

Visions of Gerard

AND

Tristessa

Tristessa and Gerard are both lost innocents. Gerard is the author's little brother, who died in childhood. His world, a village of French Canadians who came to settle in Massachusetts, has snowy landscapes, warm, patois-speaking aunts and uncles, poker games played backstage in the theatre and pets kept secretly on the windowsill. It is recreated with all the vividness of childhood; and Gerard's visions and death are evoked with equal poignancy.

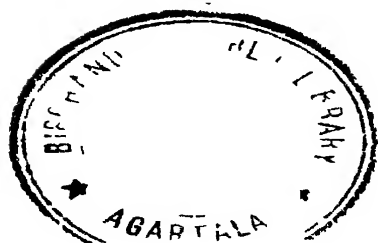
Tristessa belongs to the author's adult life. She is a beautiful, waif-like Mexican who lives among drug-peddlers and addicts. Untouched by squalor, tough, generous and sad, she preserves a dignity which the violence of her life cannot impair.

BOOKS BY JACK KEROUAC

On the Road
The Subterraneans
The Dharma Bums
Lonesome Traveller
Big Sur
Maggie Cassidy
Visions of Cody
Book of Dreams
Desolation Angels

JACK KEROUAC

Visions of Gerard
AND
Tristessa



ANDRE DEUTSCH

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Gerard Duluoz was born in 1917 a sickly little kid with a rheumatic heart and many other complications that made him ill for the most part of his life which ended in July, when he was nine, and the nuns of St. Louis de France Parochial School were at his bedside to take down his dying words because they'd heard his astonishing revelations of heaven delivered in catechism class on no more encouragement than that it was his turn to speak——Saintly Gerard, his pure and tranquil face, the mournful look of him, the piteousness of his little soft shroud of hair falling down his brow and swept aside by the hand over blue serious eyes——I would deliver no more obloquies and curse at my damned earth, but observations only, could I resolve in me to keep his fixed-in-memory face free of running off from me——For the first four years of my life, while he lived, I was not Ti Jean Duluoz, I was Gerard, the world was his face, the flower of his face, the pale stooped disposition, the heart-breakingness and the holiness and his teachings of tenderness to me, and my mother constantly reminding me to pay attention to his goodness and advice——Summers he'd lain a-afternoons, on his back, in yard, hand to eyes, gazing at the white clouds passing on by, those perfect Tao phantoms that materialize and then travel and then go, dematerialized, in

one vast planet emptiness, like souls of people, like substantial fleshy people themselves, like your quite substantial redbrick smokestacks of the Lowell Mills along the river on sad red sun Sunday afternoons when big scowling Emil Pop Duluoz our father is in his shirtsleeves reading the funnies in the corner by the potted plant of time and home——Patting his sickly little Gerard on the head, ‘*Mon pauvre ti Loup*, me poor lil Wolf, you were born to suffer’ (little dreaming how soon it would be his sufferings’d end, how soon the rain, incense and teary glooms of the funeral which would be held across the way in St. Louis de France’s cellar-like basement church on Boisvert and West Sixth).

For me the first four years of my life are permeated and grey with the memory of a kindly serious fate bending over me and being me and blessing me——The world a hatch of Duluoz Saintliness, and him the big chicken, Gerard, who warned me to be kind to little animals and took me by the hand on forgotten little walks.

‘*Allo. zig lain——ziglain——zigluu——*’ he’d say to our cat, in a little high crazycatvoice and the cat’d look plain and blank back at him as though the cat language was the true one but also they understood the words to portend kindness and their eyes followed him as he moved around our gray house and suddenly they’d bless him unexpectedly by jumping on his lap at dusk, in the quiet hour when water’s burbling on the stove, the starchy Irish potatoes and hush silence fills ears in houses announcing Avalokitesvara’s blessed everlasting presence grinning in the swarming shadows behind the stuffed chairs and tasseled lamps, a Womb of Exuberant Fertility, the world and the sad things in it laughable, Gerard

the least and last to dis-acknowledge it I'd bet if he were here to bless my pencil as I undertake and draw breath to tell his pain-tale for the world that needs his soft and loving like.

'Heaven is all white' (*le ciel yé tout blanc*, in the little child patois we spoke our native French in), 'the angels are like lambs, and all the children and their parents are together forever,' he'd tell me, and I: '*Sont-ils content?* Are they happy?'

'They couldnt be anything else but happy——'

'What's the colour of God?——'

'*Blanc d'or rouge noir pi toute*——White of gold red black and everything——' is the translation.

Lil Kitty comes up and gricks wet nose and teethies against Gerard's outheld forefinger, 'Whattayawant, *Ploo pli?*—— Would I could remember the huddling and the love of these forlorn two brothers in a past so distant from my sick aim now I couldnt gain its healing virtues if I had the bridge, having lost all my molecules of then without their taste of enlightenment.

He bundles me in the coat and hat, he'll show me how to play in the yard——Meanwhile smoke sorrows from red dusk roofs in winter New England and our shadows in the brown frozen grass are like remembrances of what must have happene a million aeons of aeons ago in the Same and blazing Nirvana-Samsara Blown-Out-Turned-On light.

I do believe I remember the grey morning (musta been a Saturday) when Gerard showed up at the cottage on Burnaby Street (when I was three) with the little boy whose name I cant forget and the consistency of it like lumps of grey mud, Plourdes——Balls of sorrow are his name——Snivelling at

the nose which he had no handkerchief to blow, dirty, in a little holey sweater, Gerard himself in his long black parochial stockings and the highbutton shoes, they're standing in the yard by the little wooden stoop in back of to the side where the meadows of sadness are faced (with their stand of gleary pines beyond and in which on rainy days I could see the beginning of the Indianface Fog)—Gerard wants Mama Ange to give the little boy Plourdes some bread and butter and bananas, '*Ya faim*, he's hungry'—From a poor and ignorant family, likely, and they'd never feed him except at supper, or an occasional (perhaps) lard sandwich, Gerard was acute enough to realize the child was hungry and was crying on account of hunger and he knew the munificence of his own mother's home and took him thereunto and asked for food for him—Which my mother gave the boy, who now, years later, I see, or just saw, on a recent visit to Lowell, six feet tall and two hundred pounds, and a lot of bread and butter and bananas and child largesse has gone into the bulking of his decaying mountain of flesh—A glimmer memory maybe in his truckdriver brain of the tiny sickling who mourned for him and fed him and blessed him in the long ago—Plourdes—A Canadian name containing in it for me all the despair, raw gricky hopelessness, cold and chapped sorrow of Lowell—Like the abandoned howl of a dog and no one to open the door—For Plourdes his fate, for me:—Gerard to open it to the Love of God, whereby, now, thirty years later, my heart, healed, is stillwarm, saved—Without Gerard what would have happened to Ti Jean?

I'm on the porch muffled in bundlings watching the little Christly drama—My mother goes in the kitchen and butters bread and peels bananas, with that heartbreaking, slow, fumbly motion of mothers of the world, like old Indian

Mothers who've pounded tortillas and boiled mush across clanks of millenniums and wind-howl—My heart is where it belongs.

My father comes home from work and hears the story and says 'How he's got a heart, that child!' shaking his head and biting his lips by the stove.

It was only many years later when I met and understood Savas Savakis that I recalled the definite and immortal *idealism* which had been imparted me by my holy brother—And even later with the discovery (or dullmouthed amazed hang-middled mindburnt waking re-discovery) of Buddhism, Awakenhood—Amazed recollection that from the very beginning I, whoever 'I' or whatever 'I' was, was destined, destined indeed, to meet, learn, understand Gerard and Savas and the Blessed Lord Buddha (and my Sweet Christ too through all his Paulian tangles and bloody crosses of heathen violence)—To awaken to pure faith in the bright one truth: All is Well, practice Kindness, Heaven is Nigh.

Gerard's sad eyes first foretold it—In the dream already ended, which all this is—His face so tranquil and compassionate, various pictures of him we had, one in particular in front of me now, that was taken in his (probably) fifth year, on the porch of the Lupine Road house the which, when I recently visited it, revealed to me (to my infant's old gaze) the ancient form of Earth-Beginnings in the form of a fluted porch-ceiling-light-globe that I had studied and studied with infant eyes long afternoons of drowsy sun or warm March, in my crib—When, seeing it just recently, age thirty-three, its contours rejoined me deeply with the long forgotten contours of Gerard's face and peculiar soft hair, and little

Raskolnik parochial shirt, and high black stockings—Nay, and unto the very brown slats of the house next door, and even more nay-worse-so unto the very stone 'castle' on top of the hill a field away which I had completely forgotten in my rational memory and saw with awe in maturity what already I'd divined unconsciously in teenage reveries of 'Doctor Sax and the Castle of the Great World Snake' all to be explained ahead in the *Duluoz Legend*—The said porch is the scene of the holy little snapshot here kept, Gerard sitting on the rail with my sister Nin (then three), holding her hand, smirking in the sun the two of them as some aunt or paternity godfather snaps the shot, the long forgotten snow of human hopes paling into browner stains in old photoisms—I see there in the eyes of Gerard the very diamond kindness and patient humility of the Brotherhood Ideal propounded from afar down the eternal corridors of Buddahood and Compassionate Sanctity, in Nirmana (appearance) Kaya (form)—My own brother, a spot of sainthood in the endless globular Universes and Chillicosm—His heart under the little shirt as big as the sacred heart of thorns and blood depicted in all the humble homes of French-Canadian Lowell.

Behold:—One day he found a mouse caught in Scoop's mousetrap outside the fish market on West Sixth Street—Faces more bleak than envenomed spiders, those who invented mousetraps, and had paths of bullgrained dullishness beaten to their bloodstained doors, and crowded in the sill—For that matter, on this grey morning, I can remember the faces of the Canucks of Lowell, the small tradesmen, butchers, butter and egg men, fishermen, barrelmakers, bums

on benches (no benches but the oldtime sidewalk chair spit-
ters by the dump, by banana peels steaming in the mid-day
broil)—The hungjawed dull faces of grown adults who
had no words to praise or please little trying-angels like
Gerard working to save the mouse from the trap—But just
stared or gawped on jawpipes and were silly in their prime
—The little mouse, thrashing in the concrete, was released
by Gerard—It went wobbling to the gutter with the fish-
juice and spit, to die—He picked it tenderly and in his
pocket sowed the goodness—Took it home and nursed it,
actually bandaged it, held it, stroked it, prepared a little
basket for it, as Ma watched amazed and men walked around
in the streets 'doin good for themselves', rounding up paper
beyond their beans—Bums! all!—A thought smaller
than a mouse's turd directed to the Sunday Service Mass
necessity, and that usually tinged by inner countings how
much they'll plap in th'basket—I dont remember rati-
onally but in my soul and mind, Yes there's a mouse, peeping,
and Gerard, and the basket, and the kitchen the scene of this
heart-tender little hospital—"That big thing hurt you when
it fell on your little leg' (because Gerard could really feel
empathetically that pain, pain he'd had enough to not be
apprentice at the trade, and pang)—He could feel the iron
snap grinding his little imagined birdy bones and squeezing
and cracking and pressing harder unto worse-than-death the
bleak-in-life—For it's not innocent blank nature made hills
look sad and woe-y, it's men, with their awful minds—
Their ignorance, grossness, mean petty thwartings, schemes,
hypocrite tendencies, repenting over losses, gloating over
gains—Pot-boys, bone-carriers, funeral directors, glove-
wearers, fog-breathers, shit-betiders, pissers, befoulers,
stenchers, fat calf converters, utter blots & scabs on the face

of it the earth——'Mouse? Who cares about a gad dam mouse——God musta made em to fit our traps'——Typical thought——I'd as soon drop a barrel of you-know-what on the roof of my own house, as walk a mile in conversation about one of them——I dont count Gerard in that seedy lot, that crew of bulls——The particular bleak grey-jowled pale-eyed sneaky fearful French-Canadian quality of man, with his black store, his bags of produce, his bottomless mean and secret cellar, his herrings in a barrel, his hidden gold rings, his wife and daughter jongling in another dumb room, his dirty broom in the corner, his piousness, his cold hands, his hot bowels, his well-used whip, his easy greeting and hard opinion——Lay me down in sweet India or old Tahiti, I dont want to be buried in *their* cemetery——In fact, cremate *mê* and deliver me to *les Indes*, I'm through——Wait till I get going on some of these other blood-louts, for that matter——Yet not likely Gerard ever, if he'd have lived, would have fattened as I to come and groan about peoples and in plain print loud and foolish, but was a soft tenderhearted angel the likes of which you'll never find again in science fictions of the future with their bleeding plastic penis-rods and round hole-machines and worries about how to get from Pit to Pisspot which is one millionth of a billionth of an inch further in endlessness of our gracious Lord than the earth speck (which I'd spew) (if I were you) (Maha Meru)——Some afternoon, Gerard goes to school——It had been on a noontime errand when sent to the store to buy smoked fish, that he'd found the mouse——Now, smiling, I see him from my overstuffed glooms in the parlour corner walking up Beaulieu Street to school with his strapped books and long black stockings and that peculiar gloomy sweetness of his person that was all things to me, I saw nothing else——Happy because his mouse was fed and

repaired and safe in her little basket——Innocent enough comes our cat in the mid-drowzes of day, and eats, and leaves but the tail, enough to make all Lowell laugh, but when Gerard comes home at four to see his tail-let in the bottom of the poor little basket he'd so laboriously contrived, he cried——I cried too.

My mother tried to explain that it wasnt the cat's fault and nobody's fault and such was life.

He knew it wasnt the cat's fault but he took Nanny and sat her on the rocking chair and held her jowls and delivered her an exhortation no less:

'Méchant! Bad girl! Dont you understand what you've done? When will you understand? We dont disturb little animals and little things! We leave them alone! We'll never go to heaven if we go on eating each other and destroying each other like that all the time!——without thinking, without knowing!——wake up, foolish girl!——realize what you've done!——Be ashamed! shame! crazy face! stop wiggling your ears! Understand what I'm tellin you! It's got to stop some fine day! There wont always be time!——Bad girl! Go on! Go in your corner! Think it over well!'

I had never seen Gerard angry.

I was amazed and scared in the corner, as one might have felt seeing Christ in the temple bashing the moneychanger tables everywhichaway and scourging them with his seldom whip.

When my father comes home from his printing shop and undoes his tie and removes 1920's vest and sits himself down at hamburger and boiled potatoes and bread and butter of the prime with the kiddies and the good wife, the proposition is put up to him why men be so cruel and mice betrayed and cats devour the rest—Why we were made to suffer and be harsh in return, one the other, and drop turds of iron on brows of hope, and mop up sick yards and sad—'I'll tell you, Ti Gerard, little one, in life it's a jungle, man eats man either you eat or get eaten—The cat eats the mouse, the mouse eats the worm, the worm eats the cheese, the cheese turns and eats the man—So to speak—It's like that, life—Dont cry and dont bother your sweet lil head over these things—All right, we're all born to die, it's the same story for everybody, see? We eat the cow and the cow gives us milk, dont ask why.'

'Yes, why—why do men make traps for little mice?'

'Because they eat their grain.'

'Their old grain.'

'It's grain that's in our bread—Look here, you eat it your bread? I dont see you throw it on the floor! and you dont make *passes* with the dust in the corner!'—*Passes* were the name Gerard had invented for when you run your bread

over gravy, my mother'd do the soaking and throw the *passes* all around the table, even to me in my miffles and bibs at the little child flaptable—But because of our semi-Iroquoian French-Canadian accent *passé* was pronounced PAUSS so I can still hear the lugubrious sound of it and comfort-at-suppers of it, *M'ué'n pauss*, as you'd expect Bar-dolph to remember his cockwalloping heigho's of Eastcheap—My father is in the kitchen, young and primey, shirt-sleeves, chomping up his supper, grease on his chin, bemused explaining moralities to his angels—They'll grow twelve feet tall in the grave ere the monstrance that contains the solution to the problem be held up to shine and make true belief to shine, there's no explaining your way out of the evil of existence—'In any case, eat or be eaten—We eat now, later on the worms eat us.'

Truer words were not spoken from any vantage point on this packet of earth.

'Why? *Pourquoi?*' cries lil Gerard with his brows forming woe and inabilities—'I dont want it to be like this, me.'

'Though you want or not, it is.'

'I dont care'

'What you gonna do?'

He pouts; he'll go to heaven, that's what; enough of this beastliness and compromising gluttony and compensating muck—Life, another word for mud.

'Come, come, little Gerard, maybe there's something you know that *we* dont know'—My father always did concede, Gerard had a deep mind and deep things to think that didnt find nook in insurance policies and printer's bills—They'd never write Gerard a policy but in eternity, he knew we were here a short while, and pathetic like the mouse, and

O patheticker like the cat, and O worse! like the father-cant-explain!

'Awright,' he'll go to bed and sleep it off, he'll tuck me in too, and kiss Ti Nin goodnight and the mouse be no lesser for her moment in his hands at noon—'Together we pray for the Mouse. 'Dear Lord, take care of the little mouse'—'Take care of the cat,' we add to pray, since that's where the Lord'll have to do his work.

Ah, and the winds are cold and blow forlorn dust than they'll ever be able to invent in hell, in Northern Earth here, where people's hopes though warm fail to conceal the draught, the little draught that works all night moving curtains over radiator heat and sneaks around your blanket, and would bring you outdoors where russet dawn-men with cold-chapped ham-hands saw and pound at wood and work and steam with horses and curse the Satan in the air that made all Russias, Siberias, Americas bare to the blasts of infinity.

Gerard and I huddle in the warm gleeful bed of morning, afraid to get out—It's like remembering before you were born and your hap was at hand and Karma forced you out to start the story.

'Where is she, the little mouse, now?'

'This morning. The cat has shat her in the woods (*Le chat l'a shiez dans l'champs*)—with the little pip yellow you see in the snow down there, see it?'

'Oui.'

'Voilà your fly of last summer, she's dead too—'

We think it over in motionless trance, as Ma prepares Pa's breakfast in the fragrant kitchen below.

'Angie,' says Dad at the stove, 'that kid'll break my heart yet—it hurt him so much to lose his little mouse.'

'He's all heart.'

'With his sickness inside——Ah, it busts my head——Eat or get eaten——not men?——Hah!——There's a gang downtown would, if their guts were big enough.'

Gerard's feeling of the holiness of life extended into the realm of romance.

A drunkard under an ample tent was never more adamant concerning how his little sister should behave——'Mama, look what Ti Nin's doing she's going to school with her over-shoes flopping and throwing her behind around like a flapper!' he yelled one morning looking out the window——It was one of those days when he was suffering a rheumatic fever relapse and had to stay in bed, weeks sometimes, some days worse than others——'Aw look at her!——' He was horrified——He refused to let her do it, when she came home at noon he had a speech worked out for her——'I'm telling you Gerard, you'll be a priest some day!' my mother'd say.

Meanwhile the kids at church did the sign of the cross some of them with the following words:

*'Au nom du père
Ma tante Cafière
Pistalette de bois
Ainsi soit-il'*

Meaning

'In the name of the Father
My Aunt Cafière
Pistolet of wood
Amen'

There's my pa——Emil Alcide Duluoz, at that time, a hale young printer of thirty-six, dark complexioned, frowning, serious, hardjawed but soft in the gut (though he had a gut so hard when he oomfed it and dared us kids butt our heads in it or punch fists off it and it felt like punching a powerful basketball)——five feet seven, Bretonsquat, blue-eyed——He had a habit I cant forget, even now I just imitated it, lighting a small fire in the ashtray, out of cigarette-pack paper or tobacco wrapping——Sitting in his chair he'd watch the little Nirvana fire consume the paper and render it black crisp void, and understand, mayhap, the bigger kindling of the 3,000 Chillicosms——That which would devour and digest to safety——A little matter of time, for him, for me, for you.

Too, he'd take fresh crisp MacIntosh apples of the Fall and sit in his easy chair and peel em with his pocket knife, making long tassels around and around the fruitglobe so perfect you could have hung them like tassels' canopies from chandelier to chandelier in the Hall Tolstoy, the which we'd take and sling around and I'd eat em in like great tape-worms and they'd end up flung out in the garbage can like coils of electric wire around and around——After which he'd eat his peeled apple at the gisty whitemeat cut-surface with great slobbering juicy bites that had all the world watering——'Imitate the roar of a lion! Imitate a tiger cat! Imitate an elephant!'——Which he'd do, in his chair, for us, evenings in New England, Gerard on one knee, me on the other, Nin on his lap——That is, when ever there was no poker game to speak of downtown.

'And you my little Gerard, why do you look so pensive tonight? What's goin on in that little head?' he'd say, hugging his Gerard to him, cheek against soft hair, as Nin and

I watched rave lip't and rapt in the happiness of our childhood, little dreaming what quick work the winds of outside winter would do against the timbers and tendons of his poor house.

In the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost, amen.

Gerard had birds that neighbour and relative could swear did know him personally, they came to his windowsill in the time of his long illnesses, especially Spring, when his rheum-rimmed eyes'd look out on fresh undefiled mornings like captured princesses in mist towers—Vile visitations of bile'd turned him green, and white, in the night, his bedpan beneath the bed, but for the birds he had roses for words—'Arrive, mes ti's anges, Come, my little Angels,' and he'd sow his (by Ma prepared) breadcrumbs on the sill and on the short slope roof up there where his sickroom was (a location for a room that forever frets my brain when in grey dreams I dream of houses, that location is always the one that makes me sink, somewhere to the north and west of misery, by peaks, mystery, gables)—Cherry blossom'd May brought him hundreds of gay birds with gloomy beaks that chattered on the roof around his crumbs—But he'd cry: 'Why don't the little birds come to me?! Dont they know I wont hurt them?'

'Of course they dont, they cant know—for all they know you're a boy, and boys hurt birds.'

'And birds hurt boys?'

'And birds never hurt a boy, but the boy will stone his dozen and upset the nests of a dozen fledgelings in his nasty prime.'



'Why? Why is everyone so mean? Didnt God see to it that we——of all people——*people*——would be kind——to each other, to animals.'

God made no provisions for that winter.

The birds chatter, come come close at hand, he gleans and jumps up and down at his pillow: 'That one's coming, that one I'm tellin you, he'll end up in my hand!'

'I hope,' my mother'd say with wise eyes and unwisely in the night pray for it and worthily praise him——My father couldnt believe it.

'Ah, if I could buy him birds!'

'Just one little bird, just ONE,' he'd cry, as I sat in my little chair by the bed watching, fingering the crumb pan with little pudgy fingers so fat they called me *Fi Pousse*, Little Thumb.

'Come here, Little Thumb, look, the little grey bird, doesnt he look like he wants to eat in my hand and give me a little kiss?'

'Yes.'

'Wouldn't you like to kiss that little thing?'

'Yes.'

'Yes, yes, little bird, come on.'

But a chance noise of breadtruck drives the whole flock away *kavroom*, for the next tree, where they jabber the new news——Tears come to Gerard's eyes, his lips form a fateful pout, a groan comes, it means, 'Ah what's the use——if I loved them any more they'd have honey and balm for breakfast and have beaks of gold, yet they avoid me like a rat dripping bacteria——like a falcon——like a man.'

'Gerard,' my mother'd explain, 'dont make yourself sad about the little birds. Do you know why? Because God sees and knows you love them and he'll reward you.'

'In heaven I'll have all the birds I want.'

'Yes, in heaven—and maybe on earth, have courage, patience.'

With his little belly he heaves a heigh ho sigh, 't'would be a good thing to be in that snowy somewhere and rosy nowhere where patience is just a word and no bellies burden with pain. 'Yes, in heaven there are birds, millions of birds, even smaller than these, big like butterflies, smaller, like ants, white like an angel—everywhere.' He'd turn to his drawing board propped on his lap and start drawing his dreary eternities and dreams of paradise. He was an amazing artist at the age of eight. He drew pictures that my old man actually disbelieved as his own when he saw them a-nights:

'Gerard did that?—look here!'

Ditto my father's friends—To prove it he'd draw right in front of them, boats sailing on the blue ocean (copied from the Saturday Evening Post), birds, bridges, lambies, people's hats—Also he had an erector set, and built up impossible engineering marvels like vast complicated ferris wheels and race cars and the usual tote-cranes and trucks that were borrowed from the book of instructions—Heaving the book aside he'd of a sick morning, as I watch) whip up beautiful little baby carriages or baby cribs for Nin to put her dolls in at noon, all set with little draperies—I wonder if she still remembers these latter days as she stares at television's rancid blight whole evenings in her home parlour, waiting to join him in Heaven—

For me he'd concoct delights at the drop of my saying it, 'Make me a *ritontu*,' which is I dont know what, and he'd make a crazy construction and I'd play with it and try to unscrew it and chew the edges of it—

Then the birds would come flocking and singin in rollick-

ing nations around our holy roof again, and he'd call for bread, and multiply it in crumbs, and sow it to the sisters who pecked and picked——

'*Vien, vien, vien,*' the picture of him hand outstretched and helpless in bed calling at the open window for the celestial visitors, enough to make my heart leap from a cold indifferent lair (of late)——

He never got his hand on a bird, naturally, and what transformation might have taken place in such a case I do not know——

Meanwhile Dr. Simpkins came and went with his old-fashioned satchel and his listen-tubes and pipes and pills and pumps and surprised us all by his gravity and inability to speak——He had no long hope for the life of Gerard.

I didnt understand anything that was going on, I was rosy plump Little Thumb *Ti Pousse* glad to be in the same world as Gerard.

One night we're on the kitchen floor with the Boston American, I remember distinctly the pinksheet Hearst evening news, on the front page is the photo of a woman who's murdered someone, I take my scissors and stab her right in the eye impaling the paper on the linoleum——'*Non, non, Ti Jean,* never do that!' Didnt understand (as I remember myself) the glee, the mindless happy glee that went into that vigorous stab——But to Gerard the mindlessness was precisely the horror and the currency of a hateful hopeless world——'*Non, non,* never do anything like that,——Ah poor *Ti Pousse,* you dont understand——Look, take out the scissors, fix her eyes'——We smooth the ruffled paper, stroke the paper lady's eyes, brood over our sin, rectify hells, fruition

good Karmas for ourselves, repent, go to confession—His lips tsk tsk and pout—Kissable Gerard, to kiss him and that pout of pain must have been as soft a sin as kissing a lamb in the belly or an angel in her wing—He gave me piggybacks to prove that other pastimes were better and that I was forgiven—He even let me 'beat him up' in mock fights where we rolled on the linoleum and I screamed— —

With my little hands clasped behind me I stand at the kitchen window, sometime not long after, on a gray blizzard day, watching the inky snowflakes descend from infinity and hit the ground where they become miraculous white, whereby I understand why Gerard was so white and because of man came of such black sources—It was by virtue of his pain-on-earth, that his black was turned to white.

It's a cold crisp morning in October, Gerard is going to school with his books and bread and butter and banana lunch and an apple—I watch him going down Beaulieu Street, alone—Gangs of kids run around—At the end of Beaulieu Street is the large gravel play-yard of the Green Public School where because the kids werent Catholics the nuns have been telling Gerard and Nin and the kids of St. Louis de France Parochial School that they have tails concealed beneath their trousers—Which some of us (I for one) seriously believe—At that street Gerard turns right to go to St. Louis which is right there along three wooden fences of bungalows, first you see the nuns' home, redbrick and bright in the morning sun, then the gloomy edifice of the schoolhouse itself with its longplank sorrow-halls and vast basement of urinals and echo calls and beyond the yard, with its special (I never forgot) little inner yard of cinder gravel separated from the big dirt

yard (which becomes a field down at Farmer Kenny's meadow) by a small granite wall not a foot high, that everyone sits on or throws cards against—The big game is card slinging, the bubblegum cards with pictures of movie stars and baseball players (Great God! it musta been Vilma Banky and Rogers Hornsby with young faces on the fragrant bubblegum cards)—They are flung against the wall, nearest wins—The big game at recess—Gerard comes slowly ruminating in the bright morn among the happy children—Today his mind is perplexed and he looks up into the perfect cloudless empty blue and wonders what all the bruited and furore is below, what all the yelling, the buildings, the humanity, the concern—'Maybe there's nothing at all,' he divines in his lucid pureness—'Just like the smoke that comes out of Papa's pipe'—'The pictures that the smoke makes'—'All I gotta do is close my eyes and it all goes away'—'There is no Mama, no Ti Jean, no Ti Nin, Papa—no me—no *kitigi*' (the cat)—'There is no earth—look at the perfect sky, it says nothing'—Little snively Plourdes is losing at a game of cards in the corner, the bullies buffet him out—'He's crying—he only thinks of his luck and his luck is worse'—'his luck is mixed up in the bad and the poor'—'Ah the world'—To the other end is the *Presbytère* (Rectory) where Father Pere à-lumière the *Curé* lives, and other priests, a yellow-brick house awesome to the children as it is a kind of chalice in itself and we imagine candle parades in there at night and snow-white lace at breakfast—Then the church, St. Louis de France, a basement affair then, with concrete cross, and inside the ancient smooth pews and stained windows and stations of the cross and altar and special altars for Mary and Joseph and antique mahogany confessionals with winey drapes and ornate peep doors—

And vast solemn marble basins in which the old holy water lies, dipped by a thousand hands—And secret alcoves, and upper organs, and sacrosanct backrooms where altar boys emerge in lace and back and the priests march forth bearing kingly ornaments—Where Gerard had been and kept on going many a time, he liked to go to church—It was where God had his due—‘When I get to Heaven the first thing I’m gonna ask God is for a beautiful little white lamb to pull my wagon—Ai, I’d like to be there right away already, not have to wait—’ He sighs among the birds and kids, and over at the end of the yard are gathered the teacher nuns getting ready for the morning bell and lineup, the morning breeze moving their black robes and pendant black rosaries slightly, their faces pale around rheumy eyes, delicate as lacework their features, distant as chalices, rare as snow, untouchable as holy bread of the host, the mothers of thought—Striking awe in children—Monastic ladies devoted to sewing and devout service in their gloomy redbrick hermitage there where we saw them in the windows with their cap flares and cameo profiles bent over rosaries or missals or embroideries, they themselves mostly all the time vigorously curiously digging the scene outdoors—In fact right now a hobo from Louisiana and the East Texas Oil fields who happens to be passing through Lowell, lies in the straw grass below the Green School fence, knee on knee, grass in mouth, contemplating the flawless void and humming the blues and what could be the thoughts of the old nun at the window watching him—‘Lazy bum! (*Paresseux!*)’—‘Robber!—Sinner!’

Typical of Gerard that he doesn’t look to the fields, the trees down further where Farmer Kenny’s fields become a thicket and after a few cottages of Centerville spurting morning smoke the distant hills and horizon meadows of on-to-

Dracut and New Hampshire and all that pale brown promise of the sere continent—Gerard was inward turned like a chalice of gold bearing a single holy host, bounden to his glory doom—He sits on the little wall contemplating the kids, and the bum in the field, the nuns in the window, the little girls hopskotchng beyond and where Ti Nin is screaming with the rest—‘Little crazy, look at her gettin all excited—she doesnt understand the blue sky this morning, she doesnt care like a little kitty—But look—’ he looks up, mouth agape—‘There’s nothing there, not a cloud, not a sound—just like it was water upside-down and what’s the bugs down here?’ The air is crisp and good, he breathes it in—The bell rings and all the scufflers go to shuffle in the dreary lines of class by class with the head nūn overlooking all, the parade ground formation of the new day, latecomers running through the yard with flying books—A dog barking and the coughs, and the gritty gravel under restless many little shoes—Another day of school—But Gerard has eyes up to sky and knows he’ll never learn in school what he’d like to learn this morning from that sky of silent mystery, that heartbreaking sayless blank that wont tell men and boys what’s up—‘Its the eye of God, there’s no bottom—

‘Gerard Duluoz, you’re not in line—!’

‘Yes, Sister Marie ’

‘Silence! The Mother *Supérieure* is going to talk!’

‘Ssst! Mercier! Give me my card!’

‘It’s mine!’

‘It is not!’

‘Shut your trap! (*Famme ta guêtle*).’

‘I’ll fix you.’

‘P r r r r t’

'Silence!'

Silence over all, the rustle of the wind, the banners of two hundred hearts are still—Under that liquid everpresent impossible-to-understand undefiled blue—

A few Fall trees reach faint red twigs to it, smoke-smells wraith to twist like ghosts in noses of morning, the saw of Boisvert Lumberyard is heard to whine at a log and whop it, the rumble of the junkmen's cart on Beaulieu Street, one little kid cry far off—Souls, souls, the sky receives it all—Nobody can comment on the only reality which is Crystal Naught not even Viking Press—Not even Père Lalumière who now with clothesline-fresh garments parades downhall in the *Presbytère* whistling to his room, *lacrimae rerum* of the world in his smarting morning eyes, pettling and purtling with his lips at thought of the good *cortons* pork-scraps for breakfast comin up just now soon's he gets his dud-o's on and sweeps officially to another day as *Curé* of the World—A good man and true, like Our Mayor in his City Hall and the President Coolidge at his desk five hundred miles South to the morning that brights the Potomac same as brightens the Merrimac of Lowell—In other words, and who will be the human being who will ever be able to deliver the world from its idea of itself that it actually exists in this crystal ball of mind?—One meek little Gerard with his childly ponderings shall certainly come closer than Caesarian bust-provokers with quills and signatures and cabinets and vestal dreary laceries—I say.

O, to be there on that morning, and actually see my Gerard waiting in line with all the other little black pants and the little girls in their own lines all in black dresses trimmed with white collars, the cuteness and sweetness and dearness of that old fashion'd scene, the poor complaining nuns doing

what they think is best, within the Church, all within Her Folding Wing—Dove's the church—I'll never malign that church that gave Gerard a blessed baptism, nor the hand that waved over his grave and officially dedicated it—
 —Dedicated it back to what it is, bright celestial snow not mud—Proved him what he is, ethereal angel not Festerer
 —The nuns had a habit of whacking the kids on the knuckles with the edge part of the ruler when they didnt remember 6 times 7, and there were tears and cries and calamities in every classroom every day—And all the usual—
 But it was all secondary, it was all for the bosom of the Grave Church, which we all know was Pure Gold, Pure Light.

That bright understanding that lights up the mind of the soldier who decides to fight to death—'O Arjuna, fight!'
 —That's what's implied at the rail of the altar of repentance, for the repenter gives up self and admits he was a fool and can only be a fool and may his bones dissolve in the light of forever—*All* my sins, leaving not jot or tittle out, even unto the smallest least-noticeable almost-not-sin that you could have got away with with another interpretation
 —But you bumbling fool, you're a mass of sin, a veritable barrel of it, you swish and swash in it like molasses—You ooze mistakes through your frail crevasses—You've bungled every opportunity to bless somebody's brow—You had the time, you will have the time, you'll yawn and wont understand—Ah you're a bum as you are—'T were better to dissolve you—The Holy Milk, you act like a curdler and a bacteria in it, yellow scum, sometimes purple or pot green—As you are, it wont do—The Lord *knows* he

made a mistake—We talk about ‘the Lord’ out of the corner of our hands for want of a better way to describe the undefinable emptiness of the blue sky on such mornings as the morning Gerard wondered—It’s typical of us to compromise and anthropomorphize and He it, thus attributing to that bright perfection of Heaven our own low state of self-being and selfhood and selfconsciousness and selfness general—The Lord is *no-body*—The Lord is no bandyer with forms—All conditional and talk, what I have to say, to point it out—Miserable as a dull sermon on a dull rainy morning in a damp church in the North, and Sunday to boot—We are baptized in water for no unsanitary reason, that is to say, a well-needed *bath* is implied—Praise a woman’s legs, her golden thighs only produce black nights of death, face it—Sin is sin and there’s no erasing it—We are spiders. We sting one another.

No man exempt from sin any more than he can avoid a trip to the toilet.

Gerard and all the boys did special novenas at certain seasons and went to confession on Friday afternoon, to prepare for Sunday morning when the church hoped to infuse them with some of the perfection embodied and implied in the concept of Christ the Lord—Even Gerard was a sinner.

I can see him entering the church at four pm, later than the others due to some errand and circumstance, most of the other boys are through and leaving the church with that lightfooted way indicative of the weight taken off their minds and left in the confessional—The redemption gained at the altar rail with penalty prayers, doled out according to their lights and darknesses—Gerard doffs his cap, trails fingertips in the font, does the sign of the cross absently, walks half-tiptoe around to the side aisle and down under the

crucified tablets that always wrenched at his heart when he saw them (*'Pauvre Jésus, Poor Jesus'*) as though Jesus had been his close friend and brother done wrong indeed—He genuflects and enters the pew and puts little knees to plank, the plank is worn and dusted with a million kneelings morning, noon and night—He starts a preliminary prayer—'Hail Mary——' in French the prayer: *'Je vous salue Marie pleine de grâce'*—Grace and grease interlardedly mixed, since the kids didnt say 'grace,' they said 'grawse' and no power on earth could stop them—The Holy Grease, and good enough—*'Le Seigneur est avec vous—vous êtes bénie entre toutes les femmes'*—Blessed among and above all women, and they saw their mother's and sister's eyes as one pair of eyes—*'Et Jésus le fruit de vos entrailles'*—'entrailles' the powerful French word for Womb, *entrails*, none of us had any idea what it meant, some strange interior secret of Mary and Womanhood, little dreaming the whole universe was one great Womb—The coil of that thought and wording, not conducive to a true understanding of the nature and emptiness-aspect of Wombhood, the perfect blue sky's our Womb (but not our guts and coils)—*'Sainte Marie Mère de Dieu, priez pour nous, pécheurs, maintenant et à l'heure de notre mort'*—No comma in the minds and thoughts of the little boys (and their fathers) who ran it straight through *'pécheurs maintenant et à l'heure de notre mort'*, sinner always right unto death, no help no hope, born——

'Ainsi soit-il,' amen, none of them knowing either what that meant, 'thus it is,' it is what is that's all it is—thinking *ainsi soit-il* to be some mystic priestly secret word invoked at altar—The innocence and yet intrinsic purity-understanding with which the Hail Mary was done, as Gerard, now

knelt in his secure pew, prepares to visit the priest in his ambushade and palace hut with the drapes that keep swishing aside as repentent in-and-out sinners come-and-go burdened and disemburdened as the case may be and is, amen——

Now Gerard ponders his sins, the candles flicker and testify to it——Dogs barking in the distant fields sound like casual voices in the waxy smoke nave, making Gerard turn to see——But in and throughout all a giant silence reigns, shhhhhing, throughout the church like loud remindful ever-continuing abjuration to stay be straight and honest with your thought——

'I pushed lil Carrufel'——It took place in the schoolyard, with throw-cards Gerard had contrived a card-castle at mid-day recess, the first-grader knocked it down coming too close and curious, without reflection Gerard raged and pushed him, really mad, 'Look what you done to my house——Nut!' then instantly repented and too late——Now he pouts to concede: 'But it was my house——*mautadit fou*' (a form of dyazam fool, or, drazyam, or whichever, used by children and in fact everyone including prelates, congressmen and druggists)——'But when I pushed him he turned pale, he didnt know anybody was gonna push him at that moment and that was the moment that hurt him——*Ya venu blême comme une vesse de carême* (He got pale as a lenten fart)——His heart sank, and it's *me* that done it——It's a clear sin——My Jesus wouldnt have liked that watching from his cross'——He turns eyes up and around to the cross, where, with arms extended and hands nailed, Jesus sags to his foot-rest and bemoans the scene forever, and always it strikes in Gerard's naturally pitiful heart the thought 'But *why* did they do that?'——Looking there at the foolish mistakes of

past multitudes, plain as day to see, right on the wall—The massive silence enveloping the graceful gentle form of hip and loincloth, limbs and knees, and the tortured thin breast—And the unforgettable downcast face—‘God said to his son, we’ve got to do this—they decided in Heaven—and they did it—it happened—INRI!’—‘INRI—that means, it happened!—or else, INRI, the funny ribbon on the cross of the lover they killed—and, they put a nail through it’—Whatever mysterious thoughts that lie beneath in the bent heads of people and children in churches and temples century after century—‘He’s crying!’ moaned Gerard, seeing it all.

Two other sins to confess: the deep sin of looking at Lajoie’s and Lajoie could look at his, at the urinals, Wednesday morning, in the corner, for a long time—On purpose—Gerard blushes to think of it—He sees the strange image of Lajoie’s, different, curlier than his, he twinges to urinate namelessly and twists in his knee rest with the horror of his shame, not knowing—Sin’s so deeply ingrained in us we invent them where they aint and ignore them where they are—Across his mind sneaks the proposition to avoid referring to the priest—But God will know—And to mock the kindly ear of the listener Priest, who expects what there is, by removing one whit, a human sin divine to discover—‘Poor Father Priest, what’ll he know if I dont tell him? he wont know anything and he’ll comfort me and send me off with my prayer, well it’ll be a big sin to hide him a sin—like if I’d spit in his eyes when he’s dead, like’—

The fortunate priest, Père Anselme Fournier, of Trois Rivières Quebec, the last of twelve sons but the first in his father’s eye, pink-handed where he might have been horny-handed from the soil of Abraham, receives Ti Gerard in the

confessional by sliding open his panel and bending quick ear obedient and loaded with long afternoon—Coughs revolve around the ceiling, and sail and set in the pew sea, a knee-rest scrapes Sca-ra-at! with a harsh harmonizing *bang* from the altar where a worker creaks around with chair and candle snuffer—

'Bénit' is the only word, 'bless,' Gerard hears as the priest quickly mutters the introductory invocation and then his ear is ready—Gerard can faintly smell the adult breath and that peculiar adult smell of old teeth in old mouths long at work—'Bz bz bz,' he hears as his predecessor in the confessional, just let out, prays fast and furious his repentant penalty rosaries at the rear seat, half on his way to run out and slap cap on and run screaming across dusk-stained fields of stubble and raw mud, to gangs in clover dales wrangling with rocks—A bird zings across the reddening late sky and over the roof of St. Louis de France, as though the Holy Ghost wanted it—Saffron is the east, white is the west, where a banked cloud hides the thrower Sun, but soon it'll all girdle and engolden and be rich red gambling sunset splendour, again, as yesterday—No school tomorrow is the frost announcement in the field grass, in the quiet corners of the schoolyards—Gerard senses all this but his day's work is just begun.

'My father, I confess that I pushed a little boy because he made me mad.'

'Did you hurt him?'

'No—but I hurt his heart.'

The priest is amazed to hear the refinement of it, the hair-splitting elegant point of it, ('He'll make a priest,' he inwardly grins).

'Yes, you're right, my child, it hurt his heart. *Why* did

you push him?' he pursues in conclusion with that sorrowful tender sorriness of the priest in the confessional as though and as much to say 'When all is said and done, why do we sit here and have to admit the sinningness of man.'

'I pushed him because he had broken my little card-house.'

'Ah.'

'It made me mad.'

'You flew into a rage.'

'Oui.'

'You didnt think——He was younger than you.'

'Oui, just a little boy of the first grade.'

'Aw,'——regretfully the fine priest looks around at Gerard briefly, commiserating as tender heart to tender heart——Ah, a scene going on in the little church of dusk! And somewhere wars!

'Well,' to conclude, 'you know your sin——You'll have to keep your patience next time——Keep well your idea, that you hurt his heart if not his body'——admiringly——'you've understood it yourself. I am certain,' he takes trouble to add in spite of an overburdened afternoon of work in there, 'that the Lord understands you——And, there is something else you want to tell me.'

'Yes, my father'——and this Gerard says feeling like a beast piling animality on animality,——'I——er——' he stammers, confuses, and blushes, and stops.

'I'm waiting, my little boy.'

Quickly Gerard whispers him the news about the urinal, Saturday Afternoon Confessions in St. All's had never heard a lurider admission it would seem from the stealth of his ps-ps'es.

'Ah, and did you touch his little dingdong?' (*Sa tite gidigne*).

Gerard: "Aw non!" glad he has a loophole and all because he never thought of it, mayhap——

'Well,' sighing, 'I have confidence in you, my child, that you'll never do it again. And something else? anything else?'

Gerard instantly remembers still another sin, forgotten until then——'I told the Sister I had studied my Catechism, and no, I hadn't studied it.'

'And you didn't know it?'

'Yes I knew it, but from another time, I remembered.'

('Ah, that's no sin,' thinks the Priest) and closes up accounts with: 'Very well, that's all? Well then, say your rosary and fifteen Hail Mary's.'

'Yes, my father.'

The gracious slide door slides, Gerard is facing the good happy wood, he runs out and hurries lightfoot to the altar. fit to sing——

It's all over! It was nothing! He's pure again!

He prays and bathes in prayers of gratitude at the white rail near the blood-red carpet that runs to the stainless altar of white-and-gold, he clasps little hands over leaned elbows with hallelujahs in his eyes——To be God, and to've seen his eyes, looking up at my altar, with that beholding bliss, all because of some easy remission of mine, were hells of guilt I'd say——But God is merciful and God above all is kind, and kind is kind, and kindness is all, and it all works out that the mortal angel at the altar rail as the church hour roars with empty silence (everybody gone now, including the last priest, Gerard's priest) is bathed in blisskindness whether it would be pointed out or not that other easier ways might do the job as well, which may be doubtful, snow being snow, divinity divinity, holiness holiness, believing believing.

All alone at the rail he suddenly becomes conscious of the intense roaring of the silence, it fills his ears and seems to permeate throughout the marble and flowers and the darkening flickering air with the same pure hushed transparency—The heaven heard sound for sure, hard as a diamond, empty as a diamond, bright as a diamond—Like unceasing compassion its continual near-at-hand sea-wash and solace, some subtle solace intended to teach some subtler reward than the one we've printed and that for which the architects raised.

Enveloped in peaceful joy, my little brother hurries out of the empty church and goes running and scampering home to supper through raw marched streets.

'Did you go to your confession, Lil Gerard?'

'Oui.'

'Come eat, my golden angel, my *pitou*, my lil Mama's cabbage.'

I'm sitting stupidly at a bed-end in a dark room realizing my Gerard is home, my mouth's been open in awe an hour you might think the way it's sorta slobbered and run down my cheeks, I look down to discover my hands upturned and loose on my knees, the utter disjointed non-existence of my bliss.

Me too I'd been hearing the silence. and seeing swarms of little lights through objects and rooms and walls of rooms.

None of the elements of this dream can be separated from any other part, it is all one pure suchness.

Would I were divinest punner and tell how the cold winds blow with one stroke of my quick head in this harsh unhos-

pitiable hospital called the earth, where 'thou owest God a death'—Time for me to get on my own horse—

The cat is up on the sink actually fascinated by the drip drip of the faucet, there he is with his paws under him and his tail curling down and his ruminative quickglancing face bending and earpricking to the phenomena, as though he was trying to figure out, or pass the time, or make fun of us—But Mama has a headache, it's a cold windy night in Old February and Pa is out late at work (playing poker backstage at B. F. Keith's maybe with W. C. Fields for all I know with my drawn yawp masque)—The winds belabour at the windows of the kitchen, Ma is on the couch on the newspapers where she's flopped in despair, it's about 9:30, supper dishes have been put away (tenderly by her own hands) and now she lies there head back on a kewpie cushion with an ice pack on her head—The woodstove roars—Gerard and I are at the stove rocker, warming our feet, Nin is at the table doing her '*devoir*' (homework)—

'Mama, you're sick,' demurs Gerard with the gods, with his piteous voice, 'what are we going to do.'

'Aw it'll go away.'

He goes over and lays his head against hers and waits to hear her cure—

'If I had some aspirins.'

'I'll go get you some—at the drugstore!'

'It's too late.'

'It's only 9:30—I'm not afraid.'

'Poor Lil Gerard, it's too cold tonight and it's too late.'

'No mama! I'll dress up good! My hat, my rubbers!'

'Run. Go to Old Man Bruneau, ask him for a bottle of aspirin—the money is in my pocketbook.'

Together Gerard and I peer and probe into the mysterious

pocketbook for the mysterious nickles and dimes that are always there intermingled with rosaries and gum and powder puffs——

Little Gerard runs and puts on his muffcap and draws it over his ears and draws on his rubbers with that tragic bent over motion no angels who never lived on earth could know——A cold key in a tight lock, our situation, the skin so warm, thin, the night of Winter so broad and cool——So Saskatchewan'd with advantage——

'Hurry up my golden, Mama'll be afraid——'

'I'll go get your medicine and you'll be all right, just watch!'

Gleefully he goes off, the door admits Spectre into the kitchen an instant and he slams it——I watch him tumble off.

Beaulieu Street going down towards West Sixth, four houses, to the Fire House, is swept by dusts——The lamp on the corner only serves to accentuate by contrast the lightlessness in the general air——The stars above are no help, they twinkle in a vain freeze——The cold sweeps down Gerard's neck, he tries to bundle in——He hurries around the corner and down West Sixth, towards the lights of the big corner at Aiken and Lilley and West Sixth where bleak greypainted tenements stand with dull brown kitchen lights under the hard stars——Not a soul in sight, a few cruds of old snow stuck in the gutters——A fine world for icebergs and stones——A world not made for men——A world, if made for anything, made for something dead to sympathy——Since sympathizing there'll not be in it ever——He runs to warm up——

Down at Aiken the wind from the river hits him full-blast with a roar, around the corner, bringing with it the

odour of cold rocks in the river's ice, and the savour of rust——

'God doesnt look like he made the world for people,' he guesses all by himself as it occurs in his chilled bones the hopeless sensation——No help in sight, the utter helplessness up, down, around——The stars, rooftops, dusty swirls, streetlamps, cold storefronts, vistas at street-ends where you know the earthflat just continues on and on into a round February the roundness of which and warm ball of which wont be vouchsafed us Slav-level fools as but flat——Flat as a tin pan——So for winds to swail across, a man oughta lie down on his back on a cold night and miss those winds——No thought, no hope of the mind can dispel, nay no millions in the bank, can break, the truth of the Winter night and that we are not made for this world——Stones yes, grass and trees for all their green return I'd say no, to judge from their dead brownness tonight——A million may buy a hearth, but a hearth wont buy rich safety——

Gerard divines that all of this is pure division, a grief of separation, the cold is cold because there are two to know it, the cold and he who is en-colded——'If it wasnt for that, like in Heaven, . . .'

'And Mama has a headache, aw God why'd you do all this suffering?'

En route back with the aspirins he hears a forlorn rumble in Ennell Street, it's the old junkman coming back from some over extended work somewhere in windswept junkslopes, his horse is steaming, his steel-on-wood-wheels are grinding grit on grit and stone on stone and wind swirls dust about his burlaps, as he smiles that tooth-smile of the cold between embittered lips, you see the suffering of his mitts and the weeping in his beard, the woe——Going home to some leaky

rafter——To count his rusty corsets and by-your-leaves and tornpaper accounts and pile-alls——To die on his heap of mistakes, finally, and what was gained in emptiness you'll never find debited or credited in any account——What the preachers say not excepted——'Poor old man, he hasnt got a nice warm kitchen, he hasnt got a mother, he hasnt got a little sister and little brother and Papa, he's alone under the hole under the open stars——If it was all together in one ball of wool——!——' The horse's hooves strike sparks, the wheels labour to turn into West Sixth, the whole shebang sorrows out of sight——Gerard approaches our house, our golden kitchen lights and pauses on the cold porch for one last look up——The stars have nothing to do with anything.

In some other way, he hopes.

'There, your little hands are cold——thank you, my child——bring me a glass of water——I'll be all right——Mama's sick tonight——'

'Mama——why is it so cold?'

'Dont ask me.'

'Why did God leave us sick and cold? Why didnt he leave us in Heaven.'

'You're sure we were there?'

'Yes, I'm sure.'

'How are you sure?'

'Because it cant be like it is.'

"Oui"——Ma in her rare moments when thinking seriously she doesnt admit anything that doesnt ring all the way her bell of mind——'but it is.'

'I dont like it. I wanta go to Heaven. I wish we were all in Heaven.'

'Me too I wish.'

'Why can't we have what we want?' but as soon as he

says that the tears appear in his eyes, as he knows the selfish demand——

‘Aw Mama, I dont understand.’

‘Come, come, we’ll make some nice hot chocolate!——’

‘Hot chocolate! (*Du coco!*)’ cries Ti Nin, and I echo it:

‘Klo Klo!’

The big cocoa deal boils and bubbles chocolating on the stove and soon Gerard forgets——

If his mortality be the witness of Gerard’s sin, as Augustine Page One immediately announced, then his sin must have been a great deal greater than the sin of mortals who enjoy, millionaires in yachts a-sailing in the South Seas with blondes and secretaries and flasks and engineers and endless hormone pills and Tom Collins Moons and peaceful deaths——The sins of the junkman on Ennell Street, they were vast almost as mine and brother’s——

In bed that night he lies awake, Gerard, listening to the moan of wind, the flap of shutters——From where he lies he can just see one cold sparkle star——The fences have no hope.

Like the protection you’d get tonight huddling against an underpass.

But Gerard had his holidays, they bruided before his wan smile——New Year’s Eve we’re all in bed upstairs under the wall-papered eaves listening to the racket horns and rattlers below and out the window the dingdong bells and sad horizon hush of all Lowell and towards Kearney Square where we see the red glow embrowned and aura’d in the new sky and we think: ‘A new year’——A new year with a new number

and a new little boy with candlelight and *kitchimise* standing radiant in the eternities, as the old, some old termagant with beard and scythe, goes wandering down the darkness field, and on the sofa arms of the parlour chairs even now the fairies are dancing—Gerard and Nin and I are sitting up in the one bed of conclave, with a happy smile he's trying to explain to us what's really happening but by and by the drunks come upstairs with wild hats to kiss us—Some sorrow involved in the crinkly ends of pages of old newspapers bound in old readingroom files so that you turn and see the news of that bygone New Year's day, the advertisements with top hats, the crowds in Hail street, the snow—The little boy under the quilt who will have X's in his eyes when the rubber lamppost ushers in his latter New Year's Evè, one scythe after another lopping off his freshness juices till he comes to bibbing them from corny necks of bottles—And the swarm in the darkness, of an ethereal kind, where nobody ever looks, as if if they did look the swarms ethereal would wink off, winking, to wink on again when no one's watching—Gerard's bright explanations about dark time, and cowbells—Then we had our Easter.

Which came with lilies in April, and you had white doves in the fields, and we went see-sawing through Palm Sunday and we'd stare at those pictures of Jesus meek on the little *azno* entering the city and the palm multitudes, The Lord has found that nice little animal there and he got up on his back and they rode into the city'—'Look, the people are all glad'—A few chocolate rabbits one way or the other was not the impress of our palmy lily-like Easter, our garland of roses, our muddy-earth Spring sigh when all in new shoes we squeaked to the church and outside you could smell the fragrant cigarettes and see men spit and inside the church

was all dormant and adamant like wine with white white flowers everywhere——

We had our Fourth of July, some firecrackers, some fence sitting spitting of sparks, warm trees of night, boys throwing torpedoes against fences, general wars, oola-oo-ah popworks at the Common with the big bomb was the finale, and popcorn and Ah Lemonade——

And Halloween: the Halloween of when Ma dressed me up as a little Chinaman with the queue and a white robe and Gerard as a Pirate and Nin as a Vamp and old Papa took us by the hand and paraded us down to the corner at Lilley and Aiken, ice cream sodas, swarms of eyes on the sidewalks——

All the little children of the world keep quickly coming and going to the holidays that only slowly change, but the quality of the brightness of their eyes monotonously reverts——Seeds, seeds, the seed sown everywhere blossoming the fruit of our loom, living-but-to-die——There's just no fun in holidays when you know.

All the living and dying creatures of the endless future wont even wanta be forewarned——wherefore, I should shut up and close up shop and bang shutters and sweep my own dark and nasty nest

At this time my father had fallen sick and moved part of his printing business in the basement of the house where he had his press, and upstairs in an unused bedroom where he had some racks of type——He had rheumatism too, and lay in white sheets groaned and saying '*La mardo!*' and looking at his type racks in the next room where his helper Manuel was doing his best in an inkstained apron.

It was later on, about the time Gerard got really sick

(long-sick. year-sick, his last illness) that this paraphernalia was moved back to the rented shop on Merrimack Street in an alley in the back of the Royal Theatre, an alley which I visited just last year to find unchanged and old grey-wood Colonial one storey building where Pa's pure hopeshop rutted, a boarded up ghost-hovel not even fit for bums— And forlorn winds never did blow ragspaper around useless rubbish piles, than those that blow there tonight in that forgotten alley of the world which is no more forgotten than the heartbreaking and piteous way Gerard had of holding his head to the side whenever he was interested or bemused in something, and as if to say, 'Ay-you, world, what are our images but dust?—and our shops,'—sad.

Nonetheless, lots of porkchops and beans came to me via my old man's efforts in the world of business which for all the fact that 't is only the world of adult playball, procures tightwad bread from hidden cellars, the locks of which are guarded by usurping charlatans who know how easy it is to enslave people with a crust of bread withheld—He, Emil, went bustling and bursting in his neckties to find the money to pay rents, coalbills (for to vaunt off that selfsame winter night and I'd be *ingrat* to make light of it whenever trucks come early morning and dump their black and dusty coal roar down a chute of steel into our under bins)—Ashes in the bottom of the furnace, that Ma herself shovelled out and into pails, and struggled to the ashcan with, were ashes representative of Poppa's efforts and though their heating faculties were in Nirvana now 'twould be loss of fealty to deny—I curse and rant nowadays because I dont want to have to work to make a living and do childish work for other men

(any lout can move a board from hither to yonder) but'd rather sleep all day and stay it up all night scrubbling these visions of the world which is only an ethereal flower of a world, the coal, the chute, the fire and the ashes all, imaginary blossoms, nonetheless, 'somebody's got to do the work-a the world'—Artist or no artist, I cant pass up a piece of fried chicken when I see it, compassion or no compassion for the fowl—Arguments that raged later between my father and myself about my refusal to go to work—'I wanta write—I'm an *artist*'—'Artist shmartist, ya cant be supported all ya life—'

And I wonder what Gerard would have done had he lived, sickly, artistic—But by my good Jesus, with that holy face they'd have stumbled over one another to come and give him bread and breath—He left me his heart but not his tender countenance and sorrowful patience and kindly lights—

'Me when I'm big, I'm gonna be a painter of beautiful pictures and I'm gonna build beautiful bridges'—He never lived to come and face the humble problem, but he would have done it with that *noblesse tendresse* I never in my bones and dead-man heart could ever show.

It's a bright cold morning in December, just before Christmas, Gerard is setting out to school—Aunt Marie has him by the hand, she's visiting us for a week and she wants to take a morning constitutional, and take deep breaths and show Gerard how to do likewise, for his health—Aunt Marie is my father's favourite sister (and my favourite aunt), a talkative openhearted teary bleary lovely with red lipstick always and gushy kisses and a black ribbon pendant from

her specs—While my father has been abed with rheumatism she's helped somewhat with the housework—Crippled, on crutches, a modiste—Never married but many boyfriends helped her—The spittin image of Emil and the lover of Gerard's little soul as no one else, unless it be the cold-eyed but warm-hearted Aunt Anna from up in Maine—'Ti Gerard, for your health always do this, take big clacks of air in your lungs, hold it a long time, look' poundin her furpieced breast, 'see?'—

'Oui, Matante Marie—'

'Do you love your Matante?'

'My Matante Marie I love her so big!' he cries affectionately as they hug and limp around the corner, to the school, where the kids are, in the yard, and the nuns, who now stare curiously at Gerard's distinguished aunt—Aunt Marie takes her leave and drops in the church for a quick prayer—It's the Christmas season and everyone feels devout.

The kids bumble into their seats in the classroom.

'This morning,' says the nun up front, 'we're going to study the next chapter of the catechism—' and the kids turn the pages and stare at the illustrations done by old French engravers like Boucher and others, always done with the same lamby grey strangeness, the curlicue of it, the reeds of Moses' bed-basket, I rememb-r the careful way they were drawn and divided and the astonishe faces of women by the riverbank—It's Gerard's turn to read after Picou'll be done—He dozes in his seat from a bad night's rest during which his breathing was difficult, he doesnt know it but a new and serious attack on his heart is forming—Suddenly Gerard is asleep, head on arms, but because of the angle of the boy's back in front of him the nun doesnt see.

Gerard dreams that he is sitting in a yard, on some house-steps with me, his little brother, in the dream he's thinking sorrowfully: 'Since the beginning of time I've been charged to take care of this little brother, my Ti Jean, my poor Ti Jean who cries he's afraid——' and he is about to stroke me on the head, as I sit there drawing a stick around in the sand, when suddenly he gets up and goes to another part of the yard, nearby, trees and bushes and something strange and grey and suddenly the ground ends and there's just air and supported there at the earth's grey edge of immateriality, is a great White Virgin Mary with a flowing robe ballooning partly in the wind and partly tucked in at the edges and held aloft by swarms, countless swarms of grave bluebirds with white downy bellies and necks——On her breast, a crucifix of gold, in her hand a rosary of gold, on her head a star of gold——Beauteous beyond bounds and belief, like snow, she speaks to Gerard:

'Well my goodness, Ti Gerard, we've been looking for you all morning——where were you?'

He turns to explain that he was with . . . that he was on . . . that he was . . . that . . . ——He cant remember what it is that it was, he cant remember why he forgot where he was, or why the time, the morning-time, was shortened, or lengthened——The Virgin Mary reads it in his perplexed eyes. 'Look,' pointing to the red sun, 'it's still early, I wont be mad at you, you were only gone less than a morning——Come on——'

'Where?'

'Well, dont you remember? We were going——come on——'

'How'm I gonna follow you?'

'Well your wagon is there' and Oh yes, he snaps his finger

and looks to remember and there it is, the snow-white cart drawn by two lambs, and as he sits in it two white pigeons settle on each of his shoulders; as prearranged, he bliss-remembers all of it now, and they start, though one perplexing frown shows in his thoughts where he's still trying to remember what he was and what he was doing before, or during, his absence, so brief—And as the little wagon of snow ascends to Heaven, Heaven itself becomes vague and in his arm with head bent Gerard is contemplating the perfect ecstasy when his arm is rudely jolted by Sister Marie and he wakes to find himself in a classroom with the sad window-opening pole leaning in the corner and the erasers on the ledges of the blackboards and the surly marks of woe smudged thereon and the Sister's eyes astonished down on his:

'Well, what are you doing Gerard! you're sleeping!'

'Well, I was in Heaven.'

'What?'

'Yes Sister Marie, I've arrived in Heaven!'

He jumps up and looks at her straight to tell her the news.

'It's your turn to read the catechism!'

'Where?'

'There—the chapter—at the end—'

Automatically he reads the words to please her; while pausing, he looks around at the children; Lo! all the beings involved! And look at the strange sad desks, the wood of them, and the carved marks on them, initials, and the little boy Ouellette (suddenly re-remembered) as usual with the same tranquil unconcern (outwardly) whistling soundlessly into his eraser, and the sun streaming in the high windows showing motes of room-dust—The whole pitiful world is

still there! and nobody knows it! the different appearances of the same emptiness everywhere! the ethereal flower of the world!

'My sister, I saw the Virgin Mary.'

The nun is stunned: 'Where?'

'There——in a dream, when I slept.'

She does the sign of the cross.

'Aw Gerard, you gave me a start!'

'She told me come on——and there was a pretty little white wagon with two little lambs to pull it and we started out and we were going to Heaven.'

'Mon Seigneur!'

'A little white wagon!' echo several children with excitement.

'Yes——and two white pigeons on my shoulder——doves——and she asked me 'Where were you Gerard, we've been waiting for you all morning'——'

Sister Marie's mouth is open——'Did you see all this in a dream?——? here now?——in the room.'

'Yes, my good sister——dont be afraid, my good sister, we're all in Heaven——but we dont know it!——Oh,' he laughs, *'we dont know it!'*

'For the love of God!'

'God fixed all this a long time ago.'

The bell is ringing announcing the end of the hour, some of the children are already poised to scamper on a word, Sister Marie is so stunned everyone is motionless——Gerard sits again and suddenly over him falls the tight overpowering drowsiness around his heart, as before, and his legs ache and a fever breaks on his brow——He remains in his seat in a trançe, hand to brow, looking up minutes later to an empty room save for Soeur Marie and the elder Soeur Caroline who

has been summoned——They are staring at him with tenderest respect.

'Will you repeat what you told me to Sister Caroline?'

'Yes——but I dont feel good.'

'What's the matter, Gerard?'

'I'm starting to be sick again I guess.'

'We'll have to send him home——'

'They'll put him to bed like they did last year, like before——He hasnt got much strength, the little one.'

'He saw Heaven.'

'Ah'——shrugging, Sister Caroline——'that'——nodding her head——

Slowly, at 9:30 o'clock that morning, my mother who's in the yard with clothespins in her mouth sees him coming down the empty schooltime street alone, with that lassitude and dragfoot that makes a chill in her heart——

'*Gerard is sick——*'

For the last time coming home from school.

When Christmas Eve comes a few days later he's in bed, in the side room downstairs——His legs swell up, his breathing is difficult and painful——The house is chilled. Aunt Louise sits at the kitchen table shaking her head——'*La peine, la peine*, pain, pain, always pain for the Duluozes——I knew it when he was born——his father, his aunt, all his uncles, all invalids——all in pain——Suffering and pain——I tell you, Emil, we havent been blessed by Chance.'

The old man sighs and plops the table with his open hand. 'That goes without saying.'

Tears bubbling from her eyes, Aunt Louise, shifting one hand quickly to catch a falling crutch, 'Look, it's Christmas already, he's got his tree, his toys are all bought and he's

lying there on his back like a corpse—it's not *fair* to hurt little children like that that aren't old enough to know—Ah Emil, Emil, Emil, what's going to happen, what's going to happen to *all* of us!

And her crying and sobbing gets me crying and sobbing and soon Uncle Mike comes in, with wife and the boys, partly for the holidays, partly to see little Gerard and offer him some toys, and he too, Mike, cries, a great huge tormented tearful man with bald head and blue eyes, asthmatic thunderous efforts in his throat as he draws each breath to expostulate long woes: 'My poor Emil, my poor little brother Emil, you have so much trouble!' followed by crashing coughs and in the kitchen the other aunt is saying to my mother:

'I told you to take care of him, that child—he was never strong, you know—you've always got to send him warmly dressed' et cetera, as though my mother had somehow been to blame so she cries too and in the sickroom Gerard, waking up and hearing them, realizes with compassion heavy in his heart that it is only an ethereal sorrow and too will fade when heaven reveals her white.

'*Mon Seigneur,*' he thinks, 'bless them all'—

He pictures them all entering the belly of the lamb—Even as he stares at the wood of the windowframe and the plaster of the ceiling with its little cobwebs moving to the heat.

Hearken, amigos, to the olden message: it's neither what you think it is, nor what you think it isn't, but an elder matter, uncompounded and clear—Pigs may rut in field, come running to the Soo-Call, full of sow-y glee; people may count

themselves higher than pigs, and walk proudly down country roads; geniuses may look out of windows and count themselves higher than louts; tics in the pine needles may be inferior to the swan; but whether any of these and the stone know it, it's still the same truth: none of it is even there, it's a mind movie, *believe* this if you will and you'll be saved in the solvent solution of salvation and Gerard knew it well in his dying bed in his way, in his way—And who handed us down the knowledge here of the Diamond Light? Messengers innumerable from the Ethereal Awakened Diamond Light. And why?—because is, is—and was, was—and will be, will be—t'will!

Christmas Eve of Ti Nin and I gayly rushed out with our sleds to a new snow layer in Beaulieu street, forgetting our brother in his sack, though it was he sent us out with injunctions to play good and slide far—

'Look at the pretty snow outside, go play!' he cried like a kindly mother, and we bundled up and went out—

I still remember the quality of that sky, that very evening, though I was only three years old—

Over the roofs, which held their white and would hold them all night now that the sun was casting himself cold and wan-pink over the final birches of griefstricken westward Dracut—Over the roofs was that blue, magic Lowell blue, that keen winter northern knifeblade blue of winter dusks so unforgettable and so cold and dry, like dry ice, flint, sparks, like powdery snow that ss'es at under doorsills—Perfect for the silhouetting of birds heading darkward down their appointed lane, hushed—Perfect for the silhouetting presentations of church steeples and of rooftops and of the whole Lowell township, and always yon poor smoke putting from the human chimneys like prayer—The whole town

aglow with the final russet adventures of the day staining windowpanes and sending pirates to the east and bringing other sabres of purple and of saffron scarlet harlot rage across the gashes and mighty ironworks of incomprehensible moveless cloud wars frowned and befronting one another on horizon Shrewsburies—Up there where instead of thickening, plots thinned and leaked and warrior groups pulled wan expiring acts on the monstrous rugs of sky areas with names in purple, and dull boom cannons, and maw-mouth awwp upclouds far far away where the children say, 'There's an old man sleeping in the north with a big white mouth that's open and a round nose'—These mighty skies bending over Lowell and Gerard as he lay knowing in his deathbed, rosaries in his hands, pans on papers by the bed, pillows under his feet—The sides and portion wedges of which sky he can barely see through the window shade and frame, outside is December's big parley with night and it's Christmas Eve and his heart breaks to realize that it will be his last Christmas on our innocent mistaken earth—'Ah yes—if I could tell them what I knew—but when I start it stops coming, it's gone, it's not to talk about—but now I know it—just like my dream—poor people with their houses and their chimnies and their Christmases and their children—listen to them yelling in the street, listen to their sleds—they run, they throw themselves on the snow, the little sled takes them a little ways and then that's all—that's all—And me, big nut, I cant explain them what they're dying to know—It's because God doesnt wanta—'

God made us for His glory, not our own.

Nin and I have our sleds and mufflers and we have wrangled dramas with the other kids over the little dispositions of activity among snowbanks an slide-lanes, it all goes on end-

lessly, this world in its big and little facets with no change in it.

In the kitchen, before Pa gets home and in a quiet interim when Gerard's asleep and we're still sliding, Ma takes out her missal and unfolds a paper from it on which are written the words of the prayer to St. Martha:—

'St. Martha, I resort to thy protection and aid and as proof of my affection and faith I offer this light which I shall burn every Tuesday.'

She lights her devotional candle.

'Comfort me in difficulties and through the great favour which you enjoyed through lodging in the house of Our Saviour, intercede for my family that we may always hold God in our hearts and be provided for in our necessities. I beseech thee to have infinite pity in regard to the favour I ask thee.' (State favour).

'If you please, my Lord, bless my poor little Gerard and make him well again, so he can live his little life in peace—and without pain—he has suffered so much—he's suffered enough for twenty four old sick men and he hasn't said a word—My Lord, have pity on this little courageous child, amen.'

'I ask thee, St. Martha,' she finishes reading the prayer, 'to overcome all difficulties as thou didst overcome the dragon which thou hadst at thy feet. Our Father—Hail Mary—Glory Be'—

And at that very moment ladies in black garments, scores of them, are scattered throughout St. Louis de France church, kneeling or sitting or some standing at the various special shrines, their lips muttering prayers for similar requests for

similar troubles in their own poor lives and if indeed the Lord seeth all and saw all that is going on and all the beseechment in His name in dark earth-churches throughout the kingdom of consciousness, it would be with pain He'd attend and bend His thoughts to it—Some of the women are eighty years old, they've been coming to that basement church at dusk every day for the last quarter of a century and they've had manifold and O manifold reasons to loft prayer from that cellar, little chance they mightnt—

Amazing how the kids always scream with glee around the church at that sad hour of dusk.

And by God, amazing the bar-standers and beer-drinkers bubbling at elbow bangs in speakeasy clubs around the corner, enough to make a man believe in Rabelais and Khayyam and throw the Bible and the Sutras and the dry Precepts away—'*Encore un autre verre de bière mon Christ de vieux maton!* Another glass a beer ya Christing old he-cat!'

'Well you're swearing like a dog on Christmas Eve!'

'Christmas Eve my—my you-know-what, if I dont have a glass a' beer in my belly and two hundred others to boot it dont render *me* no merry in the Merry Christmas even if there was forty of your Christmases in the calendar the same bloody day I'm talkin to ya,' translation to that effect. '*Calvert, Caribou est sou, Caribou's drunk!*'

'Drunk? Come to my house, I got some whisky there that'll make you fill your words with another kinda *marde!*'

The cussingest people in the world the Canucks in their cups, all you have to do is go to their capital and range up and down the bars of Ste. Catherine Street in Montreal to see some guzzling and some profanity.

'Gayo, sonumbitch, go shit!'

'Ah the bastat.'

A pretty Christmas they're having, there's a little tree in the corner with lights, and drunk under it—In comes the younger element, they'll have to take out papers to catch up with the old good swigglers and cussmakers—

My father, en route home, stops for a quick one himself in the company of his old friend Gaston MacDonald who has a spanking 1922 Stutz parked outside, with them is Manuel whose usual courtesy of driving Pa home tonight in the sidecar motorcycle has been set aside in favour of the Stutz, and besides it's too cold and besides they're so high now the motorcycle trip would have been a fatality—

'Drink, Emil, amuse yourself, dammit it's Christmas!'

'Not for me, Gaston—with my little Gerard in bed it's not a hell of a pretty Christmas.'

'Ah, he was sick before.'

'Yes, but it always tears my heart out.'

'Ah well, poor Emil, you might as well go throw yourself on the rocks in the river off the cliff in Little Canada . . . to crack . . . your spirit like that—look here, nothin you can do. Down the hatch!'

'Down the hatch.'

'You dammit, Manuel, I thought you was s'posed to be a drunkard?'

'Drunkards take their time,' says my father's assistant with a sly grin—

There are also silent drinkers with big chapped red fists around silent glasses, huddled over, figuring out ways to get their wives outa their thoughts and you can see their mouths lengthen down and draw sorrow almost as you look—

'Poor dog there, look, Bolduc.—do you know that guy

was the best basketball player at the YMCA in '18?—and '16, and '17 too!—They offered him a professional contract—No, his father didnt want it, old rocky Rocher Bolduc, “Stay in your store damn you or you’ll never have it again”——today he’s got the store, little candies for the children, licorice, pencils, a little stove near the corner, Bolduc spends his time in there with his sweater and his wife hates him and there was a time when he was the biggest athlete in Lowell——and a goodlooking happygolucky guy!’

And the chances are Bolduc’s wife is one of the black sorrowful ladies in the now-dark pews a few blocks up from the club——

My father has his drink, two or three of them, and wipes his mouth, and heads home, on foot passing through the corner at Lilley and Aiken, stopping at the drugstore for his 7-20-4 cigars, then the bakery for fresh Franco-American bread that at home he’ll slice on a wood board in the middle of the table slices big enough to write your biography on——

‘Allo Emil——long time no see.’

‘I’m pretty busy.’

‘Still got your shop near the Royal?’

‘I’m established there, Roger——business is going good.’

‘The *anglais* aint givin you *marde*?’ (the English)——‘the Irish——the Greeks?——one thing me I like about bread, I do my business with the Canadians’ (pronounced Ca-na-yen, the thick peasant pride and emphatic umph of it)——

My father is actually a complicated cosmopolite compared to Roger the baker——but he hands him a cigar.

‘We’ll see you at the bazaar?’

‘If I have time——I’ll pitch in a little in any case, for invitation cards, my little bit——’

And all the usual pleasantries, detailed styles, and pano-

ramic shots of a complete social scene, Centreville in Lowell being a close knit truly French community such as you might not find any more (with the peculiar Medieval Gallic closed-in flavour) in modern long-eared France——

Emil comes home with his cigars and bread, and rounds the corner of Beaulieu just as the dusk clouds have fought their last war grim and purple in the invisibilities and here comes the evening star shimmering like a magic hanger in the fade-far flank of the retreat, and lights of brown and quiet flavour have come on in homes and he sees lil Nin and I wheeing with our sleds——

'In any case I got two of em in good health——but in my heart I cant be happy about anything, Gerard there are no others like Gerard, I shall never be able to understand where a little boy like that got so much goodness——so much——enough to make me cry, damn it——it's the way he's always got his little head to one side——pensive, so sad, so concerned——I'd give all the Lowells for the map of the Devil, to keep my Gerard——Will I keep him?' he wonders looking up?——seeing the same unsaying stars Gerard had stared at——'*Mystère*, it's a Christmas to make the dogs cry'——'Come, my little kids!' he calls to Nin and me, but we dont hear him in the heat of our play in the cold snow so he goes in the house anyway, with that sad motion of men passing into their domiciles, the pitifulness of it, specially in winter, the sight of which, if an angel returned from heaven and looked (if angels, if heaven. which is an ethereal crock) would make an angel melt——If angels were angels in the first place.

Christmas comes, Gerard gets a great new erector set, big

enough and complicated enough to build hoists that'll carry the house away—He sits in bed contemplating it with his sad sideways look, like the way the moon looks on May nights, the face tilted over—It's an expression, with his arms folded, that again and again says, 'Ah, but and but, look at that, my souls'—Nin gets a pickaninny doll, I remember distinctly finding it that Christmas morning on the mantel by the tree, and the little high chair that went with it, and Gerard promptly that week made a little dollshouse for his sister, subsidiary gifts from his own Santa Claus hands—Me, I had toys that I've forgotten cold, and it goes to show—

Then New Year's—

Then the bleak January, the friendless February with his iron fingers in your grill of ribs—

Gerard lay abed all the time, getting up only to go to the toilet or occasional wan visits to the breakfast table, where after dishes were cleared, he'd sometimes sit a half hour erecting structures that I watched standing at the side of him, holding his knee I expect—'What you doin Gerard?'

No answer but in the action of his hands and the working of his face as he thinks, and I marvel at my love for him—

Then he'd get tired and sigh and go back to bed and try to sleep, at midday, and I had no one to play with any more—I'd bring him drawingboards and crayons, he'd feebly rise to do my bidding—Sitting up, against pillows, legs out, in the white room, and white frost on the windowpane, and my mother watching us in the doorway—Her gleeful way of saying: 'You're having fun now?' as though everything was all right with the world and fifty years later she'll still be the same, and seen it all—

'Ti Pousse, Ti Pousse, Ti Pousse, how fat you are Ti

Pousse,' he'd say to me, mockfighting and hugging me and stroking my face. 'Little Cabbage, Little Wolf, Little Piece of Butter, Little Boy, Little Pile, Little Nut, Little Savage, Little Bad, Little Cryer, Little Bawler, Little Winner, Little Robber, Little Lazy, Little *Kitigi*—Ti Jean Ti Jean—*Ti Jean Louis le gros Pipi*—Little Fatty—you weigh two tons—they'll bring you in a truck—Little Red, Little red mug—Look, Mama, the beautiful red cheeks Ti Jean has—he'll be a handsome little boy!—he'll be strong!'

I basked in all this just as you would expect someone who deserved it, to bask in eternal bliss—I was going to be made to appreciate it, like a Fallen Angel.

Lancing pain in the legs and vague pain in the chest wakes Gerard in the mid of night, he makes a soft groan and represses even that, realizing we're all asleep, and Mama is exhausted—I lie in the crib across the room, lips to sheet—'Aw it hurts, it hurts!!' he groans, and grabs his pain, which wont stop—It comes on and off like a light.

'Lance, lance, lance, why is this happening to me, what'd I do? I confessed to the priest, I havent hidden anything—It's not that—Aw well, I guess it isnt worth it living—Ow—Oh Ow—' Hands to face, about to cry. like a load of rocks dumped from a truck onto a little kitty, the pitiful inescapability of death and the pain of death, and it will happen to the best and all and most beloved of us, O—Why should such hearts be made to wince and cringe and groan out life's breath?—*why does God kill us?*—The only answer can be written without words.

And Gerard knows that. He remembers his whole life now. Nothing to do in the long pain night, but hurt. And

think. It is the long night of life. And think. The morning he was born somehow there was grey rain and damp overshoes and rubbers in a dreary closet and a brown sad light in the kitchen and angry smirch of bepestered life-faces, and somehow from somewhere out, or in the centre, Counsel coming to him, saying, 'Dont do it—Dont be born' but he was born, he wanted to do it and be born and ignored the Counsel, the Ancient Counsel—

The pain knives into his jerking flesh, he jumps in bed a little, and aside, to avoid, it fades away a bit—'To me, to me it's happening'—He knows it isnt happening to me otherwise I'd be thrashing in my crib—'It's happening only to me'—He hears Pa snore upstairs, the littler harmonious snores of probably Ti Nin and Ma—It's only happening to him and it's the middle of the night and the window leaks and rattles from that wind—Out on the cold canals of Lowell across the river, snow-swirls are turning in the moon—

'O. when will it stop—?'

'O my Lord, help me—'

A stab of pain—'Help me!' he involuntarily cries out loud—'Nobody could know how much it hurts—O my Jesus you've left me alone and you're hurting me—And you too, you were hurted—Aw Jesus—nothing to help me—nothing'—Stab of strange pain, it advertises as it comes and comes with quick and open robbery, and vanishes with your peace—'I'll have to die, I'll have to die!' steals the dark cant-help-it thought—'If it doesnt stop'—And '*It wont stop*' sneaks the other thought, coming with the pain as voucher—

'Throughout all that, throughout that snowy window and the cold night and the big wind, and my leg and everything

else in the house, throughout all that there isn't something else?

An ecstasy unfolds inside his mind like a flower and says Yes, and he sees millions of white dots, like, and in another instant his legs are stabbing again and he's opened his eyes to concentrate on the concentrating—Like a Roman soldier left to die on a deserted battlefield and howling for mercy for three days running, without food or water, and finally dying, which is a remembrance of the great American Saint Edgar Cayce (according to him in an earlier transmigration) Gerard a petalish thing of nine is left to face cold unhelpful bone antagonized deep by elements within itself that will to war and wreck it, he himself, his personal-soul, is but victimized, tyrannized, wracked, flung aside, suffered to be a loser in the dubious game of mortal well-being—Words can't do it—'I've been thrown to that!'—A thousand realizations come to him—'It's got to stop!' the constant human thought as pain continues to hurt—

Words can't do it, readers will get sick of it—

Because it's not happening to themselves—

'O Lord, Ethereal Flower,
 Messenger from Perfectness,
 Hearer and Answerer of Prayer,
 Raise thy diamond hand,
 Bring to naught,
 Destroy,
 Exterminate—

O thou Sustainer,
 Sustain all who are in extremity—

Bless all living and dying things in
 the endless past of the ethereal flower,

Bless all living and dying things in
the endless present of the ethereal flower,
Bless all living and dying things in
the endless future of the ethereal flower,
amen.'

Unceasing compassion flows from Gerard to the world even while he groans in the very middle of his extremity.

But comes morning and a temporary cessation of his pain and Ma's up making oatmeal in the kitchen, the steam from the stove is fragrant and comes and steams Gerard's bedroom window and gives everything a wonderful new quality of gladness, of simple attempt—The earth and the flesh be harsh, but there's comradeship below—'I'm making you some nice oatmeal, Gerard, and some nice toasts—wait another five minutes, I'll put you that on a tray and we'll have a nice breakfast together.'

'It was a long night, Mama.'

'Well, now it's finished, my golden angel—It was hurting?'

'*Oui*'—sadly.

'You shoulda called me if it was hurting—Always call me when you need something, Mama is there—There! Ti Pousse is awake—your chum's gonna get up and you can spend the morning having fun together.'

'O Mama, I'm so happy it's morning—the oatmeal smells so good—You're so nice, Mama.'

Such tributes few mothers hear, or at least over so little, and over the oatmeal she blurs and rubs her eyes—'Dear

angel, are you comfortable?—here, I'll fix your pillow—there'—slapping the pillow expertly, then kissing him—'There—Mama's golden angel—Dont worry, you'll be all better in two months—the Doctor Simpkins told me—You'll be able to go out and play in the nice warm weather!—It'll be March in two weeks and *bing*, April!—May!—See how fast it goes?'

'Oui, Ma.'

'Dont you worry, with your Mama to take care of you you'll be well in two shakes of a lamb's tail—'

Great joy, because of the vacuum created by great horror in the night, floods into his being as he sees his delighted mother come hurrying over bearing the steaming tray to place on his lap—Ahead of him is a long day of interested drawing and erector set—The sun hasnt shown, it's a cold cloudy day, the windows are grey and portentous with the news of the excitement of life and the healthy and the living—

He eats daintily and formally the simple food, reverencing each bite as though it was holy, to enjoy it more, and because it is so momentous. 'The corner of the toast—good—the middle of the toast —there—' A faint twinge in his legs recalls the pain of the night before, and setting the tray aside with a weary sigh he neve theless sees it fit to realize, 'Ah well, it goes up and down a..d then it goes no more. It's best not to frighten anyone, nor harm anyone—dont let them know.'

I'm up in my crib, in long johns, jealous because Gerard got his breakfast before me. I'm thinking 'Because he's sick he's always waited on before me—Me, me!' I cry. 'Me too, I'm hungry!' 'They always make such a fuss over him,' I pout—I remember that morning, distinctly, standing in

the crib like that—*Sticks and stones may break my bones but words'll hurt me never?*

In fact, Gerard is a little impatient with me for rattling the crib and throws me an exasperated look—'Eh twé, Oh you!'

And there's no doubt in my heart that my mother loves Gerard more than she loves me.

After awhile Pa's up and grumbling in the kitchen over his breakfast, with puffed disinterested eyes, not, as Edgar Cayce explicitly reminds us, 'mindful of the present vision before our eyes.'

The long night of life is terribly long and deceptively short.

Caribou the man who was drunkest and gayest the night before, having undergone indescribably ghastly feelings under the bridge where he wobbled and woggled and spat, is now lofting a new morning drink to his lips which will soon plunge him back into—what?

'What else you want me to do?—We all die? We're all piles of you-know-what? Liars? Poor? Invalids? Well then! I drink! Open the door, belly, gimme another chance.' He gets his other chance, dances jigs till ten, and sleeps at noon. What he does at four o'clock in the afternoon is in its poor selfsame essence no different than what the mournful ladies with their beads and moving-lips, in the shadows of the church, are doing—For, the truth that is realizable in dead men's bones ought to be a good enough truth for everybody, laughers, cryers, cynics, and hoppers included, all—The truth that is realizable in dead men's bones, all great gloomy unwilling life aside, and setting aside my knighthood to thus say so, exhilarates, yea, exterminates all symbols and bosses and crosses and leaves that quiet blank—For my

part, the news about the truth came from the silence of my predecessor diers' graves.

Sicken if you will, this gloomy book's foretold.

Comes the cankerous rush of spring, when earth will fecundate and get soft and produce forms that are but to die, multiply—And a thousand splendours sweep across the March sky, and moons with raving moons that you see through drunken pine boughs snapping—When the river with her loaded humus gets heavier at the bank, because of the melting of the caky stiffnesses that'd had the earth seal-locked in her vaunted tomb of Hard—And there'll be laughter in the melting earth tonight—And there'll be sawdust trees, women's thighs, river bends, starlight, back-porches, more babies, young husbands, beer—There'll be singing in the April tree tops—There'll be visitations from the South from oft-returning species of visitors with feather tails and beady eyes, avaricious for the worm—And the worm himself will divide into a billion counterparts and come oozing out of parted-sands (black and oily and blue) like as if someone were squeezing the earth from below—There'll be new fish—There'll be There'll-be Himself—

All of a sudden tossed wars of tree-tops will be warmer wars and less dry and crackety ones, and there'll be rumours and singing down the hillsides as snow melts, running for cover under the bloody light, to join the river's big body—So that Ocean will again receive her swollen rent, as ever April, yet, landlord without end. be none the richer and with such coffers bottomless how the poorer possible?—In the ocean there is a Spring, deep and verdurous we cant estimate,

so I sing the surface one, the Spring that makes us feel so sad and fair, and morning air brings nostalgic cigarette smoke from the holy hopey smokers—When hats are whipped and finally succumb, coats flap and run their stories out, and vests disappear, and shirtsleeves are hoisted of a sudden afternoon, April 26th, and the ballgame is on—The time when all the earth is black with sap—No end to what you could say about Spring, and in that locked-in New England Spring is a big event, long coming, short staying, it flows by as fast as a flooded river—In that river you can see the accumulated debris of seventeen thousand fecundities up both shores clear to the maw of the well where she began—Marble'd melt in such country at the time, and add veins to the colour in the river—Children run out exhilarated as princes and knights, illustriously insane as ancient fools, to weirdly fool in fields and down river banks; to at that time put them behind a knife-carved schooldesk is like asking Thane to stow his Ice Axe and say farewell to his Prow—It is the dizzy lyrical time, airy, ethereal, mists are bright, the sun is never exactly golden, never exactly silver, never exactly bright, never exactly dark, never for a long time dimmed, but races continual eye-dazzling wars, reaches everywhere throughout textures of clouds and shows birds' shining wings—And when the first buds appear on bushes and trees, and your heartborne blossoms float to commemorate new Awakened Ones and fall in migholes and on hop-skotch trails, Vaya, then, night coming, and the round horizon all about reverberates with roars of all-sigh all-world all-men Shush War, you'll know, by the fence, the sad wooden American fences and under the promised yellow moon, the pierce of the arrow of April in your flesh, the promise accounted for in the Tablets of Hardworking Man's

Beardy Serious Propets : namely, ecstasy of living and dying. . .

You'll have your cold wars and warm peaces, the fretting and rubbings of all things on all sides, the ecstasy general, orgasms, screams of passion, rites of Spring, May, June, July, and the Bees—No matter what anyone says, you'll have it, you'll dream you have it and so like the popular lovesong says, You'll Have It.

Blossoms fluttered from the trees and crossed contrarious Gerardo's windowpane, he would not balmy truck with Spring and swell with it, but wasted like Sacrosanct and ill-timed Autumn, out of his element—Like my father exactly twenty years later, he was dying during the Resurrection and the Life Renewed.

He was getting worse. Rarely now we saw him out of bed and about the kitchen. Our visits to his bedside were still, for he slept a lot. My mother grew rings around her sleepless eyes, and prayed late and rose early to praise early—Her nerves were so shot she was losing her teeth on by one, her stomach was a mass of gelid anxious phenomena, like swarms of snakes—The Snake of Inevitability was rising up and eating the Duluozes.

My father had more time to avoid the sight of his little boy's death, by busying by burying himself in details of his work at the shop—And as heartbreaking April blossomed—burst into May and the mornings and the nights were music, the death in the house grew browner—I remember Spring-night the fence in our backyard, and the dim light in Gerard's sickroom window casting a faint candle-like glow on the lilac bushes, and above the warm teary stars, and the roar furor all around in the city of Lowell: trains across the river, the river itself booming heavily at the Falls, cries of people, doors slamming clear down to Lilley Street.

'Angie, we gotta do some work tonight me and Manuel
——I'm going to his house now.'

'Awright Emil——dont come home too late——I'm afraid
to be alone if anything happened.'

'Ah well, you should be used to it by now——It'll happen
in time.'

'Dont talk like that——He recovered the last time.'

'Yeah, but I never saw him skinny and quiet like that——
Ah,' from the porch, door open, 'the beautiful nights that are
coming——all for other people——'

'Call Ti Jean, he's in the yard with his kitty——it's his
bedtime.'

'Take it easy, my girl, I'll be home before eleven——We
got a big order, just came in this morning——Manuel's wait-
ing——Ti Jean, come in the house——your mother wants
you——come on, my little man.'

'Did you take your bath?'

'Aw tomorrow, if I'm dirty I'm dirty——Make me some
cortons if you got time, I always like them for my sandwiches
at the shop——'

'Bye Emil.'

'Bye Angie——I'm going now.'

Emil Alcide Duluoz, born in upriver St. Hubert Canada in
1889, I can picture the scene of his baptism at some wind-
whipped country crossing Catholic church with its iron-
spike churchspire high up and the paysans all dressed up,
the bleak font (brown, or yellow, likely) where he is baptized,
to go with the colour of old teeth in this wolfish earth——
Forlorn, the Plains of Abraham, the winds bring plaque
dust from all the way to Baffin and Hudson and where roads
end and the Iroquois Arctic begins, the utterly hopeless place
to which the French came when they came to the New

World, the hardness of the Indians they must have embrothered to be able to settle so and have them for conspirators in the rebellion against contrarious potent churlish England—Winds all the way from the nostril of the moose, coarse rough tough needs in potato fields, a little fold of honey enfleshed is being presented to the holy water for life—I can see all the kinds of Duluozes that must have been there that 1889 day, Sunday most likely, when Emil Alcide was anointed for his grave, for the earth's an intrinsic grave (just dig a hole and see)—Maybe Armenagé Duluoze, bow-legged five feet tall, plank-stiff, baptismal best boots, tie, chain and watch, hat (hat slopey, Saxish, slouch)—His statuesque and beauteous sisters in endless fold-draperies designed by Montreal couturiers tinkling delighted laughter late of afternoons when parochial children make long shadows in the gravel and Jesuit Brothers rush, bookish like 'ill angels,' from darkness to darkness—The mystery there for me, of Montreal the Capital of all French Canada the culture, out of which came the original potato paternity that rioted and wrought us the present family-kids of Emil—I can see the baptism of my father in St. Hubert, the horses and carriages, an angry tug at the reins, '*Allons ciboire de cawlis de calvert*, wait'll they finish wipin im'—Poor Papa Emil, and then began his life.

A whole story in itself, the story of Emil, his mad brothers and sisters, the whole troop coming down from the barren farm, to the factories of U.S.A.—Their early life in early Americana New Hampshire of pink suspenders, strawberry blondes, barbershop quartets, popcorn stands with melted butter in a teapot, and fistfights in the Sunday afternoon streets between bullies and heroes who read Frank Merriwell—Of Emil much later more—

But his rise from riotous family, to insurance salesman in the 'big city' (for Lowell fourteen miles downriver) and then to independent businessman with a shop, his waxing and puffing on cigars—His eager bursting out of vests and coats, tortured armpits of suits, quick short heavy steps on our history sidewalks—But a reverend, sensitive, apt-to-understand man, and understand he did, the mournfulness of his vision, the way he shook his head (that little Gerard imitated), the way he sighed—A citizen of the raving world, but eager to be good—Eager to be rich too—But a man endowed with qualities of interested apperception of the nature of things, as would qualify him to be a tragic philosopher—Insights, sadnesses, that leapfrogged his intelligence and came down on the other side and were light—'I see blind light—I see this sad black earth!' might have been one thought he had.

Here he goes hurrying to Manuel's for their night work—Manuel lives four blocks down near the big corner of Lilley and Aiken—As Emil turns off Beaulieu, which is the little street that bears the great burden of Gerard's dying, a breeze blows, bringing whiffs of hope, voices, song, it's a gay Saturday night, but the young father has no primer for that well known pump, and only slowly ghostly sadly wends his way, thinking, 'My father died drunk behind his stove—my mother died in her dishes and poor washclothes—father and mother, it happens to all of us one way or the other, we can pray if we want but it wont help—Go on, God, dont call yourself God in my face—Doin business under conditions like that, we'll never win—'

Manuel lives in a raucous tenement, first floor, you walk in

from the woodporch which has rollers that run the washlines across a tar court to the porch of the other tenements, all closed in, with, on warm Spring night, all windows open and families airing their rave and grievance—Crash! Old Paquette's drunk again—Bang! Old lady Pirouette who lost her son in the war is dropping her dishes again—Boom! that damn little Petrie's poppin off his lastyear's firecrackers—It swims in through all windows and revolves around and rumbles and runs like a river, voices, language, gossip, crashes, jingles and jangles—'There's no end to it!'—Whole rant-sentences can be heard in rising and falling snatches of vigorous Canuckois, coming from by old woodstoves in ancient rocking chairs—Sounds for the quick head and trailing robe—Emil walks in to Manuel's kitchen unannounced, nobody in it he stands questioning—It doesn't take long for him to realize that Manuel is in the bedroom with his wife having a fight—

'They always told me not to marry you, you were a drunkard at sixteen—*sixteen?!!* I bet you was drunk as a hoot-owl at fifteen, fourteen—You're not the man I married but dammit, the reason for that is because you were puttin up a front *when* I married you, crook—'

'Aw, shut ya big gadam mouth, it's only good for *blagues*—I gave you your money, I'm goin to work, I'll be gone all night, you oughta be satisfied, ya cow—'

'Dont call me a cow, dog—'

'Call yourself what you like, me I'm goin—and if I'm drunk tomorrow morning when I get back we'll blame it on you—'

'Aw yeah, look for excuses.'

'Bein in the same house with a pest like you it's enough to make a man drink poison!'

'Why don't you do it then.'

'And leave you my insurance that I took out because Emil Duluoz bullshitted my ear in 1920, not a chance—I'll live and you'll be poor—Go tell *that* to your mother.'

My old man winces in the kitchen and bathetically would tiptoe out except that Manuel's wife is suddenly exploding into the kitchen with a backward added yell to loverboy: 'Aw sure, simpleton, I'll go tell all this to my mother and make her happy she had a little girl and brought her up too well, my goodness, Mr. Duluoz is here!'

My father, eyes to the ceiling salutes at the side of his head, as if to say, 'Don't mind me, I'm the court jester.'

Manuel comes out of his gloomy bridal chamber with a chamberpot in his hand, and slipper on his feet. 'Ah—Emil—'

'Come on, Manuel, before Rosie throws you out on your face—'

'I'll throw him out to the Devil, damn him!' she screams, slamming the door that leads to the parlour which is never used.

(Sigh) my old man, 'At least you dont have any children—Put on your shoes and come on—You got drunk again there yesterday?'

'Just a little nip.'

'Poor Manuel, come on I'll *buy* you a little nip—just one hour of work then we'll go to the club.'

'How is it at home?'

'Well, there we dont fight, we—' he was about to say 'we die' but checked himself.

Together they leave the tenement and get on Manuel's motorcycle with the side-car, Emil in it, stately with hat-in-hand and goopy look, and off they go put-putting and bounc-

ing over the Aiken Street Bridge—Almost exhilaration sweeps over both of them as the river winds whip their faces, and they both yell and point at the moon, which is rising yellow-huge on the horizon over Pawtucketville—About a mile to the left are the glowing windows of the mills, some windows dye-blue, all reflected on the thrashy waters—About a mile to the right, Pawtucketville's hill of houses and the moon and one vast darkness cloud burlying over Spring—

It's the time of the juices—

They go careering up Aiken through the tenement streets of Little Canada and cross the canal bridge and along to the high Medieval granite walls of St. Jean de Baptiste church (where Gerard was baptized), then left on Moody Street along busy store fronts, then right, to Merrimack Street, with its trolleys and busy cars, and down to the bright corner where stands the Jewel Theatre, and the Royal Theatre—Manuel roars to a stop, they get out like brave mechanics, and toddle off down the alley by the Royal, redbrick, past the fire escape, to the rear—Emil turns on the light—You see the press, the hand presses, the piles of glossy paper, the paper cutter, the roll-trucks, the inky shadows, rolls, rags, cans, inks, the long sad stained planks of the floor leading to the back entrance which fronts Market Street where the Greek coffee shops show dismal cardgames and *barbutte* dice games going on in green interiors among gloomy men in black, the long lost sad scenes.

'What you thinkin, Leo, will we do it before eight o'clock?' comes the cry now in English from the rhythmic chomping press where inky Manuel (inky from so much) in blue striped scullion's apron stands feeding sheets between the yawns of inkpan and types, sheketak, sheketoom, shketak, shketoom,

and out come orange circulars advertising stores their Spring bargains and Specials:—

THE MODERN WONDER

Shoe Sale

MEN'S SHOES

\$7 or \$8 value

As low as \$2.98

WOMEN'S

\$6 low shoes

Goodyear welt

\$2.98

BOY'S SCOUT SHOES

\$2.49

THE MODERN SHOE STORE

143 Central St Opp. Talbot's

—to be delivered door to door by boys on bikes or by Tao hoboos who assemble under the pharting trills of birds at daybreak to receive their day's bagful of circulars, which will go for booze and beans—

'All I gotta do, Manuel, is finish this ad and get my foldin done, turn the key on Red Line Taxi and Cantwell optical, be done. Did you finish that new Pollard mat?'

'The great underpriced basement? All done, Leo, everything twenty-three skidoo and ready to roll.'

'Well, oil her up, we'll be outa here by eight and maybe go down to the Keiths' for a game.'

'*Ah ben mué, les cartes, son pas assez bon pour la soif pour mué* (ah well me, cards, they're not good enough for thirst for me.)'

Ben mué to shpeux usez un bierre, (well me too I can use a beer,) both of them suddenly reverting to Frenchy slang since nobody's there to hear them anyway, just as you

might expect the Greeks that you could see across the way through the great dirty wire windows, breaking from their usual Greek to talk some English for the benefit of the business there 'ska ta la pa ta wa ya' here we go again, the great raving *patois* of Lowell on all sides, Polocks on Lakeview Avenue and Back Central, and practically pure Gaelic or at least lilting lyric Gaelic English on the Highlands and downtown—Syrians to boot, up the canal somewhere—And your old New England Yankees eating Indian Pudding for dessert in old stately houses with lawns, on Andover, Pawtucket and Chelmsford, with names like Goldtwaithe and Smith—And thin noses and thin lips and read *Walden* by the fireplace on howling nights—

Eight o'clock Pa and Manuel close up shop and go across the street to the Jewel Theatre for a chat with the manager Sam, the projectors are running off the latest photoplay replete with thrills and fast action and grey rain streaming across the screen and the piano rumbling suspense thunders in the pit, the oldtime movie stars with their prim painted lips set grim—'We go through suffering,' is written for what says the hero in flickery letters, 'Jesus God,' says a bum in the seat, 'by now I oughta be as big as the side of a house'—Sam gives them an introductory warming nip that goes like a prairie fire through Manuel's belly, then they get back in the contraption and go bouncing down Merrimack to the Square, as acquaintances shout, 'Weyo, Emil, when you gonna enter in the races? Buy yourself some goggles and a hat that comes down over your ears! Manuel'll get you in the river, give im time!'—

'Ho Emil, how's the boy?'

'Ho Slattery——still swingin em?'

My father is a popular fellow around Lowell, in insurance he's buttonholed practically every small (and some big) businessman in town and extolled the virtues etc. etc. of seeing that your grave doth not rot in vain and you leave your successors some of your ghostly change——Then as a printer, to get ad-work, he'd followed up old acquaintances and hotfooted everywhere and was a proficient, nay much more proficient with the non-French usually Irish segment of his customers, a proficient persuader and general good-time Charley——'Ha ha ha!' rang his harsh laugh, and you heard him cough as he left through the door, bound for another——

The go rattletrapping in the strange comic French movie contraption down past the City Hall and for want of shamelessness go sneaking through the back streets to avoid the great Main Kearney Square where all Lowell's in the lights——The clock, the Chinese restaurant, the Number One soda-fountain, the trolley stops, the big stores, the newspaper——They go instead around by Kirk street and down a railroad switch alley for the mills, across spectral-in-my-mind Bridge Street where stands the great grey warehouse of eternity and into the little alley that runs between it and the stagedoor side entrance of the B. F. Keith's theatre.

'If you want your moonshine, there he is now, old Henry——I'll meet you backstage.'

Emil goes under the iron fire escape and's just about to disappear inside when some of the vaudeville performers who have gathered in the warm night for a smoke, call him over——As one-time ad man making up the B. F. Keith's Vaudeville ads he is wellknown by a lot of the performers on the famous old circuit——

'If it aint Ben Oaklander, where's your piano, boy?'

'Emil——What you been doin these past two years——know Billy here, Billy Dale?'

'Shore I know Billy Dale——Say, what's on tap with the new show?'

'Just opened tonight——There's Rialto and Lamont, the Talkless Boys——Oh, Lois Bennett, you know her——'

'A Ray of Western Sunshine——'

'——Western Sunshine, and Muriel Pollock the Popular Composer——and old Prop-Prop himself——'

'Prop-Prop, did they ever throw him in the canal like they said they'd do the night he puked all over the trunks and suitcases?'

'No——Say, boy, we took pity on him——Wal, you know what happened to him, wal, he's in South Bend now; wal, sir, Emil, how are you boy?'

'And do I understand we've got the dainty captivating vivacious Miss Corinne and Dick Himber offering Coquettish Fancies with Ben Oaklander on the piano?'

'Say, boy, you got that memory——Yes, sir, and there's Bob Yates and Evelyn Carsen in "Getting Soaked" by Billy Dale and Bob Yates and there's Clarence Oliver, "Wire Collect"'

'I'll be damned, he's still around——'

'Yes sir, old mountain man too, and Billy McDermott the only survivor of Coxey's Army and on the screen a photoplay of speed and derring-do, me boy, forget what the name of it is——'

'A little bit of canned music, a title, a couple of sighs, and there's your money's worth——'

'Me boy, if it wasnt for vaudeville the man on the street wouldnt have a place in the world to get himself a good

night of entertainment——Pathe News and topics, and Aesop's Fables all right, but when you got them flesh'n blood performers up there, me boy, that exit march at eleven p.m. wouldnt be worth the paper 't'scored on! Stop me if I'm lying.'

Bend the drapes to your purpose——

And as they're standing there, smoke fragrantly rises from their cigarettes to the spring moon, and here crunching down the cindered alley comes a man in a strawhat (like Emil), but fatter, huge, with cane and great pot belly and bulbous red nose, a namelessly battered and muddled eaten-up and almost disappeared face :——Old Bull Baloon.

'Emil, want ya to meet Bull Baloon here——'

'Glad ta meet ya——'

'This the boy plays poker?'

'Same.'

'How 'bout a little swiggle a Mother Machree's ancient revitalizing monkey juice, Mister Emil?'

'Why——well——'

'Sometimes known as continental bug joy juice, or *joie* the cindered alley comes a man in a traw hat (like Emil), to Emil's great amused delight)——

'No, no, non, non, non——it's *joie de vivre*, I'm French, I know.'

'This here business at hand, the poker game, somebody called Charley Sagely, and somebody O-BRIEN or other, brings my attention to the fact that——' upending his flask, swallowing, looking around, wiping the neck of it, '——brings my attention——' but again repeating it slowly as now his eye has caught one of the principals coming down

the alley and it's time to get the game underway, and meanwhile Manuel has come back with *his* bottle, and they all go inside to start the game in one of the dressing-rooms——

As the game progresses the participants increase, and soon they can hear the B. F. Keith's orchestra playing the exit march in the pit and the audience is filing out for a soda in Paige's or Liggett's Drugstore or in Dana the Greek's and there will be dense dyed neon of oldtime city night in America, like old cartoons showing the boy newspaper seller with little cloth cap and scarf and knickers holding out a paper to two men, one in derby, one with elegant cane, their coats flapping in the aftertheatre wind, and beyond, a great crowd, some reading papers, and the wallsides of buildings in the city night and the dimmed marquees and the general drizzle of activity in the furthest reaches of the scene, where I see Gerard's dead face——Old Fish Street, it is all incredibly dense, dark, soft, rich as if Spanish night, the blue of tombs is in the neons, the secret of the Old Fish is on Old Fish Street, the dark spoor of real profound red throbs up from the assembled lights and makes a halo overhead, it is all slightly alien, ugly, but soft and kindly——It is a dream, in the middle of it the kings and queens are being dealt by the mysterious cardplayers in the empty theatre.

'What in the hell kinda concoction by the way you got in that new flask, Bull?'

And he, Old Bull Baloon, a man of a long life (sixty) cluttered with a hundred thousand misadventures the whole story of which can never, will never be told except you see it written in the picotée carnation of his nose, the swim of wrinkles in his eyes, the wrinkles there, indicative of earlier olden eyes like of a hardboot on a Kentucky rail, the crooked

coy smile and yellow-teeth, the big ring on thick Neroid finger like fingers of old whores successful and retired or fingers of Roman prelates given to regurgitation ere their excarnification comes due and all the banquets fall:—‘It’s a little mixture of wine, gin, and bourbon, I learned it in Panama some years ago with a little man named Low stood about four foot one inch and was half Chinese for all I know, lived in a wattle tenement on the edge of a river sewer system with dead rats and crapsticks floatin in the tide, and green spiders where he hid his dice—One afternoon some hobo from Pratt Street Baltimore, I believe, and I believe the name was Slats, came up to Lady Nicotima at the bar and slapped her rump, congratlatin her for the good showing that afternoon, whereupon she turns around and says ‘Dont you believe in God?’ and aims a delicate little pistol and fires, hitting Charley Low dead between the shoulderblades and the bullet goes through him and ends up I aint never seen him no more—and so,’ he says, receiving his hole card and his face card, ‘better be jocund with the fruitful grape, as sadden after none, or bitter fruit’ (quoting Omar Khayyam) and glances down at his hole-card, a nine of spades.

‘By God, I dont drink as a rule like you do, Bull—Manuel you see this guy?’—to Manuel who’s watching the game sitting on a trunk drunk—‘but by golly, have you seen that boy guzzle up that whisky tonight, Charley? Jim? Two bottles now?’

‘It’s only two a.m., give him a chance to start—’

‘I’ve had to come from a long way and a lot of snowy country to want that much heat, Emil.’

‘I’m *made* of water!’ complains the stagehand who keeps going to the toilet.

‘Well, I like to gamble, like a drink once in a while,’ big

Emil glancing at his king of heart face-card and adjusting it over the hole card, which now, surreptitiously, in the middle of his sentence, he raises a corner of, to see the spade smooth black of a ten of spades, winking inside himself to think, 'but I never could drink like that and put it away like that—hell George Daslin and me and Henry O'Hara one time drink I dunno how much beer out of a barrel, in Lawrence, and then had whisky and a card game just like this I guess nine in the morning, whoo, it took ten years offa my life——'

'I wouldnt tell you if I knew,' says O'Brien now looking at his hole-card with the same sly up-corner, saying to himself, so that the others can almost read it in the imprint of the smoke before the lamp, 'ten of diamonds.'

Old Conductor Jim Sagely the railroad man, holding his ace of clubs in one hand, thoughtfully raises the jack of same underneath and purses his New England farmer lips.

'Sagely,' says Bull, slyly, small blue eyes through reddened eyelid puffs watching, raising flask for a slug soon as he's finished his speech, a simple, 'if I had a barrel a' beans and I had a store, I'd hire you to count the bad ones and lay the good ones aside, that's now sly your dollar is.'

'What are you, a Scotchman? A sneaky character you must be, with that false hat— —bet it's got hinges on it. I aint no guy that lets his whisky bottle interfere with the waybills, or throws a switch and throws the crummy over before it's crossed the points.'

'A lame, unprofitable, infantile turn of talk if ever I heard one, your *crummies*——You? You're to miserly for *my* card-game——it's midnight in *my* little life——what's *your* key? ——Took eighty dollars from me last night——that represents a lotta claprous calls from the crew clerk and a lotta

locals in the freezing air for an old Canadian National boomer like me.'

'Boomer? You? You cahd shahp! Pool shahk!—First time I win some real money in my life and they's complainin in the sides and up the back——'

Le Phantôme de l'opéra, provides, sepulchrally looking-over his shoulder, Manuel, looking to the eerie shrouds backstage deeper——

'Ne-mind the phantoms and drink your drink——You gave me a start, damn you!' says my father quietly chuckling.

'No complainin, Sage, I'm passin king of hearts Emil Pop here with his wife and kiddies just born, bang,' throwing Emil a king of clubs face-card, and everybody eyeing it. 'And Charles the hammer, bang, a queen of spades, two kings and two queens showing and where's the marital bed, bang, a jack of spades for the conductor, and bang' (for himself) 'same of hearts.'

'The game thickens.'

'I bet and raise the ante.'

'At this stage, nobody cares.'

'And on this stage a new ace wont do you no good——old Sage could use it.'

'Sevens——aint got no use for em, even when I got seven in the hole, my unlucky number, nine's my lucky number by God.'

'Another seven——talkin of the devil——pair a kings high.'

'There he is, Bull Baloon with a girl for his jack. Who's gonna win the rainbow pot?'

'Let me look and think.' Emil, high, with a pair of kings, pretends innocent worry. Charley O'Brien has nothing further

to examine beyond his showing queens, but a mentioned forlorn seven.

'It's a dream, lads, it's a dream,' utters Bull up-endings a lofty big pull on his swiggins, bloodshot returning the cap, spitting over his shoulder at the two spittoons in the corner. Sagely has a jack under and a jack on top, and nobody knows, but no advantage his, yet, till the last thrust of fate-cards, from the hands of the dealer, Bull. Emil leans over to rub his thigh in the night of the world forgetting his family, lost in the eye to eye the game of men in America; nights long ago after Langford battered Johnson; smoke in Butte saloons; Denver backrooms, games; lost heroes of America; Chicago, Seattle; vaudeville redbrick alleys and forgotten condoms under isolated signs in the highway night of Roadster Twenties; long jaws of bo's riding the boxcar from outside North Platte, to clear t'Ogallah, mis-pronounced, sad, spindle-legged waiters in the summermoth night, by lights; America, sweaty, poker games, Negroes on the sidewalk in Baltimore, history, nostalgic with afternoon and man, midnight and weariness, dawn and O'Shea running to catch his train, Old Bull Baloon examining his useless King hole-card, half-deciding to full-decide to leave the game because even if he gets another King he's got no ace to ace-high Emil.

The others stay; Bull deals, lost in the dream. 'Ten dont do you no good, Emilio, lessn you got another underneath,' dealing Emil a ten of clubs. Deals Charley a seven, making a pair of sevens on the top. 'You better have a queen underneath,' which Charley doesnt have, stripped bare and queenless, turning up a ten apoleticaliy. 'Another pair of sevens!' dealing Sagely a seven of hearts. 'If he has another seven underneath,' opines the rednosed dealer from Butte Montana,

'he's got his own deck a cards hidden in back of his ear inside that curly hair, yass. Which, would a left me with the Ace of Jokers,' dealing himself, for the hell of it, the final fifth card though he's out, the Ace of Spades, Death. 'Gentlemen,' seeing he's inadvertently emptied his flask without realizing it in the heat of what he was doing, 'is there any beer in the house? No beer?'

'We got some left, yeh, Bull, in the box there.'

And Emil rakes in the pot, cigar in teeth, big body tensed forward in chair to affairs of the night, as goldpots strew the blue beginnings with incense of aurora and dawn creaks up to crack and boom over the black sad earth now irrevocably Gerard was, enfleshed, sacrificed and given over to, O moanin shame.

'I'm the one shoulda got that spade,' comments Emil in the alley, as they urinate.

Bull, pointing up the dawn sky: 'More ill fated than in all your dreams you'd a bitterly hoped her to be.'

Then they get drunk——It happens all of a sudden, on the spur of nothing but a cry——'Slup a slug, son!'——The high white mists of Spring morn over the redbrick roofs of downtown Lowell make them dizzily glad, they go (Manuel in the middle bawling) staggering down the alley——In two cars and the ridiculous motorcycle they go careering through the mists and over the bridge.

'Where's that Irish club?——Where's that dog with the pipe in his mouth and the blue eyes who sits by the stove in the——'

'You mean Bob Donnelly, if he aint asleep now with his arms around his milky wife I'd bet and be damned and

be called Tarzan if he wasnt still up and jawin his Jew's harp somewhere the other side a' town——'

'And Murphy! Where are the river boys?'

'Never mind! It's a mystery!'

'Be Jesus Christ it makes me feel good, they lit the furnace in my damp cellar.'

'All the blowers of hell'll send it through the vents and veins and you'll come out with a true face at last.'

They rave and scream as the wind ventilates them across the bridge, they're looking for the Polish Club that's supposed to open twenty-four hours a day, down on Lakeview——
'That place with the chairs in front.'

'Ah who needs a gadam club——come down by the carnival grounds and piss in the bushes.'

'Suits me fine, termagant.'

'Manuel, what you doin, you almost got us to the end of our holes.'

'They been swallowin a long time!'

'Then why not swallow more, lover.'

'With my wife in hell everything suits me.'

'You got eyes like a dead potatobug——wake up and watch the road!'

'Eat the damn road!' says Manuel who'd as soon the road ate him so they'd be where they were going sooner.

Irrelevant conversations meanwhile rage in the cars, driven respectively by Sagely and O'Brien, Old Bull Baloon in his red-eye cups now reconstructing adventures of six decades with the invention of sixty——They all spill out on the field at Lakeview Avenue, across from the mills, on the river, just as the blazing red sun kisses and peeps over the window roofs of all Centreville——

My father reels about from snort to snort, the earth morning under him——

My father with straw hat in big gnarled veiny hands, collar bursting out soft and unstylish over his coat lapels from folds of thick muscular neck, frown-dark on his brow, hair curly, dark, crisp, nose bulbous, mouth grim but sentimental, kneeling on one knee, examining the sunrise with serious and exact and ponderous officialness, nodding slowly, 'I'll tell ya Bull, there aint never been a mystery of this world I didnt stand in awe of, when standing in front of it, or kneeling on one knee as I am now.' Strangely, rockily, the redness shows on the ridges of his face.

His head is held slightly on one side, as I say, a little like Gerard, but in this case, the father's sadness is held inside a manly grace, or rather, a manly brace, the philosophicalness abides higher in the cranium here than it can in the recentness-film of the angel child——Experience has made a man of Emil, and you may take man and weigh him on the scales with his weight in goldshit on the other pan, the measurement may come out, legible——If so, write me a letter——I see no reason for Man——But his value, I buy——Dawns white with drunkenness I've had myself with my boys and after that were boys——And there'll be more——Brothers that were saints that died on me, that too's happened a million times in a million repetitions and reincarnations in Samsara's sorrow parade——More wine! fewer dead potato bugs! Roll me down the road in a barrel, if I'm lying——(and I've been rolled in a barrel down the road, an I'm a liar)——Jesus Child——But birth and tender years which we take to be actual happeningness in the phenomenon of this self belief that something seems to happen, called existence, hath made of Emil's son Gerard instead of a weightable

debatable man, a tender-born and angel of tender years— Emil's lips pressed together to make the whole face storm, Breton, hot, worried, Emil, leaning his big arms on thick unbreakable knees, thick thighs, he brushes the cigar smoke from the pants of his thigh, he fixes his face in the rising sun (priests are anointing and intoning a quartermile away), he looks like some Medieval wallguard waiting for the Jesus Child, nodding, 'I'll be gol danged . . . aint it a strange world, Bull—here we are, by the side of a river, two men— once upon a time we had a notion we were romeos and gave up our little suspenders and our Saturday night nickelodeons and made googoo eyes at the girls at basketball games and hit hero home runs and then developed these big endless holes to throw our money in—*money?* And all of it!— Like throwing ten dollar bills and flowers in the gad dam ocean, Bull—'

'Expand upon the theme,' says Bull passing the bottle.

'No, I'm through—an ocean, Caesar never had it so good, I'm tellin you.'

Meaningless, they grow solemn and serious.

'It's a hell of a world—debts, wives, woman—scissors, meat, do you blame her?'

'Why, hell no?'

'Ha?'

'Hell, No!'

'In the winter, kiddies—a purple shame, an American shame, a durn Babe Ruth homerun of a shame—Youth gone wild, hung upside down—'

'Tarzan—'

'Emil, the world is happy!'

'You damn right.'

'My best, MY children, I'm not promising anything—'

'End, but hole hat or no hole hat and happy sandholes of infantile or not, I predict it, seaweave breezes once in a while, sand most a the time, hot unhappy painful burning sand and right in his throat, and makes his wet yes water more'—(slup, a slug)—'Let the women wash it, I'm through, I'm the culprit officer, O offi sair, sir, but take me away not now, some other time Offi Sair Charley,' as Emil and Charley dance and gesture Cop-and-Innocent Arrest on the red haunted banksides of eight a.m., Lowell in the mud and molten snow—Harsh laughter, lighting of cigars, holding of them between fingers outstretched stiff drunk, the fragrance of the Cuban smoke, the Cuban quality of men, mixed with alcohol so many percent by volume and name your Infinity—Slapping of laugh-hands, Whoos! and 'Take me away peaceably, I wanta play one more game of poker!'—Pulling up of thigh pants, clearing of throats, ah-hums and hem-haws, popping of eye-bulge doubts, starings into the blank to wait for further time—

'O where's that Donnelly!'

'Well then goddamit, let's go to him!'

Off they vow in their immense vehicles—

'Oh call it a day!'

'And why?'

And when they do find Donnelly it's only for him to sit there saying 'Emil you could have ended up your days cryin in that corner—calling for more drinks—but you had to buy a store, and hire yourself out, and count your every blarney.'

'Aright with me, Ole Be-larney.'

'And you hankered and pankled and popped to discover—'

'I did.'

'And you——are you sure this is a mixture of what did you say?' and later to the other old Irishmen of the corner, in the store, the bloody store, he, Donnelly, says, 'Emil Duluoz - ——a perfect person,' and they believe him.

But by that time we've all got big headaches——And our Manuel-wives'll have a scream at us——and it's only stored in bottles, though you might think in furnaces of ire in Diablo Bottoms——'The trouble with you, Duluoz,' pronounces Bull on our porch, the which even Gerard in his bed can hear at ten a.m

'What?'

'You're just too eager to hear for me to tell you what's wrong with you, so you can change and rectify——God made misers, and misers made God, and I'm suited.'

They bump rolling heads together in the amazingness of this——

'Tst-tst,' says my mother peeking from the kitchen, 'it looks like your father is drunk this morning——Who's that, that big pile? He's swallowed all his glasses and his barrels in his nose, it looks like!——They want some breakfast——I'll warm up last night's good *ragout d'boulette*' (pork meat-ball stew with onions and carrots and potatoes, exquisite, Old Bull Baloon never had a better meal since the time in Wyoming the fry-cook said to him at dawn, 'I got some nice homefrieds for ya this morning. Bull'——

O pitiful, lovable, soon-to-be-departed earth——)

That'll do.

'And time bids be gone'——

It might be pepper for a cold feast, but I always did say that the fact that men *are*, is more interesting than anything

they might do——'tis only a poor action on a part stage and the scenery (the fakery) can be seen to shift and jello, in the backdrops, the stagehands are clumsy, the designer clumsy, and thine eye quick——Inadequate settings, poorly paid carpenters——You wake up in the middle of the night and look at the horizon sneaking swiftly back into place, and you think 'O God, it's all the same thing'——That there is a world, that, rather, there *seems* to be a world, is hugely more interesting than what tiddly diddly well might happen in it, like Nirvana in an ant-heap or an ant-heap in Nirvana, *one*——

Bless my soul, death is the only decent subject, since it marks the end of illusion and delusion——Death is the other side of the same coin, we call now, Life——The appearance of sweet Gerard's flower face, followed by its disappearance, alas, only a contour-maker and shadow-selector could prove it, that in all the perfect snow any such person or thing ever did arrive, say, Yea, and go away——The whole world has no reality, it's only imaginary, and what are we to do?——Nothing——*nothing*——*nothing*. Pray to be kind, wait to be patient, try to be fine. No use screamin. The Devil was a charming fool.

In his last days Gerard had little to do but lay in bed and stare at the ceiling, and sometimes watch the cat. 'Look Ti Jean, the little nut——look, he looks one way, he looks the other——Look at the crazy face, what's he thinkin?——Every time he sees something what does he think?——Look, he's goin in the other room. Why? What's he thinkin that makes him go in the next room? Look, now he stops, he looks——he licks himself——there, he yawns——well, now he's comin back——he's crazy——O CRAZY KITIGI! Bring him!' and I'd bring him the little grey tiger cat and we'd

biddle and fwiddle with his crazy nose and stroke his head and he'd set in purring and glad. 'Look at him, a little crazy ball like that, a little white belly as soft and as smooth as a heart—God made kitties I guess for us—God sent his kitties everywhere—Take care of my kitigi when I'm gone,' he adds holding kitigi to his face and almost crying.

'Where you goin?'

No answer.

'See? the little face, the little head, look, I could break his head by squeezing my hand—it's only a little thing with no strength—God put these little things on earth to see if we want to hurt them—those who dont do it who *can*, are for his Heaven—those who see they can hurt, and *do* hurt, they're not for his Heaven—See?'

'Oui.'

'Always be careful not to hurt anyone—never get mad if you can help it—I gave you a slap in the face the other day but I didnt know it when I did it'—

(That'd been one of the last days when he felt good enough to get up and play with his erector set, a grey exciting morning for all-day work, gladly he'd at the breakfast crumb-swept newspapers of the table begun to raise his first important girder when I importunately rushed up, though gleefully, to join in the watching but knocked the whole thing over, scattering screws and bolts all over and upsetting the delicate traps, inadvertently and with that eternal perdurable mistakenness we all know, he slapped my face yelling '*Décolle donc!*' (Get away!) and must have instantly regretted it, no doubt that in a few minutes his remorse was greater than my disappointed regret—) We made up soon enough, head to head at the sad and final mortal window, holy Gerard and I, which gave credence now to his speech about

kindness; and a speech it is, that down through the imaginary eternities, is, and hath been, handed down by all spiritual heroes (of his like and calibre):—immeasurable kindness——‘It’s in the words of the Lord’s Prayer——forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Did you forgive me for hitting you?’

‘Oui’——(though I was too littly naive to know what it meant, *forgive*, and hadnt really forgiven him, holding back that reserve of selfly splendour for future pomp)——As solid as anything, as solid as the rock of the mountain the solid folly men and boys and women will have——‘I hit you——but I didnt have to, now I know it, the junk is packed away, the thing I was building with my set’ (he shrugs gallicly) ‘I dont remember it any more!’

‘The *grignot!*’

‘Dont remind me,’ he smiles wanly.

‘Ti Jean, dont bother Gerard, he’s got to sleep this morning.’

June, late June, with the trees having burdgeoned green and golden and the beeswax bugs are high chickadeeing the topmost trees embrowsying the drowsy air of reader’s noon, the back fences of Beaulieu street sleeping like lazy dogs, the flies rubbing their miser forelegs on screens, ‘The little flies too, you dont have to kill them——they rub their little legs, they dont know how to do anything else——’

‘Sleep Gerard, the doctor wants you to sleep——Go outside Ti Jean, you’ve talked enough this morning.’

And I cry, to lose my buddy, whose pale door is closed on me, and there he is with his protected little kitty in the fold of his sheets and the birds are at the window waiting for more of those familiar crumbs from his sure hands——

The doctor comes more often, leaves sooner.

I wander up and down Beaulieu Street, lonely, little, a little Our Gang Rascal with no gang and no comedy and no ring-eyed dog or Pancakes to throw—All alone in mid-afternoon I sit on the highwood backsteps of the St. Louis Bazaar hall and strive to imitate the sound it makes when Uncle Mike Duluoz and his wife and all the Duluozes drive over from Nashua to visit us and sit in the parlour and lament—‘A BWA! A BWA!’—I’m especially imitating Uncle Mike, the hurt curl of his lips—His great rouge cry-face, poor Uncle Mike had he seen that, my little pantomime of him, he’d a wept cruds to the earth to add to the woe—

‘Cut out that noise, you little brat—we’ve been listening to that bwa-bwa all morning!’ shouts a woman from the tenement washlines across the way—I cant go on with my A-BWA play, go back to the house, Gerard’s asleep, Ma’s doing the wash, I go in the cellar, it’s dark and damp and sad—My mother calls from the door above ‘Your little chum is back!’ meaning some child from down the street I’d befriended a few weeks ago and now I dont remember him from beans—Hands aback clasped I go to Gerard’s bedroom door, he meditates gently in mid-afternoon, the shades drawn—

‘Ti Jean,’ he calls me, ‘take my pillow and raise it a little—there—thanks—I wanta see my birds outside—raise the shade—tick tzick tzick birdies!’—His breath smells like crushed flowers—I see and behold the sad sideways look for the last time, the long triste nun-like face, the blue eyes in their hollows.

Soon he’s asleep on his sitting-up pillow.

When the little kitty is given his milk, I imitate Gerard and get down on my stomach and watch him greedily licking up his milk with pink tongue and chup chup jowls—

'You happy, Ti Pou?—you nice *lala*'—

They see me in the parlour imitating Gerard with imaginary talks back and forth concerning lambs, kitties, clouds.

July comes, the pop firecrackers start coming on like a war in the neighbourhood—Gerard's room takes on the quality of a lily, white, wan, fragrant—My mother and father are shaking their heads—

'What's the matter with Gerard?'

'He's very sick, Ti Pousse.'

Ti Nin and I wait on the porch wondering what's wrong.

I wanta go in and talk to him but I'm not allowed—The doctor turns up the sheets and looks at Gerard's swollen legs and says 'That must hurt—I've never seen a kid like this—keep giving him that prescription—How you feelin, Gerard?'

Gerard, unaccustomed to being spoken to in English, answers with girlish lips made so by sickness, or girlish-should-I-say-beautiful lips, 'I'm aw-right, Doctor *Simpkins*,' with the accent on 'kins,' like my mother talks—

The big doctor betakes his black suited bulk out of that house of sorrows and goes home, having given up hope a long time ago—

Some time near the fourth of July he tells my mother to call the priest—'He can't have the strength to go any further' ('if he does,' adding to think, 'it'll be murder')—

My father, arms loaded with paper bags in which are firecrackers, with an expectant smile comes in that night, but he's told the priest will be called—With that comes the nuns, there they come down Beaulieu Street, three of them, to sit at Gerard's bedside praying—He's awake .

'How are you feeling, Gerard?'

'Awright, my sister.'

'Are you afraid, sweetheart?'

'No, my sister——The priest blessed me——'

They ask him questions which he answers briefly and softly, my mother sees the nun taking it down on paper——She never saw the paper again——Some secret transmitted from mouth to heart, at the quiet hour, I have no idea where any such paper or record could have ended or could be found today, lest it's written on the rock in the mountains of gold in the country I cant reach——Or some fleecy mystery imparted, concerning the kinds of fearlessness, or the proof of faith, or the ethereality of pain, or the unreality of death (and life too), or the calm hand of God evêrywhere slowly benedicting——Whatever, the solemn tearful nuns did take it down, his last words, at deathside bed, and betook themselves back to the nunnery with it, and crossed themselves, and you can be sure there were special prayers that night——Saint Teresa, who promised to come back and shower the earth with roses after her death, shower ye with roses the secret nun who understands, make her pallet a better one than canopied of kings'—— Shower with roses and defend all the lambs and war the wraithful doves around ——I'm afraid to say what I really want to say.

I dont remember how Gerard died, but (in my memory, which is limited and mundane) here I am running pellmell out of the house about four o'clock in the afternoon and down the sidewalk of Beaulieu Street yelling to my father whom I've seen coming around the corner woeful and slow with straw hat back and coat over arms in the summer heat, gleefully I'm yelling '*Gerard est mort!*' (Gerard is dead!) as though it was some great event that would make a change

that would make everything better, which it actually was, which granted it actually was.

But I thought it had something to do with some holy transformation that would make him greater and more Gerard-like—He would reappear, following his 'death', so huge and all powerful and renewed—The dizzy brain of the four-year-old, with its visions and infold mysticisms—I grabbed Pa and tugged his hand and glee'd to see the expression of likewise gladness on his face, so when he wearily just said 'I know, Ti Pousse, I know,' I had that same feeling that I have today when I would rush and tell people the good news that Nirvana, Heaven, Our Salvation is *Here and Now*, that gloomy reaction of theirs, which I can only attribute to pitiful and so-to-be-loved Ignorance of mortal brains.

'I know, my little wolf, I know,' and sadly he drags himself into the house as I dance after.

The undertakers presumably carry the little no-more-body of no-more-pain-and-swelled-legs away, in a tidy basket, to prepare him for his lying-in-state in our front parlour, and that night all the Duluozes drive up from Nashua in tragic blackflap cars and come to crying and jawing in the brown kitchen of eternity as suddenly in my mind, as though it was only a dream, a vision in the mind, which it is, I see the whole house and woe open up from within its every molecule and become instead of contours of walls and ceilings and absence-holes of door and windows and there-yawps of voices and lamentings and wherewillgo-beings of personality and name, Aunt Clementine, Uncle Mike, cousins Roland and Edgar, Aunt Marie, Pa and Ma and Nin at the lot, just suddenly a great swarming mass of roe-like fiery whitenesses,

as if a curtain had opened, and innumerably revealed the scene behind the scene ('the scene behind the scene is always more interesting than the show,' says J. R. Williams, the *Out Our Way* cartoonist), shows itself compounded of emptiness, of pure light, of imagination, of mind, mind-only, madness, mental woe, the strivings of mindpain, the working-at-thinking which is all this imagined death and false life, phantasmal beings, phantoms finagling in the gloom, goopy poor figures haranguing and failing with lack-hands in a fallen-angel world of shadows and glore, the central entire essence of which is dazzling radiant blissful ecstasy unending, the unbelievable Truth that cracks open in my head like an oyster and I see it, the house disappears in her Swarm of Snow, Gerard is dead and the soul is dead and the world is dead and dead is dead.

I've since dreamed it a million times, down the corridors of seeming eternity where there are a million mirrored figures sitting thus and each the same, the house on Beaulieu Street the night Gerard died, and the assembled Duluozes wailing with green faces of death for fear of death in time, and Time's consumed it all already, it's a dream already a long time ended and they dont know it and I try to tell them, they wanta slap me in the kisser I'm so gleeful, they send me upstairs to bed—An old dream too I've had of me glooping, that night, in the parlour, by Gerard's coffin, I dont see him in the coffin but he's there, his ghost, brown ghost, and I'm grown sick in my papers (my writing papers, my bloody 'literary career' ladies and gentlemen) and the whole reason why I ever wrote at all and drew breath to bite in vain with pen of ink, great gad with indefensible usable pencil, because

of Gerard, the idealism, Gerard the religious hero——‘*Write in honour of his death*’ (*Ecrivez pour l’amour de son mort*) (as one would say, write for the love of God)——for by his pain, the birds were saved, and the cats and mice, and the poor relatives crying, and my mother losing all her teeth in the six terrible weeks prior to his death during which time she stayed up all night every night and grew such a mess of nerves in her stomach that her teeth began falling one by one, might sight funny to some hunters of conceit, but this wit has had it.

Lord bless it, an Ethereal Flower, I saw it all blossom——they packed me to bed. They raved in the kitchen and had it their way.

There’s the rocking chair, Uncle Mike’s wife had it, the peculiar dreary voice she had, fast way she talked, things I cant utter but I’d roll and broil in butter, the gurgle in their throats——I could recount the dreary yellings and give you all the details——It’s all in the same woods——It’s all one flesh, and the pieces of it will come and go, alien hats and coats not to the contrary——Uncle Mike had a greenish face: he had barrellfulls of pickles in Nashua, a sawdust old-time store, meat-hocks and hung hams and baskets of produce on the sidewalk: fish in boxes, salted.——Emil’s brother.——‘So vain, so full of ego, people——shut your mouth you,’ he finally says to his wife, ‘I’m talkin tonight——in the great silence of our father we’ll find the reasons for our prides, our avarices, our dollars——It’s better any way, now that he’s dead his belly doesnt hurt any more and his heart and his legs, it’s better’——

‘Have it your way,’ says my father listlessly.

‘Ah Emil Emil dont you remember when we were children and we slept together and Papa built his house with

his own hands and all the times I helped you—we too, we'll die, Emil, and when we're dead will there be someone, *one person* for the love of God, who'll be able to look at us in our coffins and say, "Its all over, the *marde*, the fret, the force, the strength"?—more's the strength in the belly than anywhere else—finished, bought, sold, washed, brought to the great heaven! Emil, dont cry, dont be discouraged, your little boy is better—remember you well what Papa used to say in back of his stove—'

'With his bottle on Sunday mornings, aw sure that one was a smart one!' (the wife).

'Shut your mouth I said!—All men die—And when they die as child, even better—they're *pure* for heaven—Emil, Emil,—poor young Emil, my little brother!'

They shake their heads violently the same way, thinking.

'Ah'—they bite their lips the same way, their bulgey eyes are on the floor.

'It ends like it ends'—

My mother's upstairs sobbing, lost all her control now—The aunts are cleaning out the death-bed, there's a great to-do of sheets and an end to sheets, a Spring-cleaning.

'I brought him on earth, in my womb, the Virgin Mary help me!—in my womb, with pain—I gave him his milk—I took care of him—I stood at his bedside—I bought him presents on Christmas, I made him little costumes Halloween—I'd make his nice oatmeal he loves so much in the mornings!—I'd listen to his little stories, I examined his little pictures he drew—I did everything in my power to make his little life contented—inside me, outside me, *and returned to the earth!*' wails my mother, realizing the utter hopeless loss of life and death, the completely defeated conditionality and partiality of it, the pure

mess it entails, yet people go on hoping and hoping—'I did everything,' she sobs with handkerchief to face, in the bedroom, as the Bradleys, Aunt Pauline, her sister, come in, from New Hampshire, 'and it didnt work—he died anyhow—They took him off to Heaven!—They didnt leave him with me!—Gerard, my little Gerard!'

'Calm yourself, poor Ange, you've suffered so.'

'I haven't suffered like he did, that's what *breaks* my heart!' and she yells that and they all know she really means it, she's had her fill of the injustice of it, a little lame boy dying without hope—'It's *that* that's tearing my heart out and breaking my head in two!'

'Ange, Ange, poor sensitive heart!' weeps gentle Aunt Marie at her shoulder.

Nin and I are sobbing horribly in bed side by side to hear these pitiful wracks of clack talk coming from our own human mother, the softness of her arms all gashed now in the steely proposition Death—

'I'll never be able to wipe that from my memory!'—
'Not as long as I live!'—'He died *without* a chance!'

'We all die—'

'Good, damn it, good!' she cries, and this sends chills through all of us man and child and the house is One Woe this night.

Meanwhile, insanely, our cousins Edgar and Roland have sneaked off with the firecrackers to the backyard, and like leering devils, which they arent really, but as much as like satyrs and Mockers and be-striders of misfortune, there they are setting off all our precious firecrackers, Nin's and mine and Gerard's, at midnight, callously, a veritable burning of the books of the Duluozes, Ker plack, whack, c a k a t a r a k sht boom!

'*Les mauva, les mauva,*' (mean! mean!) Ti Nin and I scream in pillows——

The Bradleys are going to drive us to Nashua for the night and bring us back for the funeral in forty-eight hours—— With Gerard and the firecrackers all gone, and Ma crying on the very floor, we had better be driven somewhere——

When Ti Nin and I were little.

Then comes the solemn funeral. Nin and I are taken back on a rainy dreary day to see the house all one great Gloom Shrine full of kids from the St. Louis Parochial School filing in and out in frightened parades, their eyes straining to see the deadface in the unholy velvet pillow among the flowers, the sooner they see it the quicker they'll know the face of death and fears be justified all——And files of nuns, standing by the coffin, praying with long black wooden rosaries—— All dolled up in little necktie I cant believe it's my own house and this, this World Parlour with Histories of Black being written in it, the very selfsame silly drowsy parlour where I'd sat and goofed away whole long afternoons chubbling with my lips or going goo-py goopy at the window passers, or with Gerard (whose head I hold no claim on any more) held head-to-head confabs and listened to the holy lazy silence of Time as it washed and washed forever more——But now, his bier a glory, in death all Splendidified, banished-from-hair-earth and admitted-to-Perfectness he lies, commemorating our parlour silently, though no one knows precisely what I know——But others know something of him I never knew, the nuns, and some of the boys, and mayhap Père Lalumière the *Curé* who now in the kitchen with one ecclesiastical blackshoe up on a chair and manly elbow on knee assured my

mother, 'Ah well, be not anxious, Mrs. Duluo, he was a little saint! He's certainly in Heaven!'

That was the reason for the big crowd, they came to see the little boy in the neighbourhood who had died and gone to heaven, and housewives even that day began noticing and announcing that the flock of birds, the nation of phebes and peewits and meek and lowly whatnots that had pestered at his window for so long since Spring broke in, was gone——

'They're gone completely.'

'You dont see one.'

'It's 'cause it's rainin!'

But the next day, and the next day, and the next day after that, the little ones revisited no more the scene of the decide——

'They're gone with him!'

Or, I'd say, 'It was himself.'

Unforgettable the files of children come to see the cheek they knew so well in classrooms, to see its loss of lustre pink, and estimate the value of death——With what avid and horrified eyes they gazed on little schoolmate so reposy silent in his ornate bed——What horror even just to approach the house and see the wreath, with the fatal pale blue ribbon, and the fatal drawn shades in the parlour——The vultures do feed on disconsolate such-rooftops when you look, the chimney exudes angels of fear like whirligigs of grey butterflies. . .

What you learn the first time you get drunk at sixteen, tugging at old urinaters in Moody Street saloons and yelling 'Dont you realize you are God?' is what you learn when you understand the meaning that's here before you on this heavy earth: living but to die. . . look at the sky, stars; look at

the tomb, dead—In invoking the help, Transcendental help from other spheres of this Imaginary Blossom, invoke at least, by plea, for the learning of the lesson:—help me understand that I am God—that it's all God—Urinating, alone, wont get you far—It happens, every day, in all the latrines of Samsara—*Here and Now*, said the children seeing 'Ti Gerard Duluoz *qu'est mort*'—'it's not any harder'n that—they wont be able to punish me any more'—Beyond punishment, he lies, qualified for eternity and perfectness—'Is it *true* he's dead?—mebbe he's kidding'—and all the ghost feelings of men—But no, 'that bareheaded life under grass' is no 'blithe spirit'—It's the genuine death.

All the desperate praying in the stuffy parlour is scaring the kids half to death, they think 'It'll happen to me too but look how they're all afraid of it?'

Clasped in Gerard's kindly fingers is a beautiful solid silver crucifix—There are flowers from relatives in Maine who couldnt come, from friends—All the people in the world who wear their daily face come passing with their final face, as, for instance, Manuel, sober, dark-attired, unaccostably silent, he wont even speak to the priest, to Emil he makes one regretful nod—He'll be one of the pall-bearers.

Old Bull Baloon is gone west, wont be at the funeral.

The women, the aunts, stand at the back and are never weary of shaking their heads from side to side, and *lamenting the loss*, and talking about it—

Young priests make polite calls and add their powerful prayers and depart swiftly to duties in the gloom—One of them has such a handsome sad face, it's a shame he never married and presented it to some respectful wench—

'The young Lafontaine!'

'Aw oui—he comes from Montreal—I didnt know he was so short.'

'Yes, but he's so pretty.'

'Pretty? Handsome as a heart—It's too bad—All the good men are bought up or else won.'

'One or the other.'

'Look, here comes old lady Picard—she never misses one—'

'No—Oh well, the old lady, we'll accept her prayers.'

'Her prayers are not to be thrown away.'

'There—the little angels—another line—This one, they tell me it was Gerard's class—yes—the nuns are puttin em in front—there. The little angels. They're afraid.'

'Ah'—sigh—'they'll have to know *some* day, it happens to all of us.'

'Ah, but he was so young.'

'Look at that old bat across the street, she's burning her garbage and all the smoke blowin on the house of the dead with the wind.'

The house of the dead indeed, it was hardly my house—I'd lost Gerard in the shuffle.

High above, in the stormy sky, a bird with little buffeted birdy bones bats ahead, beak to the nose of the wind—Shrouds of grey rain fall Awe-ing and slanting to our crystal—It is the sky, the void, that no fist could form in and hold any part of it—Below, on the stain of earth, where we all, human brothers and sisters, pop like flower after flower from the fecund same joke of unstymied pregnant earth and raise standardbearers of fertility and ego-personality, life, below the blown shrodes and woe-bo blackclouds June is

handing down from some whoreson unseasonal storm, patches of brown and yellow and black show where we live, chimneys are pouring black smoke——'The Chimbleys of the World!'——and we are angels revisiting it——Coming down, far, sad, wide, the world, the earth, this pot, this place, this parturience-organizer——There are the chimney smokes fuming up and pouring and defiling open space, and there the tracks, cracks, cities, dead cats floating in rivers, calendars on the wall indicating June ——Licence plates on old cars sayin Massachusetts, the helm and Chineemark of it ——The name of a store, in gold leaf letters embossed and chipping already, 'Lowell Provision Company,' a self-believing butcher with a handlebar moustache standing in the door, full of human hope and realistic sentimentality among the charnels and hacked thighs of his own making, bled in his blocks, his hands raw from blood-juice, red in fact——Shakespeare, Throwspeare, Disappear Spear, and where is the provision made for a 'cessation and a truce' to all this sprouting of being just so it can wilt and be sacked, canned ——We the angel spirits, descend to this earth, earth indeed, we are awed to see living beings, living beings indeed, we see man there ghostly crystal apparition juggling as he goes in selfmade streets inside mind a liquid phantom glur-ing on the brain ectoplasm——A vision in water——

Papier-mâché canals flow in downtown Lowell, men smoking cigars stand by the rail spitting in the waters that reflect drizzle hopelessness ——And to their way of thinking, ahem, the money in their pocket is real and the pride in their heads as real as sin and as solid as Hell——And the money that is real and the pride that is solid is about to buy an actual pork chop which though it has since appeared (it is now Jan. 16th, Midnight), the hunger with it,

and the hungerer to boot, can still be called *real*, though it neither is *not*, nor *is*, but beyond such considerations anyway, like a reflection of a pork chop on water—Facts well known by fat Mr. Groscorp who now, in his apartment across the street from the St. Louis Presbytère, on West Sixth Street, is about to partake of his noonday meal at the kitchen table by the rain-drizzled window that looks down on the street where suddenly a slow caravanseri of limousines and flower-roadsters has rounded the corner from Beaulieu Street, and headed up to the church front, where official waiters minister with the proper silver special knobs—His face is huge, muckchop rich as kincobs, sleek as surah, grey pale and fetid to-make-you-sick, a great beast, with small mouth makes an oo of simpery delight, and great hanging jowls—A bathrobe, slippers, a fat cat—Wine bottle and chops laid out—His huge paunch keeps him well away from his fork, and makes it necessary for the eating-chair to be scraped a good deal of the way back, so that he stoops, or rather hunches forward with huge mountainous determination, like a tunnel, to his about-to-be-eaten lunch—‘Ah,’ he interrupted, ‘another corpse!’—And he raises napkin to lips, and watches leaning up to see below closer—‘In all this rain, they’re gonna bury another one,—aw dammit, it’s a pity, it spoils all my meal—It all goes down the same hole, why make such a great ceremonial fuss?—The solemnity, the gloves—the special gloves and the stiff legs—the little mousey smile—the little moustache—the big hunger for nothing to eat, or else the great famine in the richness of the season—One or t’other, it’s all the same, because,’ raising his eyes to the upper part of the window and examining the blown gust clouds, ‘you might say’—he burps delicately, lowering the shade—‘That, there’s plenty more

where it came from, the comin and the goin——Outa my way, I'm eating——We'll think about it later——'

The funeral directors with their cars had assembled at our door on Beaulieu and carefully, from our great drear house built on an old cemetery in which were more dead soul dusts than in all the words of this book, its sorrow was removed from its nest——Sleek like a snake the coffin was slid out and in the hearse, bang.

And around the corner.

The children and some onlookers follow on the sidewalk, the church is only a block and a half away.

Right by the building where huge Mr. Groscorp's eating his necessitous Samsara dinner, is a gang of painters and plasterers and tile-layers working on a new house——They've just had their last lunch slug of coffee and feel good and make cracks.

'Ah, another one for the cemetery?'

'Why dont they hurry up, damn them, it's not so much fun playin with the dead in the rain!'

'An old bastard who fell face first dead in his soup, I bet.'

'Or else some old bitch spent all her life yellin at her husband and her brother, now they wont hear her no more——Do you believe those hypocrite faces you see?'

'Or else an old priest, dead in his bed.'

'Or else an old housepainter, he fell off the ladder and spent six months in the hospital yelling 'A dammit it hurts!' and after that they carried him out.'

'No——too gay——a whore, from Boston, returned home, she spent sixteen years in the whorehouse swingin her ass for a buck, and now the funeral director with the little ass's got half, and——'

'And the rest lost in the bank a' the dead.'

'Throw em some rice, we'll marry em!'

'Look, they stopped to take out the coffin.'

'Coffin for the so-pretty' (*Tombeau pour les si beaux*).

'It's not a long one——'

'It's not a long one?——dammit, it's a child's coffin.'

They all get quiet.

'Ah, well that's a story we forgot.'

'We're not good enough storytellers.'

'Well me, I'm paintin.'

'Paint, dog, till your hand close your buttons.'

'Till they put a brush in your mug, my fine Piroux, and after that we'll sing dirty songs for ya.'

'Look——that little coffin, the kid wasnt ten.'

'All the better for him.'

'And why?'

'*And why* he asks me with his ignorant face?'

'It's raining on your head, come on in here.'

'There'll be plenty of rainin on the head today.'

And inside the church now as the procession comes in, the pallbearers carrying the little coffin, followed by Ma and Pa and me and Nin and relatives, across the gritty sidewalk, great comes the opening peals of the organ sounding the beginning of the mass.

'Suscipe, sancte Pater, omnipotens aeterne Deus, hanc immaculatam hostiam, quam ego indignus famulus tuus offero tibi, Deo meo vivo et vero, pro innumerabilibus peccatis, et offensionibus, et negligentis meis, et pro omnibus circumstantibus, sed et pro omnibus fidelibus christianis vivis atque defunctis: ut mihi et illis proficiat ad salutem in vitam aeternam. Amen.'

An eternal salute. . .

One of the first, if not the very first, memories of my life, I'm in a shoe repair store and there are shelves cluttered with dark shoes, innumerable battered shoes, and it's a grey rainy day, like the day of the funeral, or rather, foggy-misty with occasional drizzle)——I'm presumably with Ma and probably one year old in my baby carriage (if it happened at all) and the Vision is of the great Gloom of the earth and the great Clutter of human life and the great Drizzly Dream of the dreary eternities, and as we leave the shop, or, as is left the shop, by self or phantom, suddenly is seen a little old man, or ordinary man, in a strangely slanted grey hat, in coat, presumably, walking off up the dreary and endless boulevard of the drizzle dump, the tearful beatness of the scene and weird as if maybe this is just a memory of mine from some previous incarnation in St. Petersburg Russia, or maybe the gluey ghees of dark fitful kitchens in Thibet ancient and long ago, though not with that hat——That hat, with its strange Dostoevskyan slant, belongs to the West, this side of this hairball, earth——And it seems to me that the little man is going towards some inexpressibly beautiful opening in the rain where it will be all open sky and radiant, but I will never go there, as I'm being wheeled another way in my present vehicle——He, on foot, heads for the pure land——So that it seemed to me as the organ music played and the priest intoned in Latin at the altar far up the pews in the end of time, that Gerard, now motionless in the central presented bier at the foot of the main aisle and by the altar rail, with his long face composed, honourably mounted and all beflowered and anointed, was delivered to that Pure Land where I could never go or at least not for a long time——Dread drizzle *mer*, dread drizzle *mer*:

'*Et pro omnibus,*' sings the priest in rising and falling Latin, incense everywhere, and turns with that untouchable delicacy of lace over holy black, with all his paraphernalias, and it seems in my three-year-old brain '*et pro om-ni-boos*' is the description of that land and that attainment, the glory of Gerard——(that was prophesied)——'*aeternam,*' the gloomy fall of the song voice, 'eternity,' I can almost guess and smell the location and no way in my wild mind to muddle my way and shake off——And I'm so little and so far back, and in my reveries and dreams later on it seems the funeral took place across the street from our house in a strange other church permeating everywhere——Just as the simplest thing in the world, when properly looked at, is the original riddle.

——Way at the back of the church are blankfaced standers, it's like Good Friday when the church is crowded and it's usually raining (and according to superstition) and there are standers at the back in overshoes or rubbers or with umbrellas who want to quit swiftly the snowy grace and get back to the poolhall——I dont understand anything of the funeral service, its solemnity escapes my high head as I look around and mull over faces of people and those tragic overshoes and wet splashes of almost puddles at the back of the church and the hopeless dampness as though it was all taking place underneath some stone steps and there are the drear shadows making the yellowy marble so faint, so sad——The daubing at eyes by aunts and mothers, their faces squeezing into sections wishing he hadnt died, ah, seems to me fitting and proper, it's all part of the show——It's a vast ethereal movie, I'm an extra and Gerard is the hero and God is directing it from Heaven——

I see bleak wooden fences in the rain and the little man with the mysterious hat and then my mind swirls and I see

nothing but the swarm of angels in the church in the form of sudden myriad illuminated snowflakes of ecstasy—I scoff to think that anybody should cry—I let go a little yell, my mother grabs my face and taps me gently, ‘*Non, non, non*’—People gloomy at the funeral have heard the little child’s voice, they think: ‘He doesn’t understand.’—

I want to express somehow, ‘*Here and Now* I see the ecstasy,’ the divine and perfect ecstasy, reward without end, it has come, has been always with us, the formalities of the tomb are ignorant irrelevancies most befittingly gravely conducted by proper qualified doers and actors and Latin-singers—Of a rouse, the boys’ choir takes up in the back and my mother’s eyes burst with tears, she never could stand boys singing anyway.

‘Some of them knew Gerard!’ she announces proudly to near-at-hand solemn Emil and through him at Marie—‘The little angels!’ (‘Sing, sing,’ she thinks, ‘sing with all your hearts, my angels, for my friend Gerard who is dead, my little man, my little sad son—It’s for yourselves you sing, angels!’)

I myself hear the boys singing and turn around to see them in the choir loft with their little oo-voices uplifted and rosy to the black arms of a hypnotist, a hypnotist of feeling—By the way the boys are singing and by significant rustles you can tell the service (and increasing coughs) is almost over—Easy enough to cough cough cough and go back home, off other people’s funerals!

And Oh the coffin at the forefront, and the priest flicking the ciborium incense pot and at each flick, in three directions, by some magic bell rope signal, the outside roofbell flicks like smoke itself and kicks off a soft ‘ker plang’ for the edification of the people of Centreville, Gerard has died—

Drizzly news—From the incense pot, 'ker-ting,' so gentle and quiet, to the sound of the connecting signal rope, 'kak,' and 'ker plang,' such beautiful music and I see three fumes of music float up and away—Let there be rejoicing.

We all get in cars and they slowly weave the parade and out we go on a long slow drive along the Merrimac River, by sodden trees in all their foliage looking sad, to the bridge at Tyngsboro, and across that, to Nashua, entering that little city (my parents' come-from town) in bleak array, to the cemetery outside town, where I remember the long grey wall, and the glistening boulevard in the rain—And they haul the coffin gently down to graveropes that for all their gentle look have no gentle job to do, and lower away, easy does it, the little hunk of pain, into the mud—Roots and plopping pieces show in the dug sides—Men stand around, my father in the midst of them, bareheaded, with that gooply helplessness beneath immense and endless skies that say 'Yah' down upon the entire scene—My father's curly hair is moist, and uncombed, and his lids of eyes are down where they'll always be—A cold place to kneel, this earth, and he'll kneel again, it's a cold place for knees—Ma and Ti Nin sitting with me in a black car burst out sobbing as the coffin downward disappears, I turn to them and say 'Well, why are you crying?'

'Ti Jean you dont understand, you're too young to understand!' they wail, seeing my rosy face, my questioning eyes.

I look again, the men have stepped a pace aback, expectant, the old gravedigger picks up his shovel and closes the book.

Tristessa

PART ONE
TREMBLING AND CHASTE

I'm riding along with Tristessa in the cab, drunk, with a big bottle of Juarez Bourbon whisky in the till-bag railroad loot-bag they'd accused me of holding in railroad ——here I am in Mexico City, rainy Saturday night, mysteries, old dream sidestreets with no names reeling in, the little street where I'd walked through crowds of gloomy Hobo Indians wrapped in tragic shawls enough to make you cry and you thought you saw knives flashing beneath the folds——lugubrious dreams as tragic as the one of Old Railroad Night where my father sits big of thighs in smoking car of night, outside's a brakeman with red light and white light, lumbering in the sad vast mist tracks of life——but now I'm up on that Vegetable plateau Mexico, the moon of Citlapol a few nights earlier I'd stumbled to on the sleepy roof on the way to the ancient dripping stone toilet——Tristessa is high, beautiful as ever, going home gayly to go to bed and enjoy her morphine.

Night before I've in a quiet hassle in the rain sat with her darkly at midnight counters eating bread and soup and drinking Delaware Punch, and I'd come out of that interview with a vision of Tristessa in my bed in my arms, the strangeness of her love-cheek, Azteca, Indian girl with mysterious lidded Billy Holliday eyes and spoke with great melancholic voice

like Luise Rainer, sadfaced Viennese actress that made all Ukraine cry in 1910.

Gorgeous ripples of pear shape her skin to her cheekbones, and long sad eyelids, and Virgin Mary resignation, and peachy coffee complexion and eyes of astonishing mystery with nothing-but-earth-depth expressionless half disdain and half mournful lamentation of pain. 'I am seek,' she's always saying to me and Bull at the pad—I'm in Mexico City wildhaired and mad riding in a cab down past the Ciné Mexico in rainy traffic jams, I'm swigging from the bottle, Tristessa is trying long harangues to explain that the night before when I put her in the cab the driver'd tried to make her and she hit him with her fist, news which the present driver receives without comment—We're going down to Tristessa's house to sit and get high—Tristessa has warned me that the house will be a mess because her sister is drunk and sick, and El Indio will be there standing majestically with morphine needle downward in the big brown arm, glitter-eyed looking right at you or expecting the prick of the needle to bring the wanted flame itself and going 'Hm-za . . . the Aztec needle in my flesh of flame,' looking all a whole lot like the big cat in Culiao who presented me the O the time I came down to Mexico to see other visions—My whisky bottle has a strange Mexican soft covercap that I keep worrying will slip off and all my bag be drowned in bourbon 86 proof whisky.

Through the crazy Saturday night drizzle streets like Hong Kong our cab pushes slowly through the Market ways and we come out on the whore-street district and get off behind the fruity fruitstands and tortilla beans and tacos shacks with fixed wood benches—It's the poor district of Rome.

I pay the cab 3:33 by giving cabbie ten pesos and asking 'seis' for change, which I get without comment and wonder

if Tristessa thinks I am too splurgy like big John Drunk in Mexico——But no time to think, we are hurrying through the slicky sidewalks of glisten-neon reflections and candle lights of little sidewalk sitters with walnuts on a towel for sale——turn quickly at the stinky alleyway of her tenement cell-house one storey high——We go through dripping faucets and pails and boys and duck under wash and come to her iron door, which from adobe within is unlocked and we step in the kitchen the rain still falling from the leaves and boards that served as the kitchen roof——allowing little drizzles to fizzle in the kitchen over the chicken garbage in the damp corner——Where, miraculously now, I see the little pink cat taking a little pee on piles of okra and chicken-feed——The inside bedroom is littered completely and ransacked as by madmen with torn newspapers and the chicken's pecking at the rice and the bits of sandwiches on the floor——On the bed lay Iristessa's 'sister' sick, wrapped in pink coverlet——it's as tragic as the night Eddy was shot on the rainy Russia Street——

Tristessa is sitting on the edge of the bed adjusting her nylon stockings, she pulls them awkwardly from her shoes with big sad face overlooking her endeavours with pursy lips, I watch the way she twists her feet inward convulsively when she looks at her shoes.

She is such a beautiful girl, I wonder what all my friends would say back in New York and up in San Francisco, and what would happen down in Nola when you see her cutting down Canal Street in the hot sun and she has dark glasses and a lazy walk and keeps trying to tie her kimono to her thin overcoat as though the kimono was supposed to tie to the

coat, tugging convulsively at it and goofing in the street saying 'Here ees the cab—hey hees hey who—there you go—I breeng you back the moa-n.y.' Money's moany. She makes money sound like my old French Canadian Aunt in Lawrence 'It's not you moany, that I want, it's you loave'—Love is loave. 'Eets you lawv.' The law is lawv. —Same with Tristessa, she is so high all the time, and sick, shooting ten gramos of morphine per month,—staggering down the city streets yet so beautiful people keep turning and looking at her—Her eyes are radiant and shining and her cheek is wet from the mist and her Indian hair is black and cool and slick hanging in two pigtailed behind with the roll-sod hairdo behind (the correct Cathedral Indian hairdo) —Her shoes she keeps looking at are brand new not scuffed, but she lets her nylons keep falling and keeps pulling on them and convulsively twisting her feet—You picture what a beautiful girl in New York, wearing a flowery wide skirt à la New Look with Dior flat bosomed pink cashmere sweater, and her lips and eyes do the same and do the rest. Here she is reduced to impoverished Indian Lady gloomclothes—You see the Indian ladies in the inscrutable dark of doorways, looking like holes in the wall not women—their clothes—and you look again and see the brave, the noble *mujer*, the mother, the woman, the Virgin Mary of Mexico.—Tristessa has a huge ikon in a corner of her bedroom.

It faces the room, back to the kitchen wall, in the right hand corner as you face the woesome kitchen with its drizzle showering ineffably from the roof tree twigs and hammerboards (bombed-out shelter roof)—Her ikon represents the Holy Mother staring out of her blue charaderees, her robes and Damema arrangements, at which El Indio prays devoutly when going out to get some junk. El Indio is a vendor of

curios, allegedly,——I never see him on San Juan Letran selling crucifixes, I never see El Indio in the street, no Redondas, no anywhere——The Virgin Mary has a candle, a bunch of glass-fulla-wax economical burners that go for weeks on end, like Tibetan prayer-wheels the inexhaustible aid from our Amida——I smile to see this lovely ikon——

Around it are pictures of the dead——When Tristessa wants to say 'dead' she clasps her hands in holy attitude, indicating her Aztecan belief in the holiness of death, by same token the holiness of the essence——So she has photo of dead Dave my old buddy of previous years now dead of high blood pressure at age fifty-five——His vague Greek-Indian face looks out from pale indefinable photograph. I can't see him in all that snow. He's in heaven for sure, hands V-clasped in eternity ecstasy of Nirvana. That's why Tristessa keeps clasping her hands and praying, saying, too, 'I love Dave,' she had loved her former master——He had been an old man in love with a young girl. At sixteen she was an addict. He took her off the street and, himself an addict of the street, redoubled his energies, finally made contact with wealthy junkies and showed her how to live——once a year together they'd taken hikes to Chalmas to the mountain to climb part of it on their knees to come to the shrine of piled crutches left there by pilgrims healed of disease, the thousand *tapete*-straws laid out in the mist where they sleep the night out in blankets and raincoats——returning, devout, hungry, healthy, to light new candles to the Mother and hitting the street again for their morphine——God knows where they got it.

I sit admiring that majestical mother of lovers.

There's no describing the awfulness of that gloom in the holes in the ceiling, the brown halo of the night city lost in a green vegetable height above the Wheels of the Blakean adobe rooftops—Rain is blurring now on the green endlessness of the Valley Plain north of Actopan—pretty girls are dashing over gutters full of pools—Dogs bark at hirshing cars—The drizzle empties eerily into the kitchen's stone dank, and the door glistens (iron) all shiny and wet—The dog is howling in pain on the bed.—The dog is the little Chihuahua mother twelve inches long, with fine little feet with black toes and toenails, such a 'fine' and delicate dog you couldnt touch her without she'd squeal in pain—'Y-e-e-e-p.' All you could do was snap your finger gently at her and allow her to nip-nose her cold little wet snout (black as a bull's) against your fingernails and thumb. Sweet little dog—Tristessa says she's in heat and that's why she cries—The rooster screams beneath the bed.

All this time the rooster's been listening under the springs, meditating, turning to look all around in his quiet darkness, the noise of the golden humans above. 'Beuveu-vaa!' he screams, he howls, he interrupts a half a dozen simultaneous conversations raging like torn paper above—The hen chuckles.

The hen is outside, wandering along our feet, pecking gently at the floor—She digs the people. She wants to come up near me and rub illimitably against my pant leg, but I dont give her encouragement, in fact havent noticed her yet and it's like the dream of the vast mad father of the wild barn in howling Nova Scotia with the floodwaters of the sea about to engulf the town and surrounding pine countrysides in the endless north—It was Tristessa, Cruz on the bed, El Indio, the cock, the dove on the mantelpiece top (never a

sound except occasional wing flap practice), the cat, the hen, and the bloody howling woman dog blacky Espana Chihuahua pooch bitch.

El Indio's eyedropper is completely full, he jabs in the needle hard and it's dull and it wont penetrate the skin and he jabs in harder and works it in but instead of wincing waits open-mouthed with ecstasy, and gets the dropful in, down, standing.—'You've got to do me a favour, Mr. Gazookus,' says Old Bull Gaines interrupting my thought, 'come down to Tristessa's with me—I've run short——' but I'm bursting to explode out of sight of Mexico City with walking in the rain splashing through puddles not cursing nor interested but just trying to get home to bed, dead.

It's the raving bloody book of dreams of the cursing world, full of suits, dishonesties and written agreements And briberies, to children for their sweets 'Morphine is for pain.' I keep thinking, 'and the rest is rest. It is what it is, I am what I am, Adoration to Tathagata, Sugata, Buddha, perfect in Wisdom and Compassion who has accomplished, and is accomplishing, and will accomplish, all these words of mystery.'

——Reason I bring the whisky, to drink, to crash through the black curtain——At same time a comedian in the city in the night——Bepestered by glooms and lull intervenes, bored, drinking, curtsyng, crashing, 'Where I'm gonna do'——I pull the chair up to the corner of the foot of the bed so I can sit between the kitty and the Virgin Mary. The kitty, *la gata* in Spanish, the little Tathagata of the night, golden-pink coloured, three weeks old, crazy pink nose, crazy face, eyes of green, moustachio'd golden lion forceps and whiskers——I run my finger over her little skull and she pops up purring and the little purring machine is started for awhile and she looks around the room glad, watching what we're all doing.

——‘She’s having golden thoughts,’ I’m thinking.——
Tristessa likes eggs otherwise she wouldn’t allow a male rooster in this female establishment? How should I know how eggs are made. On my right the devotional candles flame before the clay wall.

It’s infinitely worse than the sleeping dream I’ve had of Mexico City where I go dreary along empty white apartments, grey, alone, or where the marble steps of a hotel horrify me——It’s the rainy night in Mexico City and I’m in the middle of Mexico Thieves’ Market district and El Indio is a well known thief and even Tristessa was a pick-pocket but I don’t do more than flick my backhand against the bulge of my folded money sailor-wise stowed in the railroad watch-pocket of my jeans——And in shirt-pocket I have the travelers checks which are unstealable in a sense——That, Ah that side street where the gang of Mexicans stop me and rifle through my dufflebag and take what they want and take me along for a drink——It’s gloom as unpredicted on this earth. I realize all the uncountable manifestations the thinking mind invents to place a wall of horror before its pure perfect realization that there is no wall and no horror, just Transcendental Empty Kissable Milk Light c. Everlasting Eternity’s true and perfectly empty nature.——I know everything’s all right but I want proof, and the Buddha’s and the Virgin Marys are there reminding me of the solemn pledge of faith in this harsh and stupid earth where we rage our so-called lives in a sea of worry, meat for Chicago’s of Graves——right this minute my very father and my very brother lie side by side in mud in the North and I’m supposed to be smarter than they are——being quick I am dead. I look up at the

others glooping, they see I've been lost in thought in my corner chair but are pursuing endless wild worries (all mental a hundred per cent) of their own—They're yakking in Spanish, I only understand snatches of that virile conversation—Tristessa keeps saying 'chinga' at every other sentence, a swearing Marine,—she says it with scorn and her teeth bite and it makes me worry, 'Do you know women as well as you think you do?'—The rooster is unperturbed and lets go a blast.

I take out my whisky bottle from the bag, the Canada Dry, open both, and pour me a highball in a cup—making one too for Cruz who has just jumped outa bed to throw up on the kitchen floor and now wants another drink, she's been in the cantina for women all day somewhere back near the whore district of Panama Street and sinister Rayon Street with its dead dog in the gutter and beggars on the sidewalk with no hats looking at you helplessly—Cruz is a little Indian woman with no chin and bright eyes and wears high-heel pumps without stockings and battered dresses, what a wild crew of people, in America a cop would have to do a double-take seeing them pass all be-wrongled and arguing and staggering on the sidewalk, like apparitions of poverty—Cruz takes a highball and throws it up too. Nobody notices, El Indio is holding eyedropper in one hand and little piece of paper in the other arguing, tense-necked, red, full-blast at a screaming Tristessa whose bright eyes dance to fight it out—The old lady Cruz groans from the riot of it and buries back in her bed, the only bed, under her blanket, her face bandaged and greasy, the little black dog curling against her, and the cat, and she is lamenting something, her drink sick-

ness, and El Indio's constant harrassing for more of Tristessa's supply of morphine—I gulp my drink.

Next door the mother's made the little daughter cry, we can hear her praying little woeful squeals enough to make a father's heart break and maybe it might be—Trucks pass, buses, loud, growling, loaded to the springs with people riding to Tacuyaba and Rastro and Circumvalacion round-routeries of town—the streets of mess puddles that I am going to walk home in at two a.m. splashing without care through street pools, looking along lone fences at the dismal glimmer of the wet rain shining in the streetlight—The pit and horror of my grit, the Virya tense neck muscles that a man needs to steel his teeth together to press through lonely roads of rain at night with no hope of a warm bed—My head fells and wearies to think of it. Tristessa says 'How is Jack?'—She always asks: 'Why are you so sad?—Muy dolorosa' and as though to mean 'You are very full of pain,' for pain means *dolor*—'I am sad because all la vida es doloroso.' I keep replying, hoping to teach her Number One of the Four Great Truths—Besides, what could be truer? With her heavy purple eyes she lids at me the nodding reprisal, 'ha-hum,' Indian-wise understanding the tone of what I said, and nodding over it, making me suspicious of the bridge of her nose where it looks evil and conniving and I think of her as a Houri Hari Salesman in the hell-bottoms Kshitigarbha never dreamed to redeem.—When she looks like an evil Indian Joe of Huckleberry Finn, plotting my demise—El Indio, standing, watching through sad blackened-blue eye flesh, hard and sharp and clear the side of his face, darkly hearing that I say All Life is Sad, nods, agreeing, no comment to make to me or to anyone about it.

Tristessa is bending over the spoon boiling morphine in it with a match boilerfactory. She looks awkward and lean and you see the lean hocks of her rear, in the kimono-like crazy-dress, as she kneels prayer fashion over the bed boiling her bang over the chair which is cluttered with ashes, hairpins, cottons, Konk material like strange Mexican eyelash lip-makers and teasies and greases—one giblet of a whole bone of junk, that, had it been knocked down would have added to the mess on the floor only a minor further amount of confusion—'I raced to find that Tarzan,' I'm thinking, remembering boyhood and home as they lament in the Mexican Saturday Night Bedroom, 'but the bushes and the rocks werent real and the beauty of things must be that they end.'

I wail on my cup of highball so much they see I'm going to get drunk, so they all permit me and beseech me to take a shot of morphine which I accept without fear because I am drunk—Worst sensation in the world, to take morphine when you're drunk, the result knots in your forehead like a rock and makes great pain there warring in that one field for dominion and none to be had because they've cancelled out each other, the alcohol and the alkaloid. But I accept, and as soon as I begin to feel its warning effect and warm effect I look down and perceive that the chicken, the hen, wants to make friends with me—She's walking up close with bobbing neck, looking at my knee cap, looking at my hanging hands, wants to come close but has no authority—So I stick my hand out to its beak to be pecked, to let her know I'm not afraid because I trust her not to hurt me really—which she doesnt—just stares at my hand reasonably and

doubtfully and suddenly almost tenderly and I pull away my hand with a sense of the victory. She contentedly chuckles, plucks up a piece of something from the floor, throws it away, a piece of linen thread hangs in her beak, she tosses it away, looks around, walks around the golden kitchen of Time in huge Nirvana glare of Saturday night and all the rivers roaring in the rain, the crash inside my soul when I think of babyhood and you watch the big adults in the room, the wave and gnash of their shadowy hands, as they harangue about time and responsibility, in a Golden Movie inside my own mind without substance not even gelatinous—the hope and horror of the void—great phantoms screeching inside mind with the yawk photograph *vlorck* of the rooster as he now ups and emits from his throat intended for open fences of Missouri explodes gunpowder blurts of morning shame, reverend for man—At dawn in impenetrable bleak Oceanities of Undersunk gloom, he blows his rosy morn Col-lario and still the farmer knows it wont tend that rosy way. Then he chuckles, rooster chuckles, comments on something crazy we might have said, and chuckles—poor sentient noticing being, the beast he knows his time is up in the Chickenshacks of Lenox Avenue—chuckles like we do—yells louder if a man, with special rooster jowls and jinglets—Hen, his wife, she wears her adjustable hat falling from one side of her pretty beak to the other. ‘Good morn-ing Mrs. Gazookas,’ I tell her ,having fun by myself watch-ing the chickens as I’d done as a boy in New Hampshire in farmhouses at night waiting for the talk to be done and the wood to be taken in. Worked hard for my father in the Pure Land, was strong and true, went to the city to see Tathagata, levelled the ground for his feet, saw bumps everywhere and levelled the ground, he passed by and saw

me and said 'First level your own mind, and then the earth will be level, even unto Mount Sumeru' (the ancient name for Everest in Old Magadha, India).

I wanta make friends with the rooster too, by now I'm sitting in front of the bed in the other chair as El Indio has just gone out with a bunch of suspicious men with moustaches, one of whom stared at me curiously and with pleased proud grin as I stood with cup in hand acting drunk before the ladies for his and his friends' edification—Alone in the house with the two women I sit politely before them and we talk earnestly and eagerly about God. 'My friends ees seek, I geev them shot,' beautiful Tristessa of Dolours is telling me with her long damp expressive fingers dancing little India-Tinkle dances before my haunted eyes. '—Eees when, *quando*, my friend does not pays me back, don I dont care. Because,' pointing up with a straight expression into my eyes, finger aloft, 'my Lord pay me—and he pay me *more*—M-o-r-e'—she leans quickly emphasizing more, and I wish I could tell her in Spanish the illimitable and inestimable blessing she will get anyway in Nirvana. But I love her, I fall in love with her. She strokes my arm with thin finger. I love it. I'm trying to remember my place and my position in eternity. I have sworn off lust with women—sworn off lust for lust's sake—sworn off sexuality and the inhibiting impulse—I want to enter the Holy Stream and be safe on my way to the other shore, but would as lief leave a kiss to Tristessa for her hark of my heart's sake. She knows I admire and love her with all my heart and that I'm holding myself back. 'You have you life,' she says to Old Bull (of whom in a minute) 'and I haff *mind*. mine, and Jack has hees life' indicating me, she

is giving me my life back and not claiming it for herself as so many of the women you love do claim—I love her but I want to leave. She says: 'I know it, a man and women iss dead—when they want to be dead.' She nods, confirms within herself some dark Aztecan instinctual belief, wise—a wise woman, who would have graced the herds of Bhikshunis in very Yasodhara's time and made a divine additional nun. With her lidded eyes and clasped hands, a Madonna. It makes me cry to realize Tristessa has never had a child and probably never will because of her morphine sickness (a sickness that goes on as long as the need and feeds off the need and fills in the need simultaneously, so that she moans from pain all day and the pain is real, like aϕcesses in the shoulder and neuralgia down the side of the head, and in just before Christmas she was supposed to be dying), holy Tristessa will not be cause of further rebirth and will go straight to her God and He will recompense her multi-billionfold in aeons and aeons of dead Karma time. She understands Karma, she says: 'What I do, I *reap*' she says in Spanish—'Men and women have *errores*—errors, faults, sins, *faltas*,' human beings sow their own ground of trouble and stumble over the rocks of their own false erring imagination, and life is hard. She knows, I know, you know—'Bot—I weeling to haff jonk—morfina—and be no-seek any more.' And she hunches her elbows with peasant face, understanding herself in a way that I cannot and as I gaze at her the candlelight flickers on the high cheekbones of her face and she looks as beautiful as Ava Gardner and even better like a Black Ava Gardner, a Brown Ava with long face and long bones and long lowered lids—Only Tristessa hasnt got that expression of sex-smile, it has the expression of mawkfaced downmouthed Indian disregard for what you

think about its own pluperfect beauty. Not that it's perfect beauty like Ava's, it's got faults, errors, but all men and women have them and so all women forgive men and men forgive women and go their own holy ways to death. Tristessa loves death, she goes to the ikon and adjusts flowers and prays.—She bends over a sandwich and prays, looking sideways at the ikon, sitting Burmese fashion in the bed (knee in front of knee) (down) (sitting), she makes a long prayer to Mary to ask blessing or thanks for the food, I wait in respectful silence, take a quick peek at El Indio, who is also devout and even on the point of crying from junk his eyes moist and reverent and sometimes like especially when Tristessa removes her stockings to get in the bed-blankets, an undercurrent of reverent love sayings under his breath ('Tristessa, O Yé, comme t'es Belle') (which is certainly what I'm thinking but afraid to look and watch Tristessa remove her nylons for fear I will get a flash sight of her creamy coffee thighs and go mad)—But El Indio is too loaded with the poison solution of morphine to really care and follow up his reverence for Tristessa, he is busy, sometimes busy being sick, has a wife, two children (down the other side of town), has to work, has to cajole stuff off Tristessa when he himself is out (as now)—(reason for his presence in the house)—I see the whole thing popping and parenthesizing in every direction, the story of that house and that kitchen.

In the kitchen are hanging pictures of Mexican Pornography Girls, with black lace and big thighs and revealing clouds of bosom and pelvic drapery, that I study intently, in the right places, but the pictures (two) are all roiled and rain-stained and roll-spanned and hanging protruding from the wall so you have to straighten them down to study them, and even then the rain is misting down through the cabbage

leaves above and the soggy cardboard—Who might have tried to make a roof for Fellaheena?—‘My Lord, he pay me back *more*’—

So now El Indio is back and standing at the head of the bed as I sit there, and I turn to look at the rooster (‘to tame him’) —I put my hand out exactly as I had done for the hen and allow it to see I’m not scared if it pecks me, and I will pat it and make it free from fear of me—The rooster gazes at my hand without comment, and looks away, and looks back, and gazes at my hand (the seminal gysmal champion who dreams a daily egg for Tristessa that she sucks out, the end after a little puncture, fresh)—he looks at my hand tenderly but majestically moreover as the hen can’t make that same majestical appraisal, he’s crowned and cocky and can howl, he is the King Fencer biting the duel with that mosey morn. He chuckles at sight of my hand, meaning Yeh, and turns away—and I look proudly around to see if Tristessa and El Indio heard my wild *estupiante*—They rave to notice me with avid lips, ‘Yes, we been talkin about the ten grammos we gonna get tomorror—Yeh—’ and I feel proud to’ve made the Rooster, now all the little animals in the room know me and love me and I love them though may not know them. All except The Crooner on the roof, on the clothes closet, in the corner away from the edge, against the wall just under the ceiling, cozy cooing Dove is sitting in nest, ever contemplating the entire scene, forever without comment. I look up, my Lord is flapping his wings and coo diving white and I look at Tristessa to know why she got a dove and Tristessa lifts up her tender hands helplessly and looks at me affectionately and sadly, to indicate, ‘It is my Pigeon’—‘my

pretty white Pigeon—what can I do about it?’ ‘I love it so’
——‘It is so sweet and white’——‘It never make a noise’——
‘It got soch prurty eyes you look you see the prurty eyes’
and I look into the eyes of the dove and they are dove’s eyes,
lidded, perfect, dark, pools, mysterious, almost Oriental, un-
bearable to withstand the surge of such purity out of eyes
——Yet so much like Tristessa’s eyes that I wish I could
comment and tell Tristessa, ‘Thou hast the dove’s eyes’——

Or every now and then the Dove rises and flaps her wings
for exercise, instead of flying through the bleak air she waits
in her golden corner of the world waiting for perfect purity
of death, the Dove in the grave is a dark thing to rave——
the raven in the grave is no white light illuminating the
Worlds pointing up and pointing down throughout uppity
ten sides of Eternity——Poor Dove, poor eyes,——her breast
white snow, her milk, her rain of pity over me, her even
gentle eye-gaze into mine from rosy heights on a position in a
rack and Arcabus in the Ope Heavens of the Mind World——
rosy golden angel of my days, and I cant touch her, wouldnt
dare get up on a chair and trap her in her corner and make
her leery human teeth-grins trying to impress it to my blood-
stained heart——her blood.

El Indio has brought sandwiches back and the little cat is
going crazy for some meat and El Indio gets mad and slaps
it off the bed and I throw both hands up at him ‘Non, dont
do that,’ and he doesnt even hear me as Tristessa yells at him
——the great Man Beast raging in the kitchen and slapping
his daughter in her chair clear across the room to tumble
on the floor, her tears starting as she realizes what he’s done
——I don’t like El Indio for hitting the cat. But he isn’t

vicious about it, just merely reprimandatory, stern, justified, dealing with the cat, kicking the cat out of his way in the parlour as he walks to his cigars and television—Old Father Time is El Indio, with the kids, the wife, the evenings at the supper table slapping the kids away and yornching on great meaty dinners in the dim light—‘Blurp, blap,’ he lets go before the kids who look at him with shining and admiring eyes. Now it’s Saturday night and he’s dealing with Tristessa and wrangling to explain her, suddenly the old Cruz (who is not old, just forty) jumps up crying ‘Yeh, with our money, Si, con nuestra dinero,’ and repeating twice and sobbing and El Indio warns her I might understand (as I look up with imperial magnificence of unconcern tinged by regard for the scene) and as if to say, ‘This woman is crying because you take all their money—what is this? Russia? Mussia? Mata-morapussia?’ as if I didnt care anyway which I couldnt. All I wanted to do was get away. I had completely forgotten about the dove and only remembered it days later.

The wild way Tristessa stands legs spread in the middle of the room to explain something, like a junkey on a corner in Harlem or anyplace, Cairo, Bang Bombayo and the whole Fella Ollah Lot from Tip of Bermuudy to wings of albatross ledge be-feathering the Arctic Coastline, only the poison they serve out of Eskimo Gloopgloo seals and eagles of Greenland, aint as bad as that German Civilization morphine she (an Indian) is forced to subdue and die from, in her native earth.

Meanwhile the Cat is comfortably ensconced at Cruz’s face

place where she lies at the foot of the bed, curled, the way she sleeps all night while Tristessa curls at the head and they hook feet like sisters or like mother and daughter and make one little bed do comfortably for two—The little pink kitkat is so certain (despite all his fleas crossing the bridge of his nose or wandering over his eyelids)—that everything is all right—that all is well in the world (at least now)—he wants to be near Cruz's face, where all is well—He (it's a little She) he doesnt notice the bandages and the sorrow and the drunksick horrors she's having, he just knows she's the lady all day her legs are in the kitchen and every now and then she dumps him food, and besides she plays with him on the bed and pretends she's gonna beat him up and holds and scolds him and he yurks in little face into little head and blinks his eyes and flaps back his ears to wait for the beating but she's only playing with him—So now he sits in front of Cruz and even though we may gesture like maniacs as we talk and occasionally a rough hand is waved right by its whiskers almost hitting it or El Indio might roughly decide to throw a newspaper on the bed and land it right on his head, still he sits digging all of us with eyes closed and curled up under Cat Buddha style, meditating among our mad endeavours like the Dove above—I wonder: 'Does kittykat know there's a pigeon on the clothes closet.' I wish my relatives from Lowell were here to see how people and animals live in Mexico—

But the poor little cat is one mass of fleas, but he doesnt mind, he doesnt keep scratching like American cats but just endures—I pick him up and he's just a skinny little skeleton with great balloons of fur—Everything is so poor in Mexico, people are poor, and yet everything they do is happy and carefree, no matter what is—Tristessa is a junkey and

she goes about it skinny and carefree, where an American would be gloomy—But she coughs and complains all day, and by the same law, at intervals, the cat explodes into furious scratching that doesn't help—

Meanwhile I keep smoking, my cigarette goes out, and I reach into the ikon for a light from the candle flame, in a glass—I hear Tristessa say something that I interpret to mean 'Ack, that stupid fool is using our altar for a light'—To me it's nothing unusual or strange, I just want a light—but perceiving the remark or maintaining belief in the remark without knowing what it was, I ulp and hold back and instead get a light from El Indio, who then shows me later, by quick devout prayer-ito with a piece of newspaper, getting his light indirectly and with a touch and a prayer—Perceiving the ritual I do it too, to get my light a few minutes later—I make a little French prayer: '*Excuse moi ma Dame*'—making emphasis on *Dame* because of Damema the Mother of Buddhas.

So I feel less guilty about my smoke and I know all of a sudden all of us will go to heaven straight up from where we are, like golden phantoms of Angels in Gold Strap we go hitch-hiking the Deus Ex Machina to heights Apocalyptic, Eucalyptic, Aristophaneac and Divine—I suppose, and I wonder what the cat might think—To Cruz I say 'Your cat is having golden thoughts (*su gata tienes pensas de or*)' but she doesn't understand for a thousand and one billion manifold reasons swimming in the swarm of her milk thoughts Buddha-buried in the stress of her illness enduring—'What's *pensas*?' she yells to the others, she doesn't know that the cat is having golden thoughts—But the cat loves

her so, and stays there, little behind to her chin, purring, glad, eyes X-closed and stoopy, kitty kitkat like the Pinky I'd just lost in New York run over on Atlantic Avenue by the swerve dim mad traffics of Brooklyn and Queens, the automatons sitting at wheels automatically killing cats every day about five or six a day on the same road. 'But this cat will die the normal Mexican death——by old age or disease ——and be a wise old big burn in the alleys around, and you'll see him (dirty as rags) flitting by the garbage heap like a rat, if Cruz ever gets to throw it out——But Cruz wont, and so cat stays at her chin-point like a little sign of her good intentions.

El Indio goes out and gets meat sandwiches and now the cat goes mad yelling and mewling for some and El Indio throws her off the bed——but Cat finally gets a bite of meat and ronches at it like a mad little Tiger and I think 'If she was as big as the one in the Zoo, she'd look at me with big green eyes before eating me.' I'm having the fairy tale of Saturday night, having a good time actually because of the booze and the good cheer and the careless people——enjoying the little animals——noticing the little Chihuahua pup now meekly waiting for a bite of meat or bread with her tail curled in and woe, if she ever inherits the earth it'll be because of meekness——Ears curled back and even whimpering the little Chihuahua smalldog fear-cry——Nevertheless she's been alternately watching us and sleeping all night, and her own reflections on the subject of Nirvana, and death and mortals biding time till death, are of a whimpering high frequency terrified tender variety——and the kind that says 'Leave me alone, I am so delicate,' and you leave her alone

in her little fragile shell like the shell of canoes over the ocean deeps—I wish I could communicate to all these creatures and people, in the flush of my moonshine good times, the cloudy mystery of the magic milk to be seen in Mind's Deep Imagery where we learn that everything is nothing—in which case they wouldnt worry any more, except after the instant they think to worry again—All of us trembling in our mortality boots, born to die, BORN TO DIE I could write it on the wall and on walls all over America—Dove in wings of peace, with her Noah Menagery Moonshine eyes; dog with clitty claws black and shiny. to die is born, trembles in her purple eyes, her little weak blood vessels down the ribs; yea, the ribs of Chihuahua, and Tristessa's ribs too, beautiful ribs, her with her aunts in Chihuahua also born to die, beautiful to be ugly, quick to be dead, glad to be sad, mad to be had—and the El Indio death, born to die, the man, so he plies the needle of Saturday Night every night is Saturday night and goes wild to wait, what else can he do,—The death of Cruz, the drizzles of religion falling on her burial fields, the grim mouth planted in the satin of the earth coffin . . . I moan to recover all that magic, remembering my own *impending* death, 'If only I had the magic self of babyhood when I remembered what it was like before I was born, I wouldnt worry about death now knowing both to be the same empty dream'—But what will the Rooster say when it dies, and someone hacks a knife at its fragile chin—And sweet Hen, she who eats out of Tristessa's paw a globule of beer, her beak miffing like human lips to churn up the milk of the beer—when she dies, sweet hen, Tristessa who loves her will save her lucky bone and wrap it in red thread and keep it in her belongings, nevertheless sweet Mother Hen of our Arc of Noah Night,

she the golden purveyor and reaches so far back you can't find the egg that prompted her outward through the first original shell, they'll hack and whack at her tail with hacksaws and make mincemeat out of her that you run through an iron grinder turning handle, and would you wonder why she trembles from fear of punishment too? And the death of the cat, little dead rat in the gutter with twisted yickface—— I wish I could communicate to all their combined fears of death the Teaching that I have heard from Ages of Old, that recompenses all that pain with soft reward of perfect silent love abiding up and down and in and out everywhere past, present, and future in the Void unknown where nothing happens and all simply is what it is. But they know that themselves, beast and jackal and love-woman, and my Teaching of Old is indeed so old they've heard it long ago before my time.

I become depressed and I gotta go home. Everyone of us. *born to die.*

Bright explanation of the crystal clarity of all the Worlds, I need, to show that we'll all be all right——The measurement of robot machines at this time is rather irrelevant or at any time——The fact that Cruz cooked with a smoky kerosene stove big pottery-fulls of carne, meat from a whole heifer, bites of veal, pieces of veal tripe and heifer brains and heifer forehead bones . . . this wouldn't ever send Cruz to hell because no one's told her to stop the slaying, and even if someone had, Christ or Buddha or Holy Mohammed, she would still be safe from harm——though by God the heifer aint——

The little kitty is mewling rapidly for meat——himself a

little piece of quivering meat—soul eats soul in the general emptiness.

'Stop complainin!' I yell to the cat as he raves on the floor and finally jumps and joins us on the bed—The hen is rubbing her long feathery side gently imperceptibly against my shoe-tip and I can barely feel it and look in time to recognize, what a gentle touch it is from Mother Maya—She's the Magic henlayer without origin, the limitless chicken with its head cut off—The cat is mewing so violently I begin to worry for the chicken, but no, the cat is merely meditating now quietly over a piece of smell on the floor, and I give the poor little fellow a whirr a purr on the thin sticky shoulders with my fingertip—Time to go, I've petted the cat, said goodbye to God the Dove, and wanta leave the heinous kitchen in the middle of a vicious golden dream—It's all taking place in one vast mind, us in the kitchen, I don't believe a word of it or a substantial atom-empty hunk of flesh of it, I see right through it, right through our fleshy forms (hens and all) at the bright amethyst future whiteness of reality—I am worried but I aint glad—'Foo,' I say, and rooster looks at me, 'What'z he mean by *foo*!' and Rooster goes 'Cork a Loodle Doo' a real Sunday morning (which it is now, two a.m.)—Squawk and I see the brown corners of the dream house and remember my mother's dark kitchen long ago on cold streets in the other part of the same dream as this cold present kitchen with its drip-pots and horrors of Indian Mexico City—Cruz is feebly trying to say good-night to me as I prepare to go, I've petted her several times a pat on the shoulder thinking that's what she wanted at the right moments and reassured her I loved her and was on her

side 'but I had no side of my own,' I lie to myself—I've wondered what Tristessa thought of my patting her—for awhile I almost thought she was her mother, one wild moment I divined this: 'Tristessa and El Indio are brother and sister, and this is their Mother, and they're driving her crazy yakking in the night about poison and morphine'—Then I realize: 'Cruz is a junkey too, uses three gramos a month, she'll be on the same time and antenna of their dream trouble, moaning and groaning they'll all three go through the rest of their lives sick. Addiction and affliction Like diseases of the mad, insane inside encephalitis of the brain where you knock out your health purposely to hold a feeling of feeble chemical gladness that has no basis in anything but the thinking-mind—Gnosis, they will certainly change me the day they try to lay morphine on me. And on ye.'

Though the shot has done me some good and I havent touched the bottle since, a kind of weary gladness has come over me tinged with wild strength—the morphine has gentled my concern but I'd rather not have it for the weakness it brings to my ribs,—I shall have them bashed in—'I dont want no more morphine after this,' I vow, and I yearn to get away from all the morphine talk which, after sporadic listens, has finally wearied me.

I get up to go. El Indio will go with me, walk me to the corner, though at first he argues with them as though he wanted to stay or wanted something further—We go out quickly, Tristessa closes the door in back of us, I dont even give her a close look, just a glance as she closes indicating I'll see her later—El Indio and I walk vigorously down the slimy rainy aisles, turn right, and cut out to the market street, I've already commented on his black hat, and now

here I am on the street with the famous Black Bastard—— I've already laughed and said 'You're just like Dave' (Tristessa's ex-husband), 'you even wear the black hat,' as I'd seen Dave one time, on Redondas——in the moil and wild of a warm Friday night with buses parading slowly by and mobs on the sidewalk; Dave hands the package to his boy, the seller calls the cop, cop comes running, boy hands it back to Dave, Dave says 'Okay take it and run' and tosses it back and boy hits ledge of a flying bus and hangs in to the crowd with his loins, his body hanging over the street and his arms rigidly holding the bus door pole, the cops cant catch, Dave meanwhile has vamoosed into a saloon, removed his legendary black hat, and sat at the counter with other men looking straight ahead——cops no find——I had admired Dave for his guts, now admire El Indio for *his*——As we come out of the Tristessa tenement he lets loose a whistle and a shout at a bunch of men on the corner, we walk right along and they spread and we come up to the corner and walk right on, talking, I've not paid attention to what he's done, all I wanta do is go straight home——It's started to drizzle——

'Ya voy dormiendo, I go sleep now,' says El Indio putting his palms together at side of his mouth ——I say 'Okay' then he makes a further elaborate statement I think repeating in words what he did before by sign, I fail to acknowledge complete understanding of his new statement, he disappointedly says 'Yo un entiende,' (you dont understand) but I do understand that he wants to go home and go to bed——'Okay,' I say——We shake——We then go through an elaborate smiling routine on the streets of man, in fact on broken cobbles of Redondas——

To reassure him I give him a parting smile and start off but he keeps alertly watching every flicker of my smiler and eyelash, I cant turn away with an arbitrary leer, I want to smile him on his way, he replies by smiles of his own equally elaborate and psychologically corroborative, we swing information back and forth with crazy smiles of farewell, so much so, El Indio stumbles in the extreme strain of this, over a rock, and throws still a further parting smile of reassurance capping my own, till no end in sight, but we stumble in our opposite directions as though reluctant—which reluctance lasts a brief second, the fresh air of the night hits your newborn solitude and both you and your Indio go off in a new man and the smile, part of the old, is removed, no longer necessary—He to his home, I to mine, why smile about it all night long except in company—The dreariness of the world politely—

I go down the Wild Street of Redondas, in the rain, it hasn't started increasing yet, I push through and dodge through moils of activity with whores by the hundreds lined up along the walls of Panama Street in front of their crib cells where big Mamacita sits near the cocina pig pottery, as you leave they ask a little for the pig who also represents the kitchen, the chow, *cocina*—Taxis are slanting by, plotters are aiming for their dark, the whores are nooking the night with their crooking fingers of Come On, young men pass and give 'em the once over, arm in arm in crowds the young Mexicans are Casbah buddies down their main girl street, hair hanging over their eyes, drunk, borracho, long-legged brunettes in tight yellow dresses grab them and sock their pelvics in, and pull their lapels, and plead—the boys wobble—the cops

down the street pass idly like figures on little wheel-thucks rolling by invisibly under the sidewalk—One look through the bar where the children gape and one through the whore-boy bar of queers where spidery heroes perform whore dances in turtleneck sweaters for assembled critical elders of twenty-two—look through both holes and see the eye of the criminal, criminal in heaven.—I plough through digging the scene, swinging my bag with the bottle in it, I twist and give the whores a few twisting looks as I walk, they send me stereotyped soundwaves of scorn from cussin doorways—I am starving, I start eating El Indio's sandwich he gave me which at first I'd sought to refuse so as to leave it for the cat but El Indio insisted it was a present for me, so I nakedly breast-high in one delicate hold as I walk along the street—seeing the sandwich I begin to eat it—finishing it, I start buying tacos as I run by, any kind, any stand where they yell 'Joven!'—I buy stinking livers of sausages chopped in black white onions steaming hot in grease that crackles on the inverted fender of the grille—I munch down on heats and hotsauce salsas and come to devouring whole mouthloads of fire and rush along—nevertheless I buy another one, further, two, of broken cow-meat hacked on the woodblock, head and all it seems, bits of grit and gristle, all mungied together on a mangy tortilla and chewed down with salt, onions, and green leaf—diced—a delicious sandwich when you get a good stand—The stands are one, two, three in a row a half mile down the street, tragically lit by candles and dim bulbs and strange lanterns, the whole of Mexico a Bohemian Adventure in the great outdoor plateau night of stones, candle and mist—I pass Plaza Garibaldi, the hot spot of the police, strange crowds are grouping in narrow streets around quiet musicians that only later faintly you

hear corneting round the block—Marimbas are drumming in the big bars—Rich men, poor men, in wide hats mingle—Come out of swinging doors spitting cigar putts and clapping big hands over their jock as though they were about to dive in a cold brook—guilty—Up the side streets dead buses waddling in the mud holes, spots of fiery yellow whore-dress in the dark, assembled leaners and up against the wall lovers of the loving Mexican night—Pretty girls passing, every age, all the comic Gordos and me turn big heads to watch them, they're too beautiful to bear—

I rock right by the Post Office, cross the bottom of Juarez, the Palace of Fine Arts sinking nearby—yoke myself to San Juan Letran and fall to hiking up fifteen blocks of it fast, passing delicious places where they make the churros and cut you hot salt sugar butter bites of fresh hot doughnut from the grease basket, that you crunch freshly as you cover the Peruvian night ahead of your enemies on the sidewalk—All kinds of crazy gangs are assembled, chief gleeful leaders getting high on gang leadership wear crazy woollen Scandinavian ski hats over their zoot paraphernalias and Pachuco hair-cuts—Other day here I'd passed a gang of children in a gutter, their leader dressed as a clown (with nylon stocking over head) and wide rings painted around the eyes, the littler kids have imitated him and attempted similar clown outfits, the whole thing grey and blackened eyes with white loops, like silks of great racetracks the little gang of Pinocchioan heroes (and Genet) paraphernaliaing on the street curb, an older boy making fun of the Clown Hero, 'What are you doing clowning, Clown Hero?—There aint no Heaven anywhere?' 'There aint no Santa Claus of Clown Heroes, mad boy'—Other gangs of semi-hipsters hide in front of night-club bars with wronks and noise inside, I fly by with one

quick Walt Whitman look at all that file de roll——It starts raining harder, I've got a long way to go walking and pushing that sore leg right along in the gathering rain, no chance, no intention whatever of hailing a cab, the whisky and the morphine have made me unruffled by the sickness of the poison in my heart.

When you have no more numbers in Nirvana then there won't be such a thing as 'numberless' but the crowds on San Juan Letran were like numberless——I say 'Count all these sufferings from here to the end of the endless sky which is no sky and see how many you can add together to make a figure to impress the Boss of Dead Souls in the Meat Manufactory in city City CITY every one of them in pain and born to die, milling in the streets at two a m. underneath those imponderable skies'——their enormous endlessness, the sweep of the Mexican plateau away from the Moon——living but to die, the sad song of it I hear sometimes on my roof in the Tejado district, rooftop cell, with candles, waiting for my Nirvana or my Tristessa——neither come, at noon I hear 'La Paloma' being played on mental radios in the fallways between the tenement windows——the crazy kid next door sings, the dream is taking place right now, the music is so sad, the French horns ache, the high whiney violins and the deberratarra-rabaratarara of the Indian-Spanish announcer. Living but to die, here we wait on this shelf, and up in heaven is all that gold open caramel, open my door——Diamond Sutra is the sky.

I crash along drunkenly and bleakly and hard with kicking feet over the precarious sidewalk slick of vegetable oil Tehuantepec, green sidewalks, swarmed with scumworm

invisible but in deep—dead women hiding in my hair, passing underneath the sandwich and chair—‘You’re nuts!’ I yell to the crowds in English. ‘You dont know what in a hell you’re doing in this eternity bell rope tower swing to the puppeteer of Magadha, Mara the Tempter, insane. . . . And you all eagle and you beagle and you buy—All you bungle you baffle and you lie—You poor motherin blokes pourin through the juice parade of your Main Street Night you dont know that the Lord has arranged everything in sight.’ ‘Including your death,’ ‘And nothing’s happened. I am not me, you are not ye, they un-numbered are not they, and One Un-Number Self there is no such thing.’

I pray at the feet of man, waiting, as they.

As they? As Man? As he? There is no He. There is only the unsayable divine word. Which is not a Word, but a Mystery.

At the root of the Mystery the separation of one world from another by a sword of light—

The winners of tonight’s ball game in the open mist outside Tacabatabavac are romping by in the street swinging their baseball bats at the crowd showing how great they can hit and the crowd walks unconcernedly around because they are children not juvenile delinquents. They pull their beak baseball hats tight-hawk down their faces, in the drizzle, tapping their glove they wonder, ‘Did I make a bad play in the fifth inning? Didn’t I make it up with that *heet* in the seventh inning?’

At the end of San Juan Letran is that last series of bars that end in a ruined mist, fields of broken adobe, no bums hidden, all wood, Gorky, dank with sewers and puddles, ditches in

the street five feet deep with water in the bottom—powdery tenements against the light of the nearby city—I watch the final sad bar-doors, where flashes of women golden shining lace behinds I can see and feel like flying in yet like a bird in flight twist on. Kids are in the doorway in goof suits, the band is wailing a chachacha inside, everybody's knee is knocking to bend as they pop and wail with the mad music, the whole club is rocking, *down*, an American Negro walking with me would have said 'These cats are stoning themselves on some real hip kicks, they are goofing all the time, they wail, they spend all the time knocking and knocking for that *bread*, for that *girl*, they're up in against the doorways, man, wailing all—you know? They don't know when to stop It's like Omar Khayyam, I wonder what the vintners buy, one half so precious, as what they sell.' (My boy Al Damlette)

I turn off at these last bars and it really starts raining hard and I walk fast as I can and come to a big puddle and jump out of it all wet and jump right in again and cross it—The morphine prevents me from feeling the wet, my skin and limbs are numb—like a kid when he goes skating in winter, falls through ice, runs home with skates under his arm so he wont catch cold, I kept ploughing through the Pan-American rain and above is the gigantic roar of a Pan American Airplane coming in to land at Mexico City Airport with passengers from New York looking for to find the other end of dreams. I look up into the drizzle and watch their tail fire-spark—you wont find me landing over great cities and all I do is clutch the side of the seat and wobble as the air pilot expertly leads us into a tremendous flaming crash against the

side of warehouses in the slum district of Old Indian Town——what? with all them rat tat tans with revolvers in their pockets pushing through my foggy bones looking for something made of gold, and then rats gnaw ya.

I'd rather walk than ride the airplane, I can fall on the ground flat on my face and die that way——With a watermelon under my arm. *Mira.*

I come up gorgeous Orizaba Street (after crossing wide muddy parks near Ciné Mexico and the dismal trolley street called after dismal General Obregon in the rainy night, with roses in his mother's hair——) Orizaba Street has a magnificent fountain and pool in a green park at a round O-turn in residential splendid shape of stone and glass and old grills and scrolly whorly lovely majesties that when looked at by the moon blend with magic inner Spanish gardens of an architecture (if architecture you will) designed for lovely nights at home. Andalusian in intention.

The fountain is not spraying water at two a.m. and as though it would have to, in the driving rain, and me rolling by there sitting on my railroad switchblock passing over pinking sparking switches on tracks of underneath-the-earth like the cops on the little whorestreet thirty-five blocks back and way downtown——

It's the dismal rainy night caught up with me——my hair is dripping water, my shoes are slopping——but I have my jacket on, and it is soaking on the outside——but it is rain repellent——'Why I bought it back in the Richmond Bank,' I'm tellin heroes about it later, in a littlekid dream.——I run on home, walking past the bakery where they don't at two a.m. anymore make latenight doughnuts, twisters taken

out of ovens and soaked in syrup and sold to you through the bakery window for two cents apiece and I'd buy baskets of them in my younger days——closed now, rainy night Mexico City of the present contains no roses and no fresh hot doughnuts and it's bleak. I cross the last street, slow down and relax letting out breath and stumbling on my muscles, now I go in, death or no death, and sleep the sweet sleep of white angels.

But my door is locked, my street door, I have no key for it, all lights are out, I stand there dripping in the rain with no place to dry up and sleep——I see there's a light in Old Bull Gaines' window and I go over and amazedly look in, just see his golden curtain, I realize, 'If I can't get in my own place then I'll just knock on Bull's window and sleep in his easy chair.' Which I do, knocking, and he comes out of the dark establishment of about twenty people and in his bathrobe walks through the little bit of rain between building and the door——comes and snaps open the iron door. I go in after him——'Can't go in my own place,' I say——He wants to know what Tristessa said about tomorrow, when they get more stuff from the Black Market, the Red Market, the Indian Market——So it's all right with Old Bull, I sleep and stay in his room——'Till the street door is opened at eight a.m.' I add, and suddenly decide to curl up on the floor with a flimsy coverlet, which, instantly as done, is like a bed of soft fleece and I lie there divine, legs all tired and clothes partly wet (am wrapped in Old Bull's big towel robe like a ghost in a Turkish bath) and the whole journey in the rain done, all I have to do is lie dreaming on the floor. I curl up and start sleeping. In the middle of the night now, with the small yellow bulb on, and rain crashing outside, Old Bull Gaines has closed shutters tight, is smoking cigarette after cigarette

and I can't breathe in the room and he's coughing 'Ke-he!' the dry junkey cough, like a protest, like yelling *Wake Up!*—he lies there, thin, emaciated, long nosed, strangely handsome and grey-haired and lean and mangy twenty-two in his derelict worldling ('student of souls and cities' he calls himself) decapitated and bombed out by morphine frame—Yet all the guts in the world. He starts munching on candy, I lie there waking up realizing that Old Bull is munching on candy noisily in the night—All the sides to this dream—Annoyed, I glance anxiously around and see him myorking and munching on candy after candy, what a preposterous thing to do at four a.m. in your bed—Then at four-thirty he's up and boiling down a couple of capsules of morphine in a spoon—you see him, after the shot has been sucked in and siphoned out, with big glad tongue licking so he can spit on the blackened bottom of the spoon and rub it clean and silver with a piece of paper, using, to really polish the spoon, a pinch of ashes—And he lies back, feeling it a little, it takes ten minutes, a muscle bang—by about twenty minutes he might feel all right—if not, there he is rustling in his drawer waking me up again, he's looking for his goof-balls—'so he can sleep.'

So I can sleep. But no. Immediately he wants another jolt of some kind, he ups and opens his drawer and pulls out a tube of codeine pills and counts out ten and pops that in with a slug of cold coffee from his old cup that sits on the chair by the bed—and he endures in the night, with the light on, and lights further cigarettes—At some time or other, around dawn, he falls asleep—I get up after some reflections at nine, eight, or seven, and quickly put my wet clothes on to rush upstairs to my warm bed and dry clothes—Old Bull is sleeping, he finally made it, Nirvana, he's snoring and he's

out, I hate to wake him up but he'll have to lock himself in, with his bolt and slider——It's grey outside, rain has finally stopped after heaviest surge at dawn. 40,000 families were flooded out in the Northwestern part of Mexico City that storm. Old Bull, far from floods and storms with his needles and his powders beside the bed and cottons and eyedroppers and paraphernalias——'When you got morphine, you dont need anything else, me boy,' he says to me in the daytime all combed and high-sitting in his easy chair with papers, the picture of glad health——'Madame Poppy, I call her. When youve got opium youve got all you need——All that good O goes down in your veins and you feel like singin Hallelujah!' And he laughs. 'Bring me Grace Kelly on this chair, morphine on that chair, I'll take morphine.'

'Ava Gardner too?'

'Ava Gvavna and all the bazotzkas in all the countries so far——if I can have my M in the morning and my M in the afternoon and my M in the evening before going to bed, I dont even need to know what time it is on the City Hall clock——' He tells me all this and more nodding vigorously and sincerely. His jaw quivers with emotion. 'Why for krissakes, if I had no junk I'd be bored to death, I'd die of *boredom*' he complains, almost crying——'I read Rimbaud and Verlaine, I know what I'm talking about——Junk is the only thing I want——You've never been junk-sick, you dont know what it's like——Boy when you wake up in the morning sick and take a good bang, boy, that feels good.' I can picture myself and Iristessa waking up in our nuptial madbed of blankets and dogs and cats and canaries and dots of whoreplant in the coverlet and naked shoulder to shoulder (under the gentle eyes of the Dove) she shoots me in or I shoot myself in a big bang of watery-

coloured poison straight into the flesh of your arm and into your system which it instantly proclaims *its*—you feel the weak fall of your body to the disease in the solution—but never having been junksick, I don't know the horror of the disease—A story Old Bull could tell much better than I—

He lets me out, but not until he's muttered and sputtered out of bed—holding his pyjamas and bathrobe, pushing in his belly where it hurts, where some kind of hernia cave-in annoys him,—poor sick fella, almost sixty years old and hanging on to his diseases without bothering anybody—Born in Cincinnati, brought up in the Red River Steamboats (red-legged? his legs as white as snow)—

I see that it's stopped raining and I'm thirsty and have drunk Old Bull's two cups of water (boiled, and kept in a jar)—I go across the street in my damp sopping shoes and buy an ice-cold Spur Cola and gobble it down on my way to my room—The skies are opening up, there might be sunshine in the afternoon, the day is almost wild and Atlantican, like a day at sea off the coast of the Firth of Scotland—I yell imperial flags in my thoughts and rush up the two flights to my room, the final flight a ricket of iron tin-spans creaking and cracking on nails and full of sand, I get on the hard adobe floor of the roof, the Tejado, and walk on slippery little puddles around the air of the courtyard rail only two foot high so you can just easily fall down three flights and crack your skull on tile Espaniala floors where Americans gnash and fight sometimes in raucous parties early in the twilight of the morning—I could fall, Old Bull almost fell over when he lived on the roof a month, the children sit on the soft stone

of the two-foot rail and goof and talk, all day running around the thing and skidding and I never like to watch—I come to my room around two curves of the Hole and unlock my padlock which is hooked to decaying half-out nails (one time left the room open and unattended all day)—I go in and jam the door in the rain-damp wood and rain has swollen the wood and the door barely tightens at the top—I get in my dry hobo pants and two big hobo shirts and go to bed with thick socks on and finish the Spur and lay it on the table and say ‘Ah’ and wipe the back of my mouth and look awhile at holes in my door showing me outside Sunday morning sky and I hear church bells down Orizaba lane and people are going to church and I’m going to sleep and I’ll make up for it later, goodnight.

‘Blessed Lord, thou lovedest all sentient life.’

Why do I have to sin and do the sign of the Cross?

‘Not one of the vast accumulation of conceptions from beginningless time, through the present and into the never ending future, not one of them is graspable.’

It’s the old question of ‘Yes, life’s not real,’ but you see a beautiful woman or something you can’t get away from wanting because it is there in front of you—This beautiful woman of twenty-eight standing in front of me with her fragile body (‘I put thee in my neck [a dicky] so nobody look and see my beautiful body.’—she thinks she jokes, not regarding herself as beautiful), and that face so expressive of the pain and loveliness that went no doubt into the making of this fatal world,—a beautiful sunrise, that makes you stop on the sands and gaze out to sea hearing Wagner’s Magic Fire Music in your thoughts— —the fragile and holy counten-

ance of poor Tristessa, the tremulous bravery of her little junk-racked body that a man could throw up in the air ten feet—the bundle of death and beauty—all pure Form standing in front of me, all the racks and tortures of sexual beauty, the breast, the limb of the middle body, the whole huggable mess of a woman, some of them even though six feet high you can slumber on their bellies in the night like a nap on a dreaming bankside of a woman—Like Goethe at eighty, you know the futility of love and you shrug—You shrug away the warm kiss, the tongue and lips, the tug at the thin waist, the whole warm floating thing against you held tight—the little woman—for which rivers flow and men fall down stepladders—The thin cold long brown fingers of Tristessa, slow, and casual and lazy, like the meeting of lips—The Tristessa Spanish Night of her deep love hole, the bull-fights in her dreams of you, the lazy rainy rose against the idle cheek—And all the concomitant lovelinesses of a lovely woman a young man in a far-off country should yearn to stay for—I was travelling around in circles in North America in many a grey tragedy.

I stand looking at Tristessa, she's come to visit me in my room, she wont sit down, she stands and talks—in the candle light she is excited and eager and beautiful and radiant—I sit down on the bed, looking down on the stony floor, while she talks—I dont even listen to what she's saying, about junk, Old Bull, how she's tired—'I go to the do it *to-morra*—TO-MORRAR—' she taps to emphasize me with her hand, so I have to say 'Yeh, Yeh, go ahead,' and she goes on with her story, which I dont understand—I just cant look at her for fear of thoughts I'll get—But she takes

care of all of that for me, she says 'Yes, we are in pain——' I say 'La vida es dolor' (life is pain), she agrees, she says life is love too. 'When you got one million pesos I dont care how many, they dont move,'——she says, indicating my paraphernalia of leather-covered scriptures and Sears Roebuck envelopes with stamps and airmail envelopes inside——as though I had a million pesos hiding in time in my floor——'A million pesos does not move——but when you got the friend, the friend give it to you in the bed,' she says, legs spread a little, pumping with her loins at the air in the direction of my bed to indicate how much better a human being is than a million paper pesos——I think of the inexpressible tenderness of receiving this holy friendship from the sacrificial sick body of Tristessa and I almost feel crying or grabbing her and kissing her——A wave of loneliness passes over me, remembering past loves and bodies in beds and the unbeatable surge when you go into your beloved deep and the whole world goes with you——Though we know that Mara the Tempter is evil, his fields of temptation are innocent——How could Tristessa, rousing passion in me, have anything to do, except as a field of merit or a dupe of innocence or a material witness to my murderous lust, how could she be blamed and how could she be sweeter than standing there explaining my love directly with her pantomiming thins. She's high. she keeps trying at the lapel of her kimono (underneath's a slip that shows) and trying to attach it unattachably to a nonexistent button of the coat. I look into her eyes deep, meaning 'Would you be my friend like that?' and she looks straight at me pools of neither this or that, her combination of reluctance to break her personal disgust covenant moreover lodged in the Virgin Mary, and her love of wish-for-me, makes her as mysterious as the Tathagata whose form is described as being

as nonexistent, rather as inscrutable as the direction in which a put-out fire has gone. I cant get a yes or no out of her eyes for the time I allot to them. Very nervous, I sit, stand, sit, she stands explaining further things. I am amazed by the way her skin wrinkles O so sensitively down the bridge of her nose in even clean lines, and her little laugh of delight that comes so rarely and so's littlegirlish, child of glee,—It's all my own sin if I make a play for her.

I want to take her in both hands by the waist and pull her slowly close with a few choice words of sudden endearment like 'Mi gloria angela' or 'Mi whichever it is,' but I have no language to cover my embarrassment—Worst of all, would it be, to have her push me aside and say 'No, no, no' like disappointed moustachio'd heroes in French movies being turned out by the little blonde who is the brakeman's wife, by a fence, in smoke, midnight, in the French railroad yards, and I turn away big pained loverface and apologize,—going away thence with the sensation that I have a beastly streak in me I didnt notice, conceptions common to all young lovers and old I dont want to disgust Tristessa—It would horrify me to cause her ruinous fleshpetal tender secrets and have her wake up in the morning lodged against the back of some unwelcome man who loves by night and sleeps it off, and wakes up blearing to shave and by his very presence causes consternation where before there was absolute perfect purity of nobody.

But what I've missed when I dont get that friend lunge of the lover's body, coming right at me, all mine, but it was a slaughter-house for meat and all you do is bend to wreak havocs in somethings-gotta-give of girlihood.—When

Tristessa was twelve years old suitors twisted her arm in the sun outside the mother's cooking door—I've seen it a million times, in Mexico the young men want the young girls—Their birthrate is terrific—They turn em out wailing and dying by the golden tons in vats of semiwinery messageries of oy Ole Tokyo birthcrib.—I lost track of my thought there,—

Yes, the thighs of Tristessa and the golden flesh all mine, what am I a Caveman? Am a Caveman.

Caveman buried deep under ground.

It would just be the corona of her cheeks pulsing to mouth, and my remembrance of her splendid eyes, like sitting in a box the lovely latest in France enters the, crashing orchestra and I turn to Monsieur next to me whispering 'She is *splendide*, non?'—With Johnny Walker Scotch in my tuxedo coat-pocket.

I stand up. I must see her.

Poor Tristessa is swaying there explaining all her troubles, how she hasnt got enough money, she's sick, she'll be sick in the morning and in the look of her eye I caught perhaps the gesture of a shadow of acceptance of the idea of me as a lover—Only time I ever saw Tristessa cry, was when she was junk-sick on the edge of Old Bull's bed, like a woman in the back pew of a church in daily novena she dabs at her eyes—She points to the sky again, 'If my friend dont pay me back,' looking at me straight, 'my Lord pay me back—*more*' and I can feel the spirit enter the room as she stands, waiting with her finger pointed up, on her spread legs, confidently, for her Lord to pay her back—'So I geev every-things I have to my friend, and eef he doan pay me back'—she shrugs—

'my Lord pay me back'—standing alert again—'More' and as the spirit swims around the room I can tell the effective mournful horror of it (her reward is so thin) now I see radiating from the crown of her head innumerable hands that have come from all ten quarters of the Universe to bless her and pronounce her Bodhisat for saying and knowing that so well.

Her Enlightenment is perfect—'And we are nothing, you and me'—she pokes at my chest, 'Jew—Jew—' (Mexican saying 'You')—and *me*'—pointing at herself—'We are *nothing*. Tomorrar we may be die, and so we are nothing—' I agree with her, I feel the strangeness of that truth, I feel we are two empty phantoms of light or like ghosts in old haunted-house stories diaphanous and precious and white and not-there.—She says, 'I know you want to sleep.'

'No, no,' I say, seeing she wants to leave—

'I go to it sleep, early in the mawnins I go get see for the mans and I get the morfina and come bock for Old Bool'—and since we are *nada*, nothing, I forget what she said about friends all lost in the beauty of her strange intelligent imagery, every bit true —'She's an Angel,' I think secretly, and escort her to the door with movement of arm as she leans to the door talking to go out—We are careful not to touch each other—I tremble, once I jumped a mile when her fingertip hit my knee in conversations, at chairs—the first afternoon I'd seen her, in dark glasses, in the sunny afternoon window, by a candle light lit for kicks, sick kicks of life, smoking, beautiful, like the Owner Damsel of Las Vegas, or the Revolutionary Heroine of Marlon Brando Zapata Mexico—with Culiacan heroes and all—That's when she got me—In afternoon space of gold the look, the sheer beauty, like silk, the children giggling, me blushing, at

a guy's house, where we first found Tristessa and started all this—Sympaticus Tristessa with her heart a gold gate, I'd first dug to be an evil enchantress—I'd run across a Saint in Modern Mexico and here I was fantasizing dreams away about foreordained orders for nothing and necessary betrayals—the betrayal of the old father when he entices by ruse the three little crazy kids screaming and playing in the burning house, 'I'll give each one your favourite cart,' out they come running for the carts, he gives them the High Incomparable Great Cart of the Single Vehicle White Bullock which they're too young to appreciate—with that greatcart command, he'd made me an offer—I look at Tristessa's leg and decide to avoid the issue of fate and rest beyond heaven.

I play games with her fabulous eyes and she longs to be in a monastery.

'Leave Tristessa alone' I say, anyway, like I'd say 'Leave the kitty alone, don't hurt it'—and I open her the door, so we can go out, at midnight, from my room— In my hand I stumble-awkwardly hold big railroad brakeman lantern to her feet as we descend the perilous needless-to-say steps, she'd almost tripped coming up, she moaned and she groaned coming up, she smiled and minced with her hand on her skirt going down, with that majestical lovely slowness of woman, like a Chinese Victoria.

'We are nothing.'

'Tomorrow we may be die.'

'We are nothing.'

'You and Me.'

I politely lead all the way down by light and lead her out to the street where I hail her a white taxi for her home.

Since beginningless time and into the never-ending future, men have loved women without telling them, and the Lord has loved them without telling, and the void is not the void because there's nothing to be empty of.

Art there, Lord Star?- -Diminished is the drizzle that broke my calm.

PART TWO
A YEAR LATER . . .

Diminish'd never is the drizzle that broke no calm——I didnt tell her I loved her but when I left Mexico I began to think on her and then I began to tell her I loved her in letters, and almost did, and she wrote too, pretty Spanish letters, saying I was sweet, and please hurry back——I hurried back too late. I should have come back in the Spring, almost did, had no money, just touched the border of Mexico and felt that vomity feeling of Mexico——went on to California and lived in a shack with young monk Buddhist-type visitors every day and went north to Desolation Peak and spent a summer surling in the Wilderness, eating and sleeping alone ——said, 'Soon I go back, to the warm arms of Tristessa'——but waited too long.

O Lord, why have you done this to your angel-selves, this blight life, this ugh raggedy crap scene full of puke and thieves and dying?——couldn't you have placed us in a dismal heaven where all was glad anyhow?——Art thou Masochist, Lord, art thou Indian Giver, art thou Hater?

Finally I was back in Bull's room after a four thousand mile voyage from the mountain peak near Canada, a terrible enough trip in itself, not worth mooting herein——and he went out and got her.

Already he'd warned me: 'I dont know what's the matter

with her, she's changed in the past two weeks, the *past week* even——'

'Is that because she knew I was coming?' I thought darkly——

'She throws fits and hits me over the head with coffee cups and loses my money and falls in the street——'

'What's the *matter* with her?'

'Goofballs——I told her not to take too many——You know it takes an old junkey with many years of experience to know how to handle sleeping pills,——she wont listen, she dont know how to use em, three, four, sometimes five, once twelve, it's not the same Tristessa——What I wanta do is *marry* her and get my citizenship, see, you think that's a good idea?——After all, she's my life, I'm her life——'

I could see Old Bull had fallen in love——with a woman not named Morphina.

'I never touch her——it's just a marriage of convenience——you know what I mean——I cant be getting stuff on the black market myself, I dont know how, I need her and she needs my money.'

Bull got \$150 a month from a trust fund established by his father before he died——his father had loved him, and I could know why, for Bull is a sweet and tender person, though just a little of the con man. for years in New York he supported his junk habit by stealing about \$30 every day, twenty years——He'd been in jail a few times when they'd found him with wrong merchandise——In jail he was always the librarian, he is a great scholar, in many ways, with a marvellous interest in history and anthropology and of all things French Symbolist poetry, Mallarmé above all——I'm not talking of the other Bull who is the great writer who wrote 'Junkey'——This is another Bull, older, almost sixty,

I wrote poems in his room all last summer when Tristessa was *mine, mine*, and I wouldn't take her—I had some silly ascetic or celibacious notion that I must not touch a woman—My touch might have saved her—

Now too late—

He brings her home and right away I see something is wrong—She comes tottering in on his arm and gives a weak (thank God for that) smile and holds out her arm rigidly, I dont know what to do but hold her arm up. 'What's the matter with Tristessa, is she sick?'

'All last month she was paralyzed down one whole leg and her arms were covered with cysts, O she was an awful sick girl last month.'

'What's the matter with her now?'

'Shh—let her sit down—'

Tristessa is holding me and slowly levels her sweet brown cheek against mine, with a rare smile, and I'm playing the befuddled American almost consciously—

Look, I'll save her yet—

Trouble is, what would I do with her once I'd won her?—it's like winning an angel in hell and you are then entitled to go down with her to where it's worse or maybe there'll be light, some, down there, maybe it's me's crazy—

'She's going crazy,' says Bull, 'those goofballs'll do it to everybody, to you, anybody, I dont care who.'

In fact Bull himself took too many two nights later and proved it—

The problem of junkies, narcotic addicts bless their soul, bless their quiet thoughtful souls, is to get it—On all sides they're balked, they are continually unhappy—'If the

government gave me enough morphine every day I would be completely happy and I would be completely willing to work as a male nurse in a hospital—I even sent the government my ideas on the subject, in a letter in from Lexington, how to solve the narcotic problem, by putting junkies to work, with their daily doses, cleaning the subways, anything—as long as they get their medicine they're all right, just like any other sick people—It's like alcoholics, they need medicine—'

I cant remember everything that happened except for last night so fateful, so horrible, so sad and mad—Better to do it that way, why build up?

It all started out with Bull being out of morphine, sick, a little too many goofballs he'd taken (seconals) to make up for the morphine lack and so he is acting like a baby, sloppy, like senile, not quite as bad as the night he slept in my bed on the roof because Tristessa had gone mad and was breaking everything in his room and hitting him and falling on the floor right on her head, goofballs she bought in a drugstore, Bull would give her no more—The anxious landladies are hovering at the door thinking we're beating her up but she's beating us up—

The things she said to me, what she really thought of me, now came out, a year later, a year too late, and all I should have done was *tell her* I loved her—She accused me of being a filthy teahead, she ordered me out of Bull's room, she tried to hit me with a bottle, she tried to take my tobacco pouch and keep it, I had to struggle with her—Bull and I hid the bread knife under the rug—She just sits there on the floor like an idiot baby, doodling with objects—She

accuses me of trying to smoke marijuana out of my tobacco pouch but it is only Bull Durham tobacco for my roll-me-owns because commercial cigarettes have a chemical in them to keep them firm that damaged my susceptible phlebitic veins and arteries——

So Bull is afraid she'll kill him in 'he night, we cant get her out, previously (a week ago) he'd called cops and ambulances and even they wouldnt get her out, Mexico——So he comes to sleep in my new room bed, with clean sheets, forgets that he's already taken two goofballs and takes two more and thereupon goes blind, cant find his cigarettes, gropes and knocks down everything, pees in the bed, spills coffee I bring him, I have to sleep on the floor of stone among bedbugs and cockroaches, I revile him all night poutingly: 'Look what you're doing to my nice clean bed.'

'I cant help it——I gotta find another cap——Is this a cap?' He holds up a matchstick and thinks it's a capsule of morphine. 'Bring me your spoon'——He's going to boil it down and shoot it——Lord——In the morning at grey time he finally leaves and goes down to his room, stumbling with all his things including a Newsweek he could have never read——I dump his cans of pee in the toilet, it's all pure blue like the blue of Sir Joshua Reynolds, I think. 'MY GOD, he's gotta be dying!' but turns out they were cans of washing blueing——Meanwhile Tristessa has slept and feels better and somehow they stumble around and get their shots and next day she returns tapping in Bull's window, pale and beautiful, no more an Aztec witch, and apologizes sweetly——

'She'll be back on goofballs in a week,' says Bull——'But I'm not giving her any more'——He swallows one himself——

'Why do you take em!' I yell.

'Because I know how, I've been a junkey for forty years.'
Comes then the fateful night—

I've already finally in a cab and once on the street told Tristessa I love her—'Yo te amo'—No reply—She lies to Bull and tells him I propositioned her saying 'You've slept with a lot of men, why not sleep with me'—No such thing I ever said, just 'Yo te amo'—Because I do love her—But what to do with her—She never used to lie before the goofballs—In fact she used to pray and go to church—

I've given up on Tristessa and this afternoon, Bull sick, we get a cab and go down into the slums to find El Indio (the Black Bastard he's called in the trade), who always has something—It's always been my secret hunch that El Indio loves Tristessa too—He has beautiful grown daughters, he lies in a bed behind flimsy curtains with the door wide open to the world, high on M, his elder wife sits anxiously in a chair, ikons burn, arguments take place, groans, all under the endless Mexican skies—We come to his pad and his old wife tells us she is his wife (we didnt know) and he's not in so we sit on the stone steps of the crazy courtyard full of screaming children and drunks and women with wash and banana peels you'd think, and wait there—Bull is so sick he has to go home—Tall, humped, wizard cadaver-like he goes, leaving me sitting drunk on the stone drawing pictures of the children in my little notebook—

Then out comes a host of some kind, a portly friendly man, with a waterglass of pulque, two glasses, he insists I chugalug mine with his, I do, bang, down, the cactus juice dripping from our lips, he beats me to the draw—Women laugh—There's a big kitchen—He brings me more—I drink and draw the children—I offer money for the pulque but they

wont take it——It starts to grow dark in the courtyard——

I've already swallowed a fifth of wine on the way down, it's one of my drinking days, I've been bored and sad and lost——too, for three days I've been painting and drawing with pencil, chalk and watercolours (my first formal try) and I'm exhausted——I've sketched a little bearded Mexican artist in his roof hut and he tore the picture out of the big notebook to keep it——We drank tequila in the morning and drew each other——Of me he drew a kind of tourist sketch showing how young and handsome and American I am, I dont understand (he wants me to buy it?)——Of him I draw a terrible apocalyptic black bearded face, also his body tinely twisted on the edge of the couch, O heaven and posterity will judge all this art, whatever it is——So I'm drawing one particular little boy who wont stand still, then I start drawing the Virgin Madonna——

More fellows appear and they invite me into a big room where a big white table is covered with pulque cups and on the floor open urns of it——Amazing the faces in there——I think 'I'll have a good time and meanwhile I'm right on El Indio's doorstep and I'll catch him for Bull when he comes home——and Tristessa'll come too——

Borracho, we drain big cups of cactus juice and there's an old singer with guitar, with his young disciple boy with thick sensitive lips and a big fat hostess woman like out of Rabelais and Rembrandt Middle Ages who sings——The leader of this huge gang of fifteen appears to be Pancho Villa at the table end, red clay face, perfectly round and jocund, but Mexican owlish, with crazy blue eyes (I think) and a wild red checked shirt and like always ecstatically happy——But beside him other more sinister lieutenants of some sort, to them I look down table right dead in the eye and toast and even ask

'Ques es la vida? What is life?'—(to prove I'm philosophical and smart)—Meanwhile a man in a blue suit and blue hat appears the most friendly, he beckons me to the toilet for a swaying talk over urine—He locks the door—His eyes are sunken deep in pudgy battered W. C. Fields sockets—'sockets' too clean a word—but a wicked pair of funny eyes, also a hypnotist, I keep staring at him, I keep *liking* him—I like him so much that when he takes my wallet out and counts my money I laugh, I fiddle a little bit trying to get it back, he holds off counting—Others are trying to get in the toilet—'This is Mexico!' says he. 'We stay here if we like'—When he hands me back my wallet I see my money's still in it but I swear on the Bible on God on Buddha on all that was supposed to be holy, in real life there was no more money in that wallet (wallet shwallet, just a leather foldcase for travellers' checks)—He leaves me *some* money because later I give twenty pesos to a big fat guy and tell him to go out and get some marijuana for the whole group—He too keeps taking me to the toilet for earnest confabs, somehow my dark glasses disappear—

Finally Blue Hat in front of everybody simply snatches my notebook out of my (Bull's) coat, like a joke, pencil and all, and slips it in his own coat and stares at me, wicked and funny—I really can't help laughing but then I do say 'Come on, come on, give me back my poems,' and I reach into his coat and he twists away, and I reach again and he won't—I turn to the most distinguished-looking man there, in fact the only one, who is sitting next to me, 'Will you undertake the responsibility of getting my poems back?'

He says he will, without understanding what I'm saying, but I drunkenly assume he will—Meanwhile in a blind dazzle of ecstasy I throw fifty pesos on the floor to prove

something—Later I throw two pesos on the floor saying 'It's for the music'—They end up feeding that to the two musicians but I'm too proud after reconsideration to start looking around for my fifty pesos too, but you will see that this is just a case of wanting to be robbed, a strange kind of exultation and drunken power, 'I dont care about money, I am the King of the world, I will lead your little revolutions myself'—This I begin to work on by making friends with Pancho Villa, and brother there's a lot of knocking of cups and arm-around-chugalugs down, and song—And by this time I'm too stupid to check my wallet but every cent is gone—I take great pride meanwhile in showing how I appreciate the music, I even drum on the table—Finally I go out with Fat Boy to talk in the toilet and as we're coming out here comes a strange woman up the steps, unearthly and pale, slow, majestic, neither young nor old, I cant help staring at her and even when I realize it's Tristessa I keep staring and wondering at this strange woman and it seems that she has come to save me but she's only coming for a shot from El Indio (who, by the way, had by now, on his own accord, gone to Bull's two miles away)—I leave the gay gang of thieves and follow my love.

She is wearing a long dirty dress and a shawl and her face is pale, little rings under the eyes, that thin patrician slowly hawked nose, those luscious lips, those sad eyes—and the music of her voice, the complaint of her song, when she talks in Spanish to other . . .

Ah Sacristi—the sad mutilated blue Madonna, is Tristessa, and for me to keep saying that I love her is a bleeding lie—She hates me and I hate her, make no bones about it—I

hate her because she hates me, no other reason—She hates me because I dont know, I guess I was too pious last year—She keeps yelling ‘*I dont care!*’ and hits us over the head and goes out and sits on the curb in the street and doodles and sways—Nobody dares approach the woman with her head between her knees—Tonight though I can see she’s all right, quiet, pale, walking straight, coming up the stone steps of the thieves—

Ll Indio aint in, we go down again—I had already twice visited El Indio’s to check on him, not there, but his brown daughter with the beautiful brown sad eyes staring out into the night as I question her, ‘Non, non,’ is all she can say, she is staring at some fixed point in the garbage of the sky, so all I do is stare at her eyes and I have never seen such a girl—Her eyes seem to say ‘I love my father even though he takes narcotics, but please dont come here, leave him alone’—

Tristessa and I go down to the slippery garbage street of dull brown coke-stand lights and distant dim blue and rose neons (like rubbed chalk crayon) of Santa Maria de Redondas, where we hook up with poor bedraggled wild-looking Cruz and start off somewhere—

I have my arm around Tristessa’s waist and walk sadly with her—Tonight she doesn’t hate me—Cruz always liked me and still does—In the past year she has caused poor old Bull every kind of trouble with her drunk shenanigans—O there’s been pulque and vomiting in the streets and groans under heaven, spattered angel wings covered with the pale blue dirt of heaven—Angels in hell, our wings huge in the dark, the three of us start off, and from the Golden Eternal Heaven bends God blessing us with his face which I can only describe as being infinitely sorry (compassionate), that is, infinite with understanding of suffering, the

sight of that Face would make you cry—I've seen it, in a vision, it will cancel all in the end—No tears, just the lips, O I can show you!—No woman could be that sad, God is like a man—It's all a blank how we go up the street to some small narrow dark street where two women are sitting with steaming cauldrons of some kind, or steaming cups, where we sit on wood crates, I with my head on Tristessa's shoulder, Cruz at my feet, and they give me a drink of hot punch—I look in my wallet, no more money, I tell Tristessa, she pays for the drinks, or talks, or runs the whole show, maybe she's the leader of the gang of thieves even—

The drinks dont help much, it's getting late, towards dawn, the chill of the high plateau gets into my litle sleeveless shirt and loose sports coat and chino pants and I start shivering uncontrollably—Nothing helps, drink after drink, nothing helps—

Two young Mexican cats attracted by Tristessa come and stand there drinking and talking all night, both have moustaches, one of them is very short with a round baby face with pear-like cheeks—The other is taller, with wings of newspaper stuck somehow in his jacket to protect him from the cold—Cruz just stretches out right in the road in her topcoat and goes to sleep, head on the ground, on the stone—A cop arrests somebody at the head of the alley, we around the little candle flames and steampots watch without much interest—At one point Tristessa kisses me gently on the lips, the softest, just-touchingest kiss in the world—Aye, and I receive it was amazement—I've made up my mind to stay with her and sleep where she sleeps, even if she sleeps in a garbage can, in a stone cell with rats—But I keep shivering, no amount of wrapping in can do it, for a year now I've been spending every night in my sleeping bag

and I'm no longer inured to ordinary dawn chills of the earth
 —At one point I fall right off the crate I occupy with
 Tristessa, land in the sidewalk, stay there—Other times
 I'm up haranguing long mysterious conversations with the
 two cats—What on earth are they trying to say and do?
 —Cruz sleeps in the streets—

Her hair hangs out all black across the road, people step
 over her—It's the end.

Dawn comes grey.

People start passing to go to work, soon the pale light begins
 to reveal the incredible colours of Mexico, the pale blue
 shawls of women, the deep purple shawls, the lips of people
 faintly roseate in general aubeal blue—

'What we waitin for? Where we goin?' I'd kept asking—

'I go get my shot,' she says—gets me another hot punch,
 which goes down shivering through me—One of the ladies
 is asleep, the dealer with the ladle is beginning to get sore
 because apparently I've drank more than Tristessa paid or
 the two cats or something—

Many people and carts pass—

'Vamonos,' says Tristessa getting up, and we wake up
 ragged Cruz and waver a minute standing, and go off in the
 streets—

Now you can see the ends of the streets, no more garbanzo
 darkness, it's all pale blue churches and pale people and pink
 shawls—We move along and come to rubby fields and
 cross and come to a settlement of abode huts—

It's a village in the city by itself— -

We meet a woman and go into a room and I figure we'll
 finally sleep in here but the two beds are loaded with sleepers

and wakers, we just stand there talking, leave and go down the alley past waking-up doors—Everybody curious to see the two ragged girls and the raggedy man, stumbling like a slow team in the dawn—The sun comes up orange over piles of red brick and plaster dust somewhere, it's the wee North America of my Indian Dreams but now I'm too gone to realize anything or understand, all I wanta do is sleep, next to Tristessa—She in her skimpy pink dress, her little breastless body, her thin shanks, her beautiful thighs, but I'm willing to just sleep but I'd like to hold her and stop shivering under some vast dark brown Mexican Blanket with Cruz too, on the other side, to chaperone, I just wanta stop this insane wandering in the streets—

No soap, at the end of the village, in the final house, beyond which is fields of dumps and distant Church tops and the bleary city, we go in—

What a scene! I jump to rejoice to see a huge bed—
'We're coming to sleep here!'

But in the bed is a big fat woman with black hair, and beside her some guy with a ski cap, both awake, and simultaneously a brunette girl looking like some artist gal, beatnik gal, in Greenwich Village comes in—Then I see ten, maybe eight other people all milling around in the corners with spoons and matches—One of them is a typical junkey, that rugged tenderness, those rough and suffering features covered with a grey sick slick, the eyes certainly alert, the mouth alert, hat, suit, watch, spoon, heroin, working swiftly at shots—Everybody is shooting up—Tristessa is called by one of the men and she rolls up her coat sleeve—Cruz too—The ski cap has jumped out of bed and is doing the same—The Greenwich Village gal has somehow slipped into the bed, at the foot, got her big sensuous body under the sheets from the

other end, and lies there, glad, on a pillow, watching— People come in and out from the village outdoors—I expect to get a shot too and I say to one of the cats ‘Poquito gote,’ which I imagine means little taste, but really means ‘little leak’—Leak indeed, I get nothing, all my money’s gone—

The activity is furious, interesting, human, I watch truly amazed, stoned as I am I can see this must be the biggest junk den in Latin America—What interesting types!—Tristessa in talking a mile a minute—The behatted junkey with rough and tender features, with little sandy moustache and faintly blue eyes and high cheekbones, is a Mexican, but looks just like any junkey in New York—He won’t give me a shot either—I just sit and wait—At my feet I have a half full bottle of beer Tristessa had bought me en route, which I’d cached in clothes, now I sip it in front of all these junkies and that finishes my chances—I keep a sharp eye on the bed expecting the fat lady to get up and leave, and the artist gal at her feet, but only the men hustle and dress and get out and finally we leave too—

‘Where we goin?’

We walk outa there through a saddler’s prompt line of crossed sword eyes of miux ow you know, the old gauntlet line, of respectable bourgeois Mexica is in the morning, but nobody stops us, no cops, we stumble out and down a narrow dirt street and up to another door and inside a little old court where an old man is sweeping with a broom and inside you hear many voices—

He pleads with me with his eyes about something, like, ‘Don’t start trouble,’ I make the sign ‘ME start trouble?’ but he insists so I hesitate to go in but Tristessa and Cruz drag me confidently and I look back at the old man who has given his

consent but is still pleading with his eyes—Great God, he knew!

The place is a kind of unofficial morning snort-bar, Cruz goes into dark noisy interiors and comes out with a kind of weak anisette in a waterglass and I taste—I don't want any particularly—I just stand against the dove wall looking at the yellow light—Cruz looks absolutely crazy now, with hairy bestial nostrils like in Orozco, the women screaming in revolutions, but nevertheless she manages to look dainty too—Besides she is a dainty little person, I mean her heart, all night long she has been very nice to me and she likes me—In fact she'd screamed in a drunk one time 'Tristessa you're jealous because Yack wanted to marry me!'—and but she knows I love unlovable Tristessa—so she's sistered me and I liked it—some people have vibrations that come straight from the vibrating heart of the sun, unjaded . . .

But as we're standing there Tristessa suddenly says: 'Yack' (me) 'all night'—and she starts imitating my shiver in the all-night street, at first I laugh, sun's yellow hot now on my coat, but I feel alarmed to see her imitate my shiver with such convulsive earnestness and Cruz notices too and says 'Stop, Tristessa!' but she goes on, her eyes wild and white, shivering her thin body in the coat, her legs begin to crumple—I reach out laughing, 'Ah, come on'—she gets more shivery and convulsive and suddenly (as I'm thinking 'How can she love me making fun of me *seriously* like that') she starts to fall, which imitation is going too far, I try to grab her, she bends way down to the ground and hangs a minute (just like descriptions Bull had just given me of heroin addicts nodding down to their shoetops on Fifth Avenue in the twenties era, way down till their head hung completely from the necks and there was nowhere to go but up or flat down on the head)

and to my pain and crash Tristessa just bonks her skull and falls headlong on it right on the harsh stone and collapses.

'*Oh no, Tristessa!*' I cry and grab her under the arms and twist her over and sit her in my haunches as I hunch against the wall—She is breathing heavily and suddenly I see blood all over her coat—

'She's dying,' I think, 'suddenly she's decided now to die . . . This insane morning, this insane minute'—And here's the old man with the leading eyes still looking at me with his broom and men and women going in for anisette stepping right over us (with gingerly unconcern but slowly, scarcely glancing down)—I put my head to hers, cheek to cheek, and hold her tight, and say '*Non non non non,*' and what I mean is 'Dont die'—Cruz is on the ground with us on the other side, crying—I hold Tristessa by her litle ribs and pray—Blood now trickles out of her nose and mouth—

No one's gonna move us outa that doorway—this I swear—

I realize I'm there to refuse to let her die—

We get water, on my big red bandana, and mop her a little—After whiles of convulsive shuddering suddenly she becomes extremely calm and opens her eyes and even looks up—She won't die—I feel it, she wont die, not in my arms nor right now, but I feel too, 'she must know that I refused and now she'll be expecting me to show her something better than that—than death's eternal ecstasy'—O Golden Eternity, and as I know death is best but 'Non, I love you, dont die, dont leave me. . . . I love you too much'—'Because I love you isnt that enough reason to try to live?'—O the gruesome destiny of we human beings, each one of us will suddenly at some terrible moment die and frighten all our lovers and carrion the world—and crack the world

—and all the heroin addicts in all the yellow cities and sandy deserts cannot care—and they'll die too—

Tristessa now tries to get up, I raise her by little broken armpits, she leans, we adjust her coat, poor coat, we wipe off a little blood—Start off—Start off in the yellow Mexican morning, not dead—I let her walk by herself ahead of us, lead the Way, she does so through incredibly dirty staring streets full of dead dogs, past gawking children and old women and old men in dirty rags, out to a field of rocks, across that we stumble—Slowly—I can sense it now in her silence, '*This is what you give me instead of death?*'—I try to know what to give her instead—No such thing better than death—All I can do is stumble behind her, sometimes I briefly lead the way but I'm not much the figure of the man, The Man Who Leads The Way—But I know she is dying now, either from epilepsy or heart, shock, or goofball convulsion, and because of that no landlady is going to stop me from taking her home to my room on the roof and letting her sleep and rest under my open sleep bag, with Cruz and me both—I tell her that, we get a cab and start to Bull's—We get off there, they wait in the cab as I knock on his window for the money for the cab—

'*You cant bring Cruz here!*' he yells. 'Neither one of em!' He hands me the money, I pay the cab, the girls get out, and there's Bull big sleepy face in the door saying 'No No—the kitchen is full of women, they'll never let you through!'

'But she's *dying!* I've got to take care of her!'

I turn and I see both their coats, the back of their coats, have majestically Mexicanly womanly turned, with immense dignity, streaks of dust and all street plaster and all, together, the two ladies go down the sidewalk slowly, the way Mexican women aye French-Canadian women go to church in the

morning—There is something unalterable in the way both their coats have turned on the women in the kitchen, on Bull's worried face, on me—I run after them—Tristessa looks at me seriously: 'I go down to Indio for to get a shot,' and in that way, that normal way she always says that, as if (I guess, I'm a liar, watch out!) as if she means it and really wants to go and get that shot—

And I had said to her 'I wanta sleep where you sleep to-night,' but fat chance of me getting into Indio's or even herself, his wife hates her—They walk majestically, I hesitate majestically, with majestic cowardice, fearing the women in the kitchen who have barred Tristessa from the house (for breaking everything in her goofball fits) and barred her above all from passing through that kitchen (the only way to my room) up narrow ivory-tower winding iron steps that shiver and shake—

'They'd never let you through!' yells Bull from the door. 'Let em go!'

One of the landladies is on the sidewalk, I'm too ashamed and drunk to look her in the eye—

'But I'll tell them she's dying!'

'Come *in* here! Come *in* here!' yells Bull.

I turn, they've got their bus at the corner, she's gone—

Either she'll die in my arms or I'll hear about it—

What shroud was the reason why darkness and heaven commingled to come and lay the mantle of sorrow on the hearts of Bull, El Indio and me, who all three love her and weep in our thoughts and know she will die—Three men, from three different nations, in the yellow morning of black shawls, what was the angelic demonic power that devised this?—What's going to happen?

At night little Mexican cop whistles blow that all is well,

and all is all wrong, all is tragic, I dont know what to say.

I'm only waiting to see her again——

And only last year she'd stood in my room and said 'A friend is better than pesos, a friend that geev it to you in the bed,' when still she believed anyway we'd get our tortured bellies together and get rid of some of the pain——Now too late, too late——

In my room at night, the door open, I watch to see her come in, as if she could 'get through that kitchen of women——And for me to go looking for her in Mexico Thieves' Market, that's I suppose what I'll have to do——

Liar! Liar! I'm a liar!

And supposing I go find her and she wants to hit me over the head again, I know it's not her it's the goofballs——but where could I take her, and what would it solve to sleep with her?——a softest kiss from pale-rosest lips I did get, in the street, another one of those and I'm gone——

My poems stolen, my money stolen, my Tristessa dying, Mexican buses trying to run me down, grit in the sky, agh, I never dreamed it could be this bad——

And she hates me——Why does she hate me?

Because I'm so smart.

'As sure as you're sittin there,' Bull keeps saying since that morning, 'Tristessa'll be back tapping on that window on the thirteenth for money for her connection'——

He wants her to come back——

El Indio comes over, in black hat, sad, manly, Mayan stern, preoccupied, 'Where is Tristessa?' I ask, he says, hands out, 'I dont know.'

Her blood is on my pants like my conscience——

But she comes back sooner than we expect, on the night of the ninth—Right while we're sitting there talking about her—She taps on the window but not only that reaches in a crazy brown hand through the old hole (where El Indio's a month ago, put his fist through in a rage over junklessness), she grabs the great rosy curtains that Bull junkey-wise hangs from ceiling to sill, she shivers and shakes them and sweeps them aside and looks in and as if to see we're not sneaking morphine shots on her—The first thing she sees is my smiling turned face—It must of disgusted the hell out of her—'Boo!—Boo!—'

Boo hastily dresses to go out and talk to her in the bar across the street, she's not allowed in the house.

'Aw let her in.'

'I cant.'

We both go out, I first while he locks, and there confronted by my 'great love' on the sidewalk in the dim evening lights all I can do is shuffle awhile and wait in the line of time—'How you?' I do say—

'Okay.'

Her left side of face is one big dirty bandage with black caked blood, she has it hidden under her head-shawl, holds it draped there—

'Where that happen, with me?'

'No, after I leave you, *tree times* I fall'— She holds up threc fingers—She's had three further convulsions—The cotton batting hangs down and there are long strip tails down to almost her chin—She would look awful if she wasnt holy Tristessa—

Bull comes out and slowly we go across the street to the bar, I run to her other side to gentleman her, O what an old sister I am—It's like Hong Kong, the poorest sampan maids

and mothers of the river in Chinese slacks propelling with the Venetian steer-pole and no rice in the bowl, even they, in fact they especially, have their pride and would put down an old sister like me and O their beautiful little cans in sleek shiny silk, O——their sad faces, high cheekbones, brown colour eyes, they look at me in the night, at all Johns in the night, it's their last resort——O I wish I could write!—— Only a beautiful poem could do it!

How frail, beat, final, is Tristessa as we load her into the quiet hostile bar where Madame X sits counting her pesos in the back room, facing all, and lil moustachio'd anxious bartender darts furtively to serve us, and I offer Tristessa a chair that will hide her sad mutilated face from Madame X but she refuses and sits any old way——What a threesome in a bar usually reserved for Army officers and Mex businessmen foaming their moustaches at mugs of an afternoon!——Tall bony frightening humpbacked Bull (what do the Mexicans think of him?) with his owlish glasses and his slow shaky but firm-going walk and me the baggy-trouserred gringo jerk with combed hair and blood and paint on his jeans, and she, Tristessa, wrapped in a purple shawl, skinny, poor, like a vendor of lotteria tickets in the street, like doom in Mexico——I order a glass of beer to make it look good, Bull condescends to coffee, the waiter is nervous——

O headache, but there she is sitting next to me, I drink her in——Occasionally she turns those purple eyes at me——She is sick and wants a shot, Bull no got——But she will now go get three gramos on the black market——I show her the pictures I've been painting, of Bull in his chair in purple celestial opium pyjamas, of me and my first wife ('Mi primera esposa,' she makes no comment, her eyes look briefly at each picture)——Finally when I show her my painting, 'candle

burning at night', she doesnt even look——They're talking about junk——All the time I feel like taking her in my arms and squeezing her, squeezing that little frail unobtainable not-there body——

The shawl falls a little and her bandage shows in the bar——miserable——I dont know what to do——I begin to get mad——

Finally she's talking about her friend's husband who's put her out of the house that day by calling the cops (he's a cop himself), 'He call cops because I no give im my *body*', she says nastily——

Ah, so she thinks of her body as some prize she shant give away, to hell with her——I pivot in my feelings and brood——I look at her feelingless eyes——

Meanwhile Bull is warning her about goofballs and I remind her that her old ex-lover (now a dead junkey) had told me too never to touch them——Suddenly I look at the wall and there are the pictures of the beautiful broads of the calendar (that Al Damlette had in his room in Frisco, one for each month, over tokay wine we used to revere them), I bring Tristessa's attention to them, she looks away, the bartender notices, I feel like a beast——

And all the previous ensalchichas and papas fritas of the year before, Ah Above, what you doin with your children?——You with your sad compassionate and nay-would-I-ever-say unbeautiful face, what you doin with your stolen children you stole from your mind to think a thought because you were bored or you were Mind——shouldna done it, Lord, Awakenerhood, shouldna played the suffering-and-dying game with the children in your own mind, shouldna slept,

shouldna whistled for the music and danced, alone, on a cloud, yelling to the stars you made, God, but never shoulda thought up and topped up tippy top Toonerville tweeky little sorrowers like us, the children—Poor crying Bull—child, when's sick, and I cry too, and Tristessa who wont even let herself cry. . . .

Oh what was the racket that buffeted and smashed in raging night, to make this oil-puddled world?—

Because Tristessa needs my help but wont take it and I wont give—yet, supposing everybody in the world devoted himself to helping others all day long, because of a dream or a vision of the freedom of eternity, then wouldnt the world be a garden? A Garden of Arden, full of lovers and louts in clouds, young drinkers dreaming and boasting on clouds, gods—Still the gods'd'a fought? Devote themselves to gods-dont-fight and bang! Miss Goofball would ope her rosy lips and kiss in the World all day, and men would sleep—And there wouldnt be men or women, but just one sex, the original sex of the mind—But that day's so close I could snap my finger and it would show, what does *it* care? . . . About this recent little event called the world.

'I love Tristessa,' nevertheless I have the gall to stay and say, to both of them—'I woulda told the landladies I love Tristessa—I can tell them she's sick—She needs help—She can come sleep in my room tonight'—

Bull is alarmed, his mouth opens—O the old cage, he loves her!—You should see her pattering around the room cleaning up while he sits and cuts up his junk with a razor-blade, or just sits saying 'M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m' in long low groans that arent groans but his message and song, now I

begin to realize Tristessa wants Bull to be her husband——

'I wanted Tristessa to be my third wife,' I say later——'I didnt come to Mexico to be told what to do by old sisters? Right in front of the faculty, shooting?——Listen Bull and Tristessa, if Tristessa dont care then I dont care——' At this she looks at me, with surprised not-surprised round she-doesnt-care-eyes——'Give me a shot of morphine so I can think the way you do.'

They promptly give me that, in the room later on, meanwhile I've been drinking mescal again——'All or nothing at all,' says I to Bull, who repeats it——

'I'm not a whore,' I add——And I also want to say 'Tristessa is not a whore,' but I dont want to bring up the subject——Meanwhile she changes completely with her shot, feels better, combs her hair to a beautiful black sheen, washes her blood, washes her whole face and hands in a soapy washtub like Long Jim Beaver up on the Cascades by his campfire——Swoosh——And she rubs the soap thoroughly in her ears and twists fingertips in there and makes squishy sounds, wow, washing, Charley didnt have a beard last night——She cowl her head again with the now-brushed shawl and turns to present us in the light-bulbeu high-ceiling room, a charming Spanish beauty with a little scar on her brow——The colour of her face is really tan (she calls herself dark, 'As Negra as me?') but in the lights that shine her face keeps changing, sometimes it is jet-brown almost black-blue (beautiful), with outlines of sheeny cheek and long sad mouth and the bump on her nose which is like Indian women in the morning in Nogales on a high dry hill, the women of the various guitars——The Castilian touch, though it may be only as Castilian as old Zacatecas it is fitting——She turns, neat, and I notice she *has* no body at all, it is utterly lost in a little skimpy dress,

then I realize she never eats, 'her body' (I think) 'must be beautiful'——'beautiful little thing'——

But then Bull explains: 'She dont want love——You put Grace Kelly in this chair, Muckymuck's morphine on that chair, Jack, I take the morphine, I no take the Grace Kelly.'

'Yes,' asserts Tristessa, 'and me, I no awanta love.'

I dont say nothin about love like I dont start singing 'Love is a completely endless thng, it's the April row when feelers reach for everything' and I dont sing 'Embraceable You' like Frank Sinatra nor that 'Towering Feeling' Vic Damone says 'the touch of your hand upon my brow, the look in your eyes I see,' wow, no, I wont disagree or agree with this pair of love-thieves, let em get married and get under——go under the sheets——go bateau'ing in Roma——Gallo——anywhere——me, I'm not going to marry Tristessa, Bull is——She putters around him endlessly, how strangely while I'm lying on the bed junk-high she comes over and cleans up the head-board with her thighs practically in my face and I study them and old Bull is watching out of the top of his glasses to the side——Min 'n Bill 'n Mamie 'n Ike 'n Maroney Maroney Izzy and Bizzy and Dizzy and Bessy Fall-me-my-closer Martarky and Bee, O god their names, their names, I want their names, Amie 'n Bill, not Amos 'n Andy, open the mayor (my father did love them) open the crocus the mokus in the closet (this Freudian sloop of the mind) (O slip slop) (slap) this old guy that's always——Molly!——Fibber M'Gee be-jesus and Molly——Bull and Tristessa, sitting there in the house all night, moaning over their razor-blades and white junk and pieces of broken mirror to act as the pan (the diamond sharp junk that cuts into glass)——Quiet evenings at home——Clark Gable and Mona Lisa——

Yet——‘Hey, Tristessa, I live with you and Bull pay,’ I say finally——

‘I don’t care,’ she says, turning to me on the stool——‘It’s awright with me.’

‘Wont you at least pay half of her rent?’ asks Bull, noting in his notebook figures he keeps all the time. ‘Will you say yes or no.’

‘You can go see her when you want,’ he adds.

‘No. I want to live with her.’

‘Well, you cant do that—you havent got the money.’

But Tristessa keeps looking at me and I keep staring at her, suddenly we love each other as Bull drones on and I admire her openly and she shines openly——Earlier, I’d grabbed her, when she said ‘You remember everything the other night?’——‘Yes’——‘in the street, how you kiss me’——And I show her how she’d kissed me.

That little gentle brush of the lips on the lips, with just the slightest kiss, to indicate kiss——She’d shined on that one——She didnt care——

She had no money to take the cab home, no bus was running. we had no more money any of us (except money in the bloodbank) money in the mudbank, Charley——‘Yes, I walk home.’

‘Three miles, two miles,’ I say, and there was that long walk through the rain I remembered——‘You can come up there,’ pointing to my room on the roof, ‘I wont bother you, no te molesta.’

‘No te molesta’ but I would let her molest me——Old Bull is glancing over his glasses and paper, I’ve screwed everything up with the mama again, Oedipus Rex, I’ll tear out my eyes in the morning——San Francisco, New York, Padici, Medu, Mantua or anywhere, I’m always the King sucker who

was made out to be the positional son in woman and man relationships, Ahh-yaaaaa——(Indian howl in the night, to campo-country sweet musica)——‘King, bing, I’m always in the way for momma and poppa——When am I gonna be poppa?’

‘No te molesta,’ and too, for Bull, my poppa——I said: ‘I’d have to be a junkey to ‘live with Tristessa, and I cant be a junkey.’

‘Aint nobody knows junkies like another junkey.’

I gulp to hear the truth, too——

‘Besides, too, Tristessa is an old time junkey, like me, she no chicken——in junk——Junkies are very strange persons.’

Then he would launch into a long story about the strange persons he’s known, in Riker’s Island, in Lexington, in New York, in Panama——in Mexico City, in Annapolis——In keeping with his strange history, which included opium dreams of strange tiered racks where girls are being fed opium through dreamy blue tubes, and similar strange episodes like all the innocent *faux pas* he’d made, though always with an evil greed just before it, he’d thrown up at Annapolis after a binge, in the showers, and to conceal it from his officers he’d tried to wash it down with the hot water, with the result the smell permeated ‘all of Bradley Hall’ and there was a beautiful poem written about it in the newspaper of the Navy Goats——He would launch into long stories but she was there and with her he just conducted routine junkey talk in baby Spanish, like, ‘You no go tomorrow good look like that.’

‘Yes, I clean my face now.’

‘It no look good——They take one look at you and they know you takin too many seconal.’

'Yes, I go.'

'I brush your coat——' Bull gets up and helps clean her things——

To me he says, 'Them artists and writers, they dont like to work——Dont believe in work' (as the year before, as Tristessa and Cruz and I chatted gayly with the gaiety I had last year, in the room, he's banging with a Mayan stone statue about the size of a big fist trying to fix the door he'd broken down the night before because he took too many goofballs and went out of his room and locked-clicked the padlock, key in the room and him in his pyjamas at one a.m.)——wow, I do gossip——(So he'd yelled at me 'Come help me fix this door, I cant do this by myself'——'Oh yes you can, I'm talking'——'You artists are all lazy bums').

Now to prove I'm not like that I get up slowly, dizzy from that shot of their love stuff, and get some water in the tin pitcher to heat on the upturned ray-lamp so's Tristessa can have hot water for her wound-wash——but I hand him the pitcher because I cant go through the hassle of balancing it on the flimsy wires and anyway he's the old master Old Wizard old Water Witch Doctor who can do it and wont let me try it——Then I get back on the bed, prostrate——prostrate gland too, as morphine takes all the sex out of your parts and leaves it somewhere else, in your gut——Some people are all guts and no heart——I take heart——You shoot spades——You drink clubs——You blast oranges——I take heart and bat——Two——Three——Ten trillion million dizzying powder of stars fermangitatin in the high blue Jack Shaft——prop——I dont drown no buddies in oil——I got no guts to do it——Got heart not to——But the sex, when the morphine is loosed in your flesh, and slowly spreads, hot, and headies your brain, the sex recedes into the gut,

most junkies are thin, Bull and Tristessa are both bags of bones——

But O the grace of some bones, that milt a little flesh hang-on, like Tristessa, and makes a woman——And Old Bull, spite of his thin hawky body nobody, his grey hair is well slicked and his cheek is youthful and sometimes he looks positively pretty, and in fact Tristessa had finally one night decided to make it and he was there and they made it, good——I wanted some of that too, seein's how Bull didnt rise to the issue except once every twenty years or so——

But no, that's enough, hear no more, Min 'n Molly 'n Bill 'n Gregory Pegory Fibber McGoy, oy, I'd leave them be and go my own way——'Find me a Mimi in Paris, a Nicole, a sweet Tathagata Pure Pretty Piti'——Like poems spoke by old Italians in South American palm mud, flat, who wanta go back to Palabbrio, reggi, and stroll the beauteous bell-ringing girl-walking boulevard and drink aperitif with the coffee muggers of the card street——O movie——A movie by God, showing us him——him——and us showing him——him which is us——for how can there be two, not one? Palm Sunday me that, Bishop San Jose. . . .

I'll go light candles to the Madonna, I'll paint the Madonna, and eat ice cream, benny and bread——'Dope and salt pork,' as Bhikku Booboo said——I'll go to the South of Sicily in the winter, and paint memories of Arles——I'll buy a piano and Mozart me that——I'll write long sad tales about people in the legend of my life——This part is my part of the movie, let's hear yours.

Solo.