dust anywhere, not even in the very corners. Stice's and Wayne's names are at the top of the huge chart on the floor, but Hal's name isn't. Hal says he can't tell whether he'd made some sort of basic tactical error or whether he just wasn't quite up to snuff this afternoon or what.

'You just never quite occurred out there, kid,' deLint apprises him. He has regressed certain figures to back up this nonoccurrence. His choice of words chills Hal to the root.

After which, during what's supposed to be mandatory P.M. Study Period, and despite the three chapters of Boards-prep his Boards-prep schedule calls for, Hal sits alone up in Viewing Room 6, the bad leg out along the couch in front of him, flexing the bad ankle idly, holding the other leg's knee to his chest, squeezing a ball but with the hand he doesn't play with, chewing Kodiak and spitting directly into an unlined wastebasket, his expression neutral, watching some cartridges of his late father's entertainments. Anyone else looking at him in there tonight would call Hal depressed.

Each of the cartridges is a carefully labelled black diskette; they're all signed neatly out on the clipboard by the egg-shaped glass bookshelf and are loaded in the cueing slots and waiting to drop, in order, and be digitally decoded. He watches several cartridges all in a row. He watches *The American Century as Seen Through a Brick* and *Pre-Nuptial Agreement of Heaven and Hell* and then part of *Valuable Coupon Has Been Removed*. He watches parts of *Death in Scarsdale* and *Various Small Flames* and *Kinds of Pain*. The Viewing Room has insulated panelling behind the wallpaper and is essentially soundproof. Hal watches half of the *Medusa v. Odalisque* but takes it out abruptly when people in the audience start getting turned to stone.

There are two cartridges on V.R. 6's glass shelves of Himself getting interviewed in various arty Community-Access-cable-type forums, which Hal declines to watch.

The lights' slight flicker and subtle change in the pressure of the room is from the E.T.A. furnaces kicking on way down in the tunnels below Comm.-Ad. Hal shifts uneasily on the couch, spitting into the wastecan. The very faint smell of burnt dust is also from the furnace.

A minor short didactic one Hal likes and runs twice in a row is *Wave Bye-Bye to the Bureaucrat*. A bureaucrat in some kind of sterile fluorescent-lit office complex is a fantastically efficient worker when awake, but he has this terrible problem waking up in the A.M., and is consistently late to work, which in a bureaucracy is idiosyncratic and disorderly and wholly unacceptable, and we see this bureaucrat getting called in to his supervisor's pebbled-glass cubicle, and the supervisor, who wears a severely dated leisure suit with his shirt-collar flaring out on either side of its rust-colored lapels, tells the bureaucrat that's he's a good worker and a fine man, but that this chronic tardiness in the A.M. is simply not going to fly, and if it happens one more time the bureaucrat is going to have to find another fluorescent-lit office complex to work in. It's no accident that in a bureaucracy getting fired is called 'termination,' as in ontological erasure, and the bureaucrat leaves his supervisor's cubicle duly shaken.

That night he and his wife go through their Bauhaus condominium collecting every alarm clock they own, each one of which is electric and digital and extremely precise, and they festoon their bedroom with them, so there are a dozen timepieces with their alarms all set for 0615h. But that night there's a power failure, and all the clocks lose an hour or just sit there blinking 0000h. over and over, and the bureaucrat still oversleeps the next A.M. He wakes late, lies there for a moment staring at a blinking 0000. He shrieks, clutches his head, throws on wrinkled clothes, ties his shoes in the elevator, shaves in the car, blasting through red lights on the way to the commuter rail. The 0816 train to the City pulls in to the station's lower level just as the crazed bureaucrat's car screeches into the station's parking lot, and the bureaucrat can see the top of the train sitting there idling from across the open lot. This is the very last temporally feasible train: if the bureaucrat misses this train he'll be late again, and terminated. He hauls into a Handicapped spot and leaves the car there at a crazy angle, vaults the turnstile, and takes the stairs down to the platform seven at a time, sweaty and bug-eyed. People scream and dive out of his way. As he careers down the long stairway he keeps his crazed eyes on the open doors of the 0816 train, willing them to stay open just a little longer. Finally, filmed in a glacial slo-mo, the bureaucrat leaps from the seventh-to-the-bottom step and lunges toward the train's open doors, and right in mid-lunge smashes headlong into an earnest-faced little kid with thick glasses and a bow-tie and those nerdy little schoolboy-shorts who's tottering along the platform under a tall armful of carefully wrapped packages. Kerwham, they collide. Bureaucrat and kid both stagger back from the impact. The kid's packages go flying all over the place. The kid recovers his balance and stands there stunned, glasses and bow-tie askew. The bureaucrat looks frantically from the kid to the litter of packages to the kid to the train's doors, which are still open. The train thrums. Its interior is fluorescent-lit and

filled with employed, ontologically secure bureaucrats. You can hear the station's PA announcer saying something tinny and garbled about departure. The stream of platform foot-traffic opens around the bureaucrat and the stunned boy and the litter of packages. The film's bureaucrat's buggy eyes keep going back and forth between the train's open doors and the little kid, who's looking steadily up at him, almost studious, his eyes big and liquid behind the lenses. Hal doesn't remember who played the bureaucrat, either, but it's the kid's name that's driving him bats. The bureaucrat's leaning away, inclined way over toward the train doors, as if his very cells were being pulled that way. But he keeps looking at the kid, the gifts, struggling with himself. It's a clear internal-conflict moment, one of Himself's films' very few. The bureaucrat's eyes suddenly recede back into their normal places in his sockets. He turns from the fluorescent doors and bends to the kid and asks if he's OK and says it'll all be OK. He cleans the kid's spectacles with his pocket handkerchief, Picks the kid's packages up. About halfway through the packages the PA issues something final and the train's doors close with a pressurized hiss. The bureaucrat gently loads the kid back up with packages, neatens them. The train pulls out. The bureaucrat watches the train pull out, expressionless. It's anybody's guess what he's thinking. He straightens the kid's bow-tie, kneeling down the way adults do when they're ministering to a child, and tells him he's sorry about the impact and that it's OK. He turns to go. The platform's mostly empty now. Now the strange moment. The kid cranes his neck around the packages and looks up at the guy as he starts to walk away:

'Mister?' the kid says. 'Are you Jesus?'

'Don't I wish,' the ex-bureaucrat says over his shoulder, walking away, as the kid shifts the packages and frees one little hand to wave Bye at the guy's topcoat's back as the camera recedes from the platform and picks up speed.

Wave Bye-Bye to the Bureaucrat remains Mario's favorite of all their late father's entertainments, possibly because of its unhip earnestness. Though to Mario he always maintains it's basically goo, Hal secretly likes it, too, and likes to project himself imaginatively into the ex-bureaucrat's character on the leisurely drive home toward ontological erasure.

As a kind of weird self-punishment, Hal also plans to subject himself to the horrific Fun with Teeth and Baby Pictures of Famous Dictators, then finally to one of Himself's posthumous hits, a cartridge called Blood Sister: One Tough Nun that he'd always found kind of gratuitously nasty and overwrought, but which Hal has no idea that this piece of entertainment actually germinated out of James O. Incandenza's one brief and unpleasant experience with Boston AA, in the mid-'90s, when Himself lasted two and a half months and then drifted gradually away, turned off by the simplistic God-stuff and covert dogma.

'AIYEE!' cries the man, rushing at the nun, wielding a power tool.

The tough-looking nun yells 'AIYEE!' right back as she kicks at him expertly, her habit's skirts whipping complexly around her. The combatants circle each other warily in the abandoned warehouse, both growling. The nun's wimple is askew and soiled; the back of her hand, held out in a bluish martial-art fist, displays part of a faded tattoo, some wicked-clawed bird of prey. The cartridge opens like this, in violent medias res, then freezes in the middle of the nun's leaping kick, and its title, *Blood Sister: One Tough Nun*, gets matte-dissolved in and bleeds lurid blood-colored light down into the performance credits rolling across the screen's bottom. Bridget Boone and Frances L. Unwin have come in uninvited and joined Hal in V.R. 6 and are curled up against the

arms of the room's other recumbency, their feet touching at the soles, Boone eating unauthorized frozen yogurt from a cylindrical carton. Hal's turned the rheostat down low, and the film's title and credits make their faces glow redly. Bridget Boone extends the confection-carton over in Hal's direction in an inviting way, and by way of declining Hal points to the lump of Kodiak in his cheek. He appears to be studying the scrolling credits very closely.

'So what is this?' Fran Unwin says.

Hal looks over at her very slowly, then even more slowly raises his right arm and points around the tennis ball he's squeezing at the monitor, where the cartridge's 50-point title is still trickling redly over the credits and frozen scene.

Bridget Boone gives him a look. 'What's up your particular butt?'

'I'm isolating. I came in here to be by myself.'

'So then you should've locked the door.'

'Except there aren't locks on the V.R. doors, as you quite well know.'

Round-faced Frannie Unwin says 'Sshhh.'

Then too sometimes Boone plays with the laden spoon, makes it fly around in front of her face like a child's plane before inverting it and sticking it in. 'Maybe this is partly because this is a public room, for everybody, that your thinking person probably wouldn't choose to isolate in.'

Hal leans over to spit and lets the spit hang for a while before he lets it go, so it hangs there slowly distending.

Boone withdraws the clean spoon just as slowly. 'No matter how sullen and pouty that person is over that person's play or near-loss in full view of a whole crowd that day, I hear.'

'Bridget, I forgot to tell you I saw that Rite Aid's having an enormous clearance on emetics. If I were you I'd scoot right over.'

'You are vile.'

Bernadette Longley sticks her long boxy head in the door and sees Bridget Boone and says 'I thought I heard you in here' and comes in uninvited with Jennie Bash in tow.

Hal whimpers.

The Viewing Room is redly dim. Bash asks Unwin what they're watching.

Blood Sister: One Tough Nun, one of Himself's few commercial successes. It was the sort of sleazy-looking shocksploitation film that would have had a two-week run in multiplex theaters 8 and above and then gone right to the featureless brown boxes of magnetic-video limbo. Hal's critical take on the film is that Himself, at certain dark points when abstract theory-issues seemed to provide an escape from the far more wrenching creative work of making humanly true or entertaining cartridges, had made films in certain commercial-type genre modes that so grotesquely exaggerated the formulaic schticks of the genres that they became ironic metacinematic parodies on the genres: 'sub/inversions of the genres,' cognoscenti taken in were wont to call them. The metacinematic-parody idea itself was aloof and over-clever, to Hal's way of thinking, and he's not comfortable with the way Himself always seemed to get seduced by the very commercial formulae he was trying to invert, especially the seductive formulae of violent payback, i.e. the cathartic bloodbath the audience is brought to applaud instead of mourn. Himself's best in this vein was *The Night Wears a Sombrero*, a Langesque metaWestern, with chintzy homemade interior sets but breathtaking exteriors shot outside Tucson AZ, an ambivalent-but-finally-avenging-son story played out against dust-colored skies and big angles of flesh-colored mountain, with minimal splatter, shot men clutching their chests and falling deliciously sideways, all hats staying on at all times.

Hal tries to imagine the tall slumped tremulous stork-shape of Himself inclined at an osteoporotic angle over digital editing equipment for hours on end, deleting and inserting code, arranging *Blood Sister: One Tough Nun* into subversive/inversion, and can't summon one shadowy idea of what Himself might have been feeling as he patiently labored. Maybe that was the point of the thing's metasilliness, to have felt nothing really going on.

All the kids are consummate spectators and are sucked immediately into *Blood Sister's* unfolding narrative. Hal's the only person in the room who isn't 100% absorbed.

The entertainment's uptake is that a tough biker-chick from the mean streets of Toronto is found O.D.'d, beaten up, molested, and robbed of her leather jacket outside the portcullis of a downtown convent and is rescued, nursed, befriended, spiritually guided, and converted by a tough-looking older nun who herself had been hauled out of a life of Harleys, narcotics-dealing and -addiction by an even tougher even older nun, a nun who had herself been saved by a tough ex-biker nun, and so on. The latest saved biker-chick becomes a tough and street-smart nun in the same urban order, and is known on the mean streets as Blood Sister, and rides from parish to parish and is not to be fucked with.

The motivational crux here being that almost this whole order is staffed by nuns who'd been saved from Toronto's mean, dead-end streets by other older tougher saved nuns. So, endless novenas later, Blood Sister eventually feels this transitive spiritual urge to go out and find a troubled adolescent female of her own, to 'save' and bring into the order, thereby discharging her soul's debt to the old tough nun who'd saved her. Through processes obscure, Blood Sister eventually takes on a burn-scarred, deeply troubled adolescent punker-type Toronto girl who is sullen and, yes, reasonably tough, but is also vulnerable and emotionally tormented (the girl's pink shiny burn-scarred face tends to writhe in misery whenever Blood Sister's not looking) by the terrible depredations she's endured as a result of her rapacious and unshakable addiction to crack cocaine, the kind you have to convert and cook up yourself, and with ether, which is highly combustible, and which people used before somebody found out baking soda and temperature-flux would do the same thing, which dates the film's time-period even more clearly than the tough tortured punk girl's violet stelliform coiffure.

So Blood Sister eventually gets the girl clean, by nurturing her through Withdrawal in a locked sacristy; and the girl becomes less sullen by degrees that almost have audible clicks to them — the girl stops trying to dicky the lock of the sacramental-wine cabinet, stops farting on purpose during matins and vespers, stops going up to the Trappists who hang around the convent and asking them for the time and other sly little things to try to make them slip up and speak aloud, etc. Blood Sister, revealing biceps like nobody's business, beats the girl at arm-wrestling; they both laugh; they compare tattoos: this marks the start of a brutally drawn-out Getting-to-Know-and-Trust-You montage, a genre-convention, this montage involving Harley, and long conversational walks filmed at wide-angle, and protracted and basically unwinnable games of charades with the Trappists, plus some quick scenes of Blood Sister finding the girl's Marlboros and dildo-facsimile lighter in the wastebasket, of the girl doing chores under B.S.'s grudgingly approving eye, of candle-lit scripture-study sessions with the girl's finger under each word she reads, of the girl carefully snipping the last bits of split violet ends from her soft brown hair, of the more senior tough nuns punching Blood Sister's shoulder approvingly as the girl's eyes start to get that impending-conversion gleam in them, then, finally, of Blood Sister and the girl habit shopping in a sunlit montage-climax.

This all takes about half an hour.

Hal, who could pass for asleep is in fact is experiencing some of the radical loss of concentration that attends THC-Withdrawal and is thinking the dark period when Himself had changed careers from government service to private entrepreneurship, when a sudden infusion of patent-receipts left him feeling anhedonic and existentially unmoored, and Himself took an entire year off to drink Wild Turkey and watch old broadcast-television like *Dynasty* in a remote spa off Canada's Northwest coast, where he supposedly met and bonded with Lyle, now of the E.T.A. weight room.

Entertainment-wise, things take a rapid turn for the splattery once the tough girl Blood Sister saved is found dead in her novitiate's cot, her habit's interior pockets stuffed with all kinds of substances and paraphernalia and her arm a veritable forest of syringes. Tight shot of B.S., face working purple, staring down at the ex-ex-punker. Suspecting foul play instead of spiritual recidivism, Blood Sister, disregarding the impassioned pleas and direct orders of the Vice-Mother Superior — who happens now to be the tough nun who'd saved Blood Sister, way back — begins reverting to her former pre-salvation tough-biker-chick ways: de-muffling her Harley, hauling a faded studded leather biker jacket out of storage and squeezing it over her habit, unbandaging her most lurid tattoos, shaking down former altar boys for information, flipping off motorists who get in her bike's way, meeting old contacts in dim saloons and tossing back jiggers with even the most cirrhotic of them, beating, bludgeoning, akidoing, disarming thugs, avenging the desalvation of her young charge, determined to prove that the girl's death was no accident or backslide, that Blood Sister had not failed with the soul she'd saved to discharge her debt to the Vice-Mother Superior who'd saved her, Blood Sister, so far back. In one scene she says fuck. In another she brains one of the Mother Superior's stooges, knocking his toothless head clean off.

The cartridge's closing sequence shows her astride her Hawg on Toronto's meanest street. About to lapse? Backslide back into her tough pre-saved ways? It's unclear in a way that's supposed to be rich: her expression is agnostic at best, but the huge sign of a discount Harley-muffler outlet juts just at the horizon she's roaring toward. The closing credits are the odd lime-green of bugs on a windshield.

It's hard to tell whether Boone and Bash's applause is sarcastic. There's that post-entertainment flurry of changed positions and stretched limbs and critical sallies. Hal holds up a hand for the kids to hang on, flipping through cartridge cases to see whether *Low-Temperature Civics* is up here.

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LATE EVENING

The special hush of lobby carpet, and smells of Benson & Hedges brand cigarettes in the reception area off the lobby. The blue chairs have the faint imprints of people's bottoms. The waiting room is empty and dim. Most of the waiting area's available light comes from the doorless Dean of Females's office. Meaning the Moms is: In.

Avril Incandenza, a fiend for light, has the whole bank of overheads going, two torches and some desk lamps, and a B&H cigarette on fire in the big clay ashtray Mario 'd made her at Rindge and Latin School. She is swivelled around in her swivel-chair, facing out the big window behind her desk, listening to someone on the phone, and holding up a stapler, checking its load.

Her desk has what looks like a skyline of stacks of file folders and books in neat cross-hatched stacks; nothing teeters.

The sound of Mario entering even a shag-carpeted room is unmistakable, plus she can see his reflection in the window. 'Mario!' Her arms go up in a V, stapler open in one hand. Avril Incandenza is the sort of tall beautiful woman who wasn't ever quite world-class, shiny-magazine-class beautiful, but who early on hit a certain pretty high point on the beauty scale and has stayed right at that point as she ages. She's 56 years old, and Mario gets pleasure out of just getting to look at her face, still. Avril thinks she's much too tall to be pretty. She'd seemed much less tall when compared to Himself, who was seriously tall.

'I don't want to intercept your call.'

'Don't be absurd.' She talks past the phone at the window. She rotates her swivel-chair to face Mario. Avril looks at him like the sort of stellar mother where just looking at her kid gives her joy. The lit Center Courts, now empty, are visible out the left side of Avril's window, if you lean far forward and look. Someone has forgotten a gear bag and pile of sticks out by the net-post of Court 17.

Silences between them are totally comfortable. Mario can't tell if the person on the phone is still talking or if Avril just hasn't put the dead phone down. She still holds the black stapler. Its jaws are open and it looks alligatorish in her hand.

He likes to look at her, too, leaning in and letting her know he likes looking. They are the two least embarrassable people either of them knows. She's rarely here this late. The only thing that ever shows she's tired is that her hair gets a sort of huge white cowlick, like a rolling ocean comb of hair. Her hair has been pure white since Mario can first remember seeing her looking down at him through the incubator's glass. It goes down the middle of her back against the chair and down both arms, hanging off the arms near the elbow. Its part shows her pink scalp. She keeps the hair very clean and well-combed. She has one of Mr. deLint's big whistles around her neck.

'I saw your lights. Why is the Moms here, still, I thought to myself.'

She made as if to clutch her head. 'Don't ask. I'll starting whingeing. Tomorrow's going to be hellishly busy.' Mario didn't hear her say goodbye to the man as she put down the phone. She's putting out the nub of the Benson & Hedges. She ground individual sparks out in the bowl. She had the idea that her smoking around Mario made him worry, though he'd never said anything about it one way or the other. 'I have a breakfast engagement at 07, which means I have to do final swotting and whacking for morning classes now, so I just lurched back over here to do it instead of carrying everything back and forth.'

'Are you tired?'

She just smiled at him.

To look at them, you'd never guess these two persons were related.

'A person from a magazine has come to do a piece of reportage on your brother. Charles is speaking to her in lieu of any of the students. He's not in your room. The Pemulis person was seen by Mary Esther taking their truck before Study Period. Is Hal with him, Mario?'

'I haven't seen Hal since lunchtime. He said he'd had a tooth thing.'

'I left two messages asking him to let me know how the tooth was. Love-o, I feel bad I wasn't there for him. Hal and his teeth.'

'Hey Moms?'

'I'm right here, Love-o. I am right here with my attention completely focused on you.'

'How can you tell if somebody's sad?'

Her teeth are not discolored; she gets them cleaned at the dentist all the time for the smoking, a habit she despises. Hal inherited the dental problems from Himself; Himself had horrible dental problems; half his teeth were bridges.

'You're not exactly insensitive when it comes to people, Love-o,' she says.

'What if you, like, only suspect somebody's sad. How would I confirm a suspicion of sadness in someone, you mean?'

'Well, the person in question may cry, sob, weep, or, in certain cultures, wail, keen, or rend his or her garments.'

Mario nods encouragingly. 'But say in a case where they don't weep or rend. But you still have a suspicion which they're sad.'

She uses a hand to rotate the pen in her mouth like a fine cigar. 'He or she might alternatively sigh, mope, frown, smile halfheartedly, appear downcast, slump, look at the floor more than is appropriate.'

'But what if they don't?'

'Well, he or she may act out by seeming distracted, losing enthusiasm for previous interests. The person may present with what appears to be laziness, lethargy, fatigue, sluggishness, a certain passive reluctance to engage you. Torpor.' Avril taps the pen against her front teeth. Her phone light is blinking, but there's no ringing. Is this about Hal? Is Hal sad and for some reason not yet able to speak about it?'

'I'm just saying how to be generally sure.'

'And you have no idea where he is or whether he left the grounds this evening sad?'

'I didn't see Hal since lunchtime. He had an apple he cut into chunks and put peanut butter on, instead of pears in juice.' Avril nods with vigor.

Mario smiles at her.

'Well, love, you know the idiom "not yourself" — "He's not himself today," for example,' crooking and uncrooking fingers to form quotes on either side of what she says, which Mario adores. 'There are, apparently, persons who are deeply afraid of their own emotions, particularly the painful ones. Grief, regret, sadness. Sadness especially, perhaps. Dolores describes these persons as afraid of obliteration, emotional engulfment. As if something truly and thoroughly felt would have no end or bottom. Would become infinite and engulf them.'

'Engulf means obliterate.'

'I am saying that such persons usually have a very fragile sense of themselves as persons. As existing at all. My father said his father showed very little emotion or anger or sadness. That he somehow couldn't. My father said his father was frozen, and could feel emotion only when he was drunk. He would apparently get drunk four times a year, weep about his life, throw my father through the living room window, and disappear for several days, roaming the countryside, drunk and enraged.'

She's not been looking at Mario this whole time, though Mario's been looking at her.

She smiled. 'My father, of course, could himself tell this story only when he was drunk. He never threw anyone through any windows. He simply sat in his chair, drinking ale and reading the newspaper, for hours, until he fell out of the chair. And then one day he fell out of the chair and didn't get up again, and that was how your maternal grandfather passed away. I'd never have gotten to go to University had he not died when I was a girl. He believed education was a waste for girls. His inheritance paid for university.'

'My point here is that certain types of persons are terrified even to poke a big toe into genuinely felt regret or sadness, or to get angry. This means they are afraid to live. They are

imprisoned in something, I think. Frozen inside, emotionally. The irony, of course, being that the very imprisonment that prohibits sadness's expression must itself feel intensely sad and painful. For the hypothetical person in question. There may be sad people right here at the Academy who are like this, Mario, and perhaps you're sensitive to it. You are not exactly insensitive when it comes to people.'

Mario scratches his lip again.

Her chair is a fine executive leather swivelling chair but it shrieks a little when she leans back or forward. Mario can tell she's making herself not look at her watch.

'Hey Moms?'

'People, then, who are sad, but who can't let themselves feel sad may strike someone who's sensitive as somehow just not quite right. Not quite there. Blank. Distant. Muted. Distant. Spacey. Wooden. Deadened. Disconnected. Distant. Or they may drink alcohol or take other drugs. The drugs both blunt the real sadness and allow some skewed version of the sadness some sort of expression.

'I think I get it.'

She pretends to knock her forehead at being obtuse. 'Mario Love-o, are you sad? Are you trying to determine whether I've been sensing that you yourself are sad?'

Mario's gaze keeps going from Avril to the window behind her.

'The sun would leave my sky if I couldn't assume you'd simply come and tell me you were sad.'

To the east, past all the courts, you can see some lights in houses in the Enfield Marine Complex below, and beyond that cars' lights and the robed downcast-looking statue atop St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Out the right to the north over lots of different lights is the red rotating tip of the WYYY transmitter, its spin's ring of red reflected in the visible Charles River, the Charles tumid with rain and snowmelt, illumined in patches by headlights, the river unwinding, swollen and humped, its top a mosaic of oil rainbows and dead branches.

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'Hey Hal?'

'Yes, Mario.'

'I'm sorry if you're sad, Hal. You seem sad.'

'I smoke high-resin Bob Hope in secret by myself down in the Pump Room off the secondary maintenance tunnel. I use Visine and mint toothpaste and shower with Irish Spring to hide it from almost everyone. Only Pemulis knows the true extent.'

'...'

'I'm not the one C.T. and the Moms want gone. I'm not the one they suspect. Pemulis publicly dosed his opponent at Port Washington. It was impossible to miss. The kid was a devout Mormon. The dose was impossible to miss. Sales of Visine bottles of pre-adolescent urine during quarterly tests have been noted, it turns out, and classed as a Pemulis production.'

'Selling Visine bottles?'

'I'd be immune to expulsion anyway, obviously, as the Moms's relative. But I'm suspected of nothing other than ill-considered moral paralysis out there. My urine and Axhandle's urine are just to establish a context of objectivity for Pemulis's urine. It's Pemulis they want. I'm almost

positive they're going to give Pemulis the Shoe by the end of the term. I don't know whether Pemulis knows this or not.'

'Hey Hal?'

'Normally they're after steroids, endocrine synthetics, mild 'drines, when they test. The O.N.A.N.T.A. guy gave indications this one'll be a full-spectrum scan. Gas chromatography followed by electron-bombardment, with spectrometer readings on the resultant mass-fragments. The real McCoy. The kind the Show uses.'

'Hey Hal?'

'Mike stands there and says what if hypothetically somebody was downwind from substances and got exposed and so on. Claimed vague memories of a poppy-seed bagel. Not at all Pemulis's normal rococo type of lie. This one had a kind of weary earnestness. The guy in the blazer said he'd go ahead and give us thirty days before a full-spectrum scan. Mike had pointed out that there was an enormous lady from *Moment* due to arrive and snuffle around, making it a really unfortunate time for any outside-chance inadvertent scandals for anybody. It was like the guy needed hardly any prodding to give us time to clean out the system. O.N.A.N.T.A. doesn't want to catch anybody, really. Good clean fun and so on and so forth.'

'...'

'The ingenious layer to the lie was that the guy thought the thirty days' grace was for Pemulis. That it was what Pemulis needed. Pemulis could pass a urine test hanging upside down in a high wind. Guy watching or not. He has a whole unpleasant catheterization technique you don't want to hear about. He's checked it. And his own urine can be all innocent and pale with two days' warning, as long as he stays off the Bob.'

'...'

'Booboo, the thirty days was actually for me, and Mike let me stand there with my Unit out and not say anything while he sold the urologist land and magazine subscriptions and Ginsu knives. He did it for me, and I'm not even the one they want.'

'You can tell me whatever you said.'

'What I do in secret, Boo, Mike says no more than thirty days to get it all out for sure. Cranberry juice, Calli tea, vinegar in water. Plus or minus a couple days. The Bob Hope I smoke and hide, Boo, it's fat-soluble. It stays in there, in the body's fat.'

'Mrs. Clarke told Bridget the human brain is high in fat, Bridget said.'

'Mario, if I get caught. If I come up dirty-urined in front of O.N.A.N.T.A., what could C.T. do? It's not just that I'd lose my even year in 18's. He'd have to give me the Shoe if he'd brought O.N.A.N.T.A. into it. And what about Himself's memory? I'm directly related to Himself. Not to mention Orin. And meanwhile here's this *Moment* lady lumbering around looking for family linen.'

'Troeltsch says all she wants to do is soften Orin's profile.'

'The hideous thing is how brightly it'd come out, if I flunk a urine. E.T.A.'ll be publicly hurt. Hence Himself's memory, hence Himself.'

'...'

'And it'd *kill* the Moms, Mario. It'd be a terrible kertwang on the Moms. Not so much the Hope. The *secrecy* of it. That I hid it from her. That she'll feel I had to hide it from her.'

'Hey Hal?'

'Something terrible will happen if she finds out I hid it from her.'

'Thirty days is one calendar month of Calli tea and juice, you're saying.'

‘Of tea and vinegar and total abstinence. Of no substances whatsoever. Of abrupt and total withdrawal while I try to justify my seed at the WhataBurger and maybe get offered up to Wayne at the Fundraiser. And then your birthday in two weeks.’

‘Hey Hal?’

‘Jesus and then the SAT’s in December, I’ll have to finish prepping for the Boards and then take the Boards while still in abrupt withdrawal.’

‘Everybody’s betting you get a perfect score. I’ve heard them.’

‘Marvelous. That’s just exactly what I need to hear.’

‘Hey Hal?’

‘And of course you’re hurt, Boo, that I’ve tried to hide all of it from you.’

‘I’m zero percent hurt, Hal.’

‘And of course you’re wondering why I didn’t just tell you when of course you knew anyway, knew something, the times hanging upside-down in the weight room with a forehead Lyle didn’t even want to get near. You sitting there letting me say I was just really really tired and nightmare-ridden.’

‘I feel like you always tell me the truth.’

‘You can get hurt and mad at people, Boo. News-flash at almost fucking nineteen, kid. It’s called being a person. You can get mad at somebody and it doesn’t mean they’ll go away. You don’t have to put on a Moms-act of total trust and forgiveness. One liar’s enough.’

‘You’re scared your pee might still flunk after one calendar month.’

‘Jesus it’s like talking to a big poster of some smily-faced guy. Are you in there?’

‘And you can’t use a Visine bottle of pee because the man will be right there looking at your penis, and Trevor and Pemulis’s penises.’

‘The sun’s thinking about coming up in the window. You can see it.’

‘It’s been like forty hours without Bob Hope and already I’m bats inside and I can’t sleep without more of the horror-show dreams. I feel like I’m stuck halfway down a chimney.’

‘You beat Ortho, and your toothache’s gone.’

‘Pemulis’s only concern is is this DMZ he got for the WhataBurger detectable. He goes to the library. He’s fully alert and functional. It seems different with me, Boo. I feel a hole. It’s going to be a huge hole, in a month. A way more than Hal-sized hole.’

‘So what do you think you should do?’

‘And the hole’s going to get a little bigger every day until I fly apart in different directions. I’ll fly apart in midair. I’ll fly apart in the Lung, or at Tucson at 200 degrees in front of all these people who knew Himself and think I’m different. Whom I’ve lied to, and liked it. It’ll all come out anyway, clean pee or no.’

‘Hey Hal?’

‘And it’ll kill her. I know it will. It will kill her dead, Booboo, I’m afraid.’

‘What are you going to do?’

‘Tell me what you think I should do.’ ‘

‘Me tell you?’

‘I’m just two big aprick ears right here, Boo. Listening. Because I do not know what to do.’

‘Hal, if I tell you the truth, will you get mad?’

‘I trust you. Tell me what I should do.’

‘I think you just did it. What you should do. I think you just did.’

‘...’

‘Do you see what I mean?’

THURSDAY NOV 12

7:30 PM HALS DORM ROOM

'Mike, what if I said I've been moving toward more than just a month off.'

'Abandon All Hope.'

'I mean maybe make a decision. Forever. What if it was that I was doing it more and more and it was getting less fun but I was still doing it more and more, and the only way to moderate would be to like wave a hankie at it altogether.'

'You're so naïve, Inc. You're so sharp in one way and such a little bald little fat-legged baby in the woods in others. You think you're just going to go Here I go, deciding, and reverse total thrust and quit everything?'

'What I said was what if.'

'Hal, you are my friend, and I've been friends to you in ways you don't even have a clue. So brace yourself for a growth-spurt. You want to quit because you're starting to see you need it, and —'

'That's exactly it. Peems, think how horrible that'd be, if somebody needed it. Not just liked it a great great great deal. Needing it becomes a whole separate order of. It seems horrific. It seems like the difference between really loving something and being —'

'What if it's true? The word. What if you are? So the answer's just walk away? If you're addicted you need it, Hallie, and if you need it what do you imagine happens if you just hoist the white flag and try to go on without it, without anything?' You lose your mind, Inc. You die inside. What happens if you try and go without something the machine needs? Food, moisture, sleep, O2? What happens to the machine? Think about it.'

'You were just now applauding the idea of Abandoning All Hope. You were just invoking an image of me with breasts, masturbating into laundry, with cobwebs between my ass and a chair.'

'You can only quit the Bob if you move onward and up to something else.'

'Harder drugs.'

'Oh fuck you. It doesn't have to be harder. It just has to be something. I know guys quit heroin, coke. How? They make the strategic move to a case a day of Coors. Or to methadone, whatever. I know hard-drinking guys that got off the booze by switching to the Bob Hope. I switch all the time. The trick is the right switch for a man's wiring. I'm saying a real cobweb-blaster with me and Axford after the Fundraiser could help you get some serious perspective, cut the babytalk and sweeping bullshit decisions and start getting a real handle on how you're going to branch out away from this Bob thing, which I applaud getting away from for you, Inc.'

'So you're in a very subtle way lobbying for a DMZ-drop by saying you don't believe I could simply quit everything. Since you sure don't plan to quit. With your left eye wobbling all over the place. You haven't even quit the Tenuate. "Winners don't ever have to quit" and all.'

'I didn't hear me say none of that. And I think you probably could quit it all. For a while. You're not a pussy. I bet you could gut it out.'

'For a while, you're saying.'

'But what do you think would happen after a while, though? Without something you need?'

'What, you're saying I'd grab my chest and keel over? Clutch my head in the middle of a Tap & Whack and die of an aneurism like that girl last year at Atwood?'

‘No. But you’d die inside. Maybe outside too. If you’re the real thing and need it and just cut yourself off of it altogether, you die inside. You lose your mind. I’ve seen it happen. Cold Turkey they call it. White-knuckling. Guys that’d just quit everything because they were in too deep and quit it all and just died.’

‘You’re saying Himself killed himself because he got sober? Because he didn’t get sober. There was a thing of Wild Turkey right there on the counter by the oven he blew his fucking head up with. So don’t try to kertwang me with him, Mike.’

‘Inc, what I know about your Da could be inscribed with a crayon on the rim of a shot glass. I’m talking guys I know. Wolf Spiders. Allston guys that quit. Some ended up in the Mental Marriott. Some got through because they joined NA or a cult or some bug-eyed church and went around with ties talking about Jesus or Surrendering, but that shit’s not going to work for you because you’re too sharp to ever buy the God-Squad shit. Most nothing big happened, that needed it and quit. They got up and went to work and came home and ate and went to sleep and got up, day after day. But dead. Like machines; you could almost see the keys in their backs. You looked into their maps and something was gone. The walking dead. They loved it so much they needed it and gave it up and now they were waiting to die. Something was all over, inside.’

‘Their joie de vivre. The fire in the belly.’

‘Hal, it’s been what, now, for you, two-and-a-half days without? three days? How you feeling in there already, brother?’

‘I’m all right.’

‘Uh-huh. Incpuddle, all I know’s I’m your friend. I am. I’m just giving you the advice to look a little further past that second of deciding something I know you won’t let yourself take back.’

‘Some vital part of my like personhood would die without something to ingest. This is your view.’

‘Spend some time figuring out this needing. Like what part of you’s come to need it, do you think.’

‘You’re alleging that’s the part that’ll die.’

‘Just whatever part you feel has come to need what you’re planning to take away from it.’

‘The part that’s dependent or incomplete, you mean. The addict.’

‘That’s just a word.’

FRIDAY NOV 13 1992

HAL AND MARIOS DORM ROOM

The dark had a distanceless shape. The room’s ceiling might as well have been clouds.

‘Booboo, I just had a wicked awful dream.’

‘I think I slept right through it.’

‘I dreamed I was losing my teeth. I dreamed that my teeth dry-rotted somehow into shale and splintered when I ate or spoke, and I was jettisoning fragments all over the place, and there was a long scene where I was pricing dentures. Then, without any sort of dream-segue, I’m sitting in a cold room, naked as a jaybird, in a flame-retardant chair, and I keep receiving bills in the mail for teeth. A mail carrier keeps knocking on the door and coming in without being invited and presenting me with various bills for teeth. Only not for any teeth of mine, Boo. The bills are for

somebody else's teeth, not my teeth, and I can't seem to get the mail carrier to acknowledge this, that they're not for my teeth.'

'All night last night people were coming up going where is Hal, have you seen Hal, what happened with CT and the urine doctor and Hal's urine. Moms asked me where's Hal, and I was surprised at that because of how she makes it a big point never to check up.'

'You probably think I'm wondering why you don't ask me about the thing with C.T. and Pemulis and the impromptu urine, where the urologist took us right down to the administrative loo and was going to watch personally while we filled his cups, like watch it go in, the urine, to make sure it came from us personally. The key datum is that the O.N.A.N.T.A. guy didn't actually extract urine samples from us. We got to hold on to our urine, as the Moms no doubt knows quite well. Pemulis, without self-abasement or concession of anything compromising, got the guy to give us thirty days — the Fundraiser, the What-aBurger, Thanksgiving Break, then Pemulis, Axford and I pee like racehorses into whatever-sized receptacles he wants is the arrangement. Pemulis showed some serious brass under pressure, standing there over that urinal. He played the O.N.A.N.T.A. man like a fine instrument. I found myself feeling almost proud for him. How does somebody with your kind of Panglossian constitution determine whether you're ever being lied to? Like what criteria brought to bear. Intuition, induction, reductio, what?'

'...'

'Some people, from what I've seen, when they lie, they become very still and centered and their gaze very concentrated and intense. They try to dominate the person they lie to. Another type becomes fluttery and insubstantial and punctuates his lie with little self-deprecating motions and sounds, as if credulity were the same as pity. Some bury the lie in so many digressions and asides that they like try to slip the lie in there through all the extraneous data like a tiny bug through a window screen. Then there are what I might call your Kamikaze-style liars. These'll tell you a surreal and fundamentally incredible lie, and then pretend a crisis of conscience and retract the original lie, and then offer you the lie they really want you to buy instead, so the real lie'll appear as some kind of concession, a settlement with truth. That type's mercifully easy to see through.'

'The merciful type of lie.'

'Pemulis could have sold that urologist land in there. It was an incredibly high-pressure moment. I never thought he had it in him. He was nerveless and stomachless. He projected a kind of weary pragmatism the urologist found impossible to discount. His face was a brass mask. It was almost frightening. I told him I never would have believed he had that kind of performance in him. The truth is nobody can always tell. Some types are just too good, too complex and idiosyncratic; their lies are too close to the truth's heart for you to tell.'

'I can't ever tell. You're right. It never crosses my mind.'

'You remember my hideous phobic thing about monsters, as a kid?'

'Boy do I ever.'

'I think I no longer believe in monsters as faces in the floor or feral infants or vampires or whatever. I think at seventeen now I believe the only real monsters might be the type of liar where there's simply no way to tell. The ones who give nothing away.'

'But then how do you know they're monsters?'

'That's the monstrosity right there, I'm starting to think. That they walk among us. Teach our children. Inscrutable. Brass-faced.'

TUESDAY NOV 17 1992 8:30AM

Johnette F. had worked five straight night shifts on Dream Duty and was in the front office just after 0830 writing up the previous night in the Log, trying to think of synonyms for boredom and periodically dipping a finger in her scalding coffee to stay awake, plus listening to distant toilets flush and showers hiss and residents clunking sleepily around in the kitchen and dining room, when somebody starts knocking at the House's front door, which meant that the person was like a newcomer or stranger, since people in the Ennet House recovery community know that the front door's unlocked at 0800 and always completely open to all but the Law as of 0801.

The residents these days all know not to answer any knocks at the door themselves. Johnette at first thought it might be some more of those kind of police that wore suits and ties, come to depose more residents. She got out the clipboard with the names of all the residents with unresolved legal issues who needed to be put upstairs out of sight before any police were let on the premises. A couple of the residents on the list were in the dining room in full view, eating cereal and smoking. Johnette carried the clipboard as a kind of emblem of authority as she went to the window by the front door to check.

But the kid at the door, there was no way he was police or court-personnel, and Johnette opened the unlocked door and let him in, not bothering to explain that nobody had to knock. It was an upscale kid about Johnette's own age or slightly less, coughing against the foyer's pall of A.M. smoke, saying he wanted to speak in comparative private to someone. He had the sort of cool aluminum sheen of an upscale kid, a kid with either a weird tan or a weird windburn on top of a tan, and just the whitest Nike hightops Johnette had ever seen, and ironed jeans, as in with like a crease down the front, and a weird woolly-white jacket with A.T.E. in red up one sleeve and in gray up the other, and slicked-back dark hair that was wet and had half frozen in the early outside cold and was standing up straight and frozen in front, making his dark face look small. His ears looked inflamed from the cold. Johnette appraised him coolly, digging at her ear with a pinkie. It was pretty obvious the boy wasn't any resident's like homey or boyfriend come to give somebody a ride to work or like that. The way the boy looked and stood and talked radiated high-maintenance upkeep and privilege and schools where nobody carried weapons, pretty much a whole planet of privilege away. The kid's hair was starting to melt in the heat of Pat's office and drip and settle on his head like a slashed tire. He looked green around the gills. The boy stood there very straight with his hands behind his back and said he lived nearby and had for some time been interested in considering dropping in on some sort of Substance Anonymous meeting basically as just something to do, the exact same roundabout Denial shit, and said he didn't know where any Meetings were, or when, and but knew The Ennet House was nearby, that dealt directly with Anonymous organizations, and was wondering whether he could have some sort of relevant meeting schedule. He apologized for intruding and said he didn't know whom else to call. Much later, Johnette F. would clearly recall the sight of the boy's frozen hair slowly settling, and how the boy had said whom. The sort snotty look-right-through-you-if-you-weren't-a-fucking-covergirl guy.

TUESDAY NOV 17, 1992

The most distant and obscure Tuesday P.M. Meeting listed in the little white Metro-Boston Recovery Options booklet the girl down at The Ennet House had given him looked to be a males-only thing at 1730h. out in Natick, a location on Route 27 that the booklet listed only as 'Q.R.S.-32A.' Hal, who had no last period, rushed through p.m.'s, dispatching Shaw 1 and 3 by the time the regular P.M.'s were even warming up, then skipping left-leg circuits in the weight room, and was also forgoing tonight's lemon chicken with potato rolls, all to check this anti-Substance-fellowship-Meeting business out. The issue's the horrific way his head felt, increasingly, since he abruptly Abandoned All Hope. It wasn't just nightmares and saliva. It was as if his head perched on the bedpost all night now and in the terribly early A.M. when Hal's eyes snapped open immediately said Glad You're UP I've Been Wanting To TALK To You and then didn't let up all day, having at him like a well-revved chain-saw all day until he could finally try to fall unconscious, crawling into the rack wretched to await more bad dreams.

Dusk was coming earlier. Hal signed out at the portcullis and blasted down the hill. By the time he was in Wellesley Hills, the sky's combustionish orange had deepened to the hellish crimson of a fire's last embers. Darkness fell with a clunk shortly after, and Hal's spirits with it. He felt pathetic and absurd even going to check this Narcotics Anonymous Meeting thing out.

WYYY was a ghostly thread of jazz against a sea of static. AM had only corporate rock and reports that the administration had scheduled and then cancelled a special address to the nation on subjects unknown. NPR had a kind of roundtable on potential subjects — George Will's laryngectomy-prosthesis sounded hideous. Hal preferred silence and traffic-sounds. He ate two of three \$4.00 bran muffins he'd whipped in for at a Cleveland Circle gourmet bakery, grimacing as he swallowed because he'd forgotten a tonic to wash them down, then put in a mammoth plug of Kodiak and spat periodically into his special NASA glass, which fit neatly in the cup-holder, and passed the last fifteen minutes of the dull drive considering the probable etymological career of the word Anonymous. Hal can summon a kind of mental Xerox of anything he'd ever read and basically read it all over again, at will. The rock faces on either side of the truck when 27 goes through the blasted hills of rock, the very fringes of the Berkshires' penumbra, are either granite or gneiss.

Hal for a while also practices saying 'My name's Mike.' 'Mike. Hi.' 'Hey there, name's Mike,' etc., into the rearview.

By 15 minutes east of Natick it becomes obvious that the little booklet's terse Q.R.S. designates a facility called Quabbin Recovery Systems, set far back from Rte. 27 on a winding groomed-gravel road flanked all the way up by classy old-time standing lanterns whose glass shades are pebbled and faceted like candy dishes and seem more for mood than illumination. Then the actual building's driveway is an even more winding little road that's barely more than a tunnel through meditative pines and poor-postured Lombardy poplars. Once off the highway the whole nighttime scene out here in exurbia — Boston's true boonies — seems ghostly and circumspect. Hal's tires crunch cones in the road. Some sort of bird shits on his windshield. The driveway broadens gradually into a parking lot of mint-white gravel, and the physical Q.R.S. is right there, cubular and brooding. Illuminated moodily from below by more classy lanterns, it looks like a building-block from some child-titan's toy-chest. Its windows are the smoky brown kind that in daylight become dark mirrors. Hal's late father had publicly repudiated this kind of window-glass in an interview in *Lens & Pane* when the stuff first came out. Right now, lit from inside, the windows have a sort of bloody, polluted aspect.

A good two-thirds of the lot's parking places say RESERVED FOR STAFF, which strikes Hal as odd. It's dead quiet. The lot's piney air has the ethyl sting of winter.

Q.R.S.'s big doors and lintel are more of that reflector-shade glass. There's no obvious bell, but the doors are unlocked. They open in that sort of pressurized way of institutional doors. The savanna-colored lobby is broad and still and has a vague medical/dental smell. Its carpet's a dense low tan Dacronyl weave that evacuates sound. There's a circular high-countered nurse's station or reception desk, but nobody's there.

The whole place is so quiet Hal can hear the squeak of blood in his head.

The 32A that follows Q.R.S. in the little white booklet is presumably a room number. Hal has on a non-E.T.A. jacket and carries the NASA glass he spits in. He'd have to spit even if he didn't have chew in; the Kodiak's almost like a cover or excuse.

The lobby's heat is intense and close but kind of porous. There's also the smell of stale coffee. The walls' color scheme is somewhere between puce and mature eggplant-skin, kind of nauseous against the sandy tan of the carpet. All buildings with any kind of health-theme to them have this thin sick sweet dental sub-odor to them. Q.R.S. also seems to have some sort of balsamy air-freshener going in the ventilation system, too, but it doesn't quite cover the sweet medical stink or the bland sour smell of institutional food.

The place has that glittery sound of total silence. His footfalls make no sound on the Dacronyl. He feels furtive and burglarish and holds the NASA glass down at his side and the NA booklet higher up and cover-out as a sort of explanatory I.D. The quiet has a kind of menace. The whole cubular building seems to Hal to hold the tensed menace of a living thing that's chosen to hold itself still. Q.R.S.'s building may be one of those infamous Rubikular cubes that looks topologically undeformed but is actually impossible to negotiate on the inside. But Hal can hear either very distant or very muffled voices. He carries the NA booklet in front of him like a crucifix.

Room 32A's wood-grain door was just as emphatically shut as all the others, but the muffled voices were behind this one. The Meeting was listed in the book as starting at 1730, and it was only around 1720, but the Meeting is under way, apparently. It isn't near big enough to create a mood of anonymity or casual spectation. Nine or ten adult middle-class males are in the warm room on orange plastic chairs with legs of molded steel tubing. Every one of the men has a beard, and each wears chinos and a sweater, and they all sit the same way, that Indian cross-legged style with their hands on their knees and their feet under their knees, and they all wear socks, with no footwear or winter jackets anywhere in sight. Hal eases the door shut and sort of slinks along the wall to an empty chair, all the time conspicuously brandishing the Meeting booklet. And the warm air in 32A is stuffy with CO₂ and unpleasantly scented with the aroma of soft male middle-aged bodies not wearing footwear, a stale meaty cheesy smell.

The only guy in the Meeting to acknowledge Hal's entrance is at the front of the room, a man Hal would have to call almost morbidly round, his socks plaid and his legs not all the way crossable so it looks like he might pitch disastrously backward in his chair any minute, smiling warmly at Hal's winter coat and NASA glass as Hal slinks and sits and slumps down low.

The round man's chair is positioned under a small white Magic Marker blackboard, and all the other chairs approximately face it, and the man holds a Magic Marker in one hand and what looks quite a bit like a teddy bear to his chest with the other, and wears chinos and a cable-knit Norwegian sweater the color of toast. His hair is that waxy sort of blond, and he's got the blond eyebrows and creepy blond eyelashes and violently flushed face of a true Norwegian blond. The morbidly round blond man's pretty clearly the leader of the Meeting, possibly a high-ranking official of Narcotics Anonymous.

Another middle-aged guy up near the front is crying, and he too holds what looks like a bear.

The leader says ‘I’d like to suggest we men all hold our bears tight and let our Inner Infant nonjudgmentally listen to Kevin’s Inner Infant expressing his grief and loss.’

It turns out after some subtle casual neck-craning that all these middle-class guys in their thirties are sitting there clutching teddy bears to their sweated chests — identical teddy bears, plump and brown and splay-limbed and with a little red corduroy tongue protruding from the mouths, so the bears all look oddly throttled. The room is menacingly quiet now except for the sibilance of the heating vents and the sobbing guy Kevin, and the plip of Hal’s saliva hitting the bottom of the empty glass rather more loudly than he might have wished.

The back of the crying guy’s neck is turning redder and redder as he clutches his bear and rocks on his hams.

Hal sits with his leg crossed good-ankle-on-knee and joggles his white hightop and looks at his callused thumb and listens to the Kevin guy sob and snuffle. The guy wipes his nose with the heel of his hand. Hal figures the tears and bears have something to do with giving up drugs, and that the Meeting is probably on the verge of coming around to talking explicitly about drugs and how to give up drugs for a certain period without feeling indescribably wretched and bereft, or maybe at least some data on how long one might expect the wretchedness of giving up drugs to continue.

The leader has made a cage of his hands and rested his hands on his teddy bear’s head and is breathing slowly and evenly, watching Kevin kindly from under the blond eyebrows, looking more than anything like some sort of Buddha-as-California-surfer-dude. The leader inhales gently and says ‘The energies I’m feeling in the group are energies of unconditional love and acceptance for Kevin’s Inner Infant.’

Nobody else says anything, and the leader doesn’t seem to need anybody to say anything. The guy Kevin, whose neck is now not only beet-red but shiny with embarrassed sweat between his shirt-collar and hair’s hem, sobs even harder at the affirmation of love and support.

The leader looks up and around and nods at nothing and says ‘Maybe we could all name our feelings right now for Kevin and share how much we’re caring for him and his Inner Infant right now, in his pain.’

Various bearded cross-legged guys speak up:

‘I love you, Kevin.’

‘I’m not judging you, Kevin.’

‘I’m feeling a lot of love for you right now, Kevin.’

‘Kevin Kevin Kevin Kevin Kevin.’

It’s at this point that Hal begins to get a bad personal feeling about this Narcotics Anonymous Meeting, which isn’t one bit like he’s imagined an even remotely hopeful antidrug Meeting would be like. It seems more like some kind of cosmetic-psychology encounter thing. Not one Substance or symptom of Substance-deprivation has been mentioned so far. None of these guys looks like they’ve ever been engaged with anything more substantial than an occasional wine cooler.

Hal’s grim mood deepens as the round man up front now leans precariously over and down and opens a CD that begins to issue a kind of low treacly ambient shopping-mall music, mostly cello, with sporadic harps and chimes. The stuff spreads through the hot little room like melted butter, and Hal sinks lower in his orange chair and looks hard at the space-and-spacecraft emblem on his NASA glass.

‘Can you share what you’re feeling, Kevin? Can you name it?’

Kevin’s voice is muffled by the hand he hides behind. ‘I’m feeling my Inner Infant’s abandonment and deep-deprivation issues, Harv,’ he says, drawing shuddering breaths. His mauve sweater’s shoulders tremble. ‘I’m feeling my Inner Infant standing holding the bars of his crib and looking out of the bars . . . and nobody’s coming!’ he sobs. ‘Nobody’s coming. I feel alone with my bear and plastic airplane- mobile and teething ring.’

Everybody’s nodding in an affirming and pained way. No two bears are exactly the same fullness and design. A couple other sobs break out across the room. Everyone’s bear stares blankly ahead.

The music’s still going, going absolutely nowhere, like Philip Glass on Quaaludes.

‘The work we’re here to do,’ the leader says over the music, one hand now pressed pensively to the side of his big face, ‘is to work on our dysfunctional passivity and tendency to wait silently for our Inner Infant’s needs to be magically met. The energy I feel in the group now is that the group is supportively asking Kevin to nurture his Inner Infant by naming and sharing his needs out loud with the group. And I’m feeling how aware we all are how risky and vulnerable need-naming-out-loud must feel for Kevin right now.’

Everybody looks deadly serious. A couple guys are rubbing their bears’ bellies pregnantly.

The slender guy who’d asked Kevin please to share is now wagging the arms of his teddy bear in an infantile way. Hal feels a wave of nausea flood his mouth with fresh saliva.

‘We’re asking you to name what your Inner Infant wants right now more than anything in the world,’ the leader’s saying to Kevin.

‘To be loved and held!’ Kevin keens, sobbing harder.

Hal begins to scan for possible exits. The only door was the one he’d come in, which is in full view of most of the room. There are no windows at all.

Hal’s chilled by multiple realizations. This is no NA or anti-Substance Meeting. This is one of those men’s-issues-Men’s- Movement-type Meetings Coyle’s stepdad went to and Coyle liked to mimic and parody during drills, making his stick’s grip poke out between his legs and yelling ‘Nurture this! Honor getting in touch with this!’

Kevin is wiping his nose with his poor teddy bear’s head and saying it didn’t look like his Inner Infant would ever get its wish. The gooey music’s cello sounds like some sort of cow mooing in distress, maybe at what it’s in the middle of.

A couple of the other men in the room are wiping at their bright-white drug-free eyes with the arms of their teddy bears. Hal is painfully reminded of the rare Ziplocs of Humboldt County hydroponic marijuana that Pemulis occasionally scored via FedEx from his mercantile counterpart at the Rolling Hills Academy, the curved tawny buds so big and plump with high-Delta-9 resin the Ziplocs had looked like bags of little teddy-bear arms. The moist sounds right behind him turn out to be a mild-faced older man eating yogurt out of a plastic cup. Hal keeps rechecking the Meeting data in the little booklet the girl had given him. He notes that the booklet has broad chocolate thumb-prints on several of the pages, and that two pages are stuck firmly together with what Hal fears is an ancient dried booger, and now that the booklet’s cover is dated January 1990, i.e. nearly two years past, and that it’s not impossible that the blandly hostile toothless girl at The Ennet facility had kertwanged him by giving him a dated and useless guide.

Kevin keeps repeating ‘Please, Mommy and Daddy, come love me and hold me’ in a kind of monotone of pathos. The gradually intensifying lisp in Please is apparently a performative invocation of the old Inner Infant.

All through his own infancy and toddlerhood, Hal had continually been held and dandled and told at high volume that he was loved, and he feels like he could have told Kevin's Inner Infant that getting held and told you were loved didn't automatically render you emotionally whole or Substance-free. Hal finds he rather envies a man who feels he has something to explain his being fucked up, parents to blame it on.

The blond and Buddhist cable-knit Harv, dandling his bear on his knee now, calmly asks Kevin if it feels to his Inner Infant like Mommy and Daddy were ever going to appear cribside to meet his needs.

'No,' Kevin says very quietly. 'No, it doesn't, Harv.'

The leader is idly arranging his bear's splayed arms in different positions, so it looks like the bear's either waving or surrendering. 'Do you suppose you would be able to ask someone in the group here tonight to love and hold you instead, Kevin?'

Hal's whole digestive tract spasms at the prospect of watching two bearded adult males in sweaters and socks engage in surrogate Infant-hugging. He begins asking himself why he doesn't just fake a hideous coughing fit and flee Q.R.S.-32A with his fist over his face.

Hal doubles over in a coughing spasm only half-faked, running decision-trees on various ruses for flight.

Hal notices a mild-faced square-bearded older guy behind him, who's holding a spoon of vividly pink yogurt in front of his bear's open mouth, just touching its protruding tongue's red corduroy, pretending to be feeding the bear. Hal very casually puts the NASA glass between his legs and gets both hands under his chair-seat and hops the chair bit by bit over and out of the lines of sight and transit between Kevin and the yogurt man.

The music's settled back into its original nodding narcosis.

'Kevin,' Harv says, 'since this is a group exercise in passivity and Inner-Infant needs, and since you've selected Jim as the member of the group you need something from, we need you to ask Jim out loud to meet your needs. Ask him to come up and hold you and love you, since your parents aren't ever coming. Not ever, Kevin.'

Kevin makes a mortified sound and reclaims a hand over his big swart face. 'Go for it, Kev,' somebody over near the Bly poster calls out.

'We affirm and support you,' says the guy by the filing cabinet.

Hal has never actually seen projectile-weeping before. Kevin's tears are actually exiting his eyes and projecting outward several cm. before starting to fall. His facial expression is the scrunched spread one of a small child's total woe, his neck-cords standing out and face darkening so that it looks like some sort of huge catcher's mitt. A bright cape of mucus hangs from his upper lip, and his lower lip seems to be having some kind of epileptic fit. Hal finds the tantrum's expression on an adult face sort of compelling. At a certain point hysterical grief becomes facially indistinguishable from hysterical mirth, it appears.

'He's not coming!' Kevin finally keens to the leader.

Harv the leader nods, scratching an eyebrow, and confirms that that seems to be the case, and asks rhetorically what might be the problem, why mild-faced Jim isn't automatically coming when called.

Pretty soon the men's supportive exhortations have distilled into everybody in the room except Harv, Jim and Hal chanting 'Meet Those Needs! Meet Those Needs!' in the same male-crowd-exhortative meter as 'Hold That Line!' or 'Block That Kick!'

Kevin wipes his nose on his sleeve and asks what he's supposed to do to get his Infant's needs met if the person he's chosen to meet those needs won't come.

The leader has folded his hands over his belly and sat back, by this time, smiling, cross-legged, holding his tongue.

‘What you’re saying is I need to actively go over to Jim myself and ask him to hold me,’ Kevin says, grinding at his eyes with his knuckles.

The leader smiles blandly.

‘It would take real courage and love and commitment to your Inner Infant to take the risk and go actively over to somebody that might give you what your Infant needs,’ he says quietly.

The CD player has at some point shifted into an all-cello instrumental of ‘I Don’t Know (How to Love Him)’ from an old opera Hal recalls.

‘Is it you moving actively toward Jim, or should it be the Infant inside you, the one with the needs?’

‘Needs, Needs, Needs,’ the bearded men are chanting, some rhythmically raising their manicured fists in the air. Kevin’s looking back and forth between Harv and Jim, chewing his finger indecisively.

‘Is this how an Infant moves towards its needs, Kevin?’ Harv says. ‘Go for it, Kevin!’ a full-bearded man calls out.

‘Let your Infant do the walking, Kev.’

Hal’s most vivid full-color memory of the non-anti-Substance Meeting he drove to by mistake will become that of Kevin down on all fours on a Dacronyl rug, crawling, hampered because one arm was holding his bear to his chest, so he dipped and rose as he crawled on three limbs, leaving twin pale tracks in the carpet and his head up on a wobbly neck, looking up and past Hal, his face unspeakable.

TUESDAY NOV 17, 1992

Entrepot-bound, twitchy-eyed and checking both sides behind him as he comes, rounding the curve of Subdormitory B’s hall with his stick and little solid frustum-shaped stool, Michael Pemulis sees at least eight panels of the drop-ceiling have somehow fallen out of their aluminum struts and are on the floor — some broken in that incomplete, hinge way stuff with fabric-content gets broken — including the relevant panel. No old sneaker is in evidence on the floor as he clears the panels to plant the stool, his incredibly potent Bentley-Phelps penlight in his teeth, looking up into the darkness of the struts’ lattice.

FRIDAY NOV 20 1992

I went down the hall to take out the tobacco and brush my teeth and rinse out the Spiru-Tein can, which had gotten an unpleasant crust along the sides. The subdorm halls were curved and had no corners as such, but you can see at most three doors and the jamb of the fourth from any point in the hall before the curve extrudes into your line of sight. I wondered briefly whether

it was true that small children believed their parents could see them even around corners and curves.

The high wind's moan and doors' rattle were worse in the uncarpeted hall. I could hear faint sounds of early-morning weeping in certain rooms beyond my line of sight. Lots of the top players start the A.M. with a quick fit of crying, then are basically hale and well-wrapped for the rest of the day.

The walls of the subdorms' hallways are dinner-mint blue. The walls of the rooms themselves are cream. All the woodwork is dark and varnished, as is the guilloche that runs below all E.T.A. ceilings; and the dominant odor in the hallways is always a mixture of varnish and tincture of benzoin.

Someone had left a window open by the sinks in the boys' room, and a hump of snow lay on the sill, and on the floor beneath the window by the sink on the end, whose hot-water pipe shrieks, was a parabolic dusting of snow, already melting at the apex. I turned on the lights and the exhaust fan kicked on with them; for some reason I could barely stand its sound. When I put my head out the window the wind came from nowhere and everywhere, the snow swirling in funnels and eddies, and there were little grains of ice in the snow. It was brutally cold. Across the East Courts, the paths were obscured, and the pine's branches were near horizontal under their snow's weight. Schtitt's observation tower looked menacing. The Headmaster's House wasn't much more than a humped shape off by the north tree-line, but I could picture poor C.T. at the living room window in leather slippers and Scotch-plaid robe, seeming to pace even when standing still, raising the phone in his hand, lips moving soundless as he brainstormed his way toward a state of Total Worry.

I brought my head back in when I could no longer feel my face. I made my little ablutions. I hadn't had to go to the bathroom in a serious way in three days.

When the whap-whap of the bathroom door subsided I heard a quiet voice with an odd tone farther up around the curve of the hallway. It turned out that good old Ortho Stice was sitting in a bedroom-chair in front of a hall window. He was facing the window. The window was closed, and he had his forehead up against the glass, either talking or chanting to himself very quietly. The whole lower part of the window was fogged with his breath. I came up behind him, listening. The back of his head was that shark-belly gray-white of crew cuts so short the scalp shows through. I was more or less right behind his chair. I couldn't tell whether he was talking to himself or chanting something. He didn't turn around even when I rattled my toothbrush in the NASA glass. He had on his classic Darknesswear: black sweatshirt, black sweatpants on which he'd had a red and gray E.T.A. silkscreened down both legs. His feet were bare on the cold floor. I was standing right beside the chair, and he still didn't look up.

'Who's that now?' he said, staring straight ahead through the window.

'Hi Orth.'

'Hal. You're up kind of early.'

I rattled my toothbrush a little to indicate a shrug. 'You know. Up and about.'

'Well then.' Stice breathed onto the window. He reached up without moving his head and scratched the back of his crew cut. 'Up and around. We going to play some furriners out there today or what?'

For the past ten days I'd always felt worst in the early a.m., before dawn. There's something elementally horrific about waking before dawn. The window was unobscured above The Darkness's breath-line. The snow wasn't swirling or pummeling the window as much on the building's east side, but the lee side's absence of wind showed just how hard new snow was coming

down. It was like a white curtain endlessly descending. The sky was lightening here on the east side, a paler gray-white, not unlike Stice's crew-cut. I realized that from his position he could see only condensed breath on the window, no reflections. I made a few grotesque, distended, pop-eyed faces at him behind his back. They made me feel worse.

I rattled the brush. 'Well, if we do, it's not going to be out there. It's drifting about up to the tape on the west nets. They'll have to try to get us indoors somewhere.'

Stice breathed. 'There's no indoor place's got thirty-six courts, Inc. Winchester Club's got twelve is maybe the most. Fucking Mount Auburn's only got eight.'

'They'll have to move us around to different sites. It's a pain in the ass, but Schtitt's done it before.'

Stice just sat there with his forehead against the glass. His bare feet were tapping some sort of rhythm on the floor. The hallway was freezing, and his toes had a faint blue tinge. He blew air out of his lips in a tight sigh, making his fat cheeks flap a little; we called this his horse-sound.

'Were you talking to yourself out here, or chanting, or what?' A silence ensued.

Another silence ensued. Two different people were weeping at different pitches behind closed doors. A toilet flushed on the second floor. One of the weepers was nearly skirling, an inhuman keening sound. There was no way to tell which E.T.A. male it was, which door back down past the walls' curve.

The Darkness scratched the back of his head again without moving his head. His hands looked almost luminous against the black sleeves.

Someone was crying out in a bad dream and someone else was yelling for quiet.

I stood next to him in silence and held my NASA glass with the toothbrush and looked over the top of Stice's head through the window's upper half. The snowfall was intense and looked silky. The East Courts' pavilion's green canvas roof bowed ominously down, its white GATORADE logo obscured. A figure was out there, not under the shelter of the pavilion but sitting in the bleachers behind the east Show Courts, leaning back with his elbows on one level and bottom on the next and feet stretched out below, not moving, wearing what seemed to be puffy and bright enough to be a coat, but getting buried by snow, just sitting there. It was impossible to tell the person's age or sex. Church spires off in Brookline were darkening as the sky lightened behind them. The beginning of dawn looked like moonlight through the snow. Several people were at their vehicles' windshields with scrapers down along Commonwealth Avenue. Their images were tiny and dark and fluttered. A snow-covered B train labored uphill like a white slug. It seemed clear that the T would be suspending routes before long. The snow and cold sunrise gave everything a confected quality. The portcullis between the driveway and the parking lot was half up, probably to keep it from being frozen closed. I couldn't see who was in the portcullis's security booth. The attendants always came and went, most of them from the Ennet House place, trying to 'recover.' The flagpole's two flags were frozen and stuck right out straight, turning stiffly from side to side in the wind, like someone in a neck-brace, instead of flapping. The E.T.A. physical-post mailbox just inside the portcullis had a mohawk of snow. The whole scene had an indescribable pathos to it. Slice's fogged breath kept me from seeing anything closer than the mailbox and East Courts. The light was starting to diffract into colors at the perimeter of Slice's breath-fog on the window.

'Isn't your forehead getting kind of cold?'

Stice didn't nod. He made his horse-sound again. He had always had the face of a fat man on a fit man's lean body. I hadn't noticed before that he had an odd little teardrop of extra flesh

low down on his right jowl, like a bit of skin with mole-aspirations. He said ‘The forehead stopped feeling cold a couple hours back, when I lost all my feeling in it.’

‘You’ve been sitting here with bare feet and your forehead against the glass for a couple hours?’

‘More like four, I think.’

‘My next question’s pretty obvious, then, Orth.’

He gave another awkward shrug that didn’t involve his head. ‘Well. It’s sort of embarrassing, here, Inc,’ he said. He paused. ‘It’s stuck is what it is.’

‘Your forehead’s stuck to the window?’

‘Best as I can recollect I wake up, it’s just after 0100, fuckin Coyle’s having them discharges again and there’s no sleeping through that, boy.’

‘I shudder to think, Orth.’

‘And Coyle ‘course just doesn’t even hit the light just hauls out a fresh sheet from the stack under his bunk and goes right back to sawing logs. And I’m wide awake by this point in time, though, and then I couldn’t get back under.’

‘Couldn’t get back to sleep.’

‘Something’s real wrong, I can tell,’ The Darkness said.

‘Pre-Fundraiser nerves? The WhataBurger coming up? You feel yourself starting to climb plateaux, starting to play the way you came here hoping one day to play, and part of you doesn’t believe it, it feels wrong. I went through this. Believe me, I can und—’

Stice automatically tried to shake his head and then gave a small cry of pain. ‘Not that. None of that. Long fucking story. I’m not even sure I’d want anybody to believe it. Forget that part. The point’s I’m up there — I’m lying there real sweaty and hot and jittered. I jump on down and got a chair and brang it out here to set where it’s cool.’

‘And where you don’t have to lie there and contemplate Coyle’s sheet slowly ripening under his bunk,’ I said, shuddering a little.

‘And it’s just starting to snow, then, out. It’s about maybe like 0100. I thought how I’d just set and watch the snow a little and settle on down.’ He scratched at the reddening back of his scalp again.

‘And as you watched, you rested your head pensively against the glass for just a second.’

‘And that was all she wrote. Forgot the forehead was sweated up. Remember when Rader and them got Ingersoll to touch his tongue on that net-post last New Year’s? Stuck here fucking tight as that tongue, Hal. Hell of a lot more total stuck area, too, than Ingersoll. He only did lose that smidgeon off the tip. Inc, I tried to pull her off her about 0230, and there was this fucking...sound. This sound and a feeling like the skin’ll give before the bind will, sure. Frozen stuck. And this here’s more skin than I care to say goodbye to, buddy.’ He was speaking just above a whisper.

‘Jesus, and you’ve just been sitting here all this time.’

‘Well shit I was embarrassed. And it never got quite bad enough to yell out. I kept thinking if it gets a little worse I’ll go on and yell out. And then along about 03 I quit feeling the forehead altogether.’

‘You’ve just been sitting here waiting for someone to happen along. Chanting quietly to keep up your courage.’

‘I was just praying like hell it wouldn’t be Pemulis. God only knows what that son of a whore’d’ve thunk of to do to me here all helpless and immobilated. And Troeltsch is sawing logs

just inside that door there, with his fucking mike and cable and ambitions. I've been praying he don't wake up.'

I looked at the door. 'But that's Axhandle's single. What would Troeltsch be doing sleeping in Axhandle's room?' Ortho shrugged. 'Trust that I've had plenty of time to listen and identify different folks' snores, Inc.'

I looked from Stice to Axford's door and back. 'So you've just been sitting here listening to sleep-noises and watching your breath expand and freeze on the window?' I said. Imagining it seemed somehow unendurable. I stood there horrified, admiring The Darkness's ballsy calm.

'There was a kind of real bad half-hour when my upper lip up and got stuck too, in the breath, when the breath froze. But I breathed the sucker loose. I was scared if I passed out I'd slump on forward and the whole face'd get stuck. Goddamn forehead's bad enough.'

I put my toothbrush and NASA glass down on the cantilevered vent-module. 'Dark, prepare yourself mentally,' I said. 'I'm going to help pull you loose.'

Stice didn't seem to hear this. He seemed oddly preoccupied for a man occlusively sealed to a frozen window. He was feeling at the back of his head with real vigor, which is what he did when he was preoccupied.

'Just going to get around behind you and yank and we'll pop you right off,' I said.

'Somebody did come by before,' he said. 'There was somebody standing back there about maybe an hour back. But he just stood there. Then he went away. Or ... it.' A full-body shiver.

'It'll be like that last little bit of ankle-tape. We'll pull you back so hard and fast you won't feel a thing.'

'I'm getting these real unpleasant memories of that piece of Ingersol's tongue on Nine's net-post that stayed there til spring.'

'This is no saliva-and-subzero-metal situation, Dark. This is some freakish occlusive seal. Glass doesn't conduct heat like metal conducts heat.'

'Then plus I think something bit me. On the back of the head here, some bug that knew I was helpless and couldn't see.' Stice dug again at the red area behind his ear. There was a kind of weltish bump there. It wasn't in a vampire-related area of the neck.

'The big thing's going to be to stiffen the old neck, Dark, to avoid whiplash. We'll pull you off there like a cork from a bottle of Moët. You're going to be fine.' I got right behind Stice and bent slightly and got an arm around his chest. His wooden chair creaked as I braced my knee against it. Stice began breathing fast and hard. His parotitic jowls flapped a little as he breathed. Our cheeks were almost pressed together. I told him I was going to pull on the count of Three. I actually pulled on Two, so he couldn't brace himself. I pulled back as hard as I could, and after a stutter of resistance Stice pulled back with me.

There was a horrible sound. The skin of his forehead distended as we yanked his head back. It stretched and distended until a sort of shelf of stretched forehead-flesh half a meter long extended from his head to the window. The sound was like some sort of elastic from hell. The dermis of Slice's forehead was still stuck fast, but the abundant loose flesh of Stice's bulldog face had risen and gathered to stretch and connect his head to the window. And for a second I saw what might be considered Stice's real face, his features as they would be if not encased in loose jowly prairie flesh: as every mm. of spare flesh was pulled up to his forehead and stretched, I got a glimpse of Stice as he would appear after a radical face-lift: a narrow, fine-featured, and slightly rodential face, aflame with some sort of revelation, looked out at the window from beneath the pink visor of stretched spare skin.

All this took place in less than second. For just an instant we both stayed there, straining backward, listening to the little Rice Krispie sound of his skin's collagen-bundles stretching and popping. His chair was leaning way back on its two rear legs. Then Stice shrieked in pain: 'Jesus God put it back!' The little second face's blue eyes protruded like cartoon eyes. The fine little thin-lipped second mouth was a round coin of pain and fear.

'Put it back put it back put it back!' Stice yelled.

I couldn't just let go, though, for fear that the elastic stretch would snap Stice forward into the window and send his face through the glass. I eased him forward, watching the chair's front legs descend slowly to the floor; and the tension of the forehead's skin decreased, and Slice's full fleshy round face reappeared over the small second face, and covered it, and we eased him forward until nothing but a few centimeters of decollagenated forehead-skin hanging and sagging at about eyelash-level remained as evidence of the horrific stretch.

'Jesus God,' Stice panted.

'You are really and truly stuck, Orth.'

'Fuck me did that ever hurt.'

I tried to rotate a kink out of my shoulder. 'We're going to have to thaw it off, Dark.'

'You're not getting close to this forehead with a saw, bud.'

'Thaw, Ortho. Warm water. Heat the window. Hot water. Dissolve the adhesion. Heating pad. Hot pack from Loach's office or something.' I squeezed Stice's shoulder. 'I'll go rig something warm.'

I went forward to make out my face's expression in the window. It was now too light, though, outside, off all the snow. I looked sketchy and faint to myself, tentative and ghostly against all that blazing white.

Jim Troeltsch's towering A.M.-cowlick and then face emerged through Axford's doorway. Stice had been right. Being in somebody else's room even after Lights Out was an infraction; staying there overnight was too far out even to mention in the regulations. It was hard to know which would be more disturbing, Axford's not being in his room all night or Axford being in there behind the ajar door, meaning Troeltsch and Axford had both spent the night in one small single with one bed. The universe seemed to have aligned itself so that even acknowledging it would violate some tacit law.

FRIDAY NOV 20, 1992

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

I was in a zoo. There were no animals or cages, but it was still a zoo. It was close to a nightmare and it woke me before 0500h. Mario was still asleep, gently lit by the window's view of tiny lights down the hill. He lay very still and soundless as always, his poor hands folded on his chest, as if awaiting a lily. I put in a plug of Kodiak. His four pillows brought Mario's chin to his chest when he slept. I was still producing excess saliva, and my one pillow was moist in a way I didn't want to turn on a light and investigate. I didn't feel good at all. A sort of nausea of the head. The feeling seemed worst first thing in the morning. I'd felt for almost a week as if I needed to cry for some reason but the tears were somehow stopping just millimeters behind my eyes and staying there. And so on.

I got up and went past the foot of Mario's bed to the window to stand on one foot. Sometime during the night heavy snow had begun to fall. I had been ordered by deLint and Barry Loach to stand on the left foot for fifteen minutes a day as therapy for the ankle. The countless little adjustments necessary to balance on one foot worked muscles and ligaments in the ankle that were therapeutically unreachable any other way. I always felt sort of dickish, standing on one foot in the dark with nothing to do.

The snow on the ground had a purple cast to it, but the falling and whirling snow was virgin white. Yachting-cap white. I stood on my left foot for maybe five minutes tops. The Boards and A.P.s were three weeks from tomorrow at 0800 in the C.B.S. auditorium at B.U. I could hear a night-custodial crew rolling a mop-bucket somewhere on another floor.

This was to be the first A.M. without dawn drills since Independence Day, and everybody was invited to sleep in until breakfast. There were to be no classes all weekend. I'd awakened too early yesterday, too. I straightened up my bed and put the pillow's wet side down and put on clean sweatpants and some socks that didn't smell foul.

The closest Mario comes to snoring is a thin sound he makes at the back of his throat. The sound is as if he's drawing out the word key over and over. It's not an unpleasant sound. I estimated a good 50 cm. of snow on the ground, and it was really coming down. In the purple half-light the West Courts' nets were half-buried. Their top halves shuddered in a terrible wind. All over the subdormitory I could hear doors rattling slightly in their frames, as they did only in a bad wind. The wind gave the snowfall a swirling diagonal aspect. Snow was hitting the exterior of the window with a sandy sound. The basic view outside the window was that of a briskly shaken paperweight — the kind with the Xmas diorama and shakeable snow. The grounds' trees, fences and buildings looked toylife and miniaturized somehow. In fact it was hard to distinguish new snow falling from extant snow simply whirling around in the wind. It only then occurred to me to wonder whether and where we would play today's exhibition meet. The Lung wasn't yet up, but the sixteen courts under the Lung wouldn't have accommodated more than an A-only meet anyway. It was improbable that anything was going to be landing on time at Logan in this kind of snow. A kind of cold hope flared in me because I realized this could be cancellation-weather. The backlash of this hope was an even worse feeling than before: I couldn't remember ever actively hoping not to have to play before. I couldn't remember feeling strongly one way or the other about playing for quite a long time, in fact.

The wind also produced a desolate moaning in all the ventilation ducts. Mario said 'key' and sometimes 'ski,' drawing them out. It occurred to me that without some one-hitters to be able to look forward to smoking alone in the tunnel I was waking up every day feeling as though there was nothing in the day to anticipate or lend anything any meaning. I stood on one foot for a couple more minutes, spitting into a coffee can I'd left on the floor near the phone from the night before. The implied question, then, would be whether the Bob Hope had somehow become not just the high-point of the day but its actual meaning.

I was going to go back up to see about Stice's defenestration, to check on Mario and change my socks and examine my expression in the mirror for unintentional hilarity, to listen to Orin's phone-messages and then the protracted-death aria from Tosca once or twice. There is no music for free-floating misery like Tosca.

I was moving down the damp hall when it hit. I don't know where it came from. It was some variant of the telescopically self-conscious panic that can be so devastating during a match. I'd never felt quite this way off-court before. It wasn't wholly unpleasant. Unexplained panic sharpens the senses almost past enduring. You perceive things very intensely. Everything came at too many frames per second. Everything had too many aspects. But it wasn't disorienting. The intensity wasn't unmanageable. It was just intense and vivid. It wasn't like being high, but it was still very: lucid. The world seemed suddenly almost edible, there for the ingesting. The thin skin of light over the baseboards' varnish. The cream of the ceiling's acoustic tile. The deerskin-brown longitudinal grain in the rooms' doors' darker wood. The dull brass gleam of the knobs. It was without the abstract, cognitive quality of Bob or Star. The turn-signal red of the stairwell's lit EXIT sign. Sleepy T. P. Peterson came out of the bathroom in a dazzling plaid robe, his face and feet salmon-colored from the showers' heat, and vanished across the hall into his room without seeing me wobbling, leaning against the cool mint wall of the hallway.

But the panic was there too, endocrinal, paralyzing, and with an overcognitive, bad-trip-like element that I didn't recognize from the very visceral on-court attacks of fear. Something like a shadow flanked the vividness and lucidity of the world. The concentration of attention did something to it. What didn't seem fresh and unfamiliar seemed suddenly old as stone. It all happened in the space of a few seconds. The familiarity of Academy routine took on a crushing cumulative aspect. The total number of times I'd schlepped up the rough cement steps of the stairwell, seen my faint red reflection in the paint of the fire door, walked the 56 steps down the hall to our room, opened the door and eased it gently back flush in the jamb to keep from waking Mario. I reexperienced the years' total number of steps, movements, the breaths and pulses involved. Then the number of times I would have to repeat the same processes, day after day, in all kinds of light, until I graduated and moved away and then began the same exhausting process of exit and return in some dormitory at some tennis-power university somewhere. Maybe the worst part of the cognitions involved the incredible volume of food I was going to have to consume over the rest of my life. Meal after meal, plus snacks. Day after day after day. Experiencing this food in toto. Just the thought of the meat alone. One megagram? Two megagrams? I experienced, vividly, the image of a broad cool well-lit room piled floor to ceiling with nothing but the lightly breaded chicken fillets I was going to consume over the next sixty years. The number of fowl vivisected for a lifetime's meat. The amount of hydrochloric acid and bilirubin and glucose and glycogen and gloconol produced and absorbed and produced in my body. And another, dimmer room, filled with the rising mass of the excrement I'd produce, the room's double-locked steel door gradually bowing outward with the mounting pressure. I had to put my hand out against the wall and stand there hunched until the worst of it passed. I watched the floor dry. Its dull shine brightened behind me in the snowlight from the east window. The wall's baby blue was complexly filigreed with bumps and clots of paint. An unmopped glob of spit sat by the corner of V.R.5's door's jamb, quivering slightly as the door rattled in its frame. There were scuffles and thumps from upstairs. It was still snowing like hell.

I lay on my back on the carpet, still on the second floor, fighting the sense that I'd either never been here before or had spent lifetimes just here. The entire room was panelled in a cool yellow shimmering material called Kevlon. The instructional and motivational cartridges were in a large glass bookcase whose central shelves were long and whose top and bottom shelving tapered down to almost nothing. Ovoid would convey the case's shape. I had the NASA glass with my toothbrush in it balanced on my chest. It rose whenever I inhaled. I'd had the NASA glass since I

was a little boy, and its decal of white-helmeted figures waving authoritatively through the windows of a prototype shuttle was faded and incomplete.

After a time, Sleepy T.P. Peterson put his wet-combed head in the door and said LaMont Chu wanted to know whether what was happening outside qualified as a blizzard. It took over a minute of my not saying anything for him to go away. The ceiling panels were grotesquely detailed. They seemed to come after you like some invasive E.T.A. patron backing you up against the wall at a party. The ankle throbbed dully in the snowstorm's low pressure. I relaxed my throat and simply let the excess saliva run post-nasally back and down. The Moms's mother had been ethnic Québécois, her father Anglo-Canadian. The term used in the Yale Journal of Alcohol Studies for this man was binge-drinker. All my grandparents were deceased. Himself's middle name had been Orin, his father's own father's name. My full name is Harold James Incandenza, and I am 183.6 cm. tall in stocking feet. Himself designed the Academy's indirect lighting, which is ingenious and close to full-spectrum. The room contained a large couch, four reclining chairs, a mid-sized recumbency, six green corduroy spectation-pillows stacked in a corner, three end tables, and a coffee table of mylar with inlaid coasters. The overhead lighting in every E.T.A. room came from a small carbon-graphite spotlight directed upward at a complexly alloyed reflecting plate above it. No rheostat was required; a small joystick controlled the brightness by altering the little spot's angle of incidence to the plate. Himself's films were arranged on the third shelf of the entertainment-case. The Moms's full name is Avril Mondragon Tavis Incandenza, Ed.D., Ph.D. She is 197 cm. tall in flats and still came up only to Himself's ear when he straightened and stood erect. The Moms had grown up without a middle name. The etymology of the term blizzard is essentially unknown. The full-spectrum lighting system had been a labor of love from Himself to the Moms, who'd agreed to leave Brandeis and head up the Academy's academics and had an ethnic Canadian's horror of fluorescent light; but by the time the system had been installed and de-bugged, the gestalt of the Moms's lumiphobia had extended to all overhead lighting, and she never used her office's spot-and-plate system.

I could feel a very slight suction in the room's air. I needed to fart but had not so far farted. The atomic weight of carbon is 12.01 and change. It had begun to occur to me that if it came down to a choice between continuing to play competitive tennis and continuing to be able to get high, it would be a nearly impossible choice to make. The distant way in which this fact appalled me itself appalled me. Pemulis had been avoiding me since Tuesday — as if he sensed something. The North American Collegiate Dictionary claimed that any 'very heavy' snowstorm with 'high winds' qualified as a blizzard. Himself, for two years before his death, had had this delusion of silence when I spoke: I believed I was speaking and he believed I was not speaking.. I tried to recall whether I had ever brought the subject up with the Moms. The Moms was at pains to be completely approachable on all subjects except Himself and what had been going on between her and Himself as Himself withdrew more and more. She never forbade questions about it; she just got so pained and blurry-faced that you felt cruel asking her anything. I considered whether Pemulis's cessation of the math-tutorials was perhaps an oblique affirmation, a kind of You Are Ready. Pemulis often communicated in a kind of esoteric code. It was true that I had kept mostly to myself in the room since Tuesday. The condensed O.E.D., in a rare bit of florid imprecision, defined blizzard as 'A furious blast of frost-wind and blinding snow in which man and beast frequently perish,' claiming the word was either a neologism or a corruption of the French blesser, coined in English by a reporter for Iowa's Northern Vindicator in 1864. Orin alleged that when he took the Moms's car in the morning he sometimes observed the smeared prints of nude human feet on the inside of the windshield. The heating duct's grille gave off a sterile hiss. All up and down the hall were sounds

of the Academy coming to life, making competitive ablutions, venting anxiety and complaints at the possible blizzard outside — wanting to play. There was heavy foot-traffic in the third-floor hall above me. John Wayne had had a violent allergic reaction to a decongestant and had commandeered the WETA microphone and publicly embarrassed himself on Troeltsch's Tuesday broadcast, apparently, and had been taken to St. Elizabeth's overnight for observation, but had recovered quickly enough to come home and then finish ahead even of Stice in Wednesday's conditioning run. I missed the entire thing and was filled in by Mario — Wayne had apparently said unkind things about various E.T.A. staff and administration, none of which anyone who knew Wayne and all he stood for had taken seriously. Relief that he was OK had dominated everyone's accounts of the whole incident; the Moms herself had apparently stayed by Wayne's side late into the night at St. E.'s. If you want prescriptive specificity you go to a hard-ass: Sitney and Schneewind's Dictionary of Environmental Sciences required 12 cm./hour of continuous snowfall, minimum winds of 60 kph., and visibility of less than 500 meters; and only if these conditions obtained for more than three hours was it a blizzard; less than three hours was 'C-IV Squall.' The dedication and sustained energy that go into true perspicacity and expertise were exhausting even to think about. Simply imagining the total number of times my chest will rise and fall and rise.

It now lately sometimes seemed like a kind of black miracle to me that people could actually care deeply about a subject or pursuit, and could go on caring this way for years on end. Could dedicate their entire lives to it. It seemed admirable and at the same time pathetic. We are all dying to give our lives away to something, maybe. God or Satan, politics or grammar, topology or philately — the object seemed incidental to this will to give oneself away, utterly. To games or needles, to some other person. Something pathetic about it. A flight-from in the form of a plunging-into. Flight from exactly what? These rooms blandly filled with excrement and meat? To what purpose? This was why they started us here so young: to give ourselves away before the age when the questions why and to what grow real beaks and claws. The original sense of addiction involved being bound over, dedicated, either legally or spiritually. To devote one's life, plunge in. I had researched this.

It's always seemed a little preposterous that Hamlet, for all his paralyzing doubt about everything, never once doubts the reality of the ghost. Never questions whether his own madness might not in fact be unfeigned. Stice had promised something boggling to look at. That is, whether Hamlet might be only feigning feigning. I kept thinking of the Film and Cartridge Studies professor's final soliloquy in Himself's unfinished *Good-Looking Men in Small Clever Rooms that Utilize Every Centimeter of Available Space with Mind-Boggling Efficiency*, the sour parody of academia that the Moms had taken as an odd personal slap. I kept thinking I really should go up and check on The Darkness. There seemed to be so many implications even to thinking about sitting up and standing up and taking a certain variable-according-to-stride-length number of steps to the stairwell door, on and on, that just the thought of getting up made me glad I was lying on the floor.

I was on the floor. I felt the Nile-green carpet with the back of each hand. I was completely horizontal. I was comfortable lying perfectly still and staring at the ceiling. I was enjoying being one horizontal object in a room filled with horizontality. Charles Tavis is probably not related to the Moms by actual blood. Neither Mario nor I had ever approached the Moms on the issue, possibly out of fear of reopening psychic wounds from a childhood that had always sounded unhappy. All I knew for sure was that I had never approached her about it.

For their part, the Moms and C.T. have never represented themselves as anything other than unrelated but extremely close.

The attack of panic and prophylactic focus's last spasm now suddenly almost overwhelmed me with the intense horizontality that was all around me in the room — the ceiling, floor, carpet, table-tops, the chairs' seats and the shelves at their backs' tops. I lay in my tight little sarcophagus of space. The horizontality piled up all around me. I was the meat in the room's sandwich. I felt awakened to a basic dimension I'd neglected during years of upright movement, of standing and running and stopping and jumping, of walking endlessly upright from one side of the court to the other. I had understood myself for years as basically vertical, an odd forked stalk of stuff and blood. I felt denser now; I felt more solidly composed, now that I was horizontal. I was impossible to knock down.

I may have been dozing. Some more heads came and awaited response and left. I may have dozed. It occurred to me that I didn't have to eat if I was not hungry. This presented itself as almost a revelation. I hadn't been hungry in over a week. I could remember when I was always hungry, constantly hungry.

Then at some point Pemulis's head appeared in the doorway, his strange twin-towered A.M. cowlick bobbing as he looked back over each shoulder out into the hall. His right eye was either twitchy or swollen from sleep; something was wrong with it.

'Mmyellow,' he said.

I pretended to shade my eyes. 'Howdy there stranger.'

It is not Pemulis's way to apologize or explain or worry that you might think ill of him. In this he reminded me of Mario. This almost regal lack of insecurity is hard to put together with his crippling neurasthenia on-court.

's up?' he said, not moving from the doorway.

I could see my asking him where he'd been all week leading to so many different possible responses and further questions that the prospect was almost overwhelming, so enervating I could barely get out that I'd just been lying here on the floor.

'Lying here is all,' I told him.

'So I just got told,' he said.

It was almost impossible to shrug lying supine on thick shag. 'See for yourself,' I said.

Pemulis came all the way in. He became the only thing in the room that understood itself as basically vertical. He didn't look very good; his color wasn't good. He had not shaved, and a dozen little black bristles jutted from the ball of his chin. He gave the impression of chewing gum even though he was not chewing gum.

He said 'Thinking?'

'The opposite. Thought-prophylaxis.'

'Feeling a little punk?'

'Can't complain.' I rolled my eyes up at him.

He made a sharp glottal stop. He moved toward the periphery of my vision and fit himself into the seam of two walls behind me; I heard him sliding down to assume the back-supported squat he sometimes liked.

I was thinking of the final film-lecture in *Good-Looking Men in Small Clever Rooms...* and then of C.T.'s misadventure at Himself's funeral. The Moms had had Himself interred in her

family's traditional plot in L'Islet Province. I heard a whoop and two crashes directly overhead. My rib cage contracted and expanded.

'Incster?' Pemulis said after a time.

A noteworthy thing turned out to be that the mound of earth on a freshly-filled grave seems airy and risen and plump, like dough.

'Hal?' Pemulis said.

'Javol.'

'We've got some really important interfacing to do, brother.'

I didn't say anything. There were too many potential responses, both witty ones and earnest ones. I could hear Pemulis's cowlicks brush each wall as he looked to either side, and the slight sound of a small zipper being played with.

'I'm thinking we could go someplace discreet and really interface.'

'I'm a highly tuned horizontal antenna tuned in to you lying right here.'

'I was meaning could we go 830mewhere.'

'So this urgency all of a sudden?' I was trying to make my intonation Jewish-motherish, that melodic dip-rise-dip. 'All week: not a call, not a card. Now I should hear this about urgency?'

'Seen your Mums around lately?'

'Haven't seen her all week. Doubtless she's over helping C.T. arrange a weather-venue.' I paused. 'I haven't seen him all week either, come to think,' I said. 'We're going to get an announcement about the Quebec kids very soon, I can feel it,' I said. 'I'm that highly tuned in this position.'

'What say let's skip the sausage-analog and whip down to Steak 'N Sundae and eat.'

There was an extended pause as I ran a response-tree. Pemulis was zipping and unzipping something with a short zipper. I couldn't decide. I finally had to choose almost at random. 'I'm trying to cut down on patronizing places with "N" in their name.'

'Listen.' I heard his knees creak as he leaned in toward the top of my head. 'About the tu-savez-quoi —'

'The Eeday Emmay Eezay. The synthetic bacchanal. That's definitely off, Mike. Talk about the map being a mess.'

'That's part of what we need to interface about, if you'd get off your literally your ass here.'

I spent a minute watching the NASA glass fall and rise. 'Don't even start.'

'What start?'

'We're on hiatus, remember? We're living like Shi'ite Moslems for the thirty days you miraculously blarneyed the guy into giving us.'

'Blarney wasn't why we got it, Inc, is the thing.'

'And now, what, twenty days to go. We're going to produce urine like a mullah's babe, we agreed.'

'This isn't—' Pemulis started.

I farted, but it didn't produce a noise. I was bored. I couldn't remember a time when Pemulis had bored me. 'And I do not need you launching temptation-rhetoric my way,' I said.

Keith Freer appeared in the doorway, leaning against the jamb with his bare arms crossed. He was still wearing the weird unitard he slept in, which made him look like someone who tore phone books in half at a sideshow.

'Does somebody have an explanation why there's human flesh on the hall window upstairs?' he said.

‘We’re conversing here,’ Pemulis told him.

I half sat up. ‘Flesh?’

Freer looked down at me. ‘This is nothing to laugh at I don’t think Hal. There’s I swear to fucking God a human strip of forehead-flesh upstairs on the hall window, and what looks like two eyebrows, and bits of nose. And now Tall Paul says down in the lobby Stice was seen coming out of the infirmary wearing something out of Zorro.’

Pemulis was completely vertical, standing again; I could hear his knees as he rose. ‘It’s like a tête-à-tête in here, brother. We’re in here bunkered, mano a—’

‘Stice got stuck to the window,’ I explained, lying all the way back down. ‘Kenkle and Brandt were going to detach him with warm water from a janitorial bucket.’

Pemulis said ‘How do you get stuck to a window?’

‘Well from the looks it looks like they detached half his face from his head,’ Freer said, feeling at his own forehead and shuddering a little.

Kieran McKenna’s little porcine snout appeared in a gap under Freer’s arm. ‘Did you guys get to see The Darkness? Gopnik said he looks like a piece of cheese pizza where somebody tore the cheese off. Gopnik said Troeltsch is charging two bucks a look.’ He ran off toward the stairwell without waiting for a reply, his pocket jingling madly. Freer looked at Pemulis and opened his mouth, then apparently reconsidered and followed off down the hall. We could hear a couple of sarcastic whistles at Freer’s unitard.

Pemulis reappeared at the top of my vision; his right eye was definitely twitching. ‘This is what I meant about going someplace discreet. When have I ever urgently asked you to dialogue before, Inc?’

‘Certainly not within the last few days, Mike, that’s for sure.’

There was an extended pause. I raised my hands over my face and looked at their shapes against the indirect lights. Pemulis finally said ‘Well, I’m going to go make sure I eat before I have to see Stice without a fucking forehead.’ ‘Have an analog for me,’ I said. ‘Let me know if there’s word on the meet. I’ll eat if I’m going to have to play.’

Pemulis licked his palm and tried to get his cowlicks to behave. From my vantage he was high overhead and upside-down. ‘So are you going to get up and go up and get dressed and stand on one foot with that opera thing on at some point? Because I could eat and then come up. We can tell Mario we need to mano-à-tête.’

Now I was making a cage of my hands and watching the light through its shape as I rotated it. ‘Will you do me a favor? Get *Good-Looking Men in Small Clever Rooms That Utilize Every Centimeter of Available Space with Mind-Boggling Efficiency* out for me. It’s about a dozen cartridges in from the right on the third shelf down in the entertainment-case. Cue it up to about 2300, 2350 maybe? The last five minutes or so.’

‘The third shelf down,’ I said as he scanned, tapping a foot. ‘They’ve got all Himself’s stuff together on the third shelf.’

He scanned. ‘*Baby Pictures of Famous Dictators? Fun with Teeth? Annular Fusion Is Our Fiend?* I haven’t even heard of half your Dad’s shit that’s here.’

‘It’s *Friend*, not *Fiend*. Either it’s mislabeled or the label’s peeling. And they’re supposed to be alphabetized. It ought to be right next to *Flux in a Box*.

‘And me using the poor guy’s lab,’ Pemulis said. He loaded the player and turned on the viewer, his knees popping again as he squatted to set the cue to 2350. The huge screen hummed in a low pitch that ascended as it began to warm up, the screen taking on a milky blue aspect like the eye of a dead bird. Pemulis’s feet were bare and I looked at the calluses on his heels. He tossed the

cartridge's case carelessly on a couch or chair behind me and looked down. 'What the fuck's *Fun with Teeth* supposed to be about?'

I tried to shrug against the friction of the carpet. 'Pretty much what it says it's about.' The funeral had been held on 5 or 6 April in St. Adalbert. What happened at the funeral service itself was simply that a circling gull scored a direct white hit on the shoulder of C.T.'s blue blazer, and that when he opened his mouth in shock at the direct hit, a large blue-bodied fly flew right into his mouth and was hard to extract. Several persons laughed. It was no huge or dramatic thing. The Moms probably laughed hardest of anyone.

The TP's tracker chugged and clicked, and the viewer bloomed. Pemulis had been wearing parachute pants and a tam-o'-shanter and lensless spectacles, but no shoes. The cartridge started close to what I'd wanted to review, the protagonist's climactic lecture. Paul Anthony Heaven, all 50 kilos of him, gripping the lectern with both hands so you could see that he was missing his thumbs, the sad dyed strands combed over his bald spot visible because he had his head down, reading the lecture in the deadening academic monotone that Himself so loved. The monotone was the reason why Himself used Paul Anthony Heaven, a nonprofessional, by trade a data-entry drone for Ocean Spray, in anything that required a deadening institutional presence — Paul Anthony Heaven had also played the threatening supervisor in *Wave Bye-Bye to the Bureaucrat*, the *Massachusetts State Commissioner for Beach and Water Safety* in *Safe Boating Is No Accident*, and a Parkinsonian corporate auditor in *Low-Temperature Civics*.

'Thus the Flood's real consequence is revealed to be desiccation, generations of hydrophobia on a pandemic scale,' the protagonist was reading aloud. Peterson's *The Cage* was running on a large screen behind the lectern. A number of shots of undergraduates with their heads on their desks, reading their mail, making origami animals, picking at their faces with blank intensity, established that the climactic lecture wasn't coming off as all that climactic to the audience within the film. 'We thus become, in the absence of death as ideologic end, ourselves desiccated, deprived of some essential fluid, aridly cerebral, abstract, conceptual, little more than hallucinations of God,' the academic read in a deadly drone, his eyes never leaving his lectern's text. The art-cartridge critics and scholars who point to the frequent presence of audiences inside Himself's films, and argue that the fact that the audiences are always either dumb and unappreciative or the victims of some grisly entertainment-mishap betrays more than a little hostility on the part of an 'auteur' pegged as *technically* gifted but narratively dull and plotless and static and not entertaining enough — these academics' arguments seem sound as far as they go, but they do not explain the incredible pathos of Paul Anthony Heaven reading his lecture to a crowd of dead-eyed kids picking at themselves and drawing vacant airplane- and genitalia-doodles on their college-rule note-pads, reading stupefyingly turgid-sounding shit — 'For while clinamen and tessera strive to revive or revise the dead ancestor, and while kenosis and daemonization act to repress consciousness and memory of the dead ancestor, it is, finally, artistic askesis which represents the contest proper, the battle-to-the-death with the loved dead'

—in a monotone as narcotizing as a voice from the grave — and yet all the time weeping, Paul Anthony Heaven, as an upward hall full of kids all scan their mail, the film-teacher not sobbing or wiping his nose on his tweed sleeve but silently weeping, very steadily, so that tears run down Heaven's gaunt face and gather on his underslung chin and fall from view, glistening slightly, below the lectern's frame of sight. Then this too began to seem familiar.

I am seated in an office, surrounded by heads and bodies. My posture is consciously congruent to the shape of my hard chair. This is a cold room in University Administration, wood-walled, Remington-hung, double-windowed against the November heat, insulated from Administrative sounds by the reception area outside, at which Uncle Charles, Mr. deLint and I were lately received.

I am in here.

Three faces have resolved into place above summer-weight sportcoats and half-Windsors across a polished pine conference table shiny with the spidered light of an Arizona noon. These are three Deans — of Admissions, Academic Affairs, Athletic Affairs. I do not know which face belongs to whom.

I believe I appear neutral, maybe even pleasant, though I've been coached to err on the side of neutrality and not attempt what would feel to me like a pleasant expression or smile.

I have committed to crossing my legs I hope carefully, ankle on knee, hands together in the lap of my slacks. My fingers are mated into a mirrored series of what manifests, to me, as the letter X. The interview room's other personnel include: the University's Director of Composition, its varsity tennis coach, and Academy prorektor Mr. A. deLint. C.T. is beside me; the others sit, stand and stand, respectively, at the periphery of my focus. The tennis coach jingles pocket-change. There is something vaguely digestive about the room's odor. The high-traction sole of my complimentary Nike sneaker runs parallel to the wobbling loafer of my mother's half-brother, here in his capacity as Headmaster, sitting in the chair to what I hope is my immediate right, also facing Deans.

The Dean at left, a lean yellowish man whose fixed smile nevertheless has the impermanent quality of something stamped into uncooperative material, is a personality-type I've come lately to appreciate, the type who delays need of any response from me by relating my side of the story for me, to me. Passed a packet of computer-sheets by the shaggy lion of a Dean at center, he is speaking more or less to these pages, smiling down.

'You are Harold Incandenza, eighteen, date of secondary-school graduation approximately one month from now, attending the Enfield Tennis Academy, Enfield, Massachusetts, a boarding school, where you reside.' His reading glasses are rectangular, court-shaped, the sidelines at top and bottom. 'You are, according to Coach White and Dean [unintelligible], a regionally, nationally, and continentally ranked junior tennis player, a potential athlete of substantial promise, recruited by Coach White via correspondence with Dr. Tavis here commencing...February of this year.' The top page is removed and brought around neatly to the bottom of the sheaf, at intervals. 'You have been in residence at the Enfield Tennis Academy since age seven.'

I am debating whether to risk scratching the right side of my jaw, where there is a wen.

'Coach White informs our offices that he holds the Enfield Tennis Academy's program and achievements in high regard, that the University of Arizona tennis squad has profited from the prior matriculation of several former E.T.A. alumni, one of whom was one Mr. Aubrey F. deLint, who appears also to be with you here today. Coach White and his staff have given us—'

The yellow administrator's usage is on the whole undistinguished, though I have to admit he's made himself understood. The Director of Composition seems to have more than the normal number of eyebrows. The Dean at right is looking at my face a bit strangely.

Uncle Charles is saying that though he can anticipate that the Deans might be predisposed to weigh what he avers as coming from his possible appearance as a kind of cheerleader for E.T.A.,

he can assure the assembled Deans that all this is true, and that the Academy has presently in residence no fewer than a third of the continent's top thirty juniors, in age brackets all across the board, and that I here, who go by 'Hal,' usually, am 'right up there among the very cream.' Right and center Deans smile professionally; the heads of deLint and the coach incline as the Dean at left clears his throat:

'— belief that you could well make, even as a freshman, a real contribution to this University's varsity tennis program. We are pleased,' he either says or reads, removing a page, 'that a competition of some major sort here has brought you down and given us the chance to sit down and chat together about your application and potential recruitment and matriculation and scholarship.'

'I've been asked to add that Hal here is seeded third, Boys' 18-and-Under Singles, in the prestigious WhataBurger Southwest Junior Invitational out at the Randolph Tennis Center —' says what I infer is Athletic Affairs, his cocked head showing a freckled scalp.

'Just so, Chuck, and that according to Chuck here Hal has already justified his seed, he's reached the semifinals as of this morning's apparently impressive win, and that he'll be playing out at the Center again tomorrow, against the winner of a quarterfinal game tonight, and so will be playing tomorrow at I believe scheduled for 0830 —'

'Try to get under way before the godawful heat out there. Though of course a dry heat.'

'— and has apparently already qualified for this winter's Continental Indoors, up in Edmonton, Kirk tells me —' cocking further to look up and left at the varsity coach, whose smile's teeth are radiant against a violent sunburn — 'Which is something indeed.' He smiles, looking at me. 'Did we get all that right Hal.'

C.T. has crossed his arms casually; their triceps' flesh is webbed with mottle in the air-conditioned sunlight. 'You sure did. Bill.' He smiles. The two halves of his mustache never quite match. 'And let me say if I may that Hal's excited, excited to be invited for the third year running to the Invitational again, to be back here in a community he has real affection for, to visit with your alumni and coaching staff, to have already justified his high seed in this week's not unstiff competition, so to speak, but of course most of all to have a chance to meet you gentlemen and have a look at the facilities here. Everything here is absolutely top-slot, from what he's seen.'

There is a silence. DeLint shifts his back against the room's panelling and recenters his weight. My uncle beams and straightens a straight watchband. 62.5% of the room's faces are directed my way, pleasantly expectant. My chest bumps like a dryer with shoes in it. I compose what I project will be seen as a smile. I turn this way and that, slightly, sort of directing the expression to everyone in the room.

There is a new silence. The yellow Dean's eyebrows go circumflex. The two other Deans look to the Director of Composition. The tennis coach has moved to stand at the broad window, feeling at the back of his crewcut. Uncle Charles strokes the forearm above his watch. Sharp curved palm-shadows move slightly over the pine table's shine, the one head's shadow a black moon.

'Is Hal all right, Chuck?' Athletic Affairs asks. 'Hal just seemed to...well, grimace. Is he in pain? Are you in pain, son?'

'Hal's right as rain,' smiles my uncle, soothing the air with a casual hand. 'Just a bit of a let's call it maybe a facial tic, slightly, at all the adrenaline of being here on your impressive campus, justifying his seed so far without dropping a set, receiving that official written offer of not only waivers but a living allowance from Coach White here, on Pac 10 letterhead, being ready in all probability to sign a National Letter of Intent right here and now this very day, he's indicated to me.' C.T. looks to me, his look horribly mild. I do the safe thing, relaxing every muscle in my

face, emptying out all expression. I stare carefully into the Kekuléan knot of the middle Dean's necktie.

My silent response to the expectant silence begins to affect the air of the room, the bits of dust and sportcoat-lint stirred around by the AC's vents dancing jaggedly in the slanted plane of windowlight, the air over the table like the sparkling space just above a fresh-poured seltzer. The coach, in a slight accent neither British nor Australian, is telling C.T. that the whole application-interface process, while usually just a pleasant formality, is probably best accentuated by letting the applicant speak up for himself. Right and center Deans have inclined together in soft conference, forming a kind of tepee of skin and hair. I presume it's probably *facilitate* that the tennis coach mistook for *accentuate*. The Dean with the flat yellow face has leaned forward, his lips drawn back from his teeth in what I see as concern. His hands come together on the conference table's surface. His own fingers look like they mate as my own four-X series dissolves and I hold tight to the sides of my chair.

We need candidly to chat re potential problems with my application, they and I, he is beginning to say. He makes a reference to candor and its value.

'The issues my office faces with the application materials on file from you, Hal, involve some test scores.' He glances down at a colorful sheet of standardized scores in the trench his arms have made. 'The Admissions staff is looking at standardized test scores from you that are, as I'm sure you know and can explain, are, shall we say ... subnormal.' I'm to explain.

The facial creases of the shaggy middle Dean are now pursed in a kind of distanced affront, an I'm-eating-something-that-makes-me-really-appreciate-the-presence-of-whatever-I'm-drinking-along-with-it look that spells professionally Academic reservations. An uncomplicated loyalty to standards, then, at center. My uncle looks to Athletics as if puzzled. He shifts slightly in his chair.

The incongruity between Admissions's hand- and face-color is almost wild. '—verbal scores that are just quite a bit closer to zero than we're comfortable with, as against a secondary-school transcript from the institution where both your mother and her brother are administrators —' reading directly out of the sheaf inside his arms' ellipse — 'that this past year, yes, has fallen off a bit, but by the word I mean "fallen off" to outstanding from three previous years of frankly incredible.'

'Off the charts.'

'Most institutions do not even *have* grades of A with multiple pluses after it,' says the Director of Composition, his expression impossible to interpret.

'This kind of...how shall I put it...incongruity,' Admissions says, his expression frank and concerned, 'I've got to tell you sends up a red flag of potential concern during the admissions process.'

'We thus invite you to explain the appearance of incongruity if not outright shenanigans.' Students has a tiny piping voice that's absurd coming out of a face this big.

'Surely by *incredible* you meant very very very impressive, as opposed to literally quote "incredible," surely,' says C.T., seeming to watch the coach at the window massaging the back of his neck. The huge window gives out on nothing more than dazzling sunlight and cracked earth with heat-shimmers over it.

'Then there is before us the matter of not the required two but nine separate application essays, some of which of nearly monograph-length, each without exception being —' different sheet — 'the adjective various evaluators used was quote "stellar" but in areas and with titles, I'm sure you recall quite well, Hal: "Neoclassical Assumptions in Contemporary Prescriptive

Grammar,” “The Implications of Post-Fourier Transformations for a Holographically Mimetic Cinema,” “The Emergence of Heroic Stasis in Broadcast Entertainment”—’

‘“Montague Grammar and the Semantics of Physical Modality”?’

‘“A Man Who Began to Suspect He Was Made of Glass”?’

‘“Tertiary Symbolism in Justinian Erotica”?’

Now showing broad expanses of recessed gum. ‘Suffice to say that there’s some frank and candid concern about the recipient of these unfortunate test scores, though perhaps explainable test scores, being these essays’ sole individual author.’

‘I’m not sure Hal’s sure just what’s being implied here,’ my uncle says. The Dean at center is fingering his lapels as he interprets distasteful computed data.

‘What the University is saying here is that from a strictly academic point of view there are admission problems that Hal needs to try to help us iron out. A matriculant’s first role at the University is and must be as a student. We couldn’t admit a student we have reason to suspect can’t cut the mustard, no matter how much of an asset he might be on the field.’

‘Dean Sawyer means the court, of course, Chuck,’ Athletic Affairs says. ‘Not to mention regulations and investigators always snuffling around for some sort of whiff of the smell of impropriety.’

The varsity tennis coach looks at his own watch.

‘Assuming these board scores are accurate reflectors of true capacity in this case,’ Academic Affairs says, his high voice serious and sotto, still looking at the file before him as if it were a plate of something bad, ‘I’ll tell you right now my opinion is it wouldn’t be fair. It wouldn’t be fair to the other applicants. Wouldn’t be fair to the University community.’ He looks at me. ‘And it’d be especially unfair to Hal himself. Admitting a boy we see as simply an athletic asset would amount to just using that boy. We’re under myriad scrutiny to make sure we’re not using anybody. Your board results, son, indicate that we could be accused of using you.’

Uncle Charles is asking Coach White to ask the Dean of Athletic Affairs whether the weather over scores would be as heavy if I were, say, a revenue-raising football prodigy. The familiar panic at feeling misperceived is rising, and my chest bumps and thuds. I expend energy on remaining utterly silent in my chair, empty, my eyes two great pale zeros. People have promised to get me through this.

Uncle C.T., though, has the pinched look of the cornered. His voice takes on an odd timbre, as if he were shouting as he receded. ‘Hal’s grades at E.T.A., which is I should stress an Academy, not simply a camp or factory, accredited by both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the North American Sports Academy Association, it’s focused on the total needs of the player and student, founded by a towering intellectual figure whom I hardly need name, here, and based by him on the rigorous Oxbridge Quadrivium-Trivium curricular model, a school fully staffed and equipped, by a fully certified staff, should show that my nephew here can cut just about any Pac 10 mustard that needs cutting, and that —’

DeLint is moving toward the tennis coach, who is shaking his head.

‘— would be able to see a distinct flavor of minor-sport prejudice about this whole thing,’ C.T. says, crossing and recrossing his legs as I listen, composed and staring.

The room’s carbonated silence is now hostile. ‘I think it’s time to let the actual applicant himself speak out on his own behalf,’ Academic Affairs says very quietly. ‘This seems somehow impossible with you here, sir.’

Athletics smiles tiredly under a hand that massages the bridge of his nose. ‘Maybe you’d excuse us for a moment and wait outside, Chuck.’

‘Coach White could accompany Mr. Tavis and his associate out to reception,’ the yellow Dean says, smiling into my unfocused eyes.

‘— led to believe this had all been ironed out in advance, from the —’ C.T. is saying as he and deLint are shown to the door. The tennis coach extends a hypertrophied arm. Athletics says ‘We’re all friends and colleagues here.’

This is not working out. I would yield to the urge to bolt for the door ahead of them if I could know that bolting for the door is what the men in this room would see. DeLint is murmuring something to the tennis coach. Sounds of keyboards, phone consoles as the door is briefly opened, then firmly shut. I am alone among administrative heads.

‘We’ve known in processing several prior applications through Coach White’s office that the Enfield School is operated, however impressively, by close relations, so that grades’ objectivity can be all too easily called into question —’

The essays are old ones, yes, but they are mine; *de moi*. But they are, yes, old, not quite on the application’s instructed subject of Most Meaningful Educational Experience Ever. In this new smaller company, the Director of Composition seems abruptly to have actuated, emerged as both the Alpha of the pack here and way more effeminate than he’d seemed at first, standing hip-shot with a hand on his waist, walking with a roll to his shoulders, jingling change as he pulls up his pants as he slides into the chair still warm from C.T.’s bottom, crossing his legs in a way that inclines him well into my personal space, so that I can see multiple eyebrow-tics and capillary webs in the oysters below his eyes and smell fabric-softener and the remains of a breath-mint turned sour.

‘. . . a bright, solid, but very shy boy,’ the Director says softly, cupping what I feel to be a hand over my sportcoat’s biceps (surely not), ‘who simply needs to swallow hard and trust and tell his side of the story to these gentlemen who bear no maliciousness none at all but are doing our jobs and trying to look out for everyone’s interests at the same time.’

I have been coached for this like a Don before a RICO hearing. A neutral and affectless silence. The sort of all-defensive game Schtitt used to have me play: the best defense: let everything bounce off you; do nothing. I’d tell you all you want and more, if the sounds I made could be what you hear.

Athletics with his head out from under his wing: ‘— to avoid admission procedures that could be seen as primarily athletics-oriented. It could be a mess, son.’

‘Bill means the appearance, not necessarily the real true facts of the matter, which you alone can fill in,’ says the Director of Composition.

‘— the appearance of the high athletic ranking, the subnormal scores, the over-academic essays, the incredible grades vortexing out of what could be seen as a nepotistic situation.’

The yellow Dean has leaned so far forward that his tie is going to have a horizontal dent from the table-edge, his face sallow and kindly and no-shit-whatever:

‘Look here, Mr. Incandenza, Hal, please just explain to me why we couldn’t be accused of using you, son. Why nobody could come and say to us, why, look here, University of Arizona, here you are using a boy for just his body, a boy so shy and withdrawn he won’t speak up for himself, a jock with doctored marks and a store-bought application.’

The Brewster’s-Angle light of the tabletop appears as a rose flush behind my closed lids. I cannot make myself understood. ‘I am not just a jock,’ I say slowly. Distinctly. ‘My transcript for the last year might have been dickied a bit, maybe, but that was to get me over a rough spot. The grades prior to that are *de moi*.’ My eyes are closed; the room is silent. ‘I cannot make myself understood, now.’ I am speaking slowly and distinctly.

‘Call it something I ate.’

It's funny what you don't recall. Our first home, in the suburb of Weston, which I barely remember — my eldest brother Orin says he can remember being in the home's backyard with our mother in the early spring, helping the Moms till some sort of garden out of the cold yard. March or early April. The garden's area was a rough rectangle laid out with Popsicle sticks and twine. Orin was removing rocks and hard clods from the Moms's path as she worked the rented Rototiller, a wheelbarrow-shaped, gas-driven thing that roared and snorted and bucked and seemed to propel the Moms rather than vice versa, the Moms very tall and having to stoop painfully to hold on, her feet leaving drunken prints in the tilled earth. He remembers that in the middle of the tilling I came tear-assing out the door and into the backyard wearing some sort of fuzzy red Pooh-wear, crying, holding out something he said was really unpleasant-looking in my upturned palm. He says I was around five and crying and was vividly red in the cold spring air. I was saying something over and over; he couldn't make it out until our mother saw me and shut down the tiller, ears ringing, and came over to see what I was holding out. This turned out to have been a large patch of mold from some dark corner of the Weston home's basement, which was warm from the furnace and flooded every spring. The patch itself he describes as horrific: darkly green, glossy, vaguely hirsute, speckled with parasitic fungal points of yellow, orange, red. Worse, they could see that the patch looked oddly incomplete, gnawed-on; and some of the nauseous stuff was smeared around my open mouth. ‘I ate this,’ was what I was saying. I held the patch out to the Moms, who had her contacts out for the dirty work, and at first, bending way down, saw only her crying child, hand out, proffering; and in that most maternal of reflexes she, who feared and loathed more than anything spoilage and filth, reached to take whatever her baby held out — as in how many used heavy Kleenex, spit-back candies, wads of chewed-out gum in how many theaters, airports, backseats, tournament lounges? O. stood there, he says, hefting a cold clod, playing with the Velcro on his puffy coat, watching as the Moms, bent way down to me, hand reaching, her lowering face with its presbyopic squint, suddenly stopped, froze, beginning to I.D. what it was I held out, countenancing evidence of oral contact with same. Her outstretched hand, still Rototrembling, hung in the air before mine.

‘I ate this,’ I said.

‘Pardon me?’

I had stopped crying, he remembers, and simply stood there, the size and shape of a hydrant, in red PJ's with attached feet, holding out the mold, seriously, like the report of some kind of audit.

O. says his memory diverges at this point, probably as a result of anxiety. In his first memory, the Moms's path around the yard is a broad circle of hysteria:

‘*God!*’ she calls out.

‘Help! My son ate this!’ she yells in Orin's second and more fleshed-out recollection, yelling it over and over, holding the speckled patch aloft in a pincer of fingers, running around and around the garden's rectangle while O. gaped at his first real sight of adult hysteria. Suburban neighbors' heads appeared in windows and over the fences, looking. O. remembers me tripping over the garden's laid-out twine, getting up dirty, crying, trying to follow.

‘God! Help! My son ate this! Help!’ she kept yelling, running a tight pattern just inside the square of string; and my brother Orin remembers noting how even in hysterical trauma her flight-

lines were plumb, her footprints Native-American-straight, her turns, inside the ideogram of string, crisp and martial, crying 'My son ate this! Help!' and lapping me twice before the memory recedes.

'My application's not bought,' I am telling them, calling into the darkness of the red cave that opens out before closed eyes. 'I am not just a boy who plays tennis. I have an intricate history. Experiences and feelings. I'm complex.'

'I read,' I say. 'I study and read. I bet I've read everything you've read. Don't think I haven't. I consume libraries. I wear out spines. I do things like get in a taxi and say, "The library, and step on it." My instincts concerning syntax and mechanics are better than your own, I can tell, with due respect.'

'But it transcends the mechanics. I'm not a machine. I feel and believe. I have opinions. Some of them are interesting. I could, if you'd let me, talk and talk. Let's talk about anything. I believe the influence of Kierkegaard on Camus is underestimated. I believe Dennis Gabor may very well have been the Antichrist. I believe Hobbes is just Rousseau in a dark mirror. I believe, with Hegel, that transcendence is absorption. I could interface you guys right under the table,' I say. 'I'm not just a *creātus*, manufactured, conditioned, bred for a function.'

I open my eyes. 'Please don't think I don't care.'

I look out. Directed my way is horror. I rise from the chair. I see jowls sagging, eyebrows high on trembling foreheads, cheeks bright-white. The chair recedes below me.

'Sweet mother of Christ,' the Director says.

'I'm fine,' I tell them, standing. From the yellow Dean's expression, there's a brutal wind blowing from my direction. Academics' face has gone instantly old. Eight eyes have become blank discs that stare at whatever they see.

'Good God,' whispers Athletics.

'Please don't worry,' I say. 'I can explain.' I soothe the air with a casual hand.

Both my arms are pinioned from behind by the Director of Comp., who wrestles me roughly down, on me with all his weight. I taste floor.

'What's *wrong*?'

I say '*Nothing* is wrong.'

'It's all *right*! I'm *here*!' the Director is calling into my ear.

'Get help!' cries a Dean.

My forehead is pressed into parquet I never knew could be so cold. I am arrested. I try to be perceived as limp and pliable. My face is mashed flat; Comp.'s weight makes it hard to breathe. 'Try to listen,' I say very slowly, muffled by the floor.

'What in God's name are those...,' one Dean cries shrilly, '*...those sounds*?'

There are clicks of a phone console's buttons, shoes' heels moving, pivoting, a sheaf of flimsy pages falling.

'*God!*'

'*Help!*'

The door's base opens at the left periphery: a wedge of halogen hall-light, white sneakers and a scuffed Nunn Bush. 'Let him *up*!' That's deLint.

'There is nothing wrong,' I say slowly to the floor. 'I'm in here.'

I'm raised by the crutches of my underarms, shaken toward what he must see as calm by a purple-faced Director: 'Get a *grip*, son!'

DeLint at the big man's arm: '*Stop* it!'

‘I am not what you see and hear.’

Distant sirens. A crude half nelson. Forms at the door. A young Hispanic woman holds her palm against her mouth, looking.

‘I’m not,’ I say.

You have to love old-fashioned men’s rooms: the citrus scent of deodorant disks in the long porcelain trough; the stalls with wooden doors in frames of cool marble; these thin sinks in rows, basins supported by rickety alphabets of exposed plumbing; mirrors over metal shelves; behind all the voices the slight sound of a ceaseless trickle, inflated by echo against wet porcelain and a cold tile floor whose mosaic pattern looks almost Islamic at this close range.

The disorder I’ve caused revolves all around. I’ve been half-dragged, still pinioned, through a loose mob of Administrative people by the Comp. Director — who appears to have thought variously that I am having a seizure (prying open my mouth to check for a throat clear of tongue), that I am somehow choking (a textbook Heimlich that left me whooping), that I am psychotically out of control (various postures and grips designed to transfer that control to him) — while about us roil deLint, trying to restrain the Director’s restraint of me, the varsity tennis coach restraining deLint, my mother’s half-brother speaking in rapid combinations of polysyllables to the trio of Deans, who variously gasp, wring hands, loosen neckties, waggle digits in C.T.’s face, and make *pases* with sheafs of now-pretty-clearly-superfluous application forms.

I am rolled over supine on the geometric tile. I am concentrating docilely on the question why U.S. restrooms always appear to us as infirmaries for public distress, the place to regain control. My head is cradled in a knelt Director’s lap, which is soft, my face being swabbed with dusty-brown institutional paper towels he received from some hand out of the crowd overhead, staring with all the blankness I can summon into his jowls’ small pocks, worst at the blurred jaw-line, of scarring from long-ago acne. Uncle Charles, a truly unparalleled slinger of shit, is laying down an enfilade of same, trying to mollify men who seem way more in need of a good brow-mopping than I.

‘He’s fine,’ he keeps saying. ‘Look at him, calm as can be, lying there.’

‘You didn’t see what *happened* in there,’ a hunched Dean responds through a face webbed with fingers.

‘Excited, is all he gets, sometimes, an excitable kid, impressed with —’

‘But the *sounds* he made.’ ‘Undescribable.’

‘Like an animal.’

‘*Subanimalistic* noises and sounds.’

‘Nor let’s not forget the *gestures*.’

‘Have you ever gotten *help* for this boy Dr. Tavis?’

‘Like some sort of animal with something in its mouth.’

‘This boy is damaged.’

‘Like a stick of butter being hit with a mallet.’

‘A writhing animal with a knife in its eye.’

‘What were you possibly about, trying to enroll this —’

‘And his *arms*.’

‘You didn’t see it, Tavis. His arms were —’

‘Flailing. This sort of awful reaching drumming wriggle. *Wagging*,’ the group looking briefly at someone outside my sight trying to demonstrate something.

‘Like a time-lapse, a flutter of some sort of awful ... growth.’

‘Sounded most of all like a drowning goat. A goat, drowning in something viscous.’

‘This strangled series of bleats and —’

‘Yes they *waggled*.’

‘So suddenly a bit of excited wagging’s a crime, now?’

‘You, sir, are in trouble. You are in *trouble*.’

‘His face. As if he was strangling. Burning. I believe I’ve seen a vision of hell.’

‘He has some trouble communicating, he’s communicatively challenged, no one’s denying that.’

‘The boy needs *care*.’

‘Instead of caring for the boy you send him here to enroll, compete?’

‘Hal?’

‘You have not in your most dreadful fantasies dreamt of the amount of *trouble* you have bought yourself, Dr. so-called Headmaster, *educator*.’

‘... were given to understand this was all just a formality. You took him aback, is all. Shy —’

‘And you, White. You sought to *recruit* him!’

‘— and terribly impressed and excited, in there, without us, his support system, whom you asked to leave, which if you’d —’

‘I’d only seen him play. On court he’s gorgeous. Possibly a genius. We had no idea. The brother’s in the bloody NFL for God’s sake. Here’s a top player, we thought, with Southwest roots. His stats were off the chart. We watched him through the whole WhataBurger last fall. Not a waggle or a noise. We were watching ballet out there, a mate remarked, after.’

‘Damn right you were watching ballet out there, White. This boy is a balletic athlete, a player.’

‘Some kind of athletic savant then. Balletic compensation for deep problems which you sir choose to disguise by muzzling the boy in there.’ An expensive pair of Brazilian espadrilles goes by on the left and enters a stall, and the espadrilles come around and face me. The urinal trickles behind the voices’ small echoes.

‘— haps we’ll just be on our way,’ C.T. is saying.

‘The integrity of my sleep has been forever compromised, sir.’

‘— think you could pass off a damaged applicant, fabricate credentials and shunt him through a kangaroo-interview and inject him into all the rigors of college life?’

‘Hal here *functions*, you ass. Given a supportive situation. He’s fine when he’s by himself. Yes he has some trouble with excitability in conversation. Did you once hear him try to deny that?’

‘We witnessed something only marginally *mammalian* in there, sir.’

‘Like hell. Have a look. How’s the excitable little guy doing down there, Aubrey, does it look to you?’

‘You, sir, are quite possibly ill. This affair is not concluded.’

‘What *ambulance*? Don’t you guys *listen*? I’m telling you there’s —’

‘Hal? Hal?’

‘Dope him up, seek to act as his mouthpiece, muzzling, and now he lies there catatonic, staring.’

The crackle of deLint’s knees. ‘Hal?’

‘— inflate this publicly in any distorted way. The Academy has distinguished alumni, litigators at counsel. Hal here is provably competent. Credentials out the bazoo, Bill. The boy reads like a vacuum. *Digests* things.’

I simply lie there, listening, smelling the paper towel, watching an espadrille pivot. ‘There’s more to life than sitting there interfacing, it might be a newsflash to you.’

And who could not love that special and leonine roar of a public toilet?

The stretcher is the special type, with restraining straps at the extremities. The same Aubrey deLint I’d dismissed for years as a 2-D martinet knelt gurneyside to squeeze my restrained hand and say ‘Just hang in there, Buckaroo,’ before moving back into the administrative fray at the ambulance’s doors. It is a special ambulance with not only paramedics but a psychiatric M.D. on board. The medics lift gently and are handy with straps. The M.D., his back up against the ambulance’s side, has both hands up in dispassionate mediation between the Deans and C.T., who keeps stabbing skyward with his cell as if it were a sabre, outraged that I’m being needlessly ambulated off to some Emergency Room against my will and interests. The M.D. has both hands up and is patting the air to signify dispassion. He has a big blue jaw.

At the only other emergency room I have ever been in, almost exactly one year back, the psychiatric stretcher was wheeled in and then parked beside the waiting-room chairs. These chairs were molded orange plastic; three of them down the row were occupied by different people all of whom were holding empty prescription bottles and perspiring freely.

I once saw the word KNIFE finger-written on the steamed mirror of a nonpublic bathroom.

I have become infantile. I am forced to roll my closed eyes either up or to the side to keep the red cave from bursting into flames from the sunlight. The street’s passing traffic is constant and seems to go ‘Hush, hush, hush.’ The sun, if your fluttering eye catches it even slightly, gives you the blue and red floaters a flashbulb gives you. ‘Why not? Why *not*? Why not *not*, then, if the best reasoning you can contrive is why not?’ C.T.’s voice, receding with outrage. I will be conveyed to an Emergency Room of some kind, where I will be detained as long as I do not respond to questions, and then, when I do respond to questions, I will be sedated; so it will be inversion of standard travel, the ambulance and ER: I’ll make the journey first, then depart. It will start on the ride itself: some blue-jawed M.D. scrubbed to an antiseptic glow with his name sewn in cursive on his white coat’s breast pocket and a quality desk-set pen, wanting gurneyside Q&A, etiology and diagnosis by Socratic method, ordered and point-by-point; or maybe in the E.R., at the intake desk, or in the green-tiled room after the room with the invasive-digital machines; a nurse’s aide with quick-bit nails, a hospital security guy, a tired orderly who—will catch what he sees as my eye and ask what’s *your* story?

I think of the Moms, alphabetizing cans of soup in the cabinet over the microwave. Of Himself’s umbrella hung by its handle from the edge of the mail table just inside the Headmaster’s House’s foyer. The bad ankle that hasn’t ached once this whole year. I think of John Wayne, who would have won this year’s WhataBurger. There’s very little doubt that Wayne would have won. And Venus Williams owns a ranch outside Green Valley; she may well attend the 18’s Boys’ and Girls’ finals. I will be out in plenty of time for tomorrow’s semi; I trust Uncle Charles. Tonight’s winner is almost sure to be Dymphna and Dymphna will still be tired tomorrow at 0830, while I, sedated, will have slept like a graven image. I have never before faced Dymphna in tournament play, nor played with the sonic balls the blind require, but I know he is mine.

¹ JAMES O. INCANDEZA: A FILMOGRAPHY

From Comstock, Posner, and Duquette, 'The Laughing Pathologists: Exemplary Works of the Anticonfluent *Après Garde*: Some Analyses of the Movement Toward Stasis in North American Conceptual Film (w/ Beth B., Vivienne Dick, James O. Incandenza, Vigdis Simpson, E. and K. Snow),' *ONANite Film and Cartridge Studies Annual*, vol. 8, nos. 1-3, pp. 44-117.

The following listing is as complete as we are able to make it. Because the twelve years of Incandenza's directorial activity also coincided with large shifts in film venue — from public art cinemas, to VCR-capable magnetic recordings and reviewable storage disk laser cartridges — and because Incandenza's output itself comprises industrial, documentary, conceptual, advertorial, technical, parodic, dramatic noncommercial, nondramatic ('anti-confluent') noncommercial, nondramatic commercial, and dramatic commercial works, this filmmaker's career presents substantive archival challenges. These challenges are also compounded by the facts that, first, for conceptual reasons, Incandenza eschewed both L. of C. registration and formal dating until the advent of Subsidized Time, secondly, that his output increased steadily until during the last years of his life Incandenza often had several works in production at the same time, thirdly, that his production company was privately owned and underwent at least four different changes of corporate name, and lastly that certain of his high-conceptual projects' agendas required that they be titled and subjected to critique but never filmed, making their status as film subject to controversy.

Accordingly, though the works are here listed in what is considered by archivists to be their probable order of completion, we wish to say that the list's order and completeness are, at this point in time, not definitive.

Each work's title is followed: by either its year of completion, or by 'B.S.,' designating undated completion before Subsidization; by the production company; by the major players, if credited; by the storage medium's ('film' 's) gauge or gauges; by the length of the work to the nearest minute; by an indication of whether the work is in black and white or color or both; by an indication of whether the film is silent or in sound or both; by (if possible) a brief synopsis or critical overview; and by an indication of whether the work is mediated by celluloid film, magnetic video or privately distributed by Incandenza's own company(ies). The designation UNRELEASED is used for those works which never saw distribution and are now publicly unavailable or lost.

Cage. Dated only 'Before Subsidization.' Meniscus Films, Ltd. Uncredited cast; 16 mm.; .5 minutes; black and white; sound. Soliloquized parody of a broadcast-television advertisement for shampoo, utilizing four convex mirrors, two planar mirrors, and one actress. UNRELEASED

Kinds of Light. B.S. Meniscus Films, Ltd. No cast; 16 mm.; 3 minutes; color; silent. 4,444 individual frames, each of which photo depicts lights of different source, wavelength, and candle power, each reflected off the same unpolished tin plate and rendered disorienting at normal projection speeds by the hyperretinal speed at which they pass. CELLULOID, LIMITED METROPOLITAN BOSTON RELEASE, REQUIRES PROJECTION AT .25 NORMAL SPROCKET DRIVE

Dark Logics. B.S. Meniscus Films, Ltd. Players uncredited; 35 mm.; 21 minutes; color; silent w/ deafening Wagner/Sousa soundtrack. Griffith tribute, limura parody. Child-sized but severely palsied hand turns pages of incunabular manuscripts in mathematics, alchemy, religion, and bogus political autobiography, each page comprising some articulation or defense of intolerance and hatred. Film's dedication to D. W. Griffith and Taka limura. UNRELEASED

Tennis, Everyone? B.S. Heliotrope Films, Ltd./U.S.T.A. Films. Documentary cast w/ narrator Judith Fukuoka-Hearn; 35 mm.; 26 minutes; color; sound. Public relations/advertorial production for United States Tennis Association in conjunction with Wilson Sporting Goods, Inc. MAGNETIC VIDEO

There Are No Losers Here. B.S. Heliotrope Films, Ltd./ U.S.T.A. Films. Documentary cast w/ narrator P. A. Heaven; 35 mm.; color; sound. Documentary on B.S. 1997 U.S.T.A. National Junior Tennis Championships, Kalamazoo MI and Miami FL, in conjunction with United States Tennis Association and Wilson Sporting Goods. MAGNETIC VIDEO

Flux in a Box. B.S. Heliotrope Films, Ltd./Wilson Inc. Documentary cast w/ narrator Judith Fukuoka-Hearn; 35 mm.; 52 minutes; black and white/color; sound. Documentary history of box, platform, lawn, and court tennis from the 17th-century Court of the Dauphin to the present. MAGNETIC VIDEO

Infinite Jest (I). B.S. Meniscus Films, Ltd. Judith Fukuoka-Hearn; 16/35 mm.; 90(?) minutes; black and white; silent. Incandenza's unfinished and unseen first attempt at commercial entertainment. UNRELEASED

Annular Fusion Is Our Friend. B.S. Heliotrope Films, Ltd./Sunstrand Power & Light Co. Documentary cast w/ narrator C. N. Reilly; Sign- Interpreted for the Deaf; 78 mm.; 45 minutes; color; sound. Public relations/advertorial production for New England's Sunstrand Power and Light utility, a nontechnical explanation of the processes of DT-cycle lithiumized annular fusion and its applications in domestic energy production. CELLULOID, MAGNETIC VIDEO

Annular Amplified Light: Some Reflections. B.S. Heliotrope Films/Sunstrand Power & Light

Co. Documentary cast w/ narrator C. N. Reilly; Sign-Interpreted for the Deaf; 78 mm.; 45 minutes; color; sound. Second infomercial for Sunstrand Co., a nontechnical explanation of the applications of cooled-photon lasers in DT-cycle lithiumized annular fusion. CELLULOID, MAGNETIC VIDEO

Union of Nurses in Berkeley. B.S. Meniscus Films, Ltd. Documentary cast; 35 mm.; 26 minutes; color; silent. Documentary and closed-caption interviews with hearing-impaired RNs and LPNs during Bay Area health care reform riots of 1996. MAGNETIC VIDEO, PRIVATELY RELEASED BY MENISCUS FILMS, LTD.

Union of Theoretical Grammarians in Cambridge. B.S. Meniscus Films, Ltd. Documentary cast; 35 mm.; 26 minutes; color; silent w/ heavy use of computerized distortion in facial close-ups. Documentary and closed-caption interviews with participants in the public Steven Pinker-Avril M. Incandenza debate on the political implications of prescriptive grammar during the infamous Militant Grammarians of Massachusetts convention credited with helping incite the M.I.T. language riots of B.S. 1997. UNRELEASED DUE TO LITIGATION

Widower. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Cosgrove Watt, Ross Reat; 35 mm.; 34 minutes; black and white; sound. Shot on location in Tucson AZ, parody of broadcast television domestic comedies, a cocaine-addicted father (Watt) leads his son (Reat) around their desert property immolating poisonous spiders. CELLULOID; INTERLACE TELET CARTRIDGE RERELEASE #357-75-00 (Y.P.W.)

Cage II. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Cosgrove Watt, Disney Leith; 35 mm.; 120 minutes; black and white; sound. Sadistic penal authorities place a blind convict (Watt) and a deaf-mute convict (Leith) together in 'solitary confinement,' and the two men attempt to devise ways of communicating with each other. LIMITED CELLULOID RUN; RERELEASED ON MAGNETIC VIDEO

Death in Scarsdale. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Cosgrove Watt, Marlon R. Bain; 78 mm.; 39 minutes; color; silent w/ closed-caption subtitles. Mann/Allen parody, a world-famous dermatological endocrinologist (Watt) becomes platonically obsessed with a boy (Bain) he is treating for excessive perspiration, and begins himself to suffer from excessive perspiration. UNRELEASED

Fun with Teeth. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Herbert G. Birch, Billy Tolan, Pam Heath; 35 mm.; 73 minutes; black and white; silent w/ non-human screams and howls. Kosinski/Updike/Peckinpah parody, a dentist (Birch) performs sixteen unanesthetized root-canal procedures on an academic (Tolan) he suspects of involvement with his wife (Heath). MAGNETIC VIDEO, PRIVATELY RELEASED BY LATRODUCTUS MACTANS PROD.

Infinite Jest (II). B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Pam Heath; 35/78 mm.; 90(?) minutes; black and white; silent. Unfinished, unseen attempt at remake of Infinite Jest (I). UNRELEASED

Immanent Domain. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Cosgrove Watt, Judith Fukuoka-Hearn, Pam Heath, Pamela-Sue Voorheis, Herbert G. Birch; 35 mm.; 88 minutes; black and white w/ microphotography; sound. Three memory-neurons (Fukuoka-Hearn, Heath, Voorheis (w/ polyurethane costumes)) in the Inferior frontal gyrus of a man's (Watt's) brain fight heroically to prevent their displacement by new memory-neurons as the man undergoes intensive psychoanalysis. CELLULOID; INTERLACE TELET CARTRIDGE RERELEASE #340-03-70 (Y.P.W.)

Kinds of Pain. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Anonymous cast; 35/78 mm.; 6 minutes; color; silent. 2,222 still-frame close-ups of middle-aged white males suffering from almost every conceivable type of pain, from an ingrown toenail to crano-facial neuralgia to inoperable colo-rectal neoplasms. CELLULOID, LIMITED METRO BOSTON RELEASE, REQUIRES PROJECTION AT .25 NORMAL SPROCKET-DRIVE

Various Small Flames. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Cosgrove Watt, Pam Heath, Ken N. Johnson; 16 mm.; 25 minutes w/ recursive loop for automatic replay; color; silent w/ sounds of human coitus appropriated from and credited to Caballero Control Corp. adult videos. Parody of neoconceptual structuralist films of Godbout and Vodriard, n-frame images of myriad varieties of small household flames, from lighters and birthday candles to stovetop gas rings and grass clippings ignited by sunlight through a magnifying glass, alternated with anti-narrative sequences of a man (Watt) sitting in a dark bedroom drinking bourbon while his wife (Heath) and an Amway representative (Johnson) have acrobatic coitus in the background's lit hallway. UNRELEASED DUE TO LITIGATION BY 1960s US CONCEPTUAL DIRECTOR OF VARIOUS SMALL FIRES ED RUSCHA — INTERLACE TELET CARTRIDGE RE-RELEASE #330-54-94 (Y.T.-S.D.B.)

Cage III — Free Show. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions/Inferatron Animation Concepts, Canada. Cosgrove Watt, P. A. Heaven, Everard Maynell, Pam Heath; partial animation; 35 mm.; 65 minutes; black and white; sound. The figure of Death (Heath) presides over the front entrance of a carnival sideshow whose spectators watch performers undergo unspeakable degradations so grotesquely compelling that the spectators' eyes become larger and larger until the spectators themselves are transformed into gigantic eyeballs in chairs, while on the other side of the sideshow tent the figure of Life (Heaven) uses a megaphone to invite fairgoers to an exhibition in which, if the fairgoers consent to undergo unspeakable degradations, they can witness ordinary persons gradually turn into gigantic eyeballs. INTERLACE TELENT FEATURE CARTRIDGE #357-65-65

*The Medusa v. the Odalisque** B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Uncredited cast; zone-plating laser holography by James O. Incandenza and Urquhart Ogilvie, Jr.; holographic fight-choreography by Kenjiro Hirota courtesy of Sony Entertainment-Asia; 78 mm.; 29 minutes; black and white; silent w/ audience-noises appropriated from network broadcast television. Mobile holograms of two visually lethal mythologic females duel with reflective surfaces onstage while a live crowd of spectators turns to stone. LIMITED CELLULOID RUN; PRIVATELY RERELEASED ON MAGNETIC VIDEO BY LATRODUCTUS MACTANS PRODUCTIONS

The Machine in the Ghost: Annular Holography for Fun and Prophet. B.S. Heliotrope Films, Ltd./National Film Board of Canada. Narrator P. A.

Heaven; 78 mm.; 35 minutes; color; sound. Nontechnical introduction to theories of annular enhancement and zone-plating and their applications in high-resolution laser holography. UNRELEASED DUE TO US/CANADIAN DIPLOMATIC TENSIONS

Homo Duplex. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Narrator P. A. Heaven; Super-8 mm.; 70 minutes; black and white; sound. Parody of Woititz and Shulgin's 'poststructural antidocumentaries,' interviews with fourteen Americans who are named John Wayne but are not the legendary 20th-century film actor John Wayne. MAGNETIC VIDEO (LIMITED RELEASE)

Zero-Gravity Tea Ceremony. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Ken N. Johnson, Judith Fukuoka-Hearn, Otto Brandt, E. J. Kenke; 35 mm.; 82 minutes; black and white/color; silent. The intricate Ocha-Kai is conducted 2.5 m. off the ground in the Johnson Space Center's zero-gravity- simulation chamber. CELLULOID; INTERLACE TELENT RERELEASE #357-40-01 (Y.P.W.)

Pre-Nuptial Agreement of Heaven and Hell. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions/ Inferatron Animation Concepts, Canada. Animated w/ uncredited voices; 35 mm.; 59 minutes; color; sound. God and Satan play poker with Tarot cards for the soul of an alcoholic sandwich-bag salesman obsessed with Bernini's 'The Ecstasy of St. Teresa.' PRIVATELY RELEASED ON CELLULOID AND MAGNETIC VIDEO BY LATRODUCTUS MACTANS PRODUCTIONS

The Joke. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Audience as reflexive cast; 35 mm. X 2 cameras; variable length; black and white; silent. Parody of Hollis Frampton's 'audience-specific events,' two Ikegami EC-35 video cameras in theater record the 'film' 's audience and project the resultant raster onto screen — the theater audience watching itself watch itself get the obvious 'joke' and become increasingly self-conscious and uncomfortable and hostile supposedly comprises the film's involuted 'antinarrative' flow. Incandenza's first truly controversial project, Film & Kartridge Kulcher's Sperber credited it with 'unwittingly sounding the death-knell of post-poststructural film in terms of sheer annoyance.' NONRECORDED MAGNETIC VIDEO SCREENABLE IN THEATER VENUE ONLY, NOW UNRELEASED

Various Lachrymose U.S. Corporate Middle-Management Figures. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Every Inch of Disney Leith. B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions/Medical Imagery of Alberta, Ltd. Disney Leith; computer-enlarged 35 mm./x 2 m.; 253 minutes; color; silent. Miniaturized, endoscopic, and microinvasive cameras traverse entire exterior and interior of one of Incandenza's technical crew as he sits on a folded scrape in the Boston Common listening to a public forum on uniform North American metricization. PRIVATE RELEASE ON MAGNETIC VIDEO BY LATRODUCTUS MACTANS PRODUCTIONS; INTERLACE TELENT RERELEASE #357-56-34 (Y.P.W.)

Infinite Jest (III). B.S. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Uncredited cast; 16/35 mm.; color; sound. Unfinished, unseen remake of Infinite Jest (I), (II). UNRELEASED

Found Drama I.

Found Drama II.

*Found Drama III.....*conceptual, conceptually unfilmable. UNRELEASED

The Man Who Began to Suspect He Was Made of Glass. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Cosgrove Watt, Gerhardt Schitt; 35 mm.; 21 minutes; black and white; sound. A man undergoing intensive psychotherapy discovers that he is brittle, hollow, and transparent to others, and becomes either transcendently enlightened or schizophrenic. INTERLACE TELENT FEATURE CARTRIDGE #357-59-00

Found Drama V.

*Found Drama VI.....*conceptual, conceptually unfilmable. UNRELEASED

The American Century as Seen Through a Brick. Year of the Whopper. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Documentary cast w/ narration by P. A. Heaven; 35 mm.; 52 minutes; color w/ red filter and oscillography; silent w/ narration. As U.S. Boston's historical Back Bay streets are stripped of brick and repaved with polymerized cement, the resultant career of one stripped brick is followed, from found-art temporary installation to displacement by E.W.D. catapult to a waste-quarry in southern Quebec to its use in the F.L.Q.-incited anti-O.N.A.N. riots of January/Whopper, all intercut with ambiguous shots of a human thumb's alterations in the interference pattern of a plucked string. PRIVATELY RELEASED ON MAGNETIC VIDEO BY LATRODUCTUS MACTANS PRODUCTIONS

The ONANtiad. Year of the Whopper. Latroductus Mactans Productions/Claymation action sequences © Inferatron Animation Concepts, Canada. Cosgrove Watt, P. A. Heaven, Pam Heath, Ken N. Johnson, Ibn-Said Chawaf, Squire Frydell, Maria-Dean Chumm, Herbert G. Birch, Everard Meynell; 35 mm.; 76 minutes; black and white/color; sound/silent. Oblique, obsessive, and not very funny claymation love triangle played out against live-acted backdrop of the inception of North American Interdependence and Continental Reconfiguration. PRIVATELY RELEASED ON MAGNETIC VIDEO BY LATRODUCTUS MACTANS PRODUCTIONS

The Universe Lashes Out. Year of the Whopper. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Documentary cast w/ narrator Herbert G. Birch; 16 mm.; 28 minutes; color; silent w/ narration. Documentary on the evacuation of Atkinson NH/New Quebec in the inception of Continental Reconfiguration. MAGNETIC VIDEO (LIMITED RELEASE)

Poultry in Motion. Year of the Whopper. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Documentary cast w/ narrator P. A. Heaven; 16 mm.; 56 minutes; color; silent w/ narration. Documentary on renegade North Syracuse NNY turkey farmers' bid to prevent toxification of Thanksgiving crop by commandeering long, shiny O.N.A.N. trucks to transplant over 200,000 pertussive fowl south to Ithaca. MAGNETIC VIDEO (LIMITED RELEASE)

Found Drama IX.

Found Drama X.

*Found Drama XL.....*conceptual, conceptually unfilmable. UNRELEASED

Möbius Strips. Year of the Whopper. Latroductus Mactans Productions. 'Hugh G. Rection,' Pam Heath, 'Bunny Day,' 'Taffy Appel'; 35 mm.; 109 minutes; black and white; sound. Pornography-parody, possible parodic homage to Fosse's All That Jazz, in which a theoretical physicist ('Rection'), who can only achieve creative mathematical insight during coitus, conceives of Death as a lethally beautiful woman (Heath). INTERLACE TELENT FEATURE CARTRIDGE #357-65-32 (Y.W.)

Wave Eye-Eye to the Bureaucrat. Year of the Whopper. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Everard Maynell, Phillip T. Smothergill, Paul Anthony Heaven, Pamela-Sue Voorheis; 16 mm.; 19 minutes; black and white; sound. Possible parody/homage to B.S. public-service-announcement cycle of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a harried commuter is mistaken for Christ by a child he knocks over.

Blood Sister: One Tough Nun. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Telma Hurley, Pam Heath, Maria-Dean Chumm, Diane Saltoone, Soma Richardson-Levy, Cosgrove Watt; 35 mm.; 90 minutes; color; sound. Parody of revenge/recidivism action genre, a formerly delinquent nun's (Hurley's) failure to reform a juvenile delinquent (Chumm) leads to a rampage of recidivist revenge. INTERLACE TELENT PULSE-DISSEMINATION 21 JULY Y.T.M.P., CARTRIDGE #357-87-04

Infinite Jest (IV). Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Latroductus Mactans Productions. Pam Heath (?), 'Madame Psychosis'(?); 78 mm.; 90 minutes(?); color; sound. Unfinished, unseen attempt at completion of Infinite Jest (HI). UNRELEASED

Let There Be Lite. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Documentary cast w/ narrator Ken N. Johnson; 16mm.; 50 minutes(?); black and white; silent w/ narration. Unfinished documentary on genesis of reduced-calorie bourbon industry. UNRELEASED

Untitled. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

No Troy. Year of the Whopper. Latrodectus Mactans Productions. No cast; liquid-surface holography by Urquhart Ogilvie, Jr.; 35 mm.; 7 minutes; enhanced color; silent. Scale-model holographic recreation of Troy NY's bombardment by miscalibrated Waste Displacement Vehicles, and its subsequent elimination by O.N.A.N. cartographers. MAGNETIC VIDEO (PRIVATE RELEASE LIMITED TO NEW BRUNSWICK, ALBERTA, QUEBEC) Note: Archivists in Canada and the U.S. West Coast do not list *No Troy* but do list titles *The Violet City* and *The Violet Ex-City*, respectively, leading scholars to conclude that the same film was released under several different appellations.

Untitled. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Valuable Coupon Has Been Removed. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cosgrove Watt, Phillip T. Smothergill, Diane Saltoone; 16 mm.; 52 minutes; color; silent. Possible Scandinavian-psychodrama parody, a boy helps his alcoholic-delusional father and dissociated mother dismantle their bed to search for rodents, and later he intuits the future feasibility of D.T.-cycle lithiumized annular fusion. CELLULOID (UNRE-LEASED)

a. See Romney and Sperber, 'Has James O. Incandenza Ever Even Once Produced One Genuinely Original or Unappropriated or Nonderivative Thing?' *Post-Millennium Film Cartridge Journal*, nos. 7-9 (Fall/Winter, Y.P.W.), pp. 4-26.)

Baby Pictures of Famous Dictators. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Documentary or uncredited cast w/ narrator P. A. Heaven; 16 mm.; 45 minutes; black and white; sound. Children and adolescents play a nearly incomprehensible nuclear strategy game with tennis equipment against the real or holographic(?) backdrop of sabotaged ATHSCME 1900 atmospheric displacement towers exploding and toppling during the New New England Chemical Emergency of Y.W. CELLULOID (UNRELEASED)

Stand Behind the Men Behind the Wire. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Documentary cast w/ narrator Soma Richardson-Levy; Super-8 mm.; 52 minutes; black and white/color; sound. Shot on location north of Lowell MA, documentary on Essex County Sheriff's Dept. and Massachusetts Department of Social Services' expedition to track, verify, capture, or propitiate the oversized feral infant alleged to have crushed, gummed, or picked up and dropped over a dozen residents of Lowell in January, Y.T.M.P. INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE #357-12-56

As of Yore. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cosgrove Watt, Marlon Bain; 16/78 mm.; 181 minutes; black and white/color; sound. A middle-aged tennis instructor, preparing to instruct his son in tennis, becomes intoxicated in the family's garage and subjects his son to a rambling monologue while the son weeps and perspires. INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE # 357-16-09

The Clever Little Bastard. Unfinished, unseen. UNRELEASED

The Cold Majesty of the Numb. Unfinished, unseen. UNRELEASED

Good-Looking Men in Small Clever Rooms That Utilize Every Centimeter of Available Space With Mind-Boggling Efficiency. Unfinished due to hospitalization. UNRELEASED

Low-Temperature Civics. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cosgrove Watt, Herbert G. Birch, Ken N. Johnson, Soma Richardson-Levy, Everard Maynell, 'Madame Psychosis,' Phillip T. Smothergill, Paul Anthony Heaven; 35 mm.; 80 minutes; black and white; sound. Wyler parody in which four sons (Birch, Johnson, Maynell, Smothergill) intrigue for control of a sandwich-bag conglomerate after their CEO father (Watt) has an ecstatic encounter with Death ('Psychosis') and becomes irreversibly catatonic. NATIONAL DISSEMINATION IN INTERLACE TELENT'S 'CAVALCADE OF EVIL' SERIES —JANUARY/YEAR OF TRIAL-SIZE DOVE BAR —AND INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE #357- 89-05

(At Least) Three Cheers for Cause and Effect. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cosgrove Watt, Pam Heath, 'Hugh G. Reaction'; 78 mm.; 26 minutes; black and white; sound. The headmaster of a newly constructed high-altitude sports academy (Watt) becomes neurotically obsessed with litigation over the construction's ancillary damage to a V.A. hospital far below, as a way of diverting himself from his wife's (Heath's) poorly hidden affair with the academically renowned mathematical topologist who is acting as the project's architect ('Reaction'). CELLULOID (UNRELEASED)

(The) Desire to Desire. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Robert Lingley, 'Madame Psychosis,' Maria-Dean

Chumm; 35 mm.; 99 minutes(?); black and white; silent. A pathology resident (Lingley) falls in love with a beautiful cadaver ('Psychosis') and the paralyzed sister (Chumm) she died rescuing from the attack of an oversized feral infant. Listed by some archivists as unfinished. UNRELEASED

Safe Boating Is No Accident. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad(?). Poor Yorick Entertainment. Unlimited/X-Ray and Infrared Photography by Shuco-Mist Medical Pressure Systems, Enfield MA. Ken N. Johnson, 'Madame Psychosis,' P. A. Heaven. Kierkegaard/Lynch (?) parody, a claustrophobic water-ski instructor (Johnson), struggling with his romantic conscience after his fiancée's ('Psychosis') face is grotesquely mangled by an outboard propeller, becomes trapped in an overcrowded hospital elevator with a defrocked Trappist monk, two overcombed missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, an enigmatic fitness guru, the Massachusetts State Commissioner for Beach and Water Safety, and seven severely intoxicated opticians with silly hats and exploding cigars. Listed by some archivists as completed the following year, Y.T.-S.D.B. UNRELEASED

Very Low Impact. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Maria-Dean Chumm, Pam Heath, Soma Richardson- Levy-O'Byrne; 35 mm.; 30 minutes; color; sound. A narcoleptic aerobics instructor (Chumm) struggles to hide her condition from students and employers. POSTHUMOUS RELEASE Y.W.-Q.M.D.; INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE * 357-97-29

The Night Wears a Sombrero. Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad (?). Ken N. Johnson, Phillip T. Smothergill, Dianne Saltoone, 'Madame Psychosis'; 78 mm.; 105 minutes; color; silent/sound. Parody/homage to Lang's Rancho Notorious, a nearsighted apprentice cowpoke (Smothergill), swearing vengeance for a gunslinger's (Johnson's) rape of what he (the cowpoke) mistakenly believes is the motherly brothel-owner (Saltoone) he (the cowpoke) is secretly in love with, loses the trail of the gunslinger after misreading a road sign and is drawn to a sinister Mexican ranch where Oedipally aggrieved gunslingers are ritually blinded by a mysterious veiled nun ('Psychosis'). Listed by some archivists as completed the preceding year, Y.W. INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE #357-56-51

Accomplice! Year of the Tucks Medicated Pad. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cos-grove Watt, Stokely 'Dark Star' McNair; 16 mm.; 26 minutes; color; sound. An aging pederast mutilates himself out of love for a strangely tattooed street hustler. INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE # 357-10-10 withdrawn from dissemination after Cartridge Scene reviewers called *Accomplice!* '... the stupidest, nastiest, least subtle and worst- edited product of a pretentious and wretchedly uneven career.' NOW UNRELEASED

Entitled. Unfinished. UNRELEASED *Untitled*. Unfinished. UNRELEASED *Untitled*. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Dial C for Concupiscence. Year of the Trial-Size Dove Bar. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Soma Richardson-Levy-O'Byrne, Maria-Dean Chumm, Ibn-Said Chawaf, Yves Fran-coeur; 35 mm.; 122 minutes; black and white; silent w/ subtitles. Parodic noir-style tribute to Bresson's *Les Anges du Peché*, a cellular phone operator (Richardson-Levy-O'Byrne), mistaken by a Québécois terrorist (Francoeur) for another cellular phone operator (Chumm) the FLQ had mistakenly tried to assassinate, mistakes his mistaken attempts to apologize as attempts to assassinate her (Richardson-Levy-O'Byrne) and flees to a bizarre Islamic religious community whose members communicate with each other by means of semaphore flags, where she falls in love with an armless Near Eastern medical attache (Chawaf). RELEASED IN INTERLACE TELENT'S 'HOWLS FROM THE MARGIN' UNDERGROUND FILM SERIES — MARCH/ Y.T.-S.D.B. — AND INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE #357-75-43

Insubstantial Country. Year of the Trial-Size Dove Bar. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cosgrove Watt; 16 mm.; 30 minutes; black and white; silent/sound. An unpopular après-garde filmmaker (Watt) either suffers a temporal lobe seizure and becomes mute or else is the victim of everyone else's delusion that his (Watt's) temporal lobe seizure has left him mute. PRIVATE CARTRIDGE RELEASE BY POOR YORICK ENTERTAINMENT UNLIMITED

It Was a Great Marvel That He Was in the Father Without Knowing Him. Year of the Trial-Size Dove Bar. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. Cosgrove Watt, Phillip T. Smothergill;

16 mm.; 5 minutes; black and white; silent/ sound. A father (Watt), suffering from the delusion that his etymologically precocious son (Smothergill) is pretending to be mute, poses as a 'professional conversationalist' in order to draw the boy out. RELEASED IN INTERLACE TELENT'S 'HOWLS FROM THE MARGIN' UNDERGROUND FILM SERIES — MARCH/ Y.T.-S.D.B. —AND INTERLACE TELENT CARTRIDGE #357-75-50

Cage IV— Web. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Cage V— *Infinite Jim*. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Death and the Single Girl. Unfinished. UNRELEASED.

The Film Adaptation of Peter Weiss's 'The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum at Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade.' Year of the Trial-Size Dove Bar. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. James O. Incandenza, Disney Leith, Urquhart Ogilvie, Jr., Jane Ann Prickett, Herbert G. Birch, 'Madame Psychosis,' Maria-Dean Chumm, Marlon Bain, Pam Heath, Soma Richardson-Levy-O'Byrne-Chawaf, Ken N. Johnson, Dianne Saltoone; Super-8 mm.; 88 minutes; black and white; silent/ sound. Fictional 'interactive documentary' on Boston stage production of Weiss's 20th-century play within play, in which the documentary's chemically impaired director (Incandenza) repeatedly interrupts the inmates'

dumbshow-capering and Marat and Sade's dialogues to discourse incoherently on the implications of Brando's Method Acting and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty for North American filmed entertainment, irritating the actor who plays Marat (Leith) to such an extent that he has a cerebral hemorrhage and collapses onstage well before Marat's scripted death, whereupon the play's nearsighted director (Ogilvie), mistaking the actor who plays Sade (Johnson) for Incandenza, throws Sade into Marat's medicinal bath and throttles him to death, whereupon the extra-dramatic figure of Death ('Psychosis') descends deus ex machina to bear Marat (Leith) and Sade (Johnson) away, while Incandenza becomes ill all over the theater audience's first row. 8 MM. SYNC-PROJECTION CELLULOID. UNRELEASED DUE TO LITIGATION, HOSPITALIZATION

Too Much Fun. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

The Unfortunate Case of Me. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Sorry All Over the Place. Unfinished. UNRELEASED

Infinite Jest (VI). Year of the Trial-Size Dove Bar. Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited. 'Madame Psychosis'; no other definitive data. Thorny problem for archivists. Incandenza's last film, Incandenza's death occurring during its post-production. Most archival authorities list as unfinished, unseen. Some list as completion of *Infinite Jest* (IV), for which Incandenza also used 'Psychosis,' thus list the film under Incandenza's output for Y.T.M.P. Though no scholarly synopsis or report of viewing exists, two short essays in different issues of *Cartridge Quarterly East* refer to the film as 'extraordinary'd and 'far and away [James O. Incandenza's] most entertaining and compelling work,'e West Coast archivists list the film's gauge as '16 ... 78 ... n mm.,' basing the gauge on critical allusionsf to 'radical experiments in viewers' optical perspective and context' as *IJ* (VI)'s distinctive feature. Though Canadian archivist Tête-Bêche lists the film as completed and privately distributed by P.Y.E.U. through posthumous provisions in the filmmaker's will, all other comprehensive filmographies have the film either unfinished or UNRELEASED, its Master cartridge either destroyed or vaulted sui testator.

a. E. Duquette, 'Beholden to Vision: Optics and Desire in Four Après Garde Films,' *Cartridge Quarterly East*, vol. 4 no. 2, Y.W.-Q.M.D., pp. 35-39.

b. Anonymous, 'Seeing v. Believing,' *Cartridge Quarterly East*, vol. 4 no. 4, Y.W.-Q.M.D., pp. 93-95.

c. Ibid.