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HUBERT
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REQUIEM
FOR A DREAM

A NOVEL



Requiem for a Dream

Hubert Selby, Jr.



*This book is dedicated, with
love, to Bobby, who has found
the only pound of pure—
Faith in a Loving God.*

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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM was originally published in 1978. It is extremely gratifying to know that it is still in print and going into another edition. Also, it is being made into a film, production scheduled to start in the middle of April this year. So the book still lives and breathes (as do I).

For me there is something beautiful and ironic in the fact that all this is happening now, during a time of “unparalleled prosperity.” The Great American Dream is coming true for many. Obviously, I don't believe that to pursue the American Dream is not only futile but self-destructive because ultimately it destroys everything and everyone involved with it. By definition it must, because it nurtures everything except those things that are important: integrity, ethics, truth, our very heart and soul. Why? The reason is simple: because Life/life is giving, not getting.

I am not suggesting we need to give everything to the poor and homeless—the millions of them who are still here in the midst of plenty—put on a hair shirt and go through the streets with a begging bowl. This, in and of itself, is no more nurturing than the pursuit of “getting.” I am not afraid of money and what it can buy. I would love to have a house full of stuff—of course I would need a house first. I have been hungry and see nothing noble in hunger. Neither do I see anything noble in eating high on the hog, though eating is certainly better. But to believe that getting stuff is the purpose and aim of life is madness.

It seems to me that we all have a dream of our own, our own personal vision, our own individual way of giving, but for many reasons we are afraid to pursue it, or to even recognize and accept its existence. But to deny our vision is to sell our soul. Getting is living a lie, turning our back on the truth, and Visions are glimpses of the truth: Obviously nothing external can truly nurture my inner life, my Vision.

What happens when I turn my back on my Vision and spend my time and energy getting the stuff of the American Dream? I become agitated, uncomfortable in my own skin, because the guilt of abandoning my “Self/self,” of deserting my Vision, forces me to apologize for my existence, to need to prove myself by approaching life as if it's a competition. I have to keep getting stuff in an attempt to appease and satisfy that vague sense of discontent that worms its way through me.

Certainly not everyone will experience this torment, but enough do and have no idea what's wrong. I'm sure the psychologists have a term for this free-floating anxiety, but the cause is what's destroying us, not the classification. There are always millions who seem to get away with doing the things that we think abominable, and thrive. It certainly appears that way. Yet I know, absolutely from my experience, that there are no free lunches in this life, and eventually we all have to accept full and total responsibility for our actions, everything we have done, and have not done.

This book is about four individuals who pursued The American Dream, and the results of the

pursuit. They did not know the difference between the Vision in their hearts and the illusion of the American Dream. In pursuing the lie of illusion, they made it impossible to experience the truth of their Vision. As a result everything of value was lost.

Unfortunately, I suspect there never will be a requiem for *the* Dream, simply because it will destroy us before we have the opportunity to mourn its passing. Perhaps time will prove me wrong. As Mr. Hemingway said: “Isn’t it pretty to think so?”

—Hubert Selby, Jr.

Los Angeles

1999

Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it ...

Psalm 127:1

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:5,6

HARRY LOCKED HIS MOTHER in the closet. Harold. Please. Not again the TV. Okay, okay, Harry opened the door, then stop playin games with my head. He started walking across the room toward the television set. And dont bug me. He yanked the plug out of the socket and disconnected the rabbit ears. Sara went back into the closet and closed the door. Harry stared at the closet for a moment. So okay stay. He started to push the set, on its stand, when it stopped with a jerk, the set almost falling. What the hells goin on here? He looked down and saw a bicycle chain going from a steel eye on the side of the set to the radiator. He stared at the closet. Whatta ya tryin to do, eh? Whats with this chain? You tryin to get me to break my own mothers set? or break the radiator?—she sat mutely on the closet floor—an maybe blow up the whole house? You tryin to make me a killer? Your own son? your own flesh and blood? WHATTA YA DOIN TA ME???? Harry was standing in front of the closet. YOUR OWN SON!!!! A thin key slowly peeked out from under the closet door. Harry worked it out with his fingernail then yanked it up. Why do you always gotta play games with my head for kristssakes always laying some heavy guilt shit on me? Dont you have any consideration for my feelings? Why do you haveta make my life so difficult? Why do—Harold, I wouldnt. The chain isnt for you. The robbers. Then why didnt you tell me? The set almost fell. I coulda had a heart attack. Sara was shaking her head in the darkness. You should be well Harold. Then why wont you come out? Harry tugging on the door and rattling the knob, but it was locked on the inside. Harry threw his hands up in despair and disgust. See what I mean? See how you always gotta upset me? He walked back to the set and unlocked the chain, then turned back to the closet. Why do you haveta make such a big deal outta this eh? Just ta lay that guilt shit on me, right? Right????—Sara continued rocking back and forth—you know youll have the set back in a couple a hours but ya gotta make me feel guilty. He continued to look at the closet—Sara silent and rocking—then threw up his hands, Eh, screw it, and pushed the set carefully, out of the apartment. Sara heard the set being rolled across the floor, heard the door open and close, and sat with her eyes closed rocking back and forth. It wasnt happening. She didnt see it. It wasnt happening. She told her husband Seymour, dead these years, it wasnt happening. And if it should be happening it would be alright, so dont worry Seymour. This is like a commercial break. Soon the program will be back on and youll see, theyll make it nice Seymour. Itll all work out. You see already. In the end its all nice.

Harrys partner, a black guy name Tyrone C. Love—Thas right jim, thats mah name an ah love nobody but Tyrone C.—was waiting for him in the hallway, chewing a Snickers candy bar. They got the set out of the building without any trouble, Harry saying hello to all the *yentas* sitting by the building getting the sun. But now came the hard part. Pushing that damn thing the three blocks to the hock shop without it getting ripped off, or getting knocked over by some dumb ass kid, or being tipped over by running into a hole in the ground or bumping into a lump of litter, or just having the goddam table collapse, took patience and perseverance. Tyrone steadied the set as Harry pushed and steered

Tyrone acting as lookout and warning Harry of the large hunks of paper and bags of garbage that might prove hazardous to the swift and safe completion of their appointed mission. They each grabbed an end as they eased it off the curb and up onto the other side of the street. Tyrone tilted his head and looked the set over. Sheeit, this mutha startin to look a little seedy man. Whats the matta, ya particular all of a sudden? Hey baby, ah dont much care if its growin hair just sos we gets our braid.

Mr. Rabinowitz shook his head as he watched them push the set into his pawn shop. So look, the table too already. Hey, what do you want from me? I cant *schlep* it on my back. You got a friend. He could help already. Hey mah man, ah aint mah lepers *schlepper*. Harry chuckled and shook his head. Whatta jew. Anyway, it makes it easier to get it home. Thats mah man, always thinkin of his mom. Oi, such a son. A *goniff*. Shes needin you like a moose needs a hat rack. Come on Abe, we/re in a hurry. Just give us the bread. Hurry, hurry. All the time in a hurry, shuffling around behind the counter, inspecting the pencils carefully before picking one out to use. You got such big things to do the void is falling apart if everything isnt dont yesterday. He clucked his tongue, shook his head, and slowly counted the money ... twice ... three times—Hey, comeon Abe, lets get with it. You dig this dude jim? Hes lickin them fingers and countin that braid ovah and ovah like its gonna change numbers. He dont even trus his ownself. Damn.

Mr. Rabinowitz gave the money to Harry and Harry signed the book. Do for me a favor and veer it over there?

Sheeit. You know somethin jim, evertime I see you I work mah pretty little ass off. They pushed the set to the corner and split.

Mr. Rabinowitz watched, shaking his head and clucking his tongue, then sighed, Something wrong ... it just aint kosher already, it just aint kosher.

Sheeit. Why you wanna go there man? Why do I wanta go there? Because they give blue chip stamps with the dope. You know somthin Harry? You is simple minded. You shouldnt fuck aroun when you talkin about somethin serious like dope man. Aspecially when you be talkin about mah dope. You know I'm not carin about. Just mine. And whats so great about the dope here? O man, what you mean. Theys just as many connections right here as there. We could even try somebody new. New? Yeah baby. We could jus ease on down the street and see who have the most fingers up their nose and noddin out an we know where the *good* dope be, ah mean the outta sight shit jim. An anyways, we save the cab fare. Cab fare? Who died and left you rich? This moneys goin for dope man. It aint goin for no cab. Ya gotta take care a necessities before ya fuck with luxuries.

Sheeit. You aspect me to ride them mutha fuckin subways with all them poiverts and winos. Damn. You outta your mine. They rip you off before you gets anywheres. Hey man, dont go pullin that lazy ass ol black joe shit on me. Tyrone chuckled, Man, if ah gotta do some travelin then let me call mah man Brody and see what he got. Gimme a dime. Goddamn it man, since when do you need

dime to make a call. Hey baby, ah dont fuck with no phone company. Harry leaned against the phone booth as Tyrone hunched himself around the phone and spoke conspiratorially. After a minute or so he hung up the phone and stepped forth from the booth, a huge grin on his face. Hey man, close ya mouth its hurtin my eyes. You pale-assed mutha fucka. You shure wouldnt make it in no cotton fields. Tyrone started walking and Harry fell in alongside him. So whats happenin? Mah man got some dynamite shit baby an wes gonna get us a spoon. They walked up the stairs from the subway separately. Harry looked around for a moment as Tyrone continued down the street, then went to the coffee shop a few doors away. The neighborhood was absolutely and completely black. Even the plain clothesmen were black. Harry always felt a little conspicuous in the coffee shop sipping light coffee and eating a chocolate doughnut. This was the only drag about copping from Brody. He usually had good shit but Harry couldnt go any further than the coffee shop or they would blow the whole scene, what was almost as bad, he might get his head laid open. Actually the smart thing to do, the real smart thing to do, would be to stay uptown, but Harry couldnt bear to be that far away from the money and the shit. It was bad enough sitting here feeling his stomach muscles tighten and that anxiety crawl through his body and the taste twitch the back of his throat, but it was a million times better than not being here.

He ordered another cup of coffee and doughnut and turned in the stool slightly as a cop, blacker than his doughnut and bigger than a goddamn Mack truck, sat next to him. Jesus krist, just my fuckin luck. Try to relax and enjoy a cup of coffee and a fuckin baboon has to sit next to me. Shit! He sipped his coffee and looked at the gun in the holster wondering what would happen if he suddenly yanked the gun out and started shooting, pow, pow, and blow the mother fuckers head right the fuck off the table. He tossed a bill on the counter and tell the chick to keep the change and stroll out or maybe just ease the gun out and then hand it to the cop and ask him if it was his, I just found it on the floor and I thought maybe you misplaced your gun, or what would really be a gasser would be to sneak the fuckin thing out and mail it to the commissioner with a little note how a couple a guys got burned with it and maybe he should take better care a his toys ... yeah, that would be a gasser and he looked at the huge son of a bitch sitting next to him as he fat mouthed with the chick behind the counter and laughed his big black ass off and Harry chuckled to himself and wondered what the cop would think if he knew that his life was in Harrys hands and then Harry noticed the size of the hand holding the coffee cup and realized that it was bigger than a fuckin basketball and he stuffed the rest of the doughnut in his mouth and swished it down with the coffee and strolled out of the coffee shop, slowly, still feeling the mountain of a fuzz behind him, as Tyrone bebopped his way down the subway steps.

Tyrones pad wasnt much more than a room with a sink. They sat around the small table, the water works in a glass, the water tinged pink with blood, their heads hanging loose from their necks, their hands hanging loose from their wrists, their fingers barely holding their cigarettes. Occasionally a finger probed a nostril. Their voices came low and weak from their throats. Sheeit, thats some bo

scag baby. I mean *dyn a mite*. Yeah man, its really somethin else. Harrys cigarette burned his fingers and he dropped it, Shit, then slowly bent over and looked at it for a minute, his hand hanging over then finally picked it up, looked at it, then gradually worked a fresh cigarette out of his pack and in his mouth and lit it with the old one, dropped the butt in the ashtray, then licked the burned spot on his fingers. He stared at the tip of his shoes for a moment, then another ... they looked good, sort of so the way they—a huge roach attracted his attention as it belligerently marched by, and by the time he thought of trying to step on it it disappeared under the molding. Just as well, that sonofabitch might put a hole in my shoe. He tugged his arm up and then his hand and took a drag of his cigarette. Harry took another long drag on his cigarette and inhaled it slowly and deeply, tasting each particle of smoke and savoring the way it seemed to titillate his tonsils and throat, krist it tasted good. There was something about smack that made a cigarette taste so fuckin good. Ya know what we oughtta do man? Huh? We oughtta get a piece a this shit and cut it and off half of it, ya dig? Yeah baby, this stuffs good enough to cut in half and still get you wasted. Yeah, we/d just take a taste for ourselves and off the rest. We could double our money. Easy. Thas right baby. An then we buys a couple a pieces an we go somethin else goin man. It sure would be righteous baby. All we gotta do is cool it with the shit, you know, just a taste once in a while but no heavy shit—Right on baby—just enough to stay straight and we/d have a fuckin bundle in no time. You bet your sweet ass. Those bucks would just be pilin up time we was ass deep in braid jim. Thats right man, and we wouldnt fuck it up like those other assholes. We wont get strung out and blow it. We/d be cool and take care a business and in no time we/d get a pour of pure and just sit back and count the bread. No hustlin the fuckin streets. You goddamn right mutha fucka. We get it right from the *eyetalians* and cut it our ownelves and get us some runy nosed doofians to hustle it for us an we jus sit back countin them bucks and drivin a big ass pink mutha fucka El Dorado. Yeah, and I/ll get a chauffers uniform and drive your black ass all over town. An you better hold that mutha fuckin door jim or I/ll burn your ass. ... O yeah, mah names *Tyrone C. Love* and I loves *nobody* but *Tyrone C.* Well, it ain't no *Tyrone C.* Im gonta love. Im gonta get me a fine pad by Central Park man and just spend my time sniffin all that fine quiff walkin by. Sheeit ... what you gonna do with that man. You done doogied out your dong. Im just gonta lay down beside it and pet the man and maybe just sort of nibble on it once in a while. Damn. Now aint this a muthafuckin sham? This dudes gonna lay up in some fine pad with some fine fox and hes gonna go stickin his nose in the nasty thang. So what do you want from me, I like to knosh. A little chopped liver, a little smoked fish, a—Gawddamn, but you a nasty mutha fucka. Thas the trouble with you ofays man, you dont know what to do with a fox. Shit man, we know what to do. Its you fuckin Africans who dont have any table manners ...why do ya think the Jewish guys get all the broads? It aint got nothing ta do with money. Its because we/re knoshers. Sheeit, you just a missin dick fool man. Afta ah has mah tailor measure me for a few more suits ahm goin back to the pad and have me a stable of foxes jim that make your knees buckle. Ah mean theys gonna be real fine. An Im gonna have a different color for everyday :

the week. How long ya figure itll take us before we can go for a pound of pure? Sheeit man. That ain't nothin. We get out there an hustle up a couple a yards for a piece an we on our way. By Christmas we be sittin back countin those bucks and talkin that trash. Merry Christmas man. Harrys cigarette burned his fingers, Shit, and he dropped it, son of a bitch.

Two young kids from the neighborhood went to the hock shop with Sara. Mr. Rabinowitz shuffled around the counter, Good evening Mrs. Goldfarb. Good evening Mr. Rabinowitz, though I'm not sure how good it is. And you? Uh, he half closed his eyes, hunched his shoulders and tilted his head, what could I say? Im alone in the store all day and mine wife is shopping mit our daughter Rachel for little Izzy something and still not home yet. For lunch Im having cold tongue, mit out da rye. ... Im having some mustard and harseradish, but mit out da rye already, oi ... he shrugged, tilted and peered again, but for supper maybe Im having cold soup if she still not home, are you vanting your TV? How old is little Izzy now? O, hes so cute I could just take hunks and bits out of those chubby little legs. Yes, if you dont mind. I have these nice young boys to push it home for me—such nice boys to help a poor mother—thank God he took the stand too so it makes it easier to get back. I only have three dollars now but next week Im—So take it, take, shrugging and tilting his head, and veal hope he doesnt take it again before you pay for this time, not like the time he stole already the set three times in vun month and it vas how long before youre paying it off? Izzy is being a whole year next week Tuesday. Oooo, Sara sighed long and deep, it seems like only yesterday Rachel was playing dolls and now ... Sara gave the three dollars, that had been folded and carefully tucked in the corner of her blouse, to Mr. Rabinowitz, and he shuffled behind the counter and put it in his cash register and carefully made an entry in a small book with the title, SARA GOLDFARB'S TV, on the cover. There were endless pages of entries and dates, covering the last few years, of money given Harry for the set and the payments his mother made after redeeming it. The two kids had started pushing the set, and the table, out to the street. Mrs. Goldfarb, can I ask of you a question, you vont be taking git personal? Sara shrugged, How many years we know each other? He nodded his head up and down up and down up and down, Whos to count? Vy dont you tell already the police so maybe they could talk to Harry and he wouldnt be stealing no more the TV, or maybe they send him somewhere for a few months he can tink and ven hes coming out hes already a good boy and takes care of you and no more all the time taking the TV? Oooo, another long and deep sigh, Mr. Rabinowitz, I couldnt, clutching her breast more fervently, Harolds my only child, and only relative. Hes all I have. Everyone else is dead. Theres only Harry and me ... my son, my boobala. And who knows how much time I have left—Ah, a young woman—she waved away his remark, to help my son. Hes the end of the line. The last of the Goldfarbs. How could I make him a criminal? They would put him with such terrible people where he could learn such terrible things. No, hes young. Hes a good boy my Harold. Hes just a little mischievous. Someday he'll meet a nice young Jewish girl and he'll settle down and make me a grandmother.

Goodbye Mr. Rabinowitz, waving as she walked toward the door, say hello to Mrs. Rabinowitz. Be careful going out the door boys. Abe Rabinowitz nodded as he watched her go out, the two boys pushing the set, then watched them go slowly up the street, past his cloudy windows, and then out of sight. He stopped nodding and shook his head, Oi, such a life. I hope she gets home already. I'm wanting cold soup. A man my age is needing hot food for his stomach and hot water for his feet. Cold mine feet. Ahhhhhhh ... such a life. *Tsouris ... tsouris ...*

After the young boys left Sara Goldfarb chained the TV to the radiator again. She turned on the set, adjusted the antenna, then sat down in her viewing chair and watched a series of Proctor and Gambro commercials and parts of a soap opera. She pulled her lips back as people brushed their teeth and ran their tongues over their teeth to be sure there was no telltale film, and felt a joy when that cutie pie little boy didn't have any cavities but he seemed so thin, he needs more meat on his bones. He shouldn't have any cavities, thank God, but he should have more meat on his bones. Like my Harold. So thin. I'll tell him, eat, eat, I see your bones. Fa kists sake, that's my fingers. Whatta ya want, festoons of fat hanging from my fingers? I just want you to be healthy, you shouldn't be so skinny. You should drink milk. Hamalted. Malted, schmalted, eh? I wonder if Harold has any cavities? His teeth didn't look so good. He smokes so many cigarettes. He pulled his lips back from his teeth again. Such nice white teeth. Maybe someday he'll grow up and smoke and have yellow teeth like my Harold. They should never have cavities, and she continued to stare at the set as boxes of detergent exploded into dazzling white clothes and bottles of household cleaner exploded into exotic fag characters who wiped all evidence of humanity off walls and floors and the tired husband comes home from a tough day on the job and is overwhelmed by the dazzling clothes and sparkling floor that he forgets all about the worries of the world and he picks up his wife—O, is she thin. You'd have to be careful she doesn't break. But she's so sweet looking. A nice girl. Keeps a clean house. My Harold should find such a girl. A nice young Jewish girl like that. The husband picked up his wife and spun her around and they ended up stretching out on the sparkling and dazzling bright kitchen floor and Sara leaned forward in her chair thinking that maybe something interesting was going to happen but all they did was look at their reflections in the linoleum; and then the TV dinners were artistically arranged on the table and the wife smiled at Sara, that sly, we have a secret kind of smile, when the husband exclaimed enthusiastically what a great cook she is and Sara smiled and winked and didn't tell that it was a TV dinner and the happy couple looked into each other's eyes as they ate their dinner, and Sara was so happy for them, she checked her money and realized she would have to go without lunch for a few days, but it was worth it to have the TV set. It wasn't the first time she gave up a meal for her set; and then the scene changed and a car drove up to a hospital and a worried mother hurried through the antiseptic and quiet corridors to a grave countenanced doctor who discussed the condition of her son and what they would have to do in order to save the boy's life and Sara leaned forward in her chair looking and listening.

intently, empathizing with the mother and feeling more and more anxious as the doctor explained, in painful detail, the possibilities of failure, O my God, that's terrible ... so terrible. The doctor finished explaining all the alternatives to the mother and watched her as she wrestled with the decision whether or not to allow the doctor to operate and Sara was leaning as far forward as she could clutching her hands together, Let him. ... Yes, yes. He's a good doctor. You should see what he did for that little girl yesterday. Such a surgeon. A crackerjack. The woman finally nodded her assent as she wiped at tears streaming down her face, Good, good. You have a good cry dolly. He'll save your son. You'll see. I'm telling you. Such a surgeon. Sara stared as the woman's face got larger and larger and the fear and tension were so obvious that Sara trembled slightly. When the scene changed to the operating room Sara quickly looked at her clock and sighed with relief when she saw that there was only a few minutes to go and soon the mother would be smiling and happy as she looked at her son with the doctor telling her it's all over and he's going to be alright, and then a minute after that we would see them outside of the hospital again but this time the boy would be walking with the mother—no, no, he would be in a wheelchair—to the car and everybody would be happy as he got into the car and the car drove off, the doctor watching them from the window of his office. Sara sat back and smiled, and relaxed with the inner knowledge that everything would be alright. Her Harry is a little mischief sometimes, but he's a good boy. Everything will be alright. Some day he'll meet a nice girl and he'll settle down and make me a grandmother.

THE SUN WAS DOWN which made it night time, but Harry and Tyrone were bugged with all the light that stabbed and slashed and skewered their eyeballs. They hung tough behind their shades. Daytime is a drag, when the sun is shining, the sunlight bouncing off windows and cars and buildings and the sidewalk and the goddamn glare pushing on your eyeballs like two big thumbs and you look forward to the night when you can get some relief from the assaults of the day and start to come alive as the moon rises, but you never get the complete relief you look forward to, that you anticipate. You start to feel the apathy of the day start to seep away as the lames and squares all make it home from the 9 to 5 and sit down to a dinner with the wife and kids, the wife lookin like the same beat up broad with haemorrhoids in her face and her ass saggin, dumpin the same old slop on the table and the goddamn house apiece yellin and fightin about whose piece of meat is bigger and who got the most butter and whats for dessert and after dinner he grabs a can a beer and sits in front of the tube and grunts and farts and picks his teeth thinkin that he oughtta go out and get a good piece a ass but too tired and eventually the old lady comes in and flops on the couch and says the same thing every night. Never changes. Watch ya watchin, hon???? By the time that scene is played all over the apple there's a little life in the streets, but theres still those damn lights. Yeah, the lights are a drag, but its a lot better than the sun. Anythings better than that. Especially in the middle of summer. Now you have just said a mouthful mah man. Ah feels like slidin mah pretty little ass to some nice dark corner and groove behind some fine sounds and maybe lay a bad dick on some groovy fox, and ah mean a *bad* mutha fuckin dick jir Jesus krist man, you really got pussy on the mind. Cant you ever think above your navel fa krist's sake Sheeit. What the fuck you talking about man? Jus cause they cut the bone outta yours dont mean diddly to me. Mines still moren just a pee pole. Gahd damn, give me five. Harry slapped the palms of Tyrone's hands and Tyrone slapped Harry's. Well man, we gonta stand here all night and count the cars goin by, or should we try to drum up a little action? O man, what you mean? you know ah caint count O krist, man, why dont you cool it, eh? You think they cut that shit with laughin gas? Anyway, lets go where theres some life. Whatta ya say? Hey baby, Im down. Why dont we make it crosstown to the morgue? Hey, yeah, Angels on duty tonight. Theres always a little action at the morgue. Lets make a baby.

Harry Goldfarb and Tyrone C. Love got on the crosstown bus. Harry started to sit in the front, just behind the driver, and Tyrone grabbed his arm and dragged him out of the seat and shook him, his eyes Step-n-Fetch-It wide, yawl outta yoe mine man? shaking Harry as his body shook, dartin his glances everywhere at once, yawl tryin to get us killed? Yawl tryin to get us lynched from the lamppost? Yawl outta your gawd-damn mine? Hey man, lighten up. Whats with you? Whats with me? —the bus lurched to a stop and they knocked into the railing around the driver and Tyrone jerked the wheel back as he tried to hide behind his shoulder and peer at the people boarding the bus—whats with me? Is you crazy? This here is the south Bronx man, ah mean the *south*, SOUTH, you dig? O shit. Lets make it man. They slunk down the aisle, bouncing off the seats, bowing and scraping, Sorry, sorry. N

offense man. ... The other passengers continued reading their papers, talking, looking out the window reading the advertisements, straining to see the street signs, blowing their nose, cleaning their glasses and staring straight ahead at nothing, as they lurched by. When they reached the rear of the bus they sat down with a long, loud sigh. Hey massa Harry, how come you is a sittin back chere wit us black foke? Well, ahll tell you brother Tyrone, cause under it all ah feels that we is all brothers and under this white skin beats a heart just as black as yours, hahahaha, lay it on me, and they gave each other five. Sheeit baby, you aint white, youse just pale ... and you got to remember baby, beautys only skin deep, but ugllys to the bone, and they gave each other five again. Harry made a telescope with his hands and peered through it at the ads along the side of the bus. What the fuck you doin man? Its the only way to look at an ad, man. You really get to peep the broads without distractions. Harry deepened his voice: Dont be half safe, put Arried under both your arms. Sheeit man, Mums the word. You think Im putting ya on, eh? Go ahead, try it. Its the only way, man. Im tellin ya. All those lovely ads up there and you never noticed them. Harry scanned the ads as a lookout the horizon. Hey, look at that one. I bet you missed it. Does she or doesnt she? Only her gynecologist knows for sure. What he do peepin at her thang. Yeah, it dont mean a swing if you aint got that thang. They stretched out and continued rappin and gooffin on their way to the morgue.

They eased themselves out of the bus and stood on the corner for a moment as the bus roared slowly away and the diesel fumes floated unnoticed around them. They lit cigarettes and savored the deliciousness of the first drag as they looked around before crossing the street. They went down the dimly lit street, around the back, over the low fence and quickly dropped down to the runway leading to the tunnel, then quickly through the tunnel and off to the right in a small, narrow recess and rang the bell with the opening movement of Beethovens Fifth, DA DA DA DAAAAAA. There was an old serial named Spy Smasher, and the opening music for each chapter was the beginning of Beethovens Fifth as a huge V appeared on the screen and the morse signal for v appeared under it, dot dot dash. Angel loved that serial. He thought it was real hip havin Beethoven help them win the war. That was his secret signal for everything. Angel peeped at them for a moment, then opened the door slightly, Hurry up before fresh air gets in here. They slid in and Angel closed the door, shut. The warm, humid summer air was left behind and it was suddenly cool, very cool. They walked past the machinery, up the steel staircase to an office. It was dense with smoke that whirled as the door opened and closed and looked exotic in the blue light. Tony, Fred and Lucy were sitting on the floor, listening to the music from the radio on the desk. Whatta ya say, man? Hey baby, whats happenin? Hows your going sweetheart? Hey, mah man, what's happenin? Things are pretty good Harry. Whats happenin baby? Groovy baby. Harry and Tyrone sat down and leaned against the wall and started to move slightly in time to the music. Any action tonight Angel? Hey man, theres always action here. This is a lively joint when the Angels around, eh? You straight? Not yet. Itll be here soon. Gogit is on his way. Hey, groovy man. He always got some good stuff. The Spy Smasher ring got Angel to his feet and on

of the office. He came back in a minute with Marion and Betty. Hey, whats happenin man? Im cool baby, what goin on? Whatta ya say? Whats shakin baby? Makin it, makin it. You know, same ol thing. They joined the others on the floor, Marion sitting next to Harry. Tyrone looked at Fred, Yo lookin good man. You know me man, strength and health. Watch you do, change embalmers? Sheeit man, theys got stiffs out in them boxes that looks betteran you. Ooooo, thats some deep shit man. sheeit. That dude walk in that room an he scare them stiffs outen here. O man, thats rank. Dont letti shit all overya man, open ya mouth. You know somethin baby, yawls a degenerate. The giggling was becoming laughter and becoming louder and louder. Hey man, who let you out without a leash. Ooo thats—DOT DOT DOT DAAAAAAAASH. Angel spun around and out of the room and the silence maintained itself as effortlessly as it had started as everyone felt that it was Gogit and waited to see him bebop his way through the door. He did. Hey mah man, whaz happenin? Hey baby. Lay it on me jim—*slap*. You straight baby? Sheeit, ahm ah straight? What the fuck yoe think ahm doin here, lookin at the scenery? Yeah, its kindda dead, eh? Ah got some boss shit, man. Ah mean its dy no mite, right from the *eyetalians*. Everybody started taking their money out and Gogit put the heroin on the table and scooped up the money. Lets go git it on. Everyone left the office and started roaming around the dimlit refrigeration room, reaching down cracks, crevices, under floorplates, behind machinery between loose bricks, for their works. No matter how many other sets they might have stashed around town, everyone always had a set stashed in the Bronx County Morgue. They went back to the office, got paper cups filled with water and each one staked out a small portion of the floor for themselves. The radio was still playing but the concentration was so intense that no one heard the music or was aware of anything but their own cooker as they carefully dumped the heroin in it, then added the water and heated it until the dope dissolved, then drew the liquid up through the cotton in the cooker into the dropper, then tied up. Each knew they were not alone in the room, but paid absolutely no attention to what was going on around them. When their favorite vein was ready they tapped the needle into it and watched the first bubble of blood pulse through the fluid and streak to the surface, their eyes glued to it, their senses aware only of the fact that they got a good hit and that their stomachs were churning with anticipation and then they squeezed the bulb and shot the shit into their vein and waited for the first rush and then let the dropper fill with blood again and squeezed that in and then booted again and went with the flow as they flushed and felt the sweat ooze from their skin then filled their dropper with water and let their works set in the cup of water while they leaned back against the wall and lit a cigarette, their movements slow, their eyes half closed, everything inside them quiet and mellow; the air smooth, their lives free from all concerns; their speech slower, quieter. Harry started picking his nose. Hey man, this shit is somethin else. Gogit mah man, you is alright. Yoe gahddamn right ah is. Yoe seen the rest now you sees the best. The laughter and giggling was low and slow, and oooo, so cool. Hey man, pick me a winner. Harrys right pinky was still buried deep in his nose, his brows knitted in deep concentration as he probed, his entire being involved in the sensuous pleasure of the search.

the near orgasmic satisfaction of finding a solid substance to be picked and pried from the dry
sides with the nail, then extracted with care from the darkness of the cavern to the caressing blue light
to be deliciously rolled between the tips of his fingers. The sound of his voice was soothing to his ears
as it reflected an inner peace and contentment. Be cool man. Different strokes for different folks, o
man? Marion kissed Harry on the cheek, I think youre beautiful Hare. I like to see a man enjoy
himself. There was a little more intensity to the laughter, but still low and, ooooo, so slow. Sheeit
whyent chuall leave the dude alone and letim do his thang in peace. It got to be a drag, man, to be
booger freak. Yeah, anytime he wants to lose ten pounds he just picks his nose. I should tell my sister
that. She makes two of me. She really gets up tight when she sees me. Well baby, yawl just turn her o
to some smack and her butter ball ass go right down the drain and ah mean right now. Hey man, yo
sure you aint finger fuckin yourself? Hey Harry, yawl wanna borrow a finger? Sheeit, whyent chu
get offen his muthafuckin ass? Sheeit, thats as good as pussy, right Harry? Go git it on man, git
on!!! Harry grinned as the others laughed and took time out to take a poke on his cigarette, the
rubbed the tip of his nose with the back of his hand. I should have you all locked up for interferin wi
religious freedom. Betty made the sign of the cross at him, In the name of the father, the son and the
holy booger. Harry joined the laughter and Angel turned the radio up a bit and they gradually starte
nodding and finger poppin in time to the music. Hey Angel, any interesting customers out there? N
theyre all a bunch of stiffs, har, har, har. Angels head was nodding up and down as he continued t
laugh, and when he spoke the words sputtered through his laughter, theyre all a bunch of dead beat
Sheeit, I bet they look better than you baby. Dont say that. I think Angel is cute. Yeah, haha, lik
Count Dracula. I bid you velcome. Drink you blood before it clots. Lucy giggled for a few second
shaking her head, Ah wonder what that dude would do here, hehehe, hed be one hungry mutha. Yo
aint shitin man. Alls he gotta do it bite into Gogit and hed o.d. Thats a funny scene, a strung o
vampire. Harry put his arms around Marion and pulled her close to him, Be cool baby, or I/ll biteya o
the chroat, and started nibbling her neck. She giggled and squirmed and soon they both tired and ju
leaned against the wall, smiling loudly. No kiddin Angel, do ya ever get anything special in here, lik
some young good lookin heads? Sheeit, this muthafuckas a ghoul man. Everyone was giggling an
scratching. Thats okay man, I understand. Some likeim hot and some likeim cold. Hey Gogit, wat
you put into Freds stuff? Marion was giggling and gagging on a mouthful of smoke, Hey Fred, go ov
to the other side of the room. Id feel a lot safer. They were all laughing and gigglin an rubbing the
noses between taking pot shots at Fred and drags on their cigarettes. The smoke was becoming s
thick that the blue light made the room look as if a small part of light blue sky had somehow falle
into the room. Sheeit, ah dont care what was in the stuff, ah wants to know whats he gonna do with i
He got to find it first. There was one here yesterday that was a real doll, man. I mean gorgeous. A re
knockout. A redhead. A real redhead, and built like a brick shithouse. She had a pair like this and a as
that didnt quit. Fred looked and spoke as eagerly as the dope allowed him, No shit man? How old w

she? Hey, what could I tellya? About nineteen or twenty. Sheeit, aint this a bitch? This mutha worryin' how old she is. Hes got scruples man, he dont wanna get caught with anyone underage. Right Fred? Everyone was grinning as broadly as possible and chuckling, their heads bouncing and bobbin'. Where is she? Maybe Fred/d like to meater, MEAT? Betty was shaking her head and chuckling, You dont know something, you guys are sick. Hey, dont knock it. Its ecologically sound. Ya gotta recycle everything man. The faces still grinned and the heads still bobbed and the laughter got a little louder. Sheeit, yoe honky ass mutha fuckas is weird jim, ah mean weird. Yawl sound like a bunch a guhns, damn cannibals. Hey man, whats all the static? I was just askin a friendly question. The laughter was getting a little louder and a little more energetic. Watch she die of? Who said she was dead? She was a visitor, har, har, har. The heads stopped bobbing and started shaking. Thats pretty good, eh? Reall'ly had ya goin, didnt I? Yoe know somethin jim? youse got the right job cause yoe haid is daid baby, aah means daid. A hand reached up and turned the volume of the radio up and the music worked its way through the blue smoke and over the chuckling and laughter. Hey, that's mah man wailin. Everyone was nodding at the lyrics. Yeah, tellem baby, we sure do need someone to lean on. O, lean on me baby, *lean on me!* You dig what that mutha say about her breas be always open? What kind a weirdo is that? she close her legs? Hey Angel, why dont you be cool man. Everyones eyes were half closed from the smoke and dope, and their faces kept twisting and grinning as they leaned into the words. Hey baby, you got some space for me in your parking lot? Fred grinned and made a few clacking noises, and Lucy continued to keep her attention on the stream of smoke bending up from her cigarette, digging for the difference between the color of the smoke coming out of the lit end and the other end. Lay some of that coke and sympathy on me an fine out sucker. There was some giggling, Oooooo, that one bad bitch jim. They were all suddenly silent as they listened through the *dream on* lines, each in their own way thinking they didnt need anyone to dream on, that this boss shit did the job just fine. ...

Then they all twisted into the next lines and giggled and snickered and grinned, Yeah, now you're talkin man, I need someone to cream on. Yeah, do it *to me* baby, uh huuuu. Lucy squinted in Fred's direction, Doan look at me baby, betta see your mammy. The others worked into a slight giggling. Oooooo, she bad jim. Fred giggled as loud as he could, but still couldnt hear it himself. He tried to look at Lucy but couldnt raise his head, saving his energy to poke at his cigarette. The singing continued and they listened and savored each word and rolled it around in their heads. Harry put a new cigarette in his mouth and reached over to take Tyrone's to light it, but Tyrone moved his head away and tossed him a pack of matches. Harry looked at them for a moment, then slowly picked them up and went through the process of taking a match out, igniting it, raising it as high as he could and lowering his head as much as possible, then lighting his cigarette. O yeah, take it all baby, jus do it, fuck with mah haid. O what pleasant *com pan eee*. Hey man, play that again. Why, who do you want to bleed on now? Sheeit, ah doan care just sos it aint mah blood. Man, the only blood I wanna see is my dropper just before I shoot the son of a bitch back in my vein. Sheeit, you got a one track mind

jim. Yeah, and the tracks are all up and down his arm. The giggling and snickering was approaching laughter as they nodded in time to the up tempo music, taking an occasional drag on a cigarette, seeing the drab gray of the concrete floor they were sitting on but not noticing it, involved with how they felt and baby they felt good. The last notes were still in their heads when another tune started. Hey, you dig what they playin? Damn, ah aint heard this since befoe I started shootin stuff. Sheeit, aint no record that ol jim. Marion leaned comfortably into Harrys shoulder, her eyes and face soft in a smile. Remember when we used to dig this cat downtown? Yeah ...The voice so filled with nostalgia that you could almost see the memories floating through *the* blue smoke, memories not only of music and joy and youth, but, perhaps, of dreams. They listened to the music, each hearing it in his own way, feeling relaxed and a part of the music, a part of each other, and almost a part of the world. And so another swinging night in the Bronx County Morgue slowly drifted toward another day.

The phone rang a second time and Sara Goldfarb leaned toward the phone as she continued to adjust the rabbit ears on her set, torn between the need to know who was calling and to get rid of the line that darted, from time to time, across the picture, and she oooed as she tensed and squinted, leaning more and more toward the phone as it rang again, one hand reaching for the phone while the tips of the fingers of the other hand continued to tap the antenna over one centimeter at a time. Im coming, Im coming. Dont hang up, and she lunged at the phone, almost falling down in the middle of the sixth row and flopping on the chair. Hello? Mrs. Goldfarb? Mrs. Sara Goldfarb? Its me. Speaking. The voice was so bright and cheery and so enthusiastic and real that she turned toward the TV set to see if the voice was coming from there. Mrs. Goldfarb, this is Lyle Russel of the McDick Corporation. She looked at the phone. She knew for real that his voice was coming from there, but it sounded just like a television announcer. She kept at least one eye on the television as she listened and spoke to Lyle Russel of the McDick Corporation. Mrs. Goldfarb, how would *you* like to be a contestant on one of televisions most *poignant,most heartwarming* programs? Oooo me? On the television???? She kept looking from the phone to the television, and back again, trying to look at both at the same time. Hahaha, I thought you would Mrs. Goldfarb. I can tell just by the warmth in your voice that you are just the kind of individual we want for our programs. Sara Goldfarb blushed and blinked, I never thought that maybe I would be on the television. Im just a— O haha, I know how you feel Mrs. Goldfarb. Believe me when I say I am just as thrilled as you to be a part of this fantastic industry. I consider myself one of the luckiest men in the world because every day I get a chance to help people just like yourself, Mrs. Goldfarb, to be a part of programming that not only are we proud of but the entire industry—no, the entire nation is proud of. Harrys mother was clutching the top of her dress, feeling her heart palpitate, her eyes blinking with excitement. O, I never dreamed ... Lyle Russels voice became earnest. Very earnest. Mrs. Goldfarb, do you know what programs I am referring to? Do you have any idea? No ... a ...Im watching an Ajax and Im not sure ... On the television???? Mrs. Goldfarb, are you sittin

down? If not, please sit down immediately because when I tell you what programs I am talking about you will be dizzy with joy. Im sitting. Im sitting already, Mrs. Goldfarb I'm talking about none other than ... his voice suddenly stopped and Sara Goldfarb clutched even tighter at the top of her dress and stared wide-eyed at the phone and the television, not sure from which instrument his voice would come. When he spoke his voice was deep, low and full of feeling—Mrs. Goldfarb, we represent the quiz shows on television. Ooooooo ... He waited dramatically as Sara Goldfarb composed herself, her breathing audible over the voices from the television. Lyle Russels voice was authoritatively dramatic. Yes, Mrs. Goldfarb, plus—plus the brand new, I said, brand new, shows that will be on next season—the shows millions of Americans want to be on; *the* shows that are looked forward to anxiously by millions— Me ... me ... on the—O I cant—Yes, Mrs. Goldfarb you. I know how you feel, you are wondering why you should be so lucky when so many millions would give anything to be on one of these shows—O, I cant tell you ... Well, Mrs. Goldfarb, I cant tell you why you are so lucky, I guess its just that God has a special place in his heart for you. Sara Goldfarb fell against the back of the viewing chair, one hand clutching desperately at the phone, the other the top of her dress. Her eyes bulged. Her mouth hung open. For the first time in memory she was unaware of the television. You will receive all necessary information in the mail Mrs. Goldfarb. Goodbye and ... God bless. Click.

Visions of heavenly angels passed before Harrys mother as the psalmist sang so soothingly to her, before the buzzing of the phone in her hand, and the exploding of a bottle of cleaner into a whirlwind tornado, dispersed them. She breathed. Then exhaled. The phone. Yes. The phone goes on the hook. Gets hung up. Aa haaaaaaa. Clunk, clunk. She missed the cradle. She looked at the phone for a minute then picked it up and put it gently on the cradle. On television. O my God, television. What will I wear???? What do I have to wear? I should be wearing a nice dress. Suppose the girdle does not fit? Its so hot. Sara looked at herself then rolled her eyes back and up. Maybe I'll sweat a little bit but I need the girdle. Maybe I should diet? I wont eat. I'll lose thirty pounds before Im on television. The girdle with a girdle Im looking like Spring Boyington ... a little ... sort of ... Hair! I'll get Ada to do my hair. Maybe they do it. Special. O ... I should have asked ... asked who? What was his name? I'll remember, I'll remember. It will come. He said they send me everything in the mail. I look good in the red dress with—No! Red doesnt come so good on the set. Isnt just right, kind of funny and blurry. And shoes and a pocketbook and earrings and necklace and a lace handkerchief O O O O, Sara nodding her head, grabbing her temples and rolling her eyes and lifting her arms, her palms turned upward, then closing her hands in a loose fist and tapping them against each other, then suddenly stopping all movements, sitting stiff in the chair for a moment, I'll look in the closet. Thats what I'll do. The closet. She nodded her head affirmatively and got up and out of her chair and went to the bedroom and started rummaging through her closets, taking dresses off hangers and holding them up in front of her, then tossing them on the bed; crawling around on her hands and knees as she investigated the darkest and remotest corners of the closet, finding almost forgotten shoes and singing in a wordless and

tuneless monotone as she dusted them off and tried pair after pair on, wobbling on some as her callused feet oozed over the sides, attacked the straps, then posed in front of the mirror looking at her shoes and her blue striped and stippled legs. ... O, how she loved her gold shoes, all of them. Finally she couldn't resist. She put on the red dress. I know red doesn't come in so good on the set, but the red dress I like ... I love. She posed, looked over her shoulder into the mirror ... then the other shoulder adjusted the length to various heights, started to try to zip it up but after half an inch and many minutes of exertion and squeezing and stuffing and adjusting she gave it up so she stood with the dress unzipped in front of her mirror, liking what she saw as she looked through eyes of many yesterdays. In herself in the gorgeous red dress and gold shoes she wore when her Harry was bar mitzvahed. Seymour was alive then ... and not even sick ... and her boobala looked so nice in his—Ah, that's gone. No more. Seymour's dead and her—Ah, I'll show Ada how it looks. She held the unzipped back of her dress tightly as she waited for a station break, then went next door to her friend Ada. So where's the party? Party, schmarty. This is like all the parties. When I tell you you'll jump out the window. I'll jump out the basement window I hope. They sat down in the living room, strategically, so each could keep an eye and ear, tuned to the television set while discussing the momentous occasion that brought Sara Goldfarb forth in the gorgeous red dress and gold shoes she wore the day her Harry, her boobala, was bar mitzvahed, an event so important and undreamed of that Sara was in such a state of shock, though ambulatory, she turned down a piece of halvah. Sara told Ada about the phone call and how she was going on television. She, Sara Goldfarb, was going on the television. Ada stared for a moment (with one ear she caught the end of the scene of the soap opera). For real? You wouldn't kid me? Why should I kid you? What am I dressing for, the supermarket? Ada continued to stare (the music told her the commercials were fading out on the scene. She knew instinctively that a commercial was coming on even before there was that sudden increase in volume and explosion on the screen). You want a glass tea? She got up and started for the kitchen. Sara followed. The water was quickly boiled and each had a glass of tea when they returned to the living room, just at the end of the commercials, and sat in the same strategic positions, their ear and eye still tuned to the television, as they discussed and speculated on the enormity of the coming event in the life of Sara Goldfarb, an event of such prodigious proportions and importance that it infused her with a new will to live and materialized a dream that brightened her days and soothed her lonely nights.

HARRY AND TYRONE C. WERE walking through the park, spending most of their energy in trying to avoid the kids who were running around screaming or flying by on skates or a skateboard, never knowing from which end or side the attack might come. Sheeit, I dont know why they got to have a summer vacation. They oughtta keep those little muthas in school *all* the time. You kiddin? theyd tear the school down. This way it saves the taxpayers money. Now aint this a bitch, this muthafucka aint never worked in his natural life an he worried about taxpayers. Hey man, ya gotta worry about those things. Whats the matta with you, aint ya responsible? Oooooo, listen to this shit, this stud has gone and blew his cool. Comeon baby, lets get somethin to eat, youse in serious trouble. They strolled over to a hot dog pushcart and got a couple with onions and mustard and red pepper, and a bottle of soda. When they finished they walked as far as possible from the playground and stretched out on the grass. You know man, I wasnt bullshit about gettin a piece. Hey baby, Im down. Well, then lets stop fuckin around and get with it. Sheeit, get with what? We aint got no braid. No shit? I thought we had money up the gazoo. That the only place we got it. Well lets stop fuckin the duck and figure out how we can pick up the bread. How much do we need? Ah dont know exactly. Couple hundred. Best be going up there with four hundred that way you knows you got enough no matter what comes down. Are you sure Brody can cop a piece for us? Man, what the fuck you talkin about? Course Im sure. Even after he takes his tase we got enough to cut it in haf and double our braid and have a nice tase for us. Im hip. He sure does have some dynamite shit. But I dont want to get into it heavy man. I dont wanta blow the whole thing by getting strung out. You damn right. You be cool an we have a whole string of runny noses and dope fiens offen our shit for us. Yeah, thats the only way to go man. Ive seen cats get strung out an they blow their whole scene and end up in the slammer. Sheeit, we too smart for that baby. Yeah, they slapped palms. So where do we get the bread? Ah dont know baby, but ah dont want to go rippin nobody off. Ah aint been in no joint an ah wants to keep it that way. O man, be cool. What am I, a ganggester? The old ladys TV is one thing, but a robbery is something else. We could sell hot dogs. Yeah sure, whos gonna push the cart? Doan look at me baby, ahs a salesman. Hahaha, what a scene that would be ... jesus, I could see you openin the bun and me floppin a hot dog in an then we flip a coin to see who puts the mustard on. Well, lease we wouldnt be hongry. Well man, I aint worried about that. Comeon, Ty, think. There must be a way we can pick up a couple a yards in a hurry. They smoked, and squinted and scratched, then Tyrone flipped his butt away and rubbed his head, sort of stroking it to activate the gray matter ...and relieve any itch he might have. You know, theres a couple of dudes that goes down to the newspaper like four or five in the mornin and shapes up to load trucks. How much they get? Ah doan know man, but ah do know that theys always wearin some fine threads an driven some really pretty shorts. Yeah? Harry looked at Tyrone for a minute. HMMMMMMMM. Whatta ya think? Tyrone was still rubbing his head, but now he was more or less caressing it. Well man, ah tellya, ah aint so hot on that workin shit, ah mean ah dont like it any more than you. Yeah ... five oclock in the mornin. Jesus. I thought even bartenders were asleep at that time ... but ... Harry

continued to stare and Tyrone C. Love continued to rub. Whatta ya think? Ah doan know baby. ... But ah guess we could sort of maybe go see whats happenin down there. Harry shrugged, Shit, why not? Tyrone stopped rubbing his head and slapped Harry's hand then Harry slapped his and they got up and strolled from the grass to the path, then along the path through the park to the street as a couple sparrows swooped down to claim a few Crackerjack crumbs. Harry figured he'd go home while they were working so he'd be sure to get up on time. If I tell the old lady I got a job she'll be sure to get me up. I guess we'll have ta get up about four, eh? to be sure to get there on time ... four o'clock in the morning, that seems impossible. Then jus think a that piece a pure shit baby, that'll get your ass up. Then you come by mah crib an get me up. You bet your sweet ass. If I have to get up you're gona get me up. They laughed and slapped palms and Harry was about to turn to go and get ready to start the new routine that would make them big time dealers, when they spotted a friend rushing along the street. Hey, whats happening baby? You look like the man is afta you. Whats the rush? You know Little Joey the cat with the ripped ear? Yeah, sure. From across the avenue. Yeah, thats the dude. He an Tiny an some other cat just copped from Windy and before Joey emptied the dropper he was gone jim. O. just like that. They say he just had a tase an he was out. So Tiny horns a little just to be cool, ya know an he gets wasted jim. No shit? You straight? Ya goddamn right. Why ya think Im hustlin my ass over to Windys? I wanna get there before he finds out what he has jim. That mutha fucka got a habit that so long even mule piss wouldnt get him high. Harry and Tyrone joined in the rush to Windys. They could always go to work some other time, but you dont always get a chance to score for some dynamite shit like this.

The next night they still had some stuff left, it was that good. Man, somebody sure did screw up. That stuff shoulda been cut at least a half dozen times. Sheeit, there better not be too much around jim or theres gonna be a lot a daid dudes in this town. Man, whats a couple a more stiffs in this town? Sheeit, they drive the man nuts tryin to figure whats goin down.

They were feeling mellow and realized that there was no point in thinking of going to work tomorrow morning, which was only a few hours away. There was no sense in ruining a good high while at work. They decided to fall by Tony's pad to see what was happening.

The streets were filled with the actions and sounds of a summer's night. The stoops and fire escapes were filled with people and there were hundreds of games of dominoes and cards, the players surrounded with onlookers, cans of beer and bottles of wine being passed around. Kids would bump past the games and the players would automatically yell at them without taking their eyes off the game or missing a drink. It was a nice night. A pleasant evening. There seemed to be stars somewhere and it was easy to avoid stepping in the garbage and dog shit on the streets. A truly beautiful night.

Tony lived in a converted loft in an old industrial building. Actually what was meant by converted was that there was a bed at one end and a stove and refrigerator at the other end. In between was a lot of space. Usually the space was dotted with people getting high, getting higher, or wonderin

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