

THE PARIS OF AMERICA



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ABSTRACT

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This novel is the first part of a two-part work in which the mythical story of Paris of Troy is contained in the archetype of the moon cycle. Each chapter is one of the twenty-eight phases of the moon, and part one consists of the first fourteen.

Paris, an ordinary young Canadian of the nineteen seventies, moves through the archetypal elements of his predecessor revealing his identity and the identity of his adolescent homeland.

His anima, Mary Monday, is a composite of: the moon, the goddess of love, Pop culture, America, the goddess of Fortune, and Mary Magdelene. His relationship with her controls his Fate and the movement of the plot.

Because the themes are not Quebecois but Canadian, the setting is Anglo-Montreal. And because Paris, France, was the mother of 'bohemianism' and Montreal is 'Le Paris d'Amerique', Paris and Mary move in the society of Montreal's bar-room bohemians: a subculture where pop, disco, kitsch, jazz, drugs, homosexuality, anarchy, art, socialism, feminism, and poetry all mix. And where the only common denominator is rebellion against the father.

The style of the novel is comic. The method of parody is reduction: romance is reduced to sex, culture is reduced to kitsch, great historical and mythical persons are miniaturized, the Trojan war becomes the struggle for an identity, art grovels at the feet of business, and religion becomes materialism. Popular forms such as the punchline joke and the political cartoon are also utilized.

"An honest brew makes
its own friends."

John Molson

Friday, the First

Gump climbed across a mountain of seething garbage and slid into a telephone booth. He waved flies away from his face as he dialed the number.

"Hey Sybil," he snickered into the phone. "I've spotted one of your cases. That Paris guy, you know, the rock star."

When he laughed, his Adam's apple bobbed up and down like the bouncing ball in a sing-along movie.

"So? He's tryin' to commit suicide right now!"

He peered out at the street through his thick, coke-bottle glasses.

"Hey, I'm not goin' out into the middle of a highway. I'm paid for counselling, not stunt work. It's mad out there! And he thinks it's a bullfight. Must be on drugs. Did you give him anything last week?"

"Certainly not," Sybil answered. "I'll be right over, so you stay there. Where did you say you were? Right!"

In one motion she hung up, ran over to her files, pulled out a dossier, and rushed out of the clinic. She could smell rain as she signalled for a taxi. The temperature was dropping.

A cab in the outside lane spotted her and swerved inward, bringing the inside lane screeching to a halt as it skidded up to her.

"Park and Milton," she said, climbing in.

"Maudit chien!" the driver muttered.

As the car sped down the main street, cutting in and out of lanes, running yellow lights and narrowly missing pedestrians, she attempted to thumb through the dossier.

Paris De Kitschman. 24 years old. Musician. One brother. One

sister. Parents divorced. Mother institutionalized. Father a rich recluse.

The cab squealed to a stop. Horns screamed. The driver bullied his way across an intersection.

She squinted at her handwriting, notes scrawled while Paris had poured out his tale of woe: insomnia, depression, could be suicidal. Request for valium denied!

She flashed back to that previous week. He had looked like a sad puppy, the way his long blonde hair had hung on each side of his face had reminded her of a Cocker Spaniel. He had seemed to be a prisoner of his own anima, such a desperate longing for a woman. He had shown immediate signs of transference, reaching up to kiss her whenever she had comforted him. Gump had commented that Paris was fixed at the Oedipal stage, hating his father and longing for his mother. Whatever! The boy was lovesick, suffering from a broken heart. He projected the undiscovered parts of his own psyche onto a woman, and when that woman left, he felt as if part of himself had been torn away. And now he was suffering like a dismembered soul, not realizing it was his own wholeness he longed for.

The cab was stuck in a traffic jam on Sherbrooke Street. When he wasn't swearing at the other cars, the driver scowled in the rear view mirror and swore at her.

Lightning momentarily whitened everything, like a flashbulb, then they heard the clap of thunder. Rain splattered on the windshield.

"Maudit chien!" the driver yelled, to let her know that this was her fault.

She ignored him and concentrated on Paris, remembering that his ex-

girlfriend, O, had worked in her clinic teaching nutrition. O had complained about having to live in the city and having to support Paris. His band rarely worked because it only played original songs. Then it broke up entirely and O moved to the country, probably causing this crisis, she thought.

Looking out the window she could see that they were hopelessly caught in traffic. Since she wasn't too far from her destination, she decided to wait the rest of the way.

"I'll get out here," she told the driver.

"Sacrement!" the driver yelled, banging his fist against the steering wheel. "So you leave me in the middle of this mess?"

"And I need a receipt," she continued, ignoring his outburst.

"Tabernacle, certainement. Can I wash your feet, too, while I'm at it?"

He slammed around in the front of the car, making as much of a commotion as possible, finally plucking a receipt from behind the visor.

She took the blank receipt and handed him a bill. He stared in disbelief.

"Shit la merde, you give me a twenty for a three fifty fare?"

She was losing her patience.

"That's what I did all right. You're not as simple as you make out."

His face became red and swollen. He slammed his wallet open and pulled the bills out violently.

"Yeah, you think you're somethin' with your afro hair and gypsy clothes," he muttered. "But you still look like an old whore!"

She sighed. She wasn't angry, it was actually quite a typical experience. And she wasn't afraid, she had talked down kids with knives.

She was just weary, a feeling that weighed on her often, recently. Though she knew the motivations, could name and analyze the forces at work in the psyche, even the mass psyche, it made no difference. Humans still went on with the madness she must try to bear.

He thrust the change out to her, accusingly. He probably always blames some outside force for his misfortune: the English, his wife, bad luck or whatever. And as long as he persists he'll never be able to help himself. He'll remain, like so many others, a slave of history.

She stuck the bills in her purse, pulled out her card and gave it to him. He read it as she stepped into the rain.

SYBIL LAKE

Personal Potential and Development Counseling

"Know Thyself"

Westmount Youth Clinic

Tel: 932-3338

"Youth clinic?" he yelled up at her. "Is this supposed to be for me?"

"Don't worry," she said, opening her fold-up umbrella. "We deal with youths of all ages."

She crossed Sherbrooke and walked up Park. The Park Avenue traffic was blocking Sherbrooke, refusing to stop for anybody. Rain was pelting down now, and cars zipping along the inside lane splashed pedestrians. Sybil was wet by the time she saw Paris.

He had lifted his cape from his shoulders, the red silk cape already soaked in the smell of cigarettes and beer from all the nightclubs he had played in now soaked in rain, and was waving it at the vehicles as they roared by. Rush hour was in high gear and, because of the city-wide

strike by maintenance workers, none of the stoplights was working. As he stood in the middle of the street, a steady stream of traffic rolled by.

"A horde of plunderers!" he yelled at them. "An army of tinned egos! You pour off the mountain and down into the city — my city — all the raw hostile energy of human nature canned and licenced by the state, transformed by years of schooling into well-adjusted competition!"

Horns honked at him and drivers yelled from rolled-down windows. Paris didn't care. He felt that he had nothing to lose. The rain fell heavily and the passing traffic lifted a spray off the street which tasted like gasoline.

He glared at businessmen speeding to their offices to make more deals, labourers hurrying to worksites to build more highrises, professors careening toward more publication, bankers hurling interest rates higher. More, they all shouted, More!

More is what O had wanted. She wasn't thinking of Paris when she left him, with no band, no money and no woman. More was the justification for everything these days. Another guy was giving her a place to stay in the country while she put her health-food restaurant together. She had become weary of propping up Paris's ideals, his art.

Thoughts churned through his mind like the dark clouds overhead. Thunder rumbled across the sky, like The Great Steamroller of Fate.

"Get outa my way!" someone shouted at him.

He waved his fist in the air.

"You think the automobile is king. Safe inside your rusting metal wombs you race through the streets of the city, running over cats, dogs and children without a murmur from city hall! You wanna cover the world

with concrete and steel!"

He held out his cape in challenge to a passing Ford. It brushed by with a honk.

"Olé!" shouted a Spaniard, standing in the doorway of El Gitano's.

The rest of the crowd which had gathered huddled under umbrellas and in doorways.

Sybil could see Gump on the other side of the street. He was waving furiously.

"What're we gonna do?" he yelled.

Paris held out the cape to a truck bearing down on him. The angry driver swerved toward Paris, but he sidestepped the vehicle and spun round in a circle.

The onlookers applauded.

"Why haven't the police shown up?" Sybil shouted to Gump.

"They're working to rule in support of the strike. They'd only show up after he was dead!"

Gump's Adam's apple danced.

"My life is no longer worth living," Paris yelled at the cars.

"Either I die now, or I admit defeat and become ordinary!"

"Die," someone screamed.

Lightning shot across the sky and a thunderclap rang out. He turned away from the traffic and faced the city, holding his cape aloft as if to tempt fate, and watched the cars disappear down the hill on the other side of Sherbrooke Street like lemmings into the sea.

"Paris!" Sybil called out.

He looked around, surprised that someone knew his name.

"You're going through a crisis. Life is taking you somewhere that's

not where you thought you were going, so you're afraid. Don't fight it. There's a new Paris struggling to emerge from the egg of the old Paris. Don't destroy yourself before you've given him a chance!"

His eyes were wide and bloodshot.

"Sybil," he cried. "I knew you'd come! You're the only one who can save me!"

A horn blared behind him.

"Look out!" Gump screamed.

Paris turned. A red sportscar headed right at him. An icy shiver ran down Paris's spine. He leapt in the air just in time, coming down on the roof of the car as it whizzed underneath. He bounced and arched through the air, miraculously landing on his feet.

The crowd cheered.

"Paris," Sybil called out. "You see, you don't really want to die."

"I don't really want to live," he yelled back.

"Last week you told me how you used to walk in the country, commune with Nature. You described how it inspired you to feel the joy and harmony in life, and how you loved to study it, always learning more," she shouted from under her umbrella.

"Yeah," Paris said, flapping drops of rainwater from his cape.

"And look at me now, in the shitty city, surrounded by assholes. Living here isn't living!"

There were screams from the pedestrians further down the avenue. The red sportscar had turned around and was driving back toward Paris along the sidewalk. People were leaping into doorways and storefronts, scrambling over each other in terror as they tried to get out of the way.

"Perhaps there's something you can learn here," Sybil suggested.

"Maybe you will look back on your experiences in the city and realize that there were things you were trying to ignore about life and yourself. Things you had to learn here in the city!"

"Look out!" Gump screamed, emerging from behind a pile of wet garbage.

The red sportscar had careened out into the general stream of traffic and was again bearing down on Paris. The driver's face was red and excited. Paris could see the eyes bulging behind the windshield. He ran southward, toward Sherbrooke Street, Sybil and Gump following along the sidewalk, but the little car came closer and closer. At the last moment Paris sidestepped in front of a truck and dove to the pavement, letting it roll over him as the red sportscar sped by on the other side.

When Paris emerged unscathed the crowd whistled and applauded. He stood up between the lanes of traffic, with a glance back to see the red car safely downstream.

"Paris," Gump called out. "Why don't you come in off the street, we'll go into Henri Richard's here, have a few beers and talk things over."

Paris glanced at him, wild-eyed.

"What's the point?"

"I thought you wanted to become a big rock star," Gump said. "You want to write songs and have them played on the radio, and become famous — and rich."

"It's useless," Paris shouted. "The music business is all sewn up. No one has a chance unless they first sell their soul. The price is

too high! Besides, I'd have to leave Montreal and move to some bigger, more horrible city. Like New York or L.A. And that's too revolting to even think about!"

Suddenly the red car appeared once again, hurtling up the sidewalk from Bleury Street, across Sherbrooke and up Park. Sybil dashed up the stairs of the Armstrong Funeral Home. Others crammed into Phantasmagoria and Metamorphoses, records and books flying in all directions.

"He's coming around again," Sybil called out.

Paris turned to her side of the street in time to see the sports-car squeal into a turn in the parking lot of the funeral home and lurch back into the stream of traffic, heading right at him.

He leapt up onto the hood of a gigantic Chrysler. The driver honked his horn and swore, but Paris just held on. Gump ran along the east side of Bleury, following Paris down the hill toward St. Catherine Street. Sybil rushed down the stairs and flagged a cab, which came squealing to a stop and took off a second later flapping the door shut behind her with its forward motion.

Paris could see the red sportscar gaining on the Chrysler, murder in the driver's eyes. He peered at the driver. He seemed to only have one ear.

"Paris," Sybil yelled from the taxi window. "I don't believe that you have no reason for living. There is something that keeps you going even now."

A bus rolled beside the Chrysler. Curious faces peered down at Paris. He scowled back at them. But there was one face, a girl with red hair and a bright smile. Her eyes twinkled at him. His heart thumped. She gave him a wink.

"What's important to you, Paris? Figure that out and choose to follow it. That has to be your path."

"I want a girl as beautiful as that one," Paris shouted, pointing up at the bus window. "I want to be in Love!"

An explosion of thunder roared above. The rain pelted down like machine-gun fire.

"Then it will happen," Sybil promised. "Now get out of the street."

As the flow of traffic approached St. Catherine, the Chrysler signalled to turn. Being in the middle lane, it had to cut across another lane to turn left. The driver sped up and cut in front of a van. Horns honked. The van broadsided Paris's Chrysler, sending it up onto the sidewalk in front of a restaurant. Paris leapt into the air, flying past vehicles and pedestrians and landing in front of a sex shop.

As soon as he looked up he saw the red sportscar heading for him. He rolled into the doorway. The car bumped up over the sidewalk and crashed into the store window, scattering adult games, vibrators, lingerie, aphrodisiacs, plastic vaginas, dongs, leather harnesses, and an electric Swedish teenage doll onto the pavement.

Sybil and Gump appeared at Paris's side.

"He's in shock," she said.

Gump was looking at his watch.

"Ya know, I'm supposed to be in class right now. I have to deliver my paper on adolescent sexuality and its relation to Pop Culture."

"Grab hold of him and shut up," she ordered. "This isn't theory any more, this is real life!"

He obeyed. They both took an arm with difficulty and dragged Paris from the scene.

"What about that crazy driver?" Gump asked.

They looked at the red sportscar. The driver was nowhere to be seen. The shop was empty, too. It had not opened yet.

"I'll tell the police what we saw later," she said. "Right now we'd better get this guy back home before he gets really sick. I know where he lives. This way."

They dragged him through the rain to his apartment. The door was open. They took off his clothes, dried him off, and deposited him in his bed.

"You stay here," she told Gump. "Make an appointment with him to see me soon. Then call his brother; someone has to help him get back on his feet."

"Where are you goin'?"

"I'm needed at the Clinic."

She vanished like Mary Poppins.

"Son-of-a-bitch!" Gump kicked the bed. "Life is just one thing after another!"

He pulled the knapsack off his back and rummaged inside, extracting a small plastic vial. He opened it, and passed it under Paris's nose.

Paris jerked into wakefulness.

"Good," Gump said. "I need you conscious for a few minutes."

Paris stared at him, dumbfounded.

"First, we have to make an appointment."

He flipped through the pages of a large book also extracted from the bag and shook his head.

"We're booked solid, man. Kids are back in school, and we've got all kinds of problems to deal with. I don't know if we can consider

lovesickness a priority item."

His Adam's apple did a little dance.

"I mean, we've got kids in here with real problems, cookie."

He scribbled on a page.

"I'll pencil you in for a month from now, OK?"

Paris nodded, feebly.

"Hey, come on champ," Gump snickered. "Venus will watch over you."

He rooted in the bag and produced a piece of folded paper. With a great rustle he unfolded it. It was a large diagram of a vagina with labels and explanations written on the side. To Paris it looked like the map of a battlefield.

"This is what you want, eh?" Gump laughed.

Then he pulled out a package of prophylactics.

"If you're goin' into the meat market, you'd better wear armour," he said. "VD is the gift that keeps on giving."

His Adam's apple bounced.

"These were made just for you; they're Trojans."

Paris pushed them away.

"It's like taking a bath with your socks on," he muttered.

Gump's brow furrowed.

"OK. You try to help a guy and look what happens."

He stuffed everything back into his leather bag and swung it up on his back. Water flew everywhere.

"I'm the kind of guy who takes precautions. I like to stay safe. But I can see that you jump right into the deep end."

He stood up. There was a puddle on the floor where he had been sitting.

"I'll call your brother and tell him to look in on you. So you just go back to sleep now and when you wake up be ready to start your life anew, OK?"

When he walked away Paris could hear the water squishing in his shoes.

Paris's head sunk deep into the pillow. He saw the girl's face in the bus window. What was it about her; the eyes, the halo of hair, the smile? No, something beyond that.

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Saturday, the Second

"I was that hippie who thought he could live in the fields and play guitar in the sun. But my habits dragged me down. My needs, my appetites. I couldn't do what I imagined. I couldn't float like a cloud."

The Bopper laughed. His hair was combed back on both sides and puffed up on top in a hard high swirl, very fifties. He looked like a rooster.

"So here you are back in the city. Well, maybe it doesn't offer meaning or eternity, but it does promise a few moments of pleasure, eh?"

The Bopper was Paris's older brother. He loved the city life. Paris wanted to get to know him again, but they hadn't been together for years, separated by space and conflicting ideology.

"The way I see it," Paris continued, "my whole period with O was introverted. I was trying so hard to preserve the sanctity of my private world, and the country was the place to do it. But since O left, I've come to the end of that. I have to set off in a new direction, and that means straight into the city."

The Bopper nodded as if he understood. He produced one of the 'Sure, little brother' looks that used to anger Paris. Now Paris was amused. The Bopper had always been an extrovert, right at home in the singles bars and discotheques of downtown Montreal. He had been nicknamed 'The Bopper' for that very reason. He 'bopped' around, riding the waves of fad and fashion as they washed through town. He was the king of 'Bop culture'.

"You were introverted during your O period because of all those chemicals you ate. Anyone would be introverted with his brain frying

in LSD!"

The Bopper had never taken drugs. He was a body freak. Paris smiled at the thought of his brother, the vanity and ambition that moved him. He was doing well in junior league hockey. At last a local paper had given him some recognition: "De Kitschman's sizzling slapshot a goalie's nightmare".

Paris had watched him put on a freshly laundered shirt, one of his Brisson and Brisson specials: a dollar for the cotton and buttons and forty-four dollars for the name.. His torso was muscular and well proportioned, with the kind of masculine beauty you'd see in ancient Greek statues. The difference was, the Bopper was all there, no parts missing. Paris envied his brother's success with women.

The Bopper had something. Paris could see it as they walked down St. Catherine Street that Saturday night, past the crowds, and the garbage on the sidewalk. Women of every size, shape and socio-economic class would parade by him with their eyes open. Instead of looking at the ground, like most who didn't want to be bothered by some stranger on the street, they looked right at the Bopper, and he looked right back. Maybe it was his grin. Like a crescent moon, it had magnetic power.

"The way to live is to put all your concentration and energy into the moment, whether you're playing hockey, dancing or screwing! That way, you're in it, and you don't miss it when it goes by. You're alive, man, ALIVE!" he told Paris.

The girls who walked by looked up at the Bopper as if expecting something. He had self-confidence, arrogance. He was firm, stocky, and muscular. He walked with a swagger, bouncing on the balls of his feet, giving the impression of unlimited energy. Paris's body, on the other hand, was unencumbered by muscles. He walked slightly stooped

under his red cape, as if already exhausted. His features were delicate and sensitive, his demeanour modest, although he did have a sly glint in his blue eyes.

The Bopper led the way into the Rainbow Bar and Grill, looking over the girls as he passed the bar.

"There's a honey," he said, glancing at the leggy blonde perched on a stool.

"I like them like that," he continued as they sat at a table. "They're so innocent, so untouched. All possibility! When they get too old there's no more surprises."

He gazed across the room. An older woman, sitting against the far wall, stared back.

"Then again", he grinned, "there is something fascinating about older women. They're so cool and composed. Experience! They know how to carry themselves."

He ordered two Molsons, then leaned toward Paris as if to impart some great confidence.

"You know, sometimes I think I could sleep with every woman in the city, except Allison. I have to draw the line somewhere. They're all so tempting!"

The Bopper was a hedonist. He and Paris shared the hunger for touch that normal upbringing and educational processing repressed. And they both translated that hunger into sexual activity.

"But don't you ever get the feeling that one day you'll meet a girl who will be THE girl?" Paris asked.

The Bopper threw up his hands.

"Now you're floating with clouds again, every cloud you see is more

beautiful than the last cloud. If you sit there waiting for THE cloud, you'll be sitting there for the rest of your natural born."

He took a gulp of beer.

"And even when you think you've found THE girl, two years later another THE girl comes along and you're fucked. Believe me, you've always gotta leave yourself open. There's always gonna be someone coming along who you want to be with and who could be, well who knows what? And you won't be able to go to her if you're tangled up in someone else's life!"

He raised his hands emphatically, as though discussing a passionate and consuming interest.

"Last weekend I played an exhibition game in T.O. I met a girl who was flying from Vancouver to Europe in the coffee shop at the airport. We spent the whole weekend together. Stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel — fifty three bucks a night for a double. And we did the town! On monday morning she went to Europe and I came back here. I'll never see her again. Now that's what I call a perfect relationship!"

He smiled with pleasure as he recalled the experience.

"She was from Germany. She'd been in Vancouver visiting part of her family. She had a cute accent. She was quite shocked at how athletic sex is here. I said: 'Hey, what d'ya want? I'm an athelete!' Apparently, in Europe they still go in for all that soft-lights-and-violins jazz. Well, I figured it was my duty to teach her about my culture."

He pointed to his crotch.

"I told her that here we have to perform. I mean, it's a competitive world! If you're not gettin' what you want from someone, there's a million more out there!"

He picked up a beer bottle and mimicked a beer ad.

"For me, life is a wet pussy, a hard cock, and an easy drinkin' .

O'Keefe."

"Maybe in Europe they're still into Love," Paris suggested.

"Love?" the Bopper laughed. "Haven't you heard? They changed the name of Lover's Lane to Sex Drive."

"Well, what about all those people who stay together because of Love?"

"They stew in their own juice."

"You've never wanted to marry anyone?"

The Bopper laughed out loud.

"People get into conventional relationships because it's all they know. It's like you've been trained as a file clerk but you hate the job so you quit. But two weeks later you have to eat, so you end up getting another job as a file clerk."

He laughed again.

"I know some people feel that they need the security. But have you ever spent any time with married people? They act like they've been defeated. They can't do what they want to do, they always have to check with their mate. Why choose to be a slave? Monogamy was invented by the weak, probably at some time when they were all afraid of the pox!"

The older woman from the other side of the bar stumbled over to their table. She was unsteady on her feet. Had a few too many. She plunked a rose into the Bopper's beer glass.

"Join us?" the Bopper pulled back a chair.

She winked and wrinkled her nose. Then she leaned over and gave the Bopper a big, wet, alcoholic kiss.

"My husband is waiting," she pointed to the door.

"You made your bed," the Bopper shrugged.

"Meet me here at this table. Monday at five," she said, then leaned over for another smooch.

They watched her stagger out the door. Then the Bopper grinned at Paris and shrugged.

"It's either let's-get-married, or it's meet-me-here-Monday-at-five. They all want to pin you down! Amazing! I saw a girl last night who I'd gone out with before and really dug. But what happened before was, right in the middle of the affair, when everything was going great, she wanted to have a serious talk about where our relationship was going. I said—don't worry about it! We're having fun now so let's enjoy it, and whatever happens, happens! Well, I met her again last night and we went out dancing. She asked me what I wanted to see her again for. After we went home and did the do and she knew what I wanted to see her again for, she asked me if I would continue seeing her, and if so, how often. Was I applying for a job, or what? I said—what d'ya want me to say? Two days a week? Five days a week? I said—you phone me if you want to see me and I'll say yes or no. And I'll phone you if I want to see you and you can say yes or no. Why does she always do that? When we're together just flowing we have a lot of fun. Talking about it just ruins it! As soon as things are set and planned, they're dead!"

"Actually," Paris said, "I like to have someone I can depend on, something solid. I don't like being alone."

"Yeah, you always were the sentimental one. And your life'll probably be one big soap opera."

They both drank up.

"And your life will be a blue movie."

"The problem is," the Bopper mused as they walked toward the door, "that we live in the age of the ordinary. In other times people were hot on the trail of anything rare. But what arouses my interest in a woman is the ordinary, and they all have it! So how can I stick with one?"

They both laughed aloud on Stanley Street.

"And as soon as you confront the rare in her, her idiosyncrasies, you lose interest."

"Right."

They walked down past St. Catherine Street toward the discotheques. It was the part of town nicknamed 'Vaseline Alley', because of all the homosexual activity. Pretty boys loitered on the street looking for pick-ups. On Saturday nights there was an influx of straights, attracted to the area because of the outrageous characters and costumes, attracted by the sweet smell of the nectar of decadence.

"Then again," the Bopper continued, "maybe it's just the reverse. Maybe I'm attracted by the details of each woman, those things that make her different from all the rest. But when I penetrate her life and find out she's really the same as everyone else, an ordinary person, then I split."

"Either way, you split," Paris said.

"Yeah, but as soon as I've made it with a chic a few times, bang, she's laid claim to my cock!"

They walked up the stairs of a club called Die Lorelei, an old German Beerhall um-pah-pah joint turned discotheque. At the top of the stairs they paid their two dollars and were stamped on the back of their hands with a big black cross. Then they walked through the door and

the music hit them. It was loud enough to be Gabriel's horn.

A big bald Neanderthal in a clean suit led the way, wading through the crowd. Paris noticed that he only had one ear. They followed in his wake to their seats. The Bopper dropped some change in his paw. The primitive grunted and left. Then the Bopper led Paris toward the dance floor to find better seats. The club was dark except for the strobes which rippled across the sea of dancers.

The dance floor! It was an ocean of flying arms, kicking legs, jerking heads, gyrating bums. Bodies heaved, breathed hard. A genuine sweat bath. Bits and pieces of movement caught in a strobe flash. Gone. Another bit. Gone. Whirling blue lights. Red. Green. Neon rods drop from the ceiling. Glow. Pulse. Back up goes the neon. Spots run across the bodies, all jumping, swinging, twisting to a single relentless bass drum heartbeat. Thump thump thump thump, booming out of four Altec Voice-of-the-Theater speakers and horns aimed down from each corner on the balcony above. These were hooked up to a two thousand watt amplification system powerful enough to blow the Pope off his throne at fifty meters. All these watts coming from a power station kilometers away where man had cunningly utilized the weight of water on its way to another ocean.

They came to an aisle which emptied into the dance floor. Bodies poured down the stairs from the balcony into the dance floor, but a flamboyant couple who specialized in entrances was blocking the flow. They waited by the mouth until a hole opened up in the dancing crowd; then they wheeled out into the center in a frantic spin, like a whirlpool. They seemed prepared to do it all night, spinning into the dance floor, coming back, and spinning out again.

The Bopper led the way, shouldering through the crowd. He turned back to Paris.

"Think they'll let me through if I show them my golden bough?" he said, clutching his manhood.

The Neanderthal loomed ahead of them, scowling. He was protecting the good seats. The Bopper reached into his pocket and pulled out a bill, then stuck it in the bouncer's paw. The big, burly man looked at it, grunted, and let them pass. Paris looked back and watched him knocking people out of his way as he headed back to the door.

They sat at a table right beside the dance floor. Paris could not fathom it all. Drop a few centuries and these whirling figures would have all been trying to escape the addictions of the flesh, finding union with the images of Catholicism. Now they plunged instead into the urban sprawl like lemmings, becoming a great ocean of desire in search of oblivion through the flesh.

They were all here, the sons and daughters of Greek restaurateurs, British bankers, nouveau riche construction contractors from the Town of Mount Royal, Verdun shoe salesmen, East End truck drivers (the guys who deliver the beer), West End judges, political economists from the U. of M., and Jewish art professors from L'Ecole des Beaux Arts, all bouncing, slithering, swinging, swaying, jerking, jumping, weaving and wheeling in private sexual fantasies, like the molecules of liquid Paris remembered being heated over a Bunsen burner in a High-School Erlenmeyer flask, hearing their mother's heartbeat in Booker T and the MG's hitsong, "Makin' Pot".

The Bopper signalled to the waiter by holding up two fingers and the empty Molson bottle he found on the table. The waiter nodded and glided over to the bar where a group of Satan's choice were sitting, somewhere between dead serious and dead drunk.

A beautiful tall girl who reminded Paris of O sat beside the Bopper, laid a red rose on the table and smiled. They both smiled back.

The waiter navigated islands of isolated economic atoms to clunk their brew on the table.

"How much?" yelled the Bopper.

"Three dollars," shouted the waiter.

"Prices sure are goin' up around here," roared the Bopper, handing him a fiver.

"That's not all that's going up around here," bellowed the waiter, returning the change with a phallic lear. "It is quite a stiff drink."

"Yeah, the hard stuff," the Bopper winked.

"An honest brew makes its own friends," the waiter camped.

"Here," screamed the Bopper. "You gave me a dollar too much."

"Well, you are an honest brew," the waiter exclaimed.

"Now I know what I can expect from you."

"Wait a minute," the Bopper cried. "I wouldn't want to screw the waiter."

"That's a shame," the waiter flipped a wrist, giggled and gave him a wink. "But by the way," he said, pointing to the beautiful tall girl,

"what'll he have?"

He gave the waiter a cold, bitchy stare and walked off in a huff.

"More into his Yin than his Yang," the Bopper laughed.

"What're you into?" the waiter asked.

"Not you."

"Oh God, you're not straight are you? Oh shit yes, it's Saturday night! Well, if you ever change your colours give me a call. My name's Twilight."

He left them, laughing.

Paris picked up the rose left by the transvestite. He sniffed it like Ferdinand, nostrils flaring. His eyes caught the grins of two girls sitting at the next table. He stood up and, with an antiquated bow, offered it to them. The tough looking one astonished him by grabbing the rose from his hand and savagely eating it whole.

"It wasn't even cooked," the soft one giggled.

"I like it raw," the tough one yelled, then gave her girlfriend a kiss.

"Let's dance," the Bopper suggested.

"Wanna ask them?" Paris indicated the two girls.

"We can't break up a matched set," the Bopper shook his head.

They got up to dance. On this dance floor you didn't need a partner. You could drift around until you saw someone you fancied and dance with them, or just dance solo.

Beams of coloured light played off revolving ball mirrors spraying red, green, blue and yellow rainbow dots swirling across the floor. Everything was moving, the dancers, the music, the lights and the floor. The only point of reference was the changeless beat.

Between the thumps was the old reliable disco high-hat cymbal: Tchyup tchyup tchyup tchyup. It carried the upbeat. Between the two they swept the bodies all over the floor — up and down, side to side, back and forth.

Paris lost his mind in the music. A wawa guitar pushed him across the floor with its wakawakawakawakawaka. A bass brought him back with its oombah oombah oombah oombah.

Someone dragged an elbow across a keyboard and the light man hit the

strokes. The motion of all the dancers became a series of flashbulb snapshots. Arms in air. In the middle of a turn. An arch. A crouch. An upward stretch. Arms out. Each dancer created his own series of stills that existed for a flash and were gone.

The strokes went off and spotlights played over the dancers. Their beams followed various individuals. A beam followed Paris for a while. Then it caught someone dressed like a nun roller skating around the edge of the floor. He had a face like Dante.

The nun skated over and came on to Paris with his eyes. Paris shook him off and wheeled over to a dark girl with a fold-out body but a weird face who had been staring at him with out-front lust. She was dancing with a Hollywood blonde who looked like a doll. Paris tried to pick up the doll by staring into her eyes while he danced with her, but she had other ideas and spent the whole time looking at the ceiling. When he turned around he found that the Bopper had moved in on the dark girl. She was undulating her pelvis at him and licking her lips.

The Bopper leaned over and yelled in Paris's ear.

"I think she's a boxer, that's why her face is punched up. Oh well, I'll put a flag over her head and do it for the country!"

Paris danced across the floor until he came to the soft girl from the table next door. Her eyes twinkled like the lights of San Francisco.

"My name's Caboose," she smiled.

"Paris."

They both nodded.

"What's the show tonight?" he yelled in her ear.

"Tap dancers," she shouted, her words quickly shattered into nothingness by the Altec speakers. "They're beautiful."

The music faded and a voice leapt from the speakers.

"Show time, ladies and gentlemen. Show Tiiiiime!"

The dancers all left the floor. Lillith scowled at Paris as he approached the table with Caboose. The Bopper took a phone number from the boxer and joined Paris at their table. Caboose lit a joint and passed it round.

The voice over the speakers materialized into an MC, standing on the stage at the end of the dance floor. He was in a white suit and a red spotlight.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and I use the terms loosely. As you know, tonight is the beginning of Sexual Liberation Week."

The audience thundered its approval.

"We here at the Lorelei believe that you should be able to fuck who you want when you want and how you want!"

Applause.

"So to kick off the show, here's the Lorelei choir, Sodomy, Fellatio, Cunnilingus, Pederasty, and the Marquis de Sade to perform "Paper Moon".

Spotlights caught five figures running out to the dance floor as the musical introduction played. Each figure imitated its name. Sodomy hopped on everyone's backside. Fellatio and Cunnilingus crawled around on their knees with their tongues hanging out. Pederasty pushed a little boy doll on wheels in front of him, as if trying to catch it. And the Marquis de Sade was in black leather, running around, cracking a great whip at the others.

They all assembled together in a chorus line as the long introduction came to a close. Then they mimed along with the record: "It's only a paper moon, sailing over a cardboard sea, but it wouldn't be make believe if you believed in me."

After the singing stopped, the music continued. It was a thirties-style recording. The choir ran out into the audience, stopping here and there to pull someone into the dance floor. Everyone resisted until they came to Caboose. She giggled and screamed with delight as Cunnilingus dragged her to the middle of the floor. There, they all attacked her sexually, lifting up her skirt and licking her underwear. Sodomy dropped his pants and revealed a huge erection. The crowd gasped. Seeing this, Caboose's girlfriend became incensed. She left the table and ran to the rescue. She grabbed Sodomy's cock and swung him round, sending him flying. Then she punched and kicked the others until they dispersed. The crowd cheered. She picked Caboose up and carried her back to their table, proudly, the spotlight on her all the way.

The music ended and the choir left the floor. The audience gave them a standing ovation.

The MC returned.

"A standing ovulation, thank you. Drinks on the house for Lilly and Caboose," he said.

The crowd cheered.

"It's amazing," the Bopper leaned over to Paris. "Someone is always claiming someone else's genitals!"

"And now," the MC continued, "the act you've all been waiting for, the fantastic, the amazing, the better than average, straight out of the closet and into the spotlight, those children of the night: Magic Electricity!"

Caboose gave Paris a nudge.

A sparkling couple ran out of the wings and onto the floor. He was in a skintight shiny silver spacesuit with a powder blue feather boa

around his neck and red sequins lighting up his face. It was Twilight. He winked at the Bopper. But his partner smiled at Paris, and Paris smiled back. She was in a one piece red velvet bathing suit, with long fleshy legs which curved down into golden shoes. Her face was haloed by electric orange freaky hair. She had a tiny snub nose, two big golden-sequined flashing eyes, and a precocious crescent-moon grin with pearly teeth and fire-engine-red lips.

Paris's heart leapt.

Dressed in glitter costumes, looking like extras from some Sci-Fi film about future decadence, they came tapping across the floor to old pop tunes. Futuristic Nostalgia. The audience sat reverently in the present, where the past and future never quite meet. Paris was smitten. And Mary Monday knew it. Her smile, every movement of her mouth, pulled at something inside him. He felt an electrical charge flowing between them, an alternating current, building higher and higher. His whole being seemed to be illuminated by her presence.

She was fashionably lean, but definitely female. Her clothes were too scanty for transvestite deception. She also had a precocious sensuality in her movements that is hard to fake. Twilight, for all his limp and lithe gestures, seemed stiff next to her. She led, and the performance was magical. It was a mixture of childlike innocence — Shirley Temple tap dancing for her mother — and the suggestive lewdness of a bump-and-grind.

They finished with a buck-and-wings and three cartwheels.

The crowd leapt to its feet and called for more.

Paris was in love.

Magic Electricity.

"Was that a guy or a girl?" the Bopper asked.

"That was Mary Monday," Caboose said. "The Queen of this ocean. She's beautiful."

"A balloon I'd like to stick a pin into," Lilly frowned.

"Such a jealous one," Caboose reassured her with a kiss. Then she said to Paris: "Would you like to meet her? I'm going up there now."

Paris stood up immediately.

"I'll stay," said the Bopper. "There's someone over there I have to meet."

"Yeah," Lilly said. "Just your type, a sitting duck."

"Your type, too, butch," the Bopper laughed.

"What does Mary drink?" Paris asked.

"Bloody Mary," Caboose said.

"Nice touch," Lilly observed,

Caboose and Paris left the table and went up to the dressing room past the bar. Paris picked up a Bloody Mary.

They walked upstairs to a room with a big star on the door. Everyone inside was running around talking a kilometer a minute. They walked past the crowd to the far corner. Caboose introduced Paris and Mary. Paris gave her the drink. She grinned.

"You've got a real front-page smile," he said.

"Yeah," she said, "I'm happy. I'm not analytic. I'm becoming!"

Caboose left them to talk to Twilight. He was telling the Lorelei choir about the facial treatment he'd just had, a cosmetic job to get rid of his beard: "I'm doing my bit for the feminization of the universe."

"It's really happening here tonight," Paris said.

"I make things happen," Mary replied. "I'm a generator."

Paris's ears were on fire. He felt weak. Her gaze seemed to come from another world. Mystical. Moonlight. He wanted to say something more but he couldn't. He looked at her helplessly. She seemed to understand. She laughed, not at him but at the situation. He also laughed, nervously.

"I like you," she said. "You have an honest heart."

He wanted to say he loved her, but couldn't open his mouth. He was too weak.

An older man in a long purple robe came in. He gave Paris a suspicious look. Mary nodded at him, as if to a superior.

"What are you doing after the show?" Paris blurted out.

"Shh," she said. "I'm getting into a spaceship and going to the moon."

She scribbled her phone number with mascara on a cigarette package and gave it to him. "I can't talk any more, now," she said. "Phone me later." She looked right into his eyes. Arrows pierced his heart. He shuddered. "We could have a nice exchange!"

She stood up and went over to the man. He kissed her.

Paris stood there for a minute like a frozen fish, then quickly left.

He returned to the table and looked at the dance floor. A tall, thin negro woman was whirling around with her arms up in the air between Lilly and the Bopper. She flirted with them both as if to say: "I'll try anything. Anyone can have me. I love you all!" And this inflamed everyone around her to buzz by her and say with their bodies: "Would you take me?" Then she'd say back: "Anyone — Everyone!"

Paris didn't want to dance any more. He just sat there thinking about Mary. At one point the Bopper came over and said: "What's the matter with you? Are you in Love?"

Paris nodded, feebly.

"Shit!" the Bopper shook his head. "Life's too short, mate."

But Paris's fate was sealed.

The evening got crazier. Caboose and Twilight moved in on the table. Lilly and Caboose began to neck opposite Paris and Twilight leaned over, drooling, to say how much he liked to suck cocks. The Bopper was all over the dance floor, flirting and collecting telephone numbers.

"I've got enough to last me a week," he said, returning to the table at last.

"So let's go," Paris suggested.

"OK," the Bopper agreed.

"Party pooper," said Twilight.

Out on St. Catherine the sky was lightening. Saturday night was on its final chorus. A few strays roamed the street, resigned to going home alone, or coming on to everyone in sight. Two guys on the corner of Peel and St. Catherine screamed in laughter and pain: "Don't we deserve to get fucked tonight?"

"No!" the Bopper sneered at them as he passed. "Amateurs!"

Some, drunk and reeling, carried the nightclub revelry onto the sidewalks. Others pissed in the alleys or puked in the gutters.

Paris followed the Bopper into Ben's Delicatessen. A table full of tripping hippies giggled at everything; Zombie alcoholics sat frozen over a third cup of coffee; flamboyant showbiz types were engaged in animated conversation; hookers took a break or cruised in low gear; secretaries with their disco dates thrilled to the downtown whirl; budding urban artists earnestly explained their insights with a sweep of a tragic-comic hand; while a table full of American tourists from

Akron, Ohio, looked on. All part of Ben's living laboratory. The restaurant was all lit up like a spaceship. Everyone looked yellow.

The Bopper pulled his collection of phone numbers out of his pocket and shuffled through them, writing notes on them as he did.

"For my files," he said. "I have to remember who was who."

"Why didn't you take one home tonight?" Paris asked.

"Oh no. Tonight I was scouting!"

Paris pulled Mary's phone number out of his pocket.

"Do you realize how many millions of cunts there are in the world?" the Bopper asked.

"Millions!" said Paris "Millions of cunts! Millions of marshmallows! Millions of mountains! Millions of stars! Millions of coke bottles!"

"And you latch on to one?"

"I'm sorry," Paris said. "Manufacturer's defect."

Sunday, the Third

Deadpan De Kitschman was Paris's father. He lived in a compound built on Lac St. Anne in the Laurentians. It was an expensive area, a suburbia for the very rich, and like most of the inhabitants Deadpan owned businesses and real estate in the city. He no longer had to remain in Montreal because he hired people to look after his interests, so he could live in seclusion on the edge of the Canadian Shield and watch his assets grow.

He was a shrewd businessman. He had always bought cheap and sold dear. When he was young he had boasted that he could turn anything into money, and he had made it his life's work to prove that.

He had been nicknamed Deadpan by an associate who had been struck with admiration for the manner in which De Kitschman had eliminated all traces of emotion. He always kept a straight face. Even, it was rumoured, at the moment of orgasm. He had used it for so many years in the poker game of big business that the mask had become his face.

Paris hated his father. He had watched the man invalidate and ridicule his mother's romantic notions all through his youth, until she finally broke down and went mad. Then he watched his father promptly commit her to a mental hospital, push a divorce through the courts, and marry his secretary.

Paris had been very close to his mother. All his musical talents had come from her. Now she was catatonic, an empty shell. It tortured him so much to see her like that, that he could rarely bear to visit her.

Paris's stepmother was still jealous of her lamentable predecessor. She couldn't have children and resented Deadpan's previous marriage.

She cut him off from his children, banishing Paris from the house at seventeen. Then she persuaded Deadpan to move to the Laurentians. Paris hadn't talked to them in years.

Paris's friend Adam lived in the Laurentians, across the road from Deadpan's house. By some mysterious twist of Fate, their fathers had bought adjacent land.

"I can see it from here," Paris said, looking through the big picture window.

"I can't believe that he won't talk to you, he's your father, for Christ's sake!" Adam said, stroking his bushy red beard.

Adam waved a record album at Paris. He had played piano in Paris's group.

"If you talk to him, maybe he'll get them to play this down at the station. It's the biggest in town, and he owns it! It could save the group."

"He won't do me any favours," Paris shook his head.

"It's our last chance," Adam insisted.

Paris reached for the record, which was printed cheaply with liner notes written by Allison, Paris's sister and Adam's lover. The title was "Canadian Content".

"OK, I'll give it a try, just so you can't say I didn't. But you come with me."

They walked outside. It was a bright Indian summer afternoon. The smell of dying leaves was everywhere.

Adam's father's house was on a hill, overlooking a lake. Rather, it would have overlooked a lake if Deadpan hadn't built his house in front of it.

"Hey, look!" Adam pointed to his right excitedly.

They hopped over the old stone wall which circled Adam's family mansion, and skidded down into the ravine below. When Paris caught up with Adam, he was crouched behind a tree.

"Look at them," Adam whispered through his beard. "They work joyfully, obeying their instincts. Their work is play!"

In front of them, on the stream, a family of beavers carried sticks and branches across the water and stuck them together with mud. The stream above the dam had turned into a small pond, below the dam there was only a tiny trickle. They dove into the water and emerged through a hole on top of the dam. Then they slapped mud on another stick and patted it into place with their flat tails.

"It's like a Walt Disney movie," Paris laughed.

"Yeah, but it's real," Adam replied. "You know, we can learn a lot from these animals. Playing music should be like this. You just listen to your inner voice and it tells you what to play. It's a clean energy burn, instinct speaking out, not twisted or repressed by any ulterior motives."

"A great interpretation of our national beast."

"I can sit and watch them for hours."

Suddenly his face grew grim.

"Wait a minute!"

He dug his hands into the leaves beside the tree, pulling up a wire.

One end ran toward the dam; the other end, toward Deadpan's house.

"Jesus Christ!" he yelled. "Let's get outa here!"

They scrambled up the hill in panic. Adam threw himself back over the stone wall and dragged Paris down with him.

"What the...?" Paris tried to ask.

Adam pushed his head down.

"Just keep low!"

There was a clap, then a boom. Pieces of wood flew into the trees over their heads. Birds screamed, as they flew from the trees in fright.

And the thunder of the explosion rolled across the lake.

Adam's face was flushed with rage.

"That asshole could've killed us!"

He cautiously raised his head above the wall. Paris followed. The middle of the dam had been blown away. The pond emptied through it, carrying pieces of wood and dead beavers downstream toward Deadpan's property. A beaver tried to pull itself up on the shore. Its tail and hind legs had been blown away. Finally it gave up and slipped back into the stream, disappearing under the surface.

"The monster," Adam yelled. "I never thought he'd go this far!"

"Deadpan?"

"Who else? He's been trying to get rid of those beavers ever since he moved up here."

"Why?"

"They dam up the stream which runs onto his property. He's got some kind of pond in his backyard. When the stream is dammed, he says he doesn't get enough water. He claims he bought the land with the stream on it, had it written into the deed. This gives him the right to exterminate the beavers. He's been fighting with the town council for months.

'The sanctity of private property' was the phrase his lawyer used."

Adam shook his head.

"This time he's gone too far."

"I could have warned you. He'll stop at nothing."

Adam strode down the road with Paris at his heels. The stream surged under a small bridge, through a fence and onto Deadpan's land. They walked along a twelve-foot Frost fence with barbed wire at the top. They passed signs saying: "Private-Keep out", "No Trespassing", and "Beware of Dog".

Adam's jaw was hard-set.

"I keep telling myself that because he's your father I should treat him like a human being."

"Just an accident of birth," Paris said. "They don't look and bang, you're here."

"And you don't look and bang, you're gone!"

They reached the gate and a sign which said: "D. De Kitschman".

Adam rang the bell hard and paced back and forth.

"What is it?" a voice asked.

They looked around. No one.

"Where are you?" Paris asked.

"I'm everywhere," the voice said. "Now, what do you want?"

Paris pointed at a steel post inside the gate. Built onto it was a speaker, a microphone and a TV camera. They stared into the camera.

"Eureka," said the voice.

Adam stuck a middle finger up.

"Very nice," the voice said. "Young people today. No wonder the world's in such a mess!"

"It's turkeys like you who screw it up!" Adam waved a fist.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"You know damn well," Adam snarled. "The beavers!"

"It's perfectly legal. I have a permit." D

"Legal," Adam's face swelled up with anger. "All kinds of atrocities seem legal these days!"

"I have a legitimate right to protect my property."

Adam exhaled a sick laugh.

"Even if it means murder?"

A cold, cynical, cackle came from the intercom.

"Surely you aren't trying to suggest that the extermination of a few wild pests is murder. Aren't you taking your role as protector of the poor and downtrodden a little too seriously?"

"Your whole goddamn attitude pisses me off!" Adam shouted.

"Convert the universe into dollars and cents, I want to buy it. You think your wealth gives you the right to do whatever you want!"

"My dear boy, isn't that the whole point of becoming wealthy?"

"It's against nature. You're a monster!"

"Oh no. You are the unnatural one. I've observed Nature's laws and I merely reflect them. Do you think Nature is angry with me? She has none of these sick, civilized notions. She has always wished the strong to dominate. Big fish eat little fish!"

"You're a cold fish, alright," Paris said.

"I can't believe that two young, healthy boys are crying over a few miserable beavers."

"We are concerned," Adam said. "How does a human being become so insensitive?"

"It's not easy, you have to work at it," the voice cackled. "But what's that object in your hands?"

Paris looked at the record as if he'd never seen it before.

"It's a record, of our group."

They heard a little motor buzz. The lens on the camera turned.

"Oh yes. So why are you carrying it around in the woods?"

Paris laughed cynically.

"We were gonna ask you to play it on your station."

"So why don't you ask?"

Paris looked at Adam. He shrugged.

"OK. How would you like to play this on your station?"

"No," said the voice, then laughter oozed from the speaker.

"Why not?" Adam demanded.

"You boys are so naïve you probably still believe in love, am I right? Do you think records are played on my station because a couple of local boys got together? Do you think that's the way it became the number one station in Montreal?"

"But this is local culture!" Paris protested,

"And what is that?"

"Songs about life around here: the St. Lawrence river, the Rapido, the Laurentians, and hockey."

"Now I'm positive I won't play it. Who do you think is interested in that?"

"People around here. People who listen to your station," Paris argued.

"Hah," the voice thundered. "Hah!"

A deep, menacing laugh boomed out of the speaker. It was loud, but hollow. There was something twisted about it, an eerie strangeness that made Paris shudder.

"You obviously don't know the people around here. Oh, you think you

do. You're filled with all kinds of romantic notions about the simple life of an ordinary man, going about his daily tasks with pride and dignity. Hah! You think honesty is more important to them than getting rich. Hah! Let me tell you about them. I know. I read graphs and charts, breakdowns by age, income and sex. I know what they want. Hah!"

Paris wondered if the volume was being turned up. The voice seemed to be louder.

"First, there are the young. They gobble up all the dreams Hollywood has to offer. They want it loud and fast. They're only interested in songs that make it, because that adds to their stature. By identifying with a successful group they gain prestige. They think that making it big is the be-all and end-all of life. Oh the optimism and energy! My rock station feeds them and my advertising rates climb."

Paris heard the laugh again. There was something reptilian about it. He could hear water and scales. Slithering tongues.

"Then there are the adults. Hah, adults! That's a good one. Thirty and up. They've settled into their mediocre ruts and they don't want to be disturbed. They need the wall-to-wall carpet sound. Lush strings. Some background while they sit in their cars, eat their meatballs or hump. They want the weatherman to apologize for the rain. And my MOR station feeds them."

"So?"

"So I don't see where your pathetic little product fits in."

"What about people who think? People who are..."

"Think? Hah! Did you really say *think*?"

He erupted in another burst of insane laughter.

"First of all, people who think don't listen to the radio. Music

and thought don't mix. And if they did, they'd listen to the CBC. Let them play to people who think, and watch their ratings drop. Think? If you want to go bankrupt in a hurry just try selling something that makes people think!"

"But how do you expect us to build an identity?"

"Go ahead, build an identity. But sell it to L.A. first. Then they'll buy it up here."

"That's sick."

"Music is a product just like anything else, like hamburgers or hoola hoops."

Adam leapt up onto the fence in a frenzy. The camera buzzed as it turned to follow him.

"Music is energy! Music is life! Music is the flow of the universe! It's sacred!" he yelled.

He began climbing. Paris watched his friend go up, hand over hand. Adam had devoted his life to the piano, had searched the keyboard for beauty, perfection. Paris admired his friend for that. Adam has struggled to fashion a melody so beautiful that anyone who heard it would have to wake up and realize that the material world can be changed, coaxed to perfection by loving hands. And that would inspire them to try to do the same to the world we all live in. Adam wanted to turn them on! And so far, with the exception of Paris and Allison, nobody gave a damn!

"I'm gonna kill him!" Adam yelled.

He scrambled up, his shoes slipping in the small squares of the wire fence. He carefully took hold of the wire at the top between the barbs, then he pulled himself level.

"It's hopeless," the voice taunted. "Give up, you can't win. You're a fool to go this far!"

"Fuck you!" Paris yelled.

Now he was mad. He jumped onto the fence and climbed up toward his friend.

"We'll kill him with our bare hands!" Adam shouted encouragement.

"It's something I should've done a long time ago," Paris said, dragging himself up, holding the record between his teeth.

"You'll both regret this," the voice promised.

Paris reached Adam. They felt like two commandos. He took the record out of his mouth and laid it across the barbed wire, planning to use it as a bridge. They both pulled themselves up and made ready to swing over the barbed wire by putting their weight on the disc.

"For the beavers!" Adam yelled.

Suddenly, Paris felt his hand stiffen, as if the muscles had seized. Adam let out a cry of pain. Their bodies jerked in spasms. Paris saw flashes of light.

They both let go and fell toward the ground, tearing their clothes and flesh on the barbed wire. Then they hit the driveway with a sickening thud, like the slap of dogflesh on chrome.

Monday, the Fourth

Paris's sister, Allison, lived with Adam in the big stone house near the lake. While Adam wrote music, she wrote poetry.

"The law of Chance is unfathomable/like the first cause from which all life arises/and only by/immersion in/devotion to/and communion with/the fantastic flow of Chance/can the authenticity of imagination be discovered/No yesterday/no tomorrow/no law/no morality/Just perpetual motion and freedom/for all!"

Because she was a dreamer, she had been given the nickname Allison Wonderland.

She had been fasting for a week. She was trying to push her mind to the point where her sense of reality would snap and release her imagination from all restraint.

She slipped her canoe into the shallow water.

"Never underestimate/the superficial," she thought as she skimmed across the surface.

It was a cool Indian summer afternoon. The lake was smooth. Insects spidered across the surface tension. A school of minnows drifted below them. Frogs floated among the lillies, only their eyes above water. Fish eggs glided near the surface, reminding her of tapioca. Swallows swooped by, hungrily.

"In a canoe/named desire," she thought.

She glided past her father's property. She could see his backyard from the lake. She knew that he had freed the water from the beaver dam upstream, but why wasn't any of it getting to the lake? She peered into his property. Ah, he had dammed it up himself.

"Damn dam/Dam/nation/Will imposers/imposters/Impossible dream/Bottle
and sell the universe/You need verse/You need first/to let go/grow/to
ever know!"

Deadpan was standing beside his sacred pond, which was surrounded
by a three foot stone wall. Beside him was a table with a large cut of
red meat on it. His gestures were stylized, as if he were performing some
sort of rite. She backpaddled closer to the shore and strained her ears
to hear what he was saying.

"O great One; the Devourer, I offer this sacrifice."

He picked up the meat and held it in the air.

"I, the Exalted Grand Chomper, I, the chief representative of the
ancient society, pledged to carry out your plan: subjugate the weak and
raise up the strong; and bring forth a new race of Masters! We know
that the only law of life is: eat or be eaten. Blessed are the meat
eaters, for they shall consume the earth. Meat eaters first. M.E. first!"

He tossed the meat over the wall, into the pond. There was a
splashing of water and scales.

"There are winners and losers," Deadpan raised his fist. "But I am
a winner!"

Allison dug her paddle into the water and hurried to the middle of
the lake.

"Away from the cannibals/Pharaohs of pain/Away from the struggle/the
suffering/of material-man/Where Spirit is a car/and Concentration is a
camp/Murderers of animals/and people/but worst of all/beauty!"

She didn't eat meat, being a vegetarian. She had even persuaded
Adam to stop, by taking him to visit a slaughterhouse. They had lived
for years on vegetables, fruits and nuts. Except when she fasted.

"The greed and lust of hunger/destroys the inner eye/Men are blinded by/their own blood/unable to see/I must let it be/unattached/unlatched/only then will beauty be hatched/And Vision is the key/not whether I choose it/or how can I use it!"

When she was in the middle of the lake she pulled in her paddle. This was her favorite spot. Where she had all her poetic visions. She felt safe here.

The image of her father stayed in her mind. She tried to shake it off. She prayed to her poetic muse.

"Let me drift/free from desire/Let me escape his putrefying prison/of flesh/Let me float with the wind/with Chance/True romance/Let me lie/let me die/and in dying/really live!"

The lake was a mirror; there were no ripples, only a few clouds were reflected in it.

"Battleship grey/Anchored/in the blue peacetime sky."

Ahead was the silent, red and yellow forest. She drifted silently, like an Indian.

"The lake is my soul/a mirror/No Need to disturb the waters/And no judgements/I reflect/the harmony around me/the Peace!"

She sat on the floor of the canoe, her back propped up against the seat. She emptied her mind, to feel the stillness. But words swirled through her consciousness, looking for a form. She hummed a flat melody, almost a chant.

"Canoe song," she intoned. "The sparkling water/the whistling trees/I see and I hear/how the living God breathes/So measure it right/or measure it wrong/Each bird has his feathers/each bird has her song/Sometimes I love/and sometimes I hate/The one is my wings/the other my weight/And

sometimes it's hope/and sometimes it's fear/That my strokes on the surface/so soon disappear."

It flowed out, as if it had always been there, as if it were a poem she had memorized years ago and only had to recall. But it was new, and she was happy to have been present at its birth.

"I'd like to thank you all/for becoming," she smiled.

Now her mind was empty. Silent. She watched the sun sink behind the mountains. She loved the end of the day. Now night would begin, realm of dreams and visions, when anything could happen. She felt the magic all around her as her consciousness slipped away.

The sun disappeared. The evening star hung above the jagged peaks of the silhouetted pines. She stared at the lake surface. An image formed in the glassy water: her mother's face, as it had looked before it had taken on the zombie blankness of the mental hospital. The golden earrings she wore sparkled, one on each side of her face.

In the gathering darkness above, both Venus and Mars were visible. A light breeze began to blow off the land.

The earrings began to move, metamorphosing into golden shoes which danced on the water. Allison watched, enchanted. The shoes doubled, then doubled again, until the entire lake surface was covered with little golden shoes, dancing on the lake.

Above her, the sun had completely withdrawn and darkness assumed the throne. The stars came out, one by one. To the south the sky was lightened by the bright lights of Montreal. In the midst of this light, a moon, halfway through the first quarter, rose above the mountains.

A bat flew by, skimming the lake, flipflopping through the air, catching insects. Fish were jumping, too. Every few seconds she heard

a splash.

She became aware of a spotlight on the water, as if a show was about to begin. From the far side of the lake, where the black forest was silhouetted against the dark purple sky, from a lonely house glowing in the dark, came the strains of an old pop song. Her ears strained to catch the sound. Was it Adam and Paris fooling around? They often got together to sing old songs and have a few laughs just like in the Molson beer ads. What was the song? She recognized it from her youth, an old fifties song called "Venus".

An image began to emerge from the light on the lake. A figure in a red bathing suit and golden shoes danced on a shimmering seashell. It was surrounded by little cupids who danced the jitterbug, the foxtrot, the tango, the twist, the watusi, the frug, the swim, the hustle, the bump and the charleston. They all swirled around the larger figure as they approached Allison.

Soon she realized that they weren't cupids. They were pork chops, round steaks, pig's knuckles, salamis, and chicken legs. The seashell had turned into a huge silver dollar, and the large dancing figure into a cash register.

The buttons of the cash register bobbed up and down in time with the music. Numbers popped up on top, adding up until there was no room for another total. Then the cash register exploded, sending millions of silver dollars up into the air.

"Millions," Allison thought, "Millions of dances/Millions of pork chops/Millions of dollars!"

The silver dollars formed a long chain connecting the pieces of meat. They swirled around her canoe. As she watched, the meat turned into

musical instruments: guitars, saxophones, pianos and drums. They were all chained together like a work gang. At the front of the chain, pulling it along, was her father.

He pulled the chain toward the darkest end of the lake, where a set of gigantic jaws seemed to be waiting, expectantly. Deadpan steered the chain into the jaws and soon everything had vanished down the gaping gullet.

Allison stiffened. Now this gigantic crocodile was swimming toward her. She shook her head, blinked, even splashed some water on her face, but the vision didn't disappear, it kept coming at her.

She panicked, picking up her paddle and pulling frantically for the beach. The wind was stronger now, and it blew her bow around, slowing her progress. She knelt in the middle to distribute the weight evenly, but the wind still blew her off course. She paddled with all her might, but it was no good. It seemed as if she were standing still, while the huge set of jaws came closer and closer.

She could hear the splashing of the beast right behind her. She could smell its foul breath, like the smokey, stale beer smell of a discotheque. She turned. There it was. She swung at it desperately with the paddle, hoping it would prove to be an airy illusion.

Bang! Right on the nose.

The reptile bumped the canoe and knocked Allison into the water. When she came up for air it was heading straight for her, jaws gaping. The water all around her was being sucked into its enormous throat. She couldn't swim away, the current was too strong.

Desperately she stuck the paddle in the mouth, vertically to jam it open, and hung on while fish, lillies, frogs and logs swirled past. But

the paddle snapped in two, sending her slithering down the gullet, which was coated with slime.

She slid down, down and down, for what seemed like hours. When she finally reached the bottom she found herself at the end of a long hallway, with doors all along it. She stood up and walked along cautiously.

She opened the first door. Behind it was a small room inside which a Mountie, in full dress uniform, swung a whip at a young Indian who was chained to the wall. His back was covered in blood. She closed the door.

The next door opened into another small room. Inside, a woman dressed as a judge was whispering words from the French language into the ears of a man dressed like a bureaucrat who was masturbating furiously. She slammed that door.

In the next room there was a man who was naked except for a cowboy hat, who rubbed black oil all over his body and moaned with pleasure.

In the following room a man sat in a pin striped suit, reading the Globe and Mail, while two women licked his shoes.

In the final room a woman in an immigration officer's costume leaned over a desk and filled out a form. Behind her was a crowd of people all fighting each other for the opportunity of licking her anus.

Allison shut that door and continued down the hall in disgust. There were no more doors but a small opening at the far end. A loud din came from it. Curious, she walked carefully toward it, for the floor became slimier and more slippery as she approached. When she reached it, she had to get down on her knees to crawl through.

She plopped down into one end of a large chamber. The walls were covered with a dark yellow-green substance which she could only describe as something between puss and snot. The floor was flooded with green bile.

She could barely breathe because of the overwhelming stench of putrid and decomposing meat.

In the middle of the room hundreds of bodies in various stages of decomposition were being eaten away as they sank into the bile. In most cases all that could be seen were the heads which were all screaming: "Help! Help me!". Their screams filled the room with a terrifying discord.

Allison didn't know whether to cover her ears or her nose. But she didn't have time to make that decision because she felt the bile she was standing in begin to eat her feet. Fear gripped her as she looked around in desperation. The two halves of her paddle were close by, however, so she grabbed them. With great resourcefulness she used the laces in her shoes to bind the pieces to her feet, and walked on them like snowshoes.

And just in time.

Suddenly, litres more bile came pouring through the opening. With it came more victims, of every race, colour and creed. They gnashed their teeth and pulled their hair when they saw what kind of a place they were in. Then they sank into the slime.

With a great clatter and much howling a man and a dogsled complete with dogs slithered through the orifice and plopped into the ooze. The man looked like Pierre Trudeau dressed as an Eskimo. Looking around, and quickly sizing up his state, he cracked his whip over the heads of the dogs in an attempt to get them moving before they sank. But for some unexplainable reason the dogs insisted on pulling in different directions. Allison watched in horror as the man, the sled and the dogs all disappeared into the sludge.

She didn't give up. She began walking across the sea of bile toward an opening on the other side. As she passed the victims, they cried out for help. She was so touched by their hopeless pleas that tears fell from her eyes. She could not help them. They were too far gone and there were too many of them.

At the other end of the cavern was a round and metallic hole. An arm with a large round door on the end stuck out of the wall and hung over the bile, beside the hole. She had no time to analyse, anything was better than sinking into a sea of corrosive chemicals. She climbed through the opening into a long tube.

As if her weight had touched off some sensory mechanism, an engine began churning and the arm scooped up some of the hardened substance near the opening and swung it in, pushing Allison further into the tube. Then the slick, rubbery walls of the tube began to undulate and the large lump of digested meat, with Allison stuck on the front of it, began to move down the passage.

Soon, she found herself shooting down a twisting, winding channel at a breakneck speed. It was so fast she couldn't bear to look. She was sure that she was going to die. She thought of Adam and his beautiful music. She pictured his face before her as he would look when he told her how wonderful life could be, if only people cared. She realized how much she loved him and his sweet vision of natural life. She saw Paris, her favorite brother, strumming his guitar and singing a song he had made up about Canada. How she cherished those moments they had all shared. They had been so close and given each other so much love and inspiration.

She opened her eyes. There was a white speck at the end of the tunnel. Hope filled her heart. The speck grew bigger and bigger until

it became an opening which she was pushed through.

She splashed into the lake, and found herself sitting near the shore, waist deep in mud and water, trying to catch her breath.

"Allison, have you lost your mind?" Paris asked, wading into the water. "What are you doing here in the dark, splashing around in the reeds? You're all covered in mud and frog shit."

Allison stared around in confusion. The canoe was overturned, floating a few meters away.

Paris pulled her up. She hugged him, trembling all over.

"I was worried about you, so I thought I'd come down here and check it out," he explained.

They began to walk to the beach, but Allison tripped and fell into the water.

"What's wrong?" Paris asked.

She sat down again and untied the canoe paddles, bound to her feet.

He shook his head.

"You are getting very weird."

He waded in and rescued the canoe.

"I must have been dreaming," Allison said.

"I've had wet dreams, too. But this is ridiculous."

He pulled the canoe up onto the beach and helped her up.

"If I told you what happened, you wouldn't believe me," she said.

He shrugged.

"I think you're right."

Tuesday, the Fifth

Paris could not sit in his room alone. Inside himself, he felt a pain, a mixture of heartache and depression. Everywhere he looked, something reminded him of O. He had tried concealing things she had left behind in a trunk, but he realized he would have to burn everything in his apartment to rid himself of all traces of her.

How could he eat when everytime he saw the little dwarf refrigerator, the hotplate or the all-purpose electric frying pan, his tears would well up? It was with these few tools that she had expressed so much, knowing every vitamin in every vegetable and fruit. He remembered how passionate she had been about healthy foods. She had believed that they could change the world.

He had believed that music could change the world, but no one wanted to listen. Now it was all disco music and ego. He shook his head thinking of all the journalists across the country who decided what was real and what was not, what Canadians would consume, the styles, the issues, the names. It was depressing. He had played around Montreal for years and never once been mentioned in the paper. Yet some weird British or American group pushing some completely insubstantial carnival-dream image can roll into town and get complete coverage. He sang about Canadian towns and people and was ignored by Canadian record companies, radio stations and newspapers. What was going on here anyway?

And she, who he could always depend on, had also betrayed him. No, he couldn't stay in his apartment alone. He felt like such a loser there, a ghost. So he swung his red cape over his shoulders and wandered the streets of Montreal.

He didn't feel too bad while on the move, meandering aimlessly, and since he had no destination, anything was possible. He felt freed by the weightlessness of not knowing what would happen next. It took him back to the womb, even further, to some vaguely dreamed of other-world where he had lacked the restraint of his senses, some life before birth where he had had no limits.

His feet wandered, his eyes wandered and then his heart wandered. It fluttered from woman to woman, flower to flower, like a butterfly. Some kissed him with their eyes. Other drifted by like icebergs. They were all so beautiful.

He followed a woman in a backless dress. The sight of her shoulder-blades moving just under her soft brown skin, and her buttocks swaying from side to side, Nature's magic machinery, hypnotized him. Pigeons flew out of her way as she walked across Dominion Square. He was a pigeon, in a Skinner box of chemical stimuli.

He followed her into the Peel subway station. They stood in front of a life-sized poster of a movie starlet trying to seduce passersby into seeing her new film, "The Anti-Virgin". A man was staring at it intensely. Paris watched him, an ordinary man in a nondescript suit. The man inched closer to the billboard until he pressed right up against it. To Paris's amazement he began licking the starlet's breast. Then he took his clothes off and pushed himself against the image of the starlet in a tortured agony of desire.

Others gathered, with a mixture of shock and amusement, to watch this man naked, except for his socks, moan and writhe against the wall. Two policeman came running down the stairs and grabbed him. They put him in handcuffs and dragged him away. The starlet smiled, unaware of her defoliation.

When Paris turned around the girl in the backless dress had vanished. So he boarded the next train, and sat beside a negro woman. He watched the way her black hand grasped the metal tubing with its long slender fingers and red painted nails. It tightened and contracted with the motion of the train, then began to slip up and down. Did she know? He looked at her face, the pleasant face of a woman of forty. His eyes caught hers. What was he to say? Excuse me, but I couldn't help but notice how well you use your hands?

She looked away.

He gazed out his window. A train had stopped in the station beside his. A woman stared at him from her window. He stared back, into her eyes. For a moment, it seemed, they were lovers. Oh, if he could leap from the train, run across the stairway bridging the tracks, and jump into her car to profess his love. But her train pulled away before he could complete the thought, and he knew he would never see her again and, by tomorrow, not even remember her face.

Other women boarded his car. He observed their wrists and ankles, the only parts of their bodies women exposed these days. He wondered whether these fragments were good clues to the rest.

An Oriental girl across the aisle caught his eye, then looked away. He stared at her reflection in the carriage window. She soon noticed he was watching her there and turned to look straight at him, in a kind of challenge. Their eyes made hot contact. She quickly became flustered and dropped her gaze.

What was he to do? Stand up and make a speech? Dear ladies of this subway car. As you can see, I am a young, trim and reasonably good-looking man struggling through his sexual peak. As I look at you all I

see so much that attracts me. Yes, I find you all so beautiful. I really would like to make love to you all. You would find me very agreeable, I'm sure. So here's my telephone number. Take out your pens and paper, please.

He left the Metro at Berri, with everyone else, and walked toward Old Montreal. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed that a man with a beard was following him. Paris turned around. The man stared back. He looked like Allen Ginsberg. A homosexual? Ginsberg, riding the subways of Montreal, chanting: "Being in Charge", would have called Paris's dilemma "Random Transfers".

He passed a small park. He thought he saw someone with four arms. A Hindu Goddess? Paris looked closer. Two people stood, one behind the other. The one in front faced the declining sun, shirt up around the armpits. Hands came from behind and caressed the belly and chest. Two heads kissed. What sex were they? It was impossible to tell.

Paris hurried away. The bearded man was still following him. Damn. Would he have to confront this guy? He walked past the bistros of Place Jacques Cartier. He could hear the jabber-jabber of conversation. They all fluttered and flirted with each other inside the terraces. Sounded like birds. Paris was still trying to lose the turkey on his tail.

What would life be without desire? Peaceful, he thought. But maybe it would stop altogether.

Thunder rolled across the river from the south shore. He looked up at the sky, grey and impassive. The sound of the Steamroller of Fate, he thought. From his birth Fate had been in control. He had tried to fight it off, but it seemed omnipotent.

He remembered his poor mother. She had said to him once, shortly before her breakdown, something which had stayed with him for years: "Tragedy is Truth". He had been too full of youthful optimism then to take it seriously, but now he thought of it again.

Why did people need each other? What was this strange pull of desire? If only he didn't need O. Are love and sexual desire the road to Tragedy? In that case, we make ourselves suffer.

He needed someone, but it wasn't the guy with a beard. Paris quickened his pace. The beard quickened his. Paris couldn't imagine making love to someone with a beard. On the very few occasions he had considered the homosexual possibility, it had always been men who looked like women who had attracted him. A beard? That was rubbing him the wrong way. No one would paint a Venus with a beard!

He ducked into Notre Dame cathedral. Surely the homo erectus would never follow him in here. This was a sanctuary for the spirit. He walked to the front and sat in a pew. When he looked back he saw no sign of the beard.

Thank God.

The church was almost empty. There was an old woman praying near the front, and a group of American tourists being herded along the side. Paris listened to the guide tell them about the founding of Montreal by the Recollets and the Jesuits, and how they had dedicated this original church to the Virgin Mary, hoping she would protect them. That was why Montreal was originally called Ville Marie.

Had she protected us? Paris wondered. How could she protect us from ourselves? He thought of his mother again. So many times she had told him the story of Troy, how the naive Trojans had celebrated around the famous horse, not realizing for a moment that it was their undoing.

She had described it so well. The Greeks were smart, they knew how to sell it to the Trojans.

"What do you like best in the world?" she had asked him.

"Hamburgers," he had answered.

"It was as irresistible as a hamburger," she had said.

Was he not walking around with a Trojan horse inside? What he thought he needed might be exactly what he should not have. Yes, and the whole country has its Trojan horse. American business and culture have established themselves in the hearts and minds of Canadians because they knew what Canadians really wanted: dream wishes and fantasies. They have colonized our souls, he thought. Nationalism was impossible for us, even our most secret inner thoughts were already American.

He thought of Mary Monday. As he stared at the Heavenly City of Jerusalem he could see her face. It was a profile, a close-up, against the light background. The backlighting accentuated her small nose, long eyelashes, and full lips. Then she turned her head toward Paris and smiled ecstatically. The rest of her body came into focus and she began to dance. The city around her now was Montreal. A street came into focus. She beckoned for him to follow as she tapped up the avenue in her costume of vaudevillian glitter.

The street and city around it curved upwards. His mind's eye followed her up into the clouds where all the hard-edged buildings and buzzing neon signs had all melted like cheese into a Mary Monday New World filled with beautiful boys and girls. He saw a cartoon garden, a futuristic utopia, in which the sexes were indistinguishable. Some girls wore pants and short hair, some boys wore dresses and shaved legs. There were no beards. They were all making love.

With a start he realized that a priest was saying a mass up front. He had been staring all the while at the Holy City. There were a few more believers in the church responding half-heartedly. He thought of phoning Mary. He still had her name and number in his pocket, scrawled on a cigarette package. The word made flesh.

He felt a vibration, a rumbling. An earthquake? He turned toward the door. A gigantic, transparent penis rammed its way through the portals. The priest shouted at it, damning it for attempting to penetrate this sanctuary, but it throbbed and squeezed up the aisle toward the altar. The parishioners screamed and ran for cover. The penis swelled, filling up the church and bumping against the Golden City. The little priest was a ridiculous figure, an Elmer Fudd impotently shaking his fist and leaping out of its way. Paris ran for the side door.

A charge came vibrating up the center of this latest member of the congregation and exploded into a great burst of magic dust and animated stars. Paris was swept out of the church and discharged on the cold pavement of the street.

He looked up at the statue of de Maisonneuve as he dialed Mary's number. He girded up his courage to explore the path ahead.

"Mary Monday, Queen of the World, speaking!"

"Hi, this is Paris. You gave me your number at the Lorelei on Saturday night, remember?"

"Oh yeah, the cute one. What's happening, Paris?"

"Well, I thought maybe we could get together, you know?"

He was glad that she couldn't see him blushing.

"I've been thinking about you. I'd really like to see you."

"That's nice. Well I'd like to see you too, but tonight's impossible. How about tomorrow at the Venus. I'll be there around Happy Hour."

"Sure, great. I'll be there. You know, you really knocked me out Saturday."

"I'm glad. We could have a nice exchange. Just between you and me, I'm due for something new. My present situation is a bummer."

"If there's anything I can do.."

"You don't have a beard, do you?"

Paris laughed.

"No, why."

"Oh, I don't like beards."

"Neither do I!"

"How will I recognize you? I mean, well, I meet a lot of guys. I'm sure I'll remember you when I see you, but.. well, I hope you understand."

"I'll be wearing a red cape."

"Oh yeah. Now I remember. It looks good on you. Like Superman."

"OK, see ya then."

"Right, bye."

"Bye."

He walked away from the phone booth, feeling good. He smiled as he strolled downtown. As he walked up the hill, he felt the city loom ahead of him. All around was the chaos of an evening rush hour. Horns honked and men screamed at each other from rolled-down windows. Cars weaved in and out of lanes, trying in vain to cross a stalled line of traffic. Everyone was hustling and jockeying for position in their isolated metal shells.

The stoplight at University and Dorchester was not working. Capsules of self-seekers tried to outbluff each other to make it safely across the intersection. There were screeches of tires and a threatening howl of horns.

Paris started across. He dodged, pivoted and sidestepped like a halfback running a punt return. The large, heavy tires of a dumptruck rolled by, centimeters away. If he had hesitated for an instant they would have had to scoop up his squashed, pale flesh.

When he reached the median he came upon a stalled car. He peered into the window, to see if he could help. There was no one. The owner had probably left in disgust. But a dog jumped over the seat and barked at him. A small Cocker Spaniel, with its tongue hanging out, and a crazed, pathetic look in its eyes, ran around the car in a panic. Its stringy hair was matted from the heat. It jumped on the dashboard, wagging its tail furiously, then it leapt onto the back rest of the driver's seat, where it raced back and forth in a frantic anticipation of release.

Paris turned to go. The dog let out a sustained, high-pitched cry. Paris hesitated. The dog whined and scratched at the glass. Paris looked around, hoping he might spot the owner. There was only the traffic jam. Not another pedestrian in sight.

If only there was a way to open the window enough to let in some air, Paris thought. He felt a sympathy for the animal, trapped by its dependence on someone else; its need for food, shelter and love. And now it was abandoned, helpless.

He put his hands flat against the window and pushed down. It gave, slipping a centimeter. Then he pushed two fingers into the space and

pulled with the weight of his body. The window opened more.

With a snarling growl the dog jumped at Paris's fingers, sinking his teeth into Paris's flesh. Paris screamed and pulled his hand back.

"Jesus Christ!"

The dog was in a frenzy. It squeezed itself into the small opening and pushed with all its might. The window gave in. Paris watched in horror as the dog leapt out of the car and onto the street, right into the path of oncoming traffic. A taxi doing a hundred kilometers an hour, driven by an angry frown, didn't even try to stop.

The dog was dead before it could yelp. The body flew past Paris, and all he heard was the slap of dogflesh on chrome. With the hollow echoes from the cold, apathetic buildings and the steel and concrete street, it sounded like the clap of doom which would one day signal the end of the world.

Wednesday, the Sixth

A huge neon flower lit up the sidewalk and street with reds and blues. It was a massive sign, covering entirely the front of a four story building. Inside the flower, great neon jaws snapped at the passersby. Stairs led up through the jaws to a door.

The Shadow stood at the door. He was the bouncer and doorman. Although he worked in other clubs, this was his center of operations. He was a mountain of a man, completely bald, with a bright gold earring in his only ear.

He shouted at the crowded sidewalk: "You want tits? We got tits. You want buns? We got buns. You want cock? We got that, too. Anything you want, get it right here at the Venus!"

"Right this way," he said as Paris walked up the stairs. "Happy Hour has begun. If you're not happy now, spend some money and we'll be happy."

"No, this man isn't interested in getting drunk," Gump said, standing beside him. "Just look at him. This man is a lover, not a loser."

"Same thing to me," the Shadow sneered.

Gump extended his hand to Paris. He wore jeans and an old tweed jacket, had long stringy hair and granny-glasses as thick as coke bottles.

"Welcome to the Quintessential exotic chapel. In this dark magic chamber you can commune with other seekers, and mate to the heavenly music of the holy hit parade. You look great. Back in circulation, I see."

His Adam's apple bobbed.

Paris wore tight jeans, dashing knee-high boots and his red cape.

"You sound like a man who knows the scene," Paris said.

"Ah yes, but I only observe. I never participate. That way I gain the maximum of understanding with the minimum of risk."

Paris tried to slip past them, but the Shadow blocked the door, his hand held out. Paris dropped some change in it. The Shadow gave him a scornful look then stepped aside.

Paris had to climb another flight of stairs to get to the club. He bounded past the animal skins, old metal traps, and framed replicas of bills of sale from fur trading companies which hung on the stairwell wall.

Inside the bar there were traps everywhere: beartraps, lobster traps, fishnets and cages. A large tiger cage stood next to the door. He was surprised to find his sister Allison inside, standing on a table, shouting at the crowd.

"Clean energy burn is being one/with the raw flow of existence/
Every moment is pure novelty/nothing is repeated/or deleted/but completed/Every moment being/everything at that moment/uniting birth and death in its microcosm!"

She waved her arms in the air, her words interspersed with shouts of approval from those sitting at the tables. A band was setting up on the stage. A saxophonist Paris recognized, a maritimer everyone called Bluenose, blew random notes along with Allison's poetry.

"All memory/and other preconceptions/are arbitrary directions/a fixing of the Real election/covering the core/and becoming a bore/And oh how we yearn/our little hearts churn/if we could only return/to Clean

Energy/Burn!"

Bluenose honked, squealed and screamed a final flurry of notes.

Everyone cheered, and three guys carried Allison over to the bar.

"When you're hot, you're hot," the bartender said, laying out a round of beers. "And when you're not, you're not."

Paris approached the bar.

"Hi, baby brother," Allison greeted him, throwing her arms around his neck. "The whole family's here tonight."

"What's left of it," Paris said. "You're going over well, I see."

"She tells 'em what they want to hear," a man standing beside her said.

"Everyone wants to hear the truth!" Allison cried.

The man raised a finger in the air, ponderously.

"You are the re-emergence of the wilderness through the cracks in the cement of our social fabric."

"Are you calling my sister a weed?" Paris's brow furrowed.

"She is trying to bury civilization like the Mexican rainforests buried Teotihuacan!"

"Now I'm a jungle," Allison observed.

The man smiled from the side of his face, extending his hand to Paris.

"No offence intended. It's just that, well, somebody had to say it, and since I'm the house intellectual, it's my job."

Paris shook his hand.

"My name is Jeffrey Chawser," the man said.

"Paris De Kitschman."

"Nice name, Paris. The Trojan hero and lover."

"Our mother loved Greek myths," Allison explained. "She used to read them to us all the time."

"Unusual in this day and age," Jeffrey commented.

"Did you like Allison's poetry?" Paris asked him.

Jeffrey finished his glass and ordered another.

"I've got a composition for her," he said. "A conceptual piece.

Drop her from a thousand metres onto a huge white canvas. I'd call it 'Portrait of the Artist as a Sacrificial Lamb'!"

"That would take guts," Allison laughed.

"Yes. But an artist must have the guts to state her misunderstandings loud and clear!"

"You're really giving it to her, eh?"

Paris didn't like Jeffrey. There was something about him. Pomposness? His voice had the resonance of a man who was too certain of what he said. Besides which, Paris felt very protective of Allison. He knew the vulnerability of her vision. He had shared it for many years.

"I'd like you to meet Judas," Allison said, introducing the bartender and diverting his attention from Jeffrey.

"He's the owner of this palace."

Paris shook his hand.

"Judas, eh?"

The bartender moved his cigar to one side of his mouth to make room for talking.

"It's a perfectly good name!"

He was a pudgy little man with a dark moustache.

"I mean, what would've happened to Christ if it hadn't been for

Judas? He probably would've gone into politics or the church and become fat and corrupt like all the rest of them."

"Or gotten married to Mary Magdelene and settled down to a life of comfortable repetition," the Bopper added, sliding into the conversation.

"Judas is the shepherd who fleeces his flock," Jeffrey sneered.

Judas reddened and took the cigar out of his mouth with a smacking noise that sounded like a kiss.

"Hey, I'm no social worker!"

"Two bucks for a beer? It only costs you fifty cents," Jeffrey continued.

"So I got overhead. Don't you understand business? Don't you have any idea how much of a hassle it is to keep this place open. The cops are always breathin' down my neck. They've been in here twice this week, already."

He jerked his thumb at the end of the bar.

"See that queen down there? Last week an undercover cop watched her give head to some guy at a table and reported it. If they figure soliciting goes on in here, they'll close me up. And I know damn well it does!"

He looked down at the end of the bar in disgust.

"Oh shit!"

They all looked. The queen had dropped to her knees and was crawling between a man's legs. They could see her unzipping his fly, as he sat above her on the stool, in an eerie blue twilight.

Judas banged his fist on the bar.

"I don't care what they do. I just wish the hell they'd do it

somewhere else!"

He called the Shadow up to do his dirty work. The Shadow picked the transvestite up, threw him over his shoulder, and carried him down the stairs.

"Why do you put up with all these gays in your bar?" Paris asked.

Judas looked surprised.

"I got nothing against fags. They drink, don't they?"

"Well so do I," Paris said. "Give me a Molson."

Judas reached down and came up with a cold one.

"By the way, I like your decor," Paris commented.

"Bars are like books," Jeffrey said. "They have to have a theme."

Judas placed the beer in front of Paris and looked at the others.

"Aren't you guys ready for more?"

"Hey, don't rush us. We've got plenty of time," the Bopper protested.

"I can see that it's time to turn the heat up again," Judas said.

He turned and walked away, leaving a trail of cigar smoke behind him.

"Let's talk about me," Jeffrey suggested facetiously, a wry smile breaking across one side of his face.

"I'm working on a screenplay of the Tibetan Book of the Dead."

Yeah, that's right. An adventure-melodrama about a Yogi's journey from death, through the forty nine days of Karmic illusion in the Bardo state, back into the womb of his choice."

"Man comes out of woman and spends the rest of his life trying to get back in," the Bopper mused.

"Ah, but this is the other side of the circle, a side nobody's

ever put on the screen."

"Lots of special effects?" Allison asked hopefully.

"Depends on the budget, but knowing the Canadian film industry, it'll probably end up as a B movie," Jeffrey shook his head.

"Well, life's a B movie," Paris said. "So why not death?"

"The hero will be invisible, a ghost," Jeffrey continued. "Forced to return to life because he could not disassociate himself from bodily passions."

"I'll drink to bodily passions," the Bopper toasted, raising his glass.

Paris thought of his own journey. When O left, he was free, or should have been. It was his chance to live alone. He could have gone to the country. Lived a simple life, like a hermit. There was a side of him that wanted to do just that. A side that distrusted the world and all its slimy entanglements. Why hadn't he? Instead of thinking of himself as free he thought of himself as broken. And now he found himself irresistibly drawn toward a new passion, a new entanglement. Returning to a womb of his choice?

"How are ya gonna show the white light?" Allison asked. "If it's really like the light of God, it'll blind everyone in the theater."

"If God is light, then why is there a Shadow?" said the bouncer, joining them at the bar. He slapped Jeffrey on the back and guffawed loudly.

"Why do you have only one ear?" Paris asked.

"Like Van Gogh," the Shadow said. "To protest this fucked-up world we're all supposed to live in!"

"I heard different," the Bopper said. "I heard that you always use a straight razor, and one morning, as you were rushing, you accidentally sliced it off."

The Shadow clenched his fists. To suggest such a thing was an affront to his pride.

"That's not true!" he insisted. "I know what happened. I was there."

Jeffrey leapt in, trying to steer the conversation away from the Shadow's ear, which was a sore subject.

"We say God is light because of our heritage. Our forefathers used to worship the sun."

"The sun is the most over-rated star in the universe!" the Shadow snarled.

"This guy could start a fight in an empty room," the Bopper observed.

The Shadow picked up a glass from the bar and bit into it. He chewed the broken bits and swallowed. Then he picked up an ashtray and emptied the contents into his mouth. Again, to the amazement of all, he swallowed. Then he sneered at them, cupped his hands over his genitals and said: "Eat my shorts!"

Jeffrey tried to continue.

"But the sun has always been revered by artists, because it is the source of creation here on earth. You see, art has always been concerned with the creative..."

The Shadow brought his fist down on the bar with a crash, clinking all the bottles and glasses.

"Well it's about time that art dealt with destruction! What the

fuck is creation without destruction?"

He grabbed Jeffrey by the collar.

"You keep your Plato and your Leonardo and your Picasso. Just give me a sledgehammer. I'll show you art!"

The tension was so thick, Paris could hardly breathe. He tried a different tack.

"The Shadow's right."

They all looked at him.

"Yes. If there was nothing but creation, we'd run out of space. I mean, the old has to be destroyed to make way for the new."

The Shadow let go of Jeffrey and eyed Paris suspiciously.

"For instance," Paris went on. "I just broke up with a girl a while ago and I was hurt, you know, hurt bad. But tonight I'm gonna meet someone new, right here. That makes me happy. Precisely because it's new. And it wouldn't have been possible if my old relationship hadn't been destroyed."

The Shadow tilted his head, sticking his one ear up in the air.

"Who's the chick?"

Paris didn't mean to go this far. His confession had just slipped out under the pressure of the moment. But the Shadow was challenging his story.

"Mary Monday."

Jeffrey coughed, and spit out the mouthful of beer he'd almost swallowed. Then he looked at Paris in shock.

"Mary Monday? But she's living with me!"

"Not for long, sunshine!" the Shadow jeered.

Then he patted Paris on the back. A twisted smile broke across his face.

"Don't be afraid to destroy what needs to be destroyed," he told Paris. "Be bad. Hell, somebody's gotta do it!"

Paris looked at Jeffrey. He appeared stunned. Paris didn't know she was living with anyone. He remembered the man in the dressing room, wearing a robe. That must have been Jeffrey.

A conga drum began a rippling rhythm. A saxophone wailed over it. An electric piano dabbed abstract chords here and there, with no particular key or progression. The musicians stood on the stage in the corner. It was shaped like a gigantic seashell. Plastic grapes hung over it and there were cupidons at either end. The musicians were dressed completely in blue denim.

Allison took the Shadow's paw in her hand.

"Let's dance."

She led him out to the dance floor.

"I've heard of pot-heads, acid-heads, and skin-heads, but that guy is a war-head!" the Bopper exclaimed.

They watched him dance. He was stiff from his bald head down to his rear end, moving only his legs. His body was stocky and cylindrical.

"And I thought this was supposed to be Happy Hour," said Jeffrey, adjusting his collar.

"Don't tell me you believe the advertising," the Bopper scoffed.

Allison brushed by them, waving her arms gracefully as she slinked across the dance floor. Her body was loose and supple, like a reed bending in the wind. The Shadow clumsily tried to follow her, looking around self-consciously to see if anyone was laughing at him. No one dared.

Bluenose grabbed the microphone.

"In jazz there's no such thing as a wrong note," he yelled.

Then he played a string of wild squeals.

"Come on, baby," he screamed into the mike again, "do the Urban Sprawl!"

He sprawled on his hands and knees. The piano player followed, then Allison and the Shadow tried it. But he was too stiff, so he stood up again. Looking around, he realized that everyone was watching him. He had to do something. So he undid his belt and slipped down his pants, kicking off one leg and then the other, in a grotesque parody of rhythm.

The crowd laughed.

He bent over, his head toward the band and bum toward the clients, and pulled down his underwear, revealing a dark and hairy anus.

The crowd cheered.

"Why do you put up with this?" Paris asked Judas.

"The crowd loves it," he explained. "Because in this day and age, with as much civilization as we have thrust upon us, here's a guy who can evade his taxes, not pay rent, insult people openly, flaunt all the rules of morality and public decency, say whatever he feels, and still walk around a free man!"

Jeffrey raised his glass with a sad look of resignation.

"So let us drink to chaos, where everyone is equal, everything is free, and anything can happen."

They all clinked glasses. The Bopper nudged Paris and motioned toward the door.

"Now there's God," he said. "Look at that ass!"

"God?" Paris asked.

"Yeah. It's what pulls all of us."

He put his hands up like a film director framing a shot.

"Three perfect circles. Two round buttocks and a pussy in the middle. That's what Dante saw when he saw God. Of course, he learned everything he knew from Beatrice."

"I didn't know that you knew so much about religion."

"Are you kiddin'? Don't you remember when I was eight I won a city-wide essay contest on the love of God?"

"What did you win?"

"A Holy Bible."

"Really?"

"Autographed copy."

"Signed by who?"

"The Holy Ghost, of course."

"You never showed it to me."

"He signed it in invisible ink!"

They looked back to the door. It was Mary he was describing. She stood there in red feathers, golden shoes, a T-shirt with a big silver moon on it, and short, tight, red silk hot pants. Her bare legs were long and slender. Instead of a purse she carried a newsboy bag with The Montreal Star written on it.

She had captured everyone's attention. Paris's loins ached and his knees weakened. She smiled, dropped her bag, and jumped onto the dance floor. The band swung into an up-tempo number based on an old pop tune. She tapped, boogied, and cartwheeled, doing take-offs on a dozen dances. The crowd was electrified, yelling encouragement and applauding difficult steps.

She leapt over a table and onto the bar, dancing around the beer bottles and ashtrays. All the time, she seemed to be looking at Paris. He could feel it. Her energy was directed at him. She was showing off for him.

Just when she seemed to have exhausted her possibilities, dancing on everything except heads, she grabbed hold of a beam which spanned the length of the bar and swung herself up. Her feet hit the ceiling and stayed there. She let go of the beam and hung like a bat.

The crowd went wild, standing up and screaming with delight.

In time with the beat, she walked across the ceiling, dramatizing each step. When she hung over the middle of the dance floor she signalled for the final chord. As the band responded, she dropped out of her shoes and summersaulted down to the floor, landing on her feet. On the final drumbeat she bowed.

As the applause rocked the club, she walked over to Paris, smiling ecstatically. A man with a big blonde moustache climbed on a table and pulled her shoes off the ceiling. Then he picked up her bag and dutifully brought them over to her. She climbed back into the shoes, threw the bag over her shoulder, and stood in front of Paris.

His eyes dined. Her body was lean and firm, a dancer's body. She had beautiful wrists and ankles. His heart pounded like a jackhammer.

"Sign! Sign!"

Judas ran over to her, waving a piece of paper.

"I love it. You can start in a couple of weeks."

She winked at Paris and signed the contract. Judas smiled with satisfaction, then slid back behind the bar.

"You really knocked him out," Paris observed.

"And how did it affect you," she gasped, still out of breath.

"I throw myself at your feet."

Paris knelt down and kissed her ankles.

"I like a man who knows what he wants," she said.

"Don't we all," Twilight said, sauntering up beside them. He sipped a bottle of beer through a straw.

Paris ran his hand up the back of Mary's calf. It was round and firm, the muscle taut from the way the foot was housed in the tap shoe. He was crazy about her legs. They were so magnificent. So strong.

"Do you like my new magnetic shoes?" she asked. "I invented them myself."

"Wonderful," he said, rising to his feet. "They sure pull at me."

Her eyes twinkled at him. He felt the magic electricity.

"You make me feel like a new man."

"I always feel like a new man," Twilight interrupted. "Are there any around?"

"Don't look at me," Paris shrugged.

"Was that Judas?" Twilight asked.

"Yes," Mary said. "We got the contract."

"Oh God, I need the money," he cried. "I can't walk the streets any more. That phase of my life is over."

She frowned.

"I like your outfit," Paris complimented her.

She grinned and twirled herself around.

"I'm a barbie doll. You never know what outfit I'll come out with next."

"What about my outfit," Twilight interrupted again. "I come in

hot pants, too."

He wore the same combination as Mary, except that on his T-shirt was sewn a stork carrying a coffin to a little house, and his legs were bandy.

"Those pants don't do you justice," laughed the Bopper. "Take them off."

"Don't tempt me, big boy. There's only one thing I can't resist. That's temptation."

He stuck his nose in the air and minced off in a huff.

"He's getting to be a pain," Mary said.

"Want a drink?" Paris asked.

Mary nodded.

"Bloody Mary," he ordered. "Why don't you put your bag down. It looks heavy."

"It's my office. I'm a mobile unit," she winked. "If I dropped this, I'd float right off into space. It's the only thing that's keepin' me down."

They both drank.

"I feel like I've known you for a long time," Paris said. "I feel like I've been with you before."

"Oooooooo," she mocked television mystery music.

She looked into his eyes. Blue. She could tell that he was in the bag. Normally, she didn't like men who threw themselves at her. No fun. But he had an innocence about him that she translated as sincerity.

She reached into her bag and pulled out a postcard. A glossy picture of a crater in the Arizona desert.

"That's where my spaceship landed."

He looked at it and nodded his head.

"And you've come to our planet to teach us?"

"About love."

She had a slightly southern drawl which, along with the way she spoke from the back of her throat, gave her a baby-like voice.

His face became serious for a moment as he stared at her. "Was he being foolish throwing his heart at Mary like this? You don't send a hockey player back onto the ice until his injuries have healed. He had not yet healed. Was she the remedy?"

She noticed Jeffrey at the bar. He had glanced her way a number of times. She did not want to talk to him. It would mean trouble. She had already moved out of his house, only her cat was left there. But how long could she stay with Twilight? He was nuts. She could use some help from a sweet guy like Paris right now, to help her out of the mess she was in.

"What do you do?" she asked him.

"Musician," he mimed playing a guitar.

"Oh yeah? Make a living at it?"

"Scrape through. Pay the rent."

He wanted to curl up with her! She was so feminine! Without a woman, he felt empty. She sensed his vulnerability, and this made her feel more secure. She didn't want a male ego that was too strong. Like Jeffrey. He wanted to mummify her and stand her in his office, next to his desk.

"We could have a nice exchange," she kissed Paris on the cheek.

This gave him confidence.

"I hope so," he said.

Jeffrey stumbled over to them and bumped into Paris. He was very drunk.

"What're you two talking about so secretly," he whined. "Don't you know this is my girl?"

"I'm not your girl any more, Jeffrey, so don't lay your bum trip on me!"

A pathetic expression crossed his face, the look of a lost soul.

"You can't walk out on me that easy. It's not over yet!"

She became angry. She hated these scenes. And in front of a possible new lover? How sleazy! It was times like this when she realized how scattered her life was.

"You're so negative. You wanna drag me back into your little life. But it's too late. I left already!"

Jeffrey's face twisted in pain. Paris watched with dismay.

"Just don't go like this. I need you tonight, Mary, please!"

She looked around, nervously, to see who was watching. Everybody was.

"Don't give me that shit!" she screamed. "You always give me that poor-little-lost-lamb crap just to lure me back, but as soon as I return, bang, it's back to your analyzing and control, carving me up with your words. I've had it. That's all. Finito!"

She whirled around and hurried out the door. Paris was after her like a shot! They both rushed past Gump on the stairs outside. He sat there scribbling observations in the glow of the neon flower. By the time he looked up, Jeffrey was hovering over him.

"What's going on?" Gump inquired, nervously.

Jeffrey coughed, and then with a great heave covered poor Gump with the undigested remains of eight beers, two scotches and an all-dressed pizza.

Gump screamed in horror, and Jeffrey collapsed, hitting the stoop with a slap, like dogflesh on chrome.

Paris caught up with Mary half-way up the street. Her face was wet with tears. When he put his arm around her, she snuggled up close to him, gratefully.

"I just wanna get away from him. He's everywhere I go. He seems to know where I'm gonna be. He won't leave me alone!"

Paris stroked her hair, tenderly.

"Maybe he doesn't know what he's doing. It must be hard to break up with you."

He thought of his break with O. He had wanted to show up at her farm with a gun, but he was too miserable and depressed.

"Oh, he knows what he's doing," she said. "That's his big problem."

They turned west on Sherbrooke. It was a warm evening. There was a moon among the skyscrapers. On the sidewalk, in front of the Ritz Carlton Hotel, lay an uprooted plant. Mary bent down and picked it up. It lay limp in her hands, a little soil clinging to its roots.

"Look at this," she said. "It'll die if it's left here."

Paris looked up.

"A suicide," he said. "Maybe it jumped off the twentieth floor!"

She furrowed her brows at his flippancy.

"No, really. It needs a home."

"We'll take it to my place," Paris said, delighted at this excuse to take Mary home.

He hailed a cab.

The moon hung over their shoulders as they walked up to his door.

"I've heard that when the moon is beginning a cycle, it's a good time to plant," he said, "but what about transplant?"

"It should be good for that, too," she said, examining it closely.

"What'll we call it. It's our pet, now."

"What kind of plant is it?" he asked, opening the door.

"It's a rosebush."

"The rose is for Love."

"We can't call it Love."

"How about Eros, the God of Love?"

"Yeah, I like that. How come you know about old Gods?"

"My mother was an expert."

"All my mother knows is what she sees on TV."

They walked into the apartment and turned on the light. Mary looked around. Guitars, amplifiers, records, socks on the floor, roaches in the ashtray. The complete disorder of a bachelor apartment.

"Do you have any pots?"

"Are you kidding?"

"Well, what have you got?"

He rummaged in the tiny kitchen.

"Here's an empty peanut butter jar."

"That'll do. How about some earth?"

He took a spatula out to the little yard in front of the building and scooped up some soil from under a hedge. She packed the earth loosely around the rosebush, until it stood up in the jar.

"Now we water it and see what happens."

She poured water on it and placed it on the window sill. He switched off the overhead light and turned on a red light in the corner. It gave off a rose-coloured glow.

"Nice," she commented.

"The Love-light," he announced.

"Oh, does it work?"

"Time will tell."

"Did you like my routine tonight?" she asked, batting her eyes, fishing for flattery.

"It was a peak performance," he said, picking up an acoustic guitar by the sofa.

They both sat. He strummed an open chord and began to sing to her in a Leonard Cohen-like drone.

"Breathless, yes I wondered, as the stage stood still and the walls became transparent."

He hesitated, his mind grasping for a phrase.

"And did anyone else there realize that the Holy was happening as I dove through your eyes and you through mine."

His blue eyes flashed at her. She shuddered, involuntarily.

"Like the music in our ears, stretching out in space, looking for a station!"

He arpeggiated a final progression and put the guitar down, strings still ringing.

"Not bad," she nodded. "You give me goosebumps."

He kissed her. She opened her mouth to him, he explored it with his tongue. She was the first girl he had kissed since O. O's breath was natural, the smell of a field after a rainfall. Mary's breath was more like the icing on a cake. Strawberry flavoured.

"Let's pretend we're in a parked car at a drive-in," she said, excitedly. "You be the football hero and I'll be the rah-rah cheerleader who's still a virgin and takes Ann Landers seriously."

"So we make out until our chemicals take over?"

"No. Until you ask me to marry you," she laughed.

He kissed her again. She went limp in his arms. He put a hand on her knee. She pushed it off and stopped the kiss.

"Paris De Kitschman, I'm not that kind of a girl!" she camped, with her hands on her hips.

"Wanna bet?"

Paris grabbed her and kissed her forcefully.

"Let me explore the new world of your flesh. There's a little Jacques Cartier in us all."

As they kissed, she made low noises in her throat, as if she was purring. This spurred Paris on.

"Mmm, it's hot in here," she said, when they stopped to breath.

She took off her T-shirt. He stared at her breasts, small rises on her chest topped with large, hard nipples. He ran his fingers over them.

"Still not sure if I'm a girl or a boy?"

"They look like two fried eggs, sunnyside up."

"Like them?"

"Yeah, they're the breasts of a young girl, still budding. I feel like a child molester," he growled.

"Not much good for children."

"They're non-functional. Art for art's sake. They couldn't be used for something as grotesque as child weaning."

"Yeah, they're only for my lovers. Those are my babies!"

"Let's take off the rest of our clothes," Paris suggested, thankful that his janitor had turned up the heat.

Her little-boy body was smooth and firm, sweet with sweat and Johnson's baby powder. Paris feasted with his eyes, nose, tongue and fingers. He was enormously excited by the newness of her. She stroked him like an expert. Her eyes rolled back in her head and she quivered.

"Take me any way you want," she whispered.

Paris thought for a moment. How many ways were there? He didn't want to appear unsophisticated, but he only knew a few. He hoped she wasn't expecting anything too wild. He would just have to do his best.

He picked her up and carried her to his bed. The sheets hadn't been changed in a month. He hoped she wouldn't notice the smell. He laid her down and began licking her all over. He nibbled and bit her. She squealed and moaned. He really wanted to please her. He wanted to impress her as a lover. He listened carefully to her moans and let himself be guided by them.

"Lick me," she pleaded.

Moonlight shone on her mound of Venus. He stared into her furry mouth of mystery. Did it matter that he hardly knew this woman? No, that was part of the thrill! Because he didn't know her she could be anything to him, everything. She was the most beautiful woman in the world. She had no faults, no imperfections. She was new.

Into the wet and warm go the slaves of history. He pushed his tongue up into her, as far as it would go. He found her clitoris and sucked it between tongue and lips. Her moans changed to screams, although he had difficulty hearing now because her thighs closed over

his ears. Encouraged, his head rotated with her hips, faster and faster until her screams reached a crescendo and her body vibrated.

She lay back, whimpering, as he crawled up to the pillow. His face was soaking wet. She smiled.

"Do you want to come inside me? Get your caterpillar in traction and come inside my cocoon."

"We'll make butterflies."

He rolled on top and eased into her, glad that he was so stiff. They both groaned, pausing a moment to savour the penetration. Then he buried his hands in her fuzzy orange hair, kissed her candy-apple red mouth and licked her teeth. She was so perfect, like a doll. But real! She pushed her pelvis up to him, and they moved in harmony.

He looked at her now through a haze of passion, out of focus, as if there was vaseline on the lens.

"Your mouth is the most perfect and delicious mouth in the world!"

"You're so big. Oh, fuck me. Fuck me!"

Now you're talkin', he thought. He saw her back at the Lorelei, exciting the crowd with her long legs. And now she was with him! He was living a fantasy. He was doing what so many others wanted to do. He was a fucking hero!

"You're mine, now, Mary Monday."

"Oh yes. Yes!"

They moved faster until their hearts were pounding and their bodies thrashing around on the bed. With his thrusts he pushed her all the way to the wall, where she lay with one leg up and her head dangling from the corner. He used all the friction he could get from the rim of her vagina, especially the upper part, near her clitoris, because this made her claw

his back.

He felt a charge building in him. She felt it, too.

"Blast off.. Come on!"

"My moonshot is coming."

"Into deep space."

They were flying, weightless. He was going deeper into the void.

It suddenly struck him as funny, all this fuss over emptiness, nothing.

As he exploded inside her, he began to laugh, and tears streamed from his eyes.

Thursday, the Seventh

When Paris walked into El Cheapo studios, he was ready. From now on, he promised himself, he would work, do whatever came his way. Success with Mary had tipped the scales. For too long, he thought, he had struggled for authenticity in his music, at the expense of rewards he could have won by pumping out the kind of junk Canadians bought. Many of his fellow musicians had done just that and were getting rich. But he had allied himself with Adam to fight at the barricades for 'Real Canadian Music', shaping indigenous folk styles into forms they had hoped would help forge some sort of identity for their adolescent homeland. But Canada preferred Supertramp and The Bee Gees.

He had leaned on O during that period. She had been his strength. While he dedicated his energy to his ideals, she handled the practical problems of survival. Paid the rent. Bought the food. He cringed thinking of the sacrifices she had made. No wonder she had left.

He was determined not to let that happen again. He had learned his lesson. National identity is fine, but first we eat!

Mary was all entertainment. She didn't care where a song came from, as long as it worked. That was her power. He had been too cerebral and serious in his crusade for local music. She was pure delight, disarmed her audience completely. He could learn a lot from her. Maybe they would work together, his heart quickened at the thought.

"Today, we're gonna make a hit," Goldie announced as Paris strode through the door.

All the highs and lows were missing from her voice, as if it were an AM record, compressed to make it sound bigger.

"Just make out the cheques and I'll play anything," Paris responded.

"Alright!" said Juke, fingering his bass in the corner. Juke was short for Jukebox, a nickname he had earned during ten years on the road. Before every gig, he checked out the club's jukebox, to see what the crowd had been programmed to like. If there were any tunes on it he didn't know, he would quickly learn them. That way he always worked steady.

"Just as long as it isn't disco," Adam said, fidgeting on a desk.

"Ah, but it is," Goldie said.

She had large steamer trunks under her eyes and the slightly dazed countenance of someone whose work so conflicted with her sleep that sleep was desperately trying to claim her waking life.

"Then we'll need some of this!" Bluenose added, pulling a small vial of white powder out of his pocket.

He was originally nicknamed Bluenose because he hailed from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, but it was now generally understood in relation to his lust for cocaine.

A small man, with a hunched back, peeped out of the studio door.

"Come on, where's the drummer? D'ya want me to sit here all day and pick my nose? We gotta get a drum sound!"

Le Levesquois made a face.

"You English are always in such a hurry."

"That's how we conquered the world," X replied. X, the sound engineer, was alleged to be illiterate, but he could hear sounds other people didn't know existed. He also enjoyed being called X because he thought it added an air of mystery to his character which flattered his ego.

"Give me a snort, Bluenose, so I can handle the boredom," Le Levesquois pleaded.

Bluenose spread the powder on Goldie's desk. He lifted a razor blade from an editing board and shaped some of it into a line. Le Levesquois rolled a dollar bill up tight, stuck one end in his nose, put the other on the cocaine, and sucked the powder up into his brain.

"Ahh," he smiled. "Now I'll play anything. You want disco? You got disco. Pas de probleme, sacrement! Anything!"

He disappeared into the studio. Bluenose continued making lines. Goldie lit a cigarette.

"I wanted to ask you," Bluenose said to her, "was that story about you and your ex-hubby true?"

"Which story?"

"The CB radio."

"Sure, it was used as evidence in court."

"So you were recording some rock band in a club and hubby was there?"

"Yeah. And he says to me: 'I have to go to the can'."

"Then his voice comes out over the PA system, loud and clear, for everyone to hear?"

"That's right. He was talking on the CB radio in his car."

"And it was picked up by the lead singer's condensor microphone?"

"Yeah. And he was talking to his secretary about the pregnancy."

"And everyone in the room heard it? Five hundred people?"

"Not only that, but I recorded it."

"Amazing. That's what I call a public confession!"

"The bigger they are, the harder they fall."

Her eyes glowed like neon.

"It made my case in divorce court open and shut. I sued the bastard for everything."

She waved her hand around the room.

"That's how I got all of this."

"Well I hope you're straighter with us than he was," Bluenose said.

"Did he screw you?"

"Yeah. I did a freebee for him once, sax solo on an album, when I was starting out. It did pretty well, disco stuff. People told me they really liked my sax work, even that it had helped sell the album. D'you know the prick wouldn't even give me a free copy? I had to go out and buy one just to hear the final mix! I needed a copy as a demo to get more work. I told him I had to pay eight bucks for it."

"An' what'd he say?"

"He said: 'That's cheap for a good demo'."

"And to think that he won an award for helping to stimulate the Canadian music industry," Adam laughed.

Bluenose waved them all over to the desk. He rolled up a dollar and gave it to Adam. One by one, they snorted the cocaine. There was much sniffing, smiling, winking and nodding. They covered one nostril by pressing it with an index finger. Then they switched nostrils and finished their line. The cocaine first froze the nose, then spread across the face. They could taste it in the back of their throats. Bitter. Gradually it worked its way to the frontal lobes, freezing their critical faculties and freeing them to go with their bodies. Everyone took some but Goldie.

The door to the studio opened. They heard the thump thump of a disco beat. X appeared.

"We're ready for the bass."

"Come on, Juke, I wanna hear that hit bassline."

"I don't play anything but hit basslines," Juke retorted.

"Glad to hear it. There's nothing I hate worse than a smart-ass bass player tying the bassline in a knot, trying to outfunk everyone else!"

They both went into the studio.

"This should be a tax deductible expense," Bluenose said. "I mean, if I didn't have this stuff, I'd never make it through these sessions."

"The government doesn't care about realities," Adam sneered.

"They're in the cosmetic business."

"Yeah, ya try, against all odds, to play the music you really feel, the music that really comes from the here and now, and what d'ya get? No work, can't sign leases, and you become an outlaw in the eyes of your own people."

"It's dynasties," Paris said. "The music business is run by dynasties just like the rest of the world."

"Yeah, and most of those dynasties come from south of the border," Adam frowned.

"So does this coke, man, really south of the border," Bluenose chuckled.

He snorted another line.

"What would we do without this stuff?" Paris asked, following Bluenose.

"Revolution?" Adam did his line. "It's like TV."

"Ah, that's much better." Bluenose sat back. "The second one really gets ya."

"Let's go in there and see what's happening," Paris suggested.

Inside, the monitor speakers were up full blast. Goldie and X were screaming at each other over the tracks.

"I want that bass drum as big and round and full as a harvest moon!" she yelled.

"I'll add more bottom," X returned, flicking switches.

"And the bass. It's gotta weigh sixteen tons! A gigantic bass. I've gotta see it coming over the horizon, as big as skyscraper. Bigger!"

"OK. The bass that ate New York City!" X yelled, playing with his equalization buttons.

Le Levesquois lounged in a corner. They had already recorded his bass drum 'Thump, thump' and put it on a tape loop so that it would play indefinitely. Juke was on the other side of the glass, wearing earphones. He could hear the bass drum and was putting an eight bar 'Umbah, umbah' bassline over it.

Goldie grinned at the three musicians as they entered. She raised her eyebrows to the monitors.

"Not bad, eh?" she asked, rhetorically.

The three of them giggled.

"It's ridiculous," Adam snickered.

"That's what I like, positive thinking," Goldie frowned.

She turned to X.

"I like that sound. We'll put hand claps on the two and four."

She pushed the talk-back button and spoke through Juke's earphones.

X stopped the machine and rolled back the tape.

"E flat, C minor, A flat, B flat. OK? But stay on the B flat for four bars, twice as long as the others. That's where the horns will

build. People love that."

"OK," Juke agreed. "D'ya want a little riff on the last bar?"

"No," Goldie said. "Do what you were doing. Carry the B flat. Don't get complicated. The horns will do the rest."

"What horns?" Bluenose asked.

"You. We'll overdub you until you sound like a horn section."

"Bang! Three unemployed saxophone players," Adam mumbled in his beard.

"The wonders of technology," X grinned.

"So let's put one down," Goldie commanded. "This is a take."

They went through the piece again. Juke played endless circles of patterns over the bass drum. Goldie told X to stop the tape.

"OK. We've got enough. We can work with that."

Juke packed his bass away.

"Piano!" Goldie yelled.

"I'll set you up," X said, leading Adam into the studio.

Adam sat at the piano while X placed microphones inside and over the piano. Goldie came over.

"I want a rock'n roll type of thing, you know - dat dat dat dat," she said, playing a chord. "Kind of Fats Domino, eight to the bar. It'll push the beat along."

"And that's what's important?"

"Right. You know the changes?"

"Yeah, E flat, my favorite key."

"When you get to the B flat, carry it, but on the last two beats of the last bar give me a sweep."

"Like this?"

Adam dragged his elbow across the keys.

"Perfect," Goldie smiled.

Goldie and X returned to the control room. Adam put on earphones.

"Play him the track," Goldie commanded.

Adam played a series of diminished chords over the bass and drum tracks. Then he screamed at the mike in a gruff voice.

"In America the political power is controlled by the rich and essentially denied to the masses, who are encouraged to live in the dream world of the entertainment industry, instead. The dreams of pop music, movies and TV are the wish fulfillment of the unconscious demands of unrestrained heroism, violence and lust which the average citizen is not allowed in everyday humdrum life."

He dragged an elbow across the keys.

"But the demands press for satisfaction in this commercialized mass form. Give the people what they want! Dreams are the guardians of sleep. People want to remain in their interuterine, womb-with-a-view, safe, middle-class life!"

Goldie stopped the tape.

"It'll never sell," she said, sarcastically.

"Of course not," Adam replied. "No one wants the truth."

"Well then, I'm not interested. This is a recording session, not a philosophical society meeting. You might as well do it right, 'cause I'm not gonna let you wear me down!"

X spoke into the talk-back.

"You, like me, like countless other millions of ants, animals and insects, are forced to make a compromise with life. We're all forced to do something we don't want to do—work. So you're just another

piece of suffering flesh. And try to imagine how little we care!"

"Imagine if work was fun," Adam said.

"Then it wouldn't be work," Goldie insisted.

"You're so insensitive!"

"So are you. Have a little sensitivity for me. I have to justify this studio time you're wasting!"

Adam sighed.

"OK. Give me the tracks again."

X ran the machine. Adam played along, exactly the way Goldie had wanted. She lit a cigarette with satisfaction.

"One day I'll find a new piano player," she said to those in the control room. "So let's keep going, not slow down the pace. Where's that horn section?"

"We're all here!"

Bluenose unpacked his sax and walked into the studio. X set him up with a microphone. He slapped on earphones and licked his reed. He put the mouthpiece together, squealed through the sax, took the mouthpiece apart and licked the reed again.

"A sax is like a woman," he said. "You've gotta get her wet first!"

He jammed the mouthpiece into the horn and wailed some free-form jazz.

"I'm not using one of those pea-shooter mouthpieces, ya know? It's wide open, and if everything's not right, the sound'll get away from me."

He blew again. The notes gushed from his horn like a river bursting through a dam. He soared and swooped, twirled like a mad sufi, and screamed like a napalmed villager. Then he laughed into the mike.

"Man, jazz is a religious experience. It's everything!"

He blew up the scale, down the scale, in between the scale, in time, out of time, sticking to no meter or key.

"That's very nice, but we've got a job to do here," Goldie reminded him.

Bluenose grimaced.

"Once you experience the pure bliss of flowing along an improvised stream of jazz, and being part of it, being both the dancer and the dance, the energy flowing right through you, knowing the ultimate freedom of playing in free time and free space, no structure, just you and your instrument, and the ultimate possibilities of sound. Man, once you've been there, ya never wanna come back!"

"It's the cocaine," X said.

Goldie pressed the talk-back button.

"Yeah, yeah. But now reality strikes. We're making a hit record, not escaping from the world!"

"Reality? Dreams are real, too!"

"Oh yeah? Just try to eat them!"

"OK, OK. What d'ya want me to play?"

"A trill, dat-a-lat, on the last beat of every bar. And when you get to the B flat, just build, going up the scale to the seventh."

"That's all?"

"For the first track."

"Where do ya want me to come in? The first worse, the second worse, or the bore-us?"

"Right off the top, turkey!"

X played the tracks to Bluenose, who played it the way Goldie wanted it.

"Let me hear it with more echo," she asked X.

"Hey, I've got an echo unit so good, I can fix it so the echo doesn't come back 'til tomorrow."

X sat at his board like a pilot in a cockpit. He used all his buttons and dials to fly through musical space.

Goldie lit another cigarette.

"Next track. Up a third," she said.

"Of course."

He did it the way she wanted it.

"Now the fifth?"

"You're learning."

They did it again. It began to sound like a sax section.

"Now the seventh," Goldie commanded.

Bluenose was halfway through the piece when his sax exploded into honks and squeals. He tried it again, but they could hear the agony of a cramped soul, building up below the sound. The sax bleeped and burped periodically with the discontent of the rebel.

"Clichés, CLICHES!!" he screamed. "Give the people what they want! What people? Those who want to make cute little knick-knacks out of the infinitely changing energy and delight of the jazz of the universe? Those who are so twisted and stuck in the mire of habit they can't hear anything but what they want to hear, with ears that have been deafened by the habits of the multitudes passed down from Karmic father to Karmic son? Those whose sole inheritance is nothing but a vast warehouse of musical clichés?"

He played a few recognizable sax lines from past hits, twisting the last note into an agonized scream.

"There are no absolutes! We are free from the tyranny of harmony,

melody-and meter!"

He blew a stream of musical non-sense.

"Look at this instrument. How it limits me. Everything carefully organized into notes and octaves, tones and semitones, sharps and flats. I mean, why this?"

He blew a single note.

"For B flat? And this?"

He blew another.

"For C? It's all so arbitrariario! Between B flat and C there are a million notes. But here we stay, with our habits of hearing, our mechanical instruments and our B's and C's, refusing to budge! Gentlemen, we are involved here in a tragedy of cosmic proportions! It's our duty to end all hierarchies. The number one is no better than the number eight hundred and thirty seven! A is no better than Z! A Ph.D. is no better than a kindergarten kid. An oak is no better than an acorn!"

He finished with a flurry of notes, played so that each was as ambiguous as it was possible to play on an instrument which had been carefully constructed to permit distinct sounds.

"All right," Goldie said. "If you want to create your own style, your own ideas turned into music, go do it—in New York or L.A., but don't try it here. Nobody wants to know! We don't have the machinery or the industry to sell a new style here. It's all we can do just to reproduce old styles. I mean, if you invent a new ski-do or bulldozer, or turn gay and design a new line of ladies' fashions, maybe you can sell it here. We have those industries. But you're wasting your time, and my time, with this musical anarchy. It's like trying to sell

abstract art in Moose Jaw, where you're better off painting Texaco signs.
So play the God-damned seventh!!"

X ran the track again. Bluenose played it. Then packed up his saxophone.

"That's better," Goldie sighed.

She lit a cigarette.

"Now the guitar. Did ya bring the Telly, Paris?"

Paris pulled his Fender Telecaster out of its case.

"Good. I want a chirpy sound. Slide up to it, and-one-and-a-two, leaving the three empty and the four covered by the sax payoff."

"Sure," Paris said, walking into the studio and plugging the guitar into the ever-present Fender Twin amplifier.

"What kind of chord do you want?"

"Something with the seventh and the ninth, you know, R & B style."

Paris played an E flat chord with a D flat, E flat and B flat on top.

"That's perfect!"

"I could probably make a good living playing only this chord,"

Paris laughed.

"It's a chord that sells records," Goldie said. "You need time to find the other chords?"

"No, I'll use this one. Just move it up the fretboard."

"Great. I love simplicity!"

"The minor might be difficult."

Paris groped across the strings.

"No, no. Stay out of the minor. I'm gonna do something special there."

"What?"

"I don't know exactly. I know I'm gonna put some singing in there. But I also want an effect. Something to wake people up when they don't expect it!"

Paris gave her a shocked look.

"Well," she said. "Why can't I be creative!"

"That's fine with me."

"Good, Let's lay one down!"

She returned to the control room. X started the tape. Paris played his part. He was playing music that he had not designed or chosen. Was he then not responsible for it? If the great cosmic tape recorder was ever rolled back, he would have to shrug and say: "I was just doing a job". He shook these thoughts out of his mind. There was nothing he could do about it.

"Play it all back," Goldie said, lighting a cigarette.

She was pleased. She waved Paris back into the control room.

"Make that bass drum sound like it's in the Grand Canyon!"

"How 'bout the horns?" X asked.

"Crisp and bright. With an edge."

"Tight as a beaver's asshole," X nodded.

She listened with satisfaction as the chords repeated.

"We'll splice in a rhythm break later," she said. "You know, all that shit they love in the discos downtown."

"Eat shit, twenty million flies can't be wrong," Bluenose laughed.

"Creation from the dead matter of clichés," Adam yelled. "Brought to life with the power of electricity. The creation of a hit, a monster record! I think we're in the laboratory with Dr. Frankenstein!"

"Yeah," Bluenose agreed. "And here's her weird assistant."

X stood up, and shouted in a screechy voice.

"The electric tribal music of pain and pleasure! The commercial folk song. Around the heartbeat drum she spins the raw internal guts of the erotic, to be externalized through global neurons, with the thunderclap volume of the best modern science has to offer. Formless turbulence is channeled through those clichés that will empty a million pockets."

He threw his arms in the air, melodramatically.

"This is the creation of the mighty Goldie. She stands between heaven and hell and gives the people what they want!"

"For an illiterate, you speak quite well," she commended him.

"I've been doing crossword puzzles."

"So. Let's hear it on the small speakers, to hear if it will stand up on an average radio."

X switched monitors.

"OK. We'll go for a really average sound!"

Goldie listened and nodded.

"Perfect," she said. "But now I need something extra, to wake those sleeping masses."

"How about a bell," Paris suggested. "The final bell in school always woke me up."

"Good idea. We'll hit 'em in the subconscious. A bell will get them excited, too. There's nothing like danger to get their little lymph glands going."

"Are you sure those are the glands you're after?" X asked.

"Sure. We've already got their hormones going with the disco bass

and drum. We'll hit 'em in two levels at once. It's comin' to me. Yeah. The lyric will be something like: 'Danger - Love at Work'. Like a road sign. They'll understand that."

"No one ever went broke underestimating the American public!"

"But what bell?"

Everyone looked around.

"There's one in the elevator," Le Levesquois said.

"That's it!"

Goldie ran over and kissed him. Then she ran out into the hall. They followed. She pressed the button. The elevator arrived. She stepped in and tried the emergency bell. It rang at the bottom of the shaft, a sharp cry for help.

"Natural reverb," X nodded.

"I like it," she said.

The doors started to close so she stopped them with her arm.

"Stand here," she said to Paris.

He leaned against the door. X came down the hall, stringing a long mike wire behind him. He set up the microphone in the elevator.

"Give me the headphones, too," she said. "I'll ring the bell with the music. I know where it goes."

X complied, and scurried back to the control room. Soon they could all hear the music leaking out of her earphones. She rang the bell at various intervals.

X returned.

"How is it?" she asked.

"Not dangerous enough," X shook his head. "Let's try something else. How about the service elevator?"

They all marched to the back of the building where the old wooden service elevator hung. Goldie pushed a button. It creaked up to their floor. X lifted the barrier. Goldie entered and rang the emergency bell. Their hearts leapt as a loud clanging bell directly above them screamed for help.

"Much better," X smiled.

"This is a working class bell," Adam nodded.

X hurried down the hall and returned with the microphone, chord, and headphones.

"You guys all stand in the elevator," he ordered. "It'll help reduce the echo."

"To think, I went to the McGill conservatory for this," Adam shook his head.

X opened the escape hatch in the roof of the carriage, and poked the microphone and boom stand into the shaft above. Then he ran back to the control room and played the tracks to Goldie as she stood in the elevator and played the bell.

"Great," X said through the headphones. "I've got that. But just give me another blast for luck."

She did. Then he returned and they all helped him bring the equipment back to the studio.

"I put that last blast on quarter inch in case we wanted the bell anywhere else. We can just lay it in."

"Good," she agreed. "Let's hear what we've got so far."

X played it all back. Goldie was delighted.

"We'll begin it with the bell," she said excitedly. "The bass drum and the bell. That'll be the intro, something to get them up out

of their seats!"

"You got it," X said.

"Now the handclaps," she said. "You guys, into the studio."

They stood around a microphone and clapped their hands on the two and the four. X tracked them twice.

"We don't even need a snare drum," he said.

"That's OK," Goldie said. "So let's do the rhythm break now."

She passed around rhythm instruments. Paris played maracas, Juke a tambourine, Adam a Ouira, and Le Levesquois sat with a conga drum between his legs, which they miked separately.

"OK. Think in fours," Goldie said. "Everything these days is in fours. Four is the most popular number in the universe!"

"I thought it was number one?" Adam said.

"Yeah," Bluenose added. "The guy everyone's looking out for."

"What I'm saying is that all pop music today is in four/four time. So we'll take the hint and introduce a new rhythm instrument every four bars. First the bass drum alone, then the conga, then the tambourine, then the maracas, then the Ouira, and then four bars of wild animal rhythm with everything. On the last bar I'll ring the bell. That's where we'll cut back into the song."

"It's a real privilege to watch a genius at work," Le Levesquois said.

"Genius is knowing what you want and being able to get it," Goldie said.

She returned to the control room. X played the bass drum track. They followed her instructions and, after a few runs through, played it to her satisfaction.

"Great, guys," she smiled broadly. "X and I will put it all together tomorrow. So that'll be all for you."

Paris walked away with his cheque, the wheels of rush hour all around him.

So this is what it's like to make a living, he thought. This is what the average shmuck goes through every day, coming home from the battle to survive, an Iliad of hand-to-mouth combat, with his spoils of war. Yes, he was in the real world now, unprotected by ideals.

Friday, the Eighth

Paris's phone rang.

"Hi, Paris."

It was Mary's voice.

"I'm on St. Norbert Street. Can you come down? All hell's breaking loose. I need help. Please hurry!"

When he reached St. Norbert Street, he saw that the entire block had been cordoned off by police. Demolition equipment was everywhere: men sat behind the throttles of bulldozers, steamshovels, and a crane which swung a large heavy ball. All the apartments on the block were empty except one. A light was on in its window and loud rock music poured out. In the crowd of demonstrators under it, Paris recognized most of the people from the Venus. They were holding signs which said: "Save Montreal", and "Down With Drapeau".

When he reached the door he met Mary struggling to pull a large trunk down the stairs.

"This is getting too weird for me," she said. "I'm leaving now!"

Paris helped her with the trunk.

"I didn't know you were living here."

"I couldn't stay with Jeffrey any more. He was getting nasty. So I was staying with Twilight and Caboose until something else came up."

"You can come to my place."

She kissed him.

"Everyone on the block has been evicted. Do you believe they're gonna tear this beautiful old building down? Twilight refused to go. He's barricaded himself in. They say they'll start demolition anyway."

They have a permit. I don't know what he'll do. He's on mescaline."

As they reached the police line a constable shouted at the demonstrators through a megaphone.

"If you do not leave this area in one minute, you will be arrested. This is your last warning!"

"Fascist pig!" someone yelled back.

"Let's get those assholes," the cop said to a buddy.

"By the book, by the book," the other returned, pointing his thumb off to the left. "The press is here."

A CBC camera crew was setting up. They threw a spotlight on the demonstrators and began shooting newsfilm. The demonstrators all sat down. Police wagons backed in, close to the action, ready to accommodate the arrests. The constable raised his megaphone once more.

"You're all under arrest!"

"Fuck you!" came from the demonstrators.

He turned red with anger.

"It's that big dyke over there, I'm sure of it," he said to his buddy. "Maybe she'd like a nightstick up her ass!"

The other one wasn't angry, just weary.

"Well, come on. Let's get this over with."

They marched up to the demonstrators. One by one the protestors were picked up and dragged into the paddy wagons. They all went limp in order to give resistance without resisting. When the first policeman reached Lillith, he accidentally broke her nose with his elbow. She swung back, but was pummelled into submission with nightsticks and charged with resisting arrest.

Once they had cleared the area of demonstrators, the police rushed

up the stairs to Twilight's apartment. On-lookers heard the sound of wood splitting as they beat down his door. A bulldozer rumbled up to the building and scooped up all the debris outside left by the demonstrators, lifting it high in the air. A figure appeared at Twilight's window. The news crew threw a light on him. He was in a pink Chiffon dress with matching disco shoes. He looked just like Maggie Trudeau. The crowd gasped as he leaped from the window onto the rubble held high in the claw of the bulldozer.

The bulldozer operator was shocked. Twilight casually reclined on a large placard and gave him a wink.

"We'll have to stop meeting like this. People will think we're in love."

The operator became flustered, embarrassed, then climbed down from the machine and ran away.

"I have that effect on some people," Twilight addressed the crowd.

He was center stage, with the spotlight on him, just the way he liked it.

"But, I mean, who does she think she's kidding?"

He swung a pink feather boa around his neck.

"Everyone is homosexual. Some are latent and others are — blatant.

I obey an inner impulse when I put on women's clothes."

He lifted a leg.

"Look at these pretty ankles. This is what all those butch scrotums look for in a woman. But anyone who shaves his legs and knows how to display them can achieve the same effect. What is woman? The perfection of man. Heterosexuality is just a pale imitation of real love — narcissism. We're just directed toward women by society in order to fertilize

more tax-paying cannon fodder!"

The police peered out of the window.

"What d'we do about him?" one constable asked the other.

"Ah, leave 'im. We'll start the demolition without that bulldozer."

"Oh boys," Twilight yelled up at them. "Still acting out your hollow charade? Why don't you two make it right there in my room. It's got the right vibes for it. Come on, everyone's trying it these days. Gay is in!"

"Start the demolition," the red-faced constable yelled through the megaphone.

They left the apartment and headed back to the police line. The large crane rumbled over to the apartment block.

"In primitive times," Twilight continued, "Shamans used to dress like women to get in touch with their unconscious, their irrational side. Well, you can see how well it works for me. You see, it's only by getting in touch with your homosexual urges that you get in touch with your body. That's why us faggots are such good dancers. And everyone knows that Orpheus, the founding father of music, was as gay as the month of May. Oh, for those beautiful men of ancient Greece!"

He sighed.

The ball swung into the brick wall, shaking the building and the ground around it. Twilight glanced over his shoulder.

"Oh God," he moaned. "The cold, hard sound of reality."

The CBC camera crew moved in on him. The lady reporter's instincts sensed a wild interview which, if not suitable for the conservative six-o'clock news, might be printed in blue and shown in avant-garde cinemas in New York.

"Excuse me," she said. "I'm Bitz Little from 'The City at Six'. Would you like to tell our viewing audience what you're doing here?"

"Gladly," Twilight returned. "Or should I say, gaily. I simply adore an audience."

He blew a kiss at the camera.

"Well, let me tell you my story. I'll start at boarding school. I was sent there because my father hated children. It was there that I had my first sexual experience. I fell in love with my room-mate. He was very strong and always stood up for me, if you get my meaning."

He winked, and made an obscene gesture with his middle finger.

"But when I left school, I couldn't go home because my father was such an asshole. So I lived with my roommate and his mother near Chinatown. It looked like a slum from the outside but was very nice inside. Red velvet furniture, four-poster beds, and gold chandeliers. His mother was a big moon-faced woman who babied both of us. I loved it!"

The ground shuddered beneath him as the big ball slammed against the building.

"Larry was a hairdresser but couldn't support all of us. So I had to go to work. I got a job in the rag trade, a stockroom on Bleury Street. I swept floors and stacked pants for seventy five cents an hour. I worked for a family of Jews who were making a fortune bringing in cheap goods from Czechoslovakia and Poland and selling them here for ten times what they cost. But I stayed poor. All I owned was a cheap pair of black pants, but boy were they tight! I used to turn on one of the salesmen who always found some excuse to come into the stockroom and feel my ass. One day he asked me to go away with him for the weekend, up to the Laurentians. When I hesitated because of Larry, he said he

had a surprise for me. Well, everyone knows how I love surprises, so I couldn't resist!"

Bricks crumbled to the ground as the ball crashed through the wall of the first apartment on the block.

"When we got to our room in Tremblant, he showed me the surprise. It was a suitcase full of women's clothes. All my size! And a box of cosmetics. I got really excited, it was like Christmas. I shaved my legs and underarms and curled my long blonde hair. I put on a skirt and blouse, high heels, mascara and lip gloss. Then I looked at myself in the mirror. It was love at first sight!"

The ground shook once more. When the ball hit the outside wall of the building it made a rumbling noise like thunder.

"The salesman loved me, too. We screwed all weekend. I still remember how erotic it felt to hoist my skirt up over my knees to allow penetration. And how completely gone I was, sucking his cock on my nyloned knees. God, women have all the fun!"

The big ball swung through another wall, a little closer to Twilight's apartment.

"Anyway, when I got back to the city Larry went into a jealous rage and kicked me out. I couldn't live with the salesman because he had a wife and kids in Pointe Claire and they wouldn't understand. So I was on the street, blowing in the wind. I peddled my ass in gay bars, sleeping with whoever offered me the most cash. I cruised the Y, Dominion Square, the baths, and the mountain. Eventually I had to quit my day job because I slept all day. I was fascinated by these purely chance meetings. You don't even know each other's names, you don't care. You just go to a bar and mince and strut 'til ya find someone to fuck.

Mostly guys who are a little drunk. I think people come out of their closets more when they've had a little alcohol, don't you? I became an orgasm junkie. I had to have it. I'd wake up in bed at night longing to suck or lick anything, and I mean anything! I guess I'd have to say that it's licking I like best. I lose myself, let go completely and become an animal. Gay sex is so anarchistic. It's outlaw sex, that's why it's so exciting!"

The ball crashed through the wall of Twilight's kitchen, smashing all his dishes at once. His countenance sank, his tone became more desperate.

"I mean, law and morality just don't exist any more. The only thing that exists is the omnipotent power of desire. I've seen it happen in dark rooms and alleys with doctors, lawyers, judges, and members of parliament. At any moment the power of desire can throw off the thin crust of civilization and have its own way."

He lifted his skirt and displayed his penis.

"This is what man's will looks like. The honorable member. And the only kind of knowledge that means anything is carnal knowledge!"

His face became intense, furrows on the brow and eyes bulging. The big ball swung once more and the ceiling fell in on his kitchen.

The crowd watching the demonstration had grown larger now the demolition was underway. Anticipation was growing among them as the big ball swung closer and closer to the brightly lit window in the middle. They started to buzz with excitement when the light exploded in Twilight's kitchen as the roof fell in. In his living room the stereo still played. They leaned forward to catch the last note. They could see Twilight bathed in the camera lights off to the right of the window. He scowled

at them.

"They scream for my blood," he shouted, melodramatically. Then his voice dropped. "I guess I can't blame them. I despise their frightened little lives. They will die knowing nothing of the flesh, of their own hidden desires. They lack the courage to take chances, because they want to stay safe until they're too old to care!"

He reached into his silver purse and pulled out a silver revolver.

"But I will never have to worry about getting old," he said, caressing the pistol.

It glinted at the camera.

"My life has been a series of accidents and experiments, the results always beyond my control. Now I can finally do something of my own free will."

He smiled, his face flushed and his breath quick and heavy.

He licked the barrel of the gun, stuck it into his mouth, and pulled the trigger.

At that moment, the ball crashed through the window of Twilight's apartment, tearing apart his Victorian lace curtains, and smashed into the opposite wall, pulverizing his autographed portrait of Marilyn Monroe. It swung back, dropping the window frame into the street with a thwack, like the slap of dogflesh on chrome.

The crowd cheered.

"Did you get that?" Bitz asked her cameraman.

"Yeah," he nodded, "and I think I've got his brains all over my coat."

"I don't think the police saw."

"The camera saw it."

He pointed the camera and lights at the building. The ball swung through the wall of Twilight's room, smashing his stereo and scattering his rare collection of Judy Garland records. The lightbulb exploded. The ceiling fell in.

The crowd cheered.

The police marched over to shoo the camera crew away. A workman started the bulldozer and drove it away from the building.

"He shot himself," Bitz told the constable.

"What?"

They looked around for the bulldozer. It had crawled over to a huge pile of garbage at the other end of the street. There was fire in the driver's eyes. It was the Shadow. He swung the claw around and deposited Twilight's corpse on the top of the pile.

The crowd cheered.

Saturday, the Ninth

Paris regarded the little rosebush in the peanut butter jar. A smile lit up his face.

"Eros is taking root."

"It's amazing what love can do," Mary said. "Love from ancient artful giants, so near and so far."

"What we chase through the tall grass and spider webs of cement."

She tap-danced across the room, she always wore her tap shoes.

"But it flutters by, singing. A seed in the wind!"

He grabbed her wrist.

"Until it takes root."

With a little spin, she was out of his grasp.

"Does it ever really take root?" she teased.

He chased her across the room.

"I follow those golden shoes through all the ages."

He bumped her onto the bed.

"I'm spread out here like a pizza," she laughed.

"Mmm, with peppers and anchovies."

He began kissing her feet. Then he chewed her ankles. He nibbled on the full, round flesh of her calves. He used his tongue behind her knees. He took large bites out of her thighs. He paused over her mound of Venus.

"Into the wet and warm go the slaves of history," he said.

"Be my slave," she said. "Make me forget everything!"

Her demands excited Paris. It was a challenge. He wanted to be the best lover she had ever had. He would win her that way, conquer her and make her his.

He licked the lips of her vagina.

"Spicy," he said. "Salt."

"The gulf stream."

He dove down into the gulf, into the darkness of the deep: It was warm and fishy. Something pulled him deeper and deeper, a force he felt not only on the tip of his tongue but in the very heart of his being. A wish to disappear, to end the restless groping around the earth and to sleep forever in the darkness.

She felt electricity up her spine. She moved her hips in a circular motion. He dragged his tongue to her clitoris. It hardened like a nipple. He made love to it. It was like sucking a tiny cock, he thought. This must be the pleasure of homosexuality. She moved faster until, with one final thrust which almost suffocated him, she finished.

He fell on the floor, his face dripping wet. She stood up, laughing, and walked over to her trunk. It was painted with red and white stripes and blue stars, like an American flag. She opened the trunk and threw him a towel with a large picture of Mickey Mouse on it. He wiped his face.

"Is that your case history?" he asked.

"I have no history. I got off a space ship and here I am!"

"Where did your space ship come from?"

"A planet where everyone's sexual desires are liberated."

"Which one is that?"

"Venus!"

"I thought there was nothing there but poisonous gases."

"It looks like that to earthlings because they can't see into the fourth dimension," she said. "Do you know what the earth looks like

from the fourth dimension?"

"What?"

"A pile of shit."

"Hah. Sometimes it looks like that from here. So why did you come here, then?"

"To make it beautiful," she replied, pulling things out of her trunk.

She slipped into a fifties dress, red with a full skirt.

"By appreciating and loving all the little details of life. By accepting the universe like a child, with wonder!"

"Without judgements?"

"Of course. Going with the flow of things, like a surfer rides a wave."

"How do things get done?"

"That's the magic of it, they do themselves."

She tied her hair in a pony tail with a red bow, then did a little twirl and curtsied modestly.

"The main thing is to enjoy the show. Become part of it. Be it! People cling so hard to concepts and ideas that they lose their connection. They then become part of the audience instead of part of the show. They criticize or applaud, but either way they miss it."

She pulled out prints of paintings in the realist mode.

"I love what is in these paintings: old coke machines, telephone booths, neon signs, and highrise apartment buildings. They are magical and amazing, each in its own right. But these are just representations. I want a real telephone booth, right here, in our room!"

"I'll buy you one."

"My sugar daddy," she laughed.

She pulled a stack of photographs out of her trunk and passed them to Paris.

"Here's some eight-by-tens of me at the Lorelei."

"What's this one of you with your tongue out, modelling a T-shirt which says: 'I like Dick'?"

"Oh, that was for Nixon's campaign. He didn't like the idea."

Paris read an article from the Montreal Star. The fashion editor told of how Mary was bringing back tap-dancing. There were some pictures of her dancing around models who wore new fashions.

"You steal the show here," Paris said. "Your energy and smiles make these other models look like lifeless mannekins."

"I am the Montreal Star!" she said. "Last year was full of many lives. I made one thing happen, then another, and another. Burned up tons of Karma."

Paris looked at more photographs. Mary in California. Mary in St. Louis. Mary in various costumes.

"I am what I wear," she commented.

"Then you are a lot of different things."

"Always changing, always the same."

"Something's really different in this picture. It's your nose. It's bigger here!"

"My secret's out," she blushed a little. "You see, I was living with a group of people in Aspen, Colorado, including doctors and chemists. The chemists kept us in drugs and the doctors kept us alive. Well, one of the doctors fixed my nose. We kind of did it as a joke. Don't you like it?"

Paris needed.

"He really flattened it out. It makes you look like a cat."

Mary curtsied and did a little tap dance.

"I go through a pair of taps in a week," she commented, studying the soles of them.

"Why did you become a dancer?"

"Because I love to be loved!"

"Why did you come to Montreal?"

"Well, I always liked Canada, you know, the image I had of it. Big, wild and free. And I always liked Canadians I met."

"When was the first time you saw Canada?"

"I was changing planes in New York once, and I met a Canadian guy in the airport. He was very nice, and the vibes were right, so I ended up going to Toronto. That was my first look. I liked it. It was cute, and so was he, but too intense. Very Nelson Eddy. I had to go back to the States.

"And Montreal?"

"While I was living in Aspen, in the mountains, trying to turn tourists on to leather clothes, I met Jeffrey. He was writing radio plays for the CBC in a little A-frame. He brought me up to Montreal. But he got serious, too. And while he became more introverted, I got more extroverted. I was dancing on the streets, wearing glitter, staying all night with friends, and hanging around with gay guys. It got to him. He couldn't handle me. I was too much for him. He got very uptight. I got really uncomfortable and knew I had to split. Two days ago he changed the lock on his door and told me he didn't want me in his apartment any more."

"I guess you frightened him."

"Yeah, that happens a lot. At first they're fascinated by me. I put a spell on them. They're ready to do anything for me. Everything I do is great. Then something happens. They flip over completely. I'm bad."

She looked at Paris with a puzzled expression.

"You're all my fantasies and dreams. You vibrate strings inside me."

"Wow," she laughed. "You know, I think I must be like a walking TV show to people, they get pulled into watching me until they realize I'm real. Then they get scared. As long as I'm safe inside a tube, they can deal with me. But when they find out I'm actually there, in the flesh, they can't take it. They crawl back into their living rooms as fast as possible."

"Sybil, my counsellor, told me that people love someone who represents the lost side of themselves. Someone who is all the things they are afraid of being. So they love what they're afraid of."

"Are you afraid?"

"Yeah."

"I'm not," she laughed. "But imagine if everyone found that other side inside themselves."

"It would be a world of realized beings."

"They'd be androgynous!"

"But a world like that would stop. As soon as everything becomes perfect, that's the end. Isn't it?"

"That's when everybody becomes an angel!"

"I think you're perfect," he said.

"Well, together we're perfect." she said, coming over to him.

He was sitting up in bed, naked, covered with prints, photographs and newspaper clippings.

"Let's stop the world," Paris suggested.

"You have a beautiful body," she observed. "Do you feel the beauty of your body? The way it moves through space and time. The muscles it has, soft and hard. The way the flesh folds around the bones, over and under, covering us."

She kissed and caressed him as she spoke.

"I guess if we didn't have a body we wouldn't exist," he said.

"Damn right! The body is everything. I worship my body. Now I worship your body, too."

She licked his stomach.

"What a pretty penis."

She took his cock in her mouth. Her tongue licked the rounded border at the base of his glans.

Shivers ran through his body. His penis swelled up, deeper into her mouth. She crouched above him in her red dress, moving her head up and down. Her lips rubbed him all the way from the root to the bud. She started slowly, then accelerated as she felt it begin to sputter. He buried both hands in her cotton-candy hair. He felt a charge welling up from his deepest regions which seemed to gather electricity from the whole of his body, as if the raging river of his emotions had been transformed into this one charge.

It took over all his sensations, his will and his consciousness. He felt everything speed up until it reached another point where everything seemed to stand still. He hung like a hummingbird, suspended for

an instant that seemed like an eternity, not breathing or thinking. In a void.

Then there was the explosion. He felt himself leave his body and fly, as if shot from a gun. Everything went white and glowed.

Then he was back on the bed.

"Did you like that?" she asked.

"Is the Pope Catholic? I feel I'm glowing like a million lightbulbs. My whole body tingles."

"I want to make you feel good," she said.

"You certainly know how to do it. It'll be nice with you living here."

"Wait 'til you meet my cat, Silvery Moon."

Paris looked around.

"Does she live in the trunk?"

"No, silly," Mary laughed. "She's still at Jeffrey's. And I was kind of hoping that you would get her for me. I really don't wanna go back there. He acts real strange toward me."

"Sure," Paris said, glad to be able to do something for her. "I'll do it tomorrow."

She kissed him.

"Thanks. I'm really glad to be out of there. You can only eat frozen dinners for so long. And the parties he had. Everybody talkin' about books. Two hundred people and one lightbulb. And I was the lightbulb. I felt like I had to do the living for everyone around there. And when I did, he got jealous. I think he wanted to mummify me and stick me in a corner. I wonder if all writers are like that?"

"I don't know. Musicians try to get their music on tape."

"Life is the important thing. The only thing! And you've gotta be

there or you'll miss it. Art isn't just what's in print or on tape.

It's every minute of the day."

She laughed.

"Millions! Millions of words! Millions of guitar riffs! Millions of days!"

Paris turned on his TV. He loved to watch the news.

"I love TV," Mary said.

They both gasped. There was Twilight in drag.

"My God," she exclaimed.

"When he comes out of the closet, he doesn't fool around."

They had left before Twilight had begun his spectacle.

There was Twilight, on the six o'clock news, committing suicide.

"Amazing," Paris gasped.

"He was crazy," Mary cried. "He'd do anything for effect. But I never thought he'd go this far."

Paris put an arm around her.

"That's what ya have to do in this town to get any attention."

Mary sobbed.

"I guess I'll need a new partner, now."

Sunday, the Tenth

Paris knocked on the big wooden door. He was surprised when Allison opened it.

"I'm looking after Jeffrey for a few days," she explained.

"Is he sick?"

"Sort of, he's in a creative frenzy and he needs someone to look after his basic needs. Otherwise, I think he'd die."

A Cocker Spaniel ran up, barking furiously.

"Down, Neuro!" Allison commanded.

The dog cowered, a confused look furrowed its brow.

"Neuro?" Paris asked.

"His full name is Neurosis. I mean, look at him. He's no longer able to follow his instincts. That's the price he pays for his Alpo and his Burger Bits."

"Maybe that's why he wants to bite somebody."

"Could be. It must be frustrating. But in that way he's very human. He spends most of the time chasing his own tail. He doesn't seem to think of it as his."

"Why doesn't he chase the cat?"

"He used to, but the cat's claws soon put an end to that."

"I came to pick her up for Mary, Silvery Moon."

"Sure. This way."

He closed the door and followed her through the living room, Neuro sniffing suspiciously at his heels. There were books everywhere. Although bookcases covered all available wall space, books spilled over onto the chairs and tables. There were boxes of them on the floor and between the boxes books were piled waist high. There was a path between

them through the room to the hallway. Once in the hallway, they had to walk single file because books were piled along the walls.

Neuro ran down the hall in front of them, wagging his tail excitedly. By the time they caught up, he was in the dining room. The cat crouched three feet from the dog, her back arched and her fur standing on end. A low hiss came from her mouth. The dog looked up at Allison, a worried crease on his brow. At that very moment the cat leapt onto his back and sank her teeth and claws into his flesh.

The dog let out a terrified scream and ran in circles trying to reach the cat with its teeth. Paris bent down and grabbed the cat around her chest. The cat briskly transferred her claws and teeth into Paris's forearm. Paris screamed, lifting his arm up then bringing it down again. The cat flew to the wall and smacked against the plaster. She dropped to the floor and shot out of the room like a bullet.

"Jesus!" Paris cried. "That cat's a killer!"

Another cry came from the far end of the hall.

"Blood! I need more blood!"

"I'm coming," Allison yelled back.

She hurried to the kitchen and picked up a large bottle of Bull's Blood. Paris followed her to the bathroom, shaking his head as he stared at his wounds.

Jeffrey was in the bathtub, which was filled with red liquid. Hot water ran into it as well, and the overflow gurgled down the drain. A board lay across the tub like a bridge, supporting a typewriter, a bottle of vodka and a root beer. He hammered away at the machine as if his life depended upon it, wild and red-eyed.

She opened the bottle and poured the contents over his head. It splashed down his body and into the bath.

"Don't wet the paper," he cried.

"I'm worried about you," Allison returned. "You've been here for forty-eight hours. You need some sleep."

"Nonsense," he blustered. "My genius will sustain me."

He stopped typing to take a swig of vodka and follow it with a swig of root beer.

"Under the affluence of inkahol?" she teased.

"And you call yourself a poet?" he thundered.

Paris thought he looked like a balding Walter Cronkite.

"The deadline is approaching for your film reviews for the Montreal Star," she insisted. "You have to pay the rent."

A look of disgust darkened his face.

"The pulpitations of Lord Thompson's art: turning trees into pulp, printing pulp on the pulp and selling it bulk! If only I didn't need the money."

"Why don't you take a break, get a little sleep; then, when you wake up, you can whip off a couple of reviews and get back to your novel."

He stood up, dripping all over the typewriter. He wore surfer jams which looked like Bermuda shorts. A large belly extended over them like an awning.

"How does an old fart like you get into the position of telling people what movies they should see, anyway?" she asked.

"Film and print are the same," he said, climbing out of the tub.

"Both very mechanical arts, composed of stills in a sequence which give the impression of motion."

"You're such a pedagogue," she laughed.

"I thought a pedagogue was someone who has sex with little boys," Paris said.

Jeffrey eyed him with displeasure.

"We are, but we fuck their minds!"

Neuro walked over and licked his leg. The dog's right eye twitched as Jeffrey patted him.

"Look how faithful that poor, dumb dog is," she laughed.

"That's because of our control over things, the way our hands produce food at a moment's notice, the way we provide warmth and shelter. To him, I'm a god."

"If gods control things then I'm definitely not a god," Paris snickered.

Jeffrey squinted at him with one eye.

"What are you doing here, anyway," he demanded, sharply.

"I've come to pick up the cat," Paris answered.

He shifted his weight from foot to foot, nervously. He didn't feel comfortable here and wanted to get this done with as soon as possible.

"The cat?"

"Yes," Allison interjected. "Mary sent him to pick up her cat, Silvery Moon."

At the mention of Mary's name Jeffrey winced, as if attacked by a quick, sharp pain.

"Ooooh," he nodded his head slowly.

A grin which held no laughter, only cynical amusement, spread across his face.

"She's living with you—already?"

"Yes," Paris answered curtly, resenting the question.

"She's got nowhere else to go right now."

"She's got nowhere to go, all the time," Jeffrey said, with a bitter sneer. "And that's where she'll end up going, nowhere!"

"Come on," Paris protested.

"Really," Jeffrey insisted. "Do you call going in circles going somewhere?"

Allison sensed the hostility, so she steered the conversation another way.

"Look at you, Jeffrey," she teased. "You look like you've just been born, naked, all covered with blood."

"Born again," he nodded.

He frowned at Paris and motioned to the toilet.

"Well, have a seat."

Paris sat on the toilet seat. Jeffrey stood on the tiles in a pool of blood and water. He picked up his unfinished manuscript and waved it in the air.

"I have squirted out words onto the virgin page. But will they fertilize anything? If I could only penetrate the cold outer crust of the conventional mind, then they might influence, persuade, and shape. Then something new might be born! And it would be a virgin birth, and I would be God the father!"

"You're coming and so is Christmas," Allison laughed. "Portrait of the artist as an egomaniac."

"Any artist worth his salt is an egomaniac," Jeffrey cried.

He then noticed his image in the mirror over the sink. He peered at it, stroking his receding hairline.

"I'm going bald. Look at this, I'm going bald!"

A desperate look came upon him.

"I've been taking Lecithin for over a year, and the hair still falls out! I feel Time's icy claws on me. I'm mortal. Why do I insist, against all odds, on trying to be a god?"

"That's what life is for, I guess," Allison said. "But you don't get there until you stop trying."

"And I won't stop trying until I get there! I suppose you think I should get a nice comfortable teaching job, where I only work a few hours a day, and go home every night and suck my thumb, eh?"

He looked at them accusingly.

"Wasn't that why your father changed his name to Jeffrey Ovid Chawser in the first place? So he could be sure of getting a job in an American university?"

"That's right. But I will not follow in his footsteps. The university made him so critical he couldn't create. He despised his words as soon as he'd written them. He would only accept perfection, which left him with nothing. But I immerse myself in the flow of life, and come out with my hands wet and my body bloodied."

He put down his manuscript and shook his head.

"The hardest thing about writing an existential novel is finishing it before you kill yourself," he said, farting.

Suddenly a strange look of anxiety crossed his face. He waved his arms at Paris.

"Gangway," he cried. "I have to sit there!"

Paris jumped up to give him the seat. Jeffrey sat down, dripping red water all around.

"Should we leave?" Paris asked Allison.

"If you're that kind of coward," Jeffrey thundered.

There was a splash from the toilet bowl.

"Could you turn off the water, please?" Jeffrey asked. "It spoils my concentration."

Paris leaned over the bath and grasped the faucet tap. He yelled in pain and jumped back.

"Jesus, that was hot. I thought it was cold. It was marked C."

"That's because the plumbers are French Canadian."

Paris rolled a towel around his hand and tried again, successfully.

"A conspiracy?" Allison laughed. "Subverting the sacred bath?"

"Simpler than that," Jeffrey explained. "It's just that C stands for chaud which is their word for hot, and they figure H stands for some English word for Froid which is their word for cold."

"See the power of words?" Allison teased.

There was another splash from the toilet bowl.

"It's just words that separate this province from the rest of Canada."

"It's just words that separate anything," Allison added.

"And speaking of words," Jeffrey said, "how did you get a name like Paris. Were your parents Greek?"

"No," Paris said. "Romantic. My mother loved literature and Greek myths. Her favorite was the story of Paris and Helen of Troy."

"She must have told us that story a million times!" Allison agreed.

Jeffrey nodded with pleasure. It warmed him inside whenever he heard that someone was interested in literature.

"Well, I'm afraid she marked you for decadence and tragedy," he announced with a splash. "Mediaeval moralists pointed out that Paris

gave up both the active and contemplative virtues in favour of physical pleasure, and that was why his city was put to the torch."

"I'm not decadent," Paris argued.

"You're probably so decadent you don't even know you're decadent!"

"At least he's still heterosexual," Allison came to his defence.

"I'm relieved to hear that," Jeffrey said, sitting there naked.

At that moment the cat walked in, completely unafraid, and looked at them all, calmly. Neuro's tail stopped wagging. Paris stared down at it.

"Let's get it now," he whispered.

"You'll never catch it without the net," Jeffrey warned.

"What net?" Paris asked.

"The net I used when I transferred it from Mary's previous residence," Jeffrey said. "The net under the tub."

Paris looked under the bath. There, between the legs, was a folded up fishing net. He reached in and pulled it out.

"My grandfather was a fisherman," Jeffrey said. "This was passed down from father unto son."

"It's huge," Paris observed, unfolding it.

"An artist should never work without a net," Jeffrey pronounced.

As soon as the cat saw the net, it turned and ran, claws scraping the wooden floor all the way to the kitchen. Paris followed, and Allison followed Paris. She emptied a box of its books and carried it with her.

Neuro followed both of them, his tail between his legs.

The cat was on top of the refrigerator, hissing. Paris waved the net at her, trying to get her to leap. As she did, Paris threw it out. The cat tangled in the netting and crashed to the floor with a horrified

scream.

Allison grabbed one side of the net and pushed the cardboard box under the squirming lump. They untangled the netting, hoping to drop the cat safely into the box. But suddenly they realized, as the netting unfolded, that Silvery Moon was on top.

The cat let out a ferocious scream and leapt at Paris's throat, teeth and claws out. Paris ducked and raised his left hand. The cat bounced off the forearm and skidded down his back, leaving a trail of claw marks. He cried out in pain and jumped back. The cat scrambled out of the kitchen and down the hall. Neuro hid under the table as she flew by.

"Jesus!" Paris yelled.

"He was a fisherman, too," Jeffrey shouted, chuckling to himself in the bathroom.

Paris returned, head hung in defeat.

"You have lost the battle but not the war," Jeffrey consoled him.

"You know, that's exactly the kind of trouble I had with Mary."

A wry, ironic smile graced one side of his face.

"You're in trouble," he warned, "living with her. She tried to destroy me."

He took a handful of toilet paper from the roll and began wiping himself.

"But I protected myself the way I always do," he laughed. "By writing about it!"

"You're just bitter, because it didn't work out," Paris said.

"Sure I am, but wait until she turns on you. You won't be smiling then."

"Well, I guess I'll have to deal with it the only way I can. By writing a song!"

"Ah, yes, songs to make the ladies cry. A troubadour, eh? You must be the Paris from that famous painting by David, playing a lyre and singing so sweetly to Helen that she gives up everything ethical and follows him into a life of sin and destruction."

He waved the soiled toilet paper in the air.

"Why do you remind me of Luther?" Allison teased.

"Besides," Paris defended himself, "ethics have nothing to do with it."

Jeffrey glared.

"Oh yes they do. You don't know it but you are part of a long tradition of decadence. It was the troubadours of mediaeval Europe who led the ladies of the courts away from their ethical duties and into the dream world of romance. And now it's the pop musicians delivering their message of unrestrained sensuality who are leading the masses into the skid-row of history!"

Paris ran cold water over his forearm. It still stung from the wounds inflicted by the cat. Something told him he was now being assaulted psychologically.

"Ah yes," Jeffrey continued, waving the toilet paper. "It was only when the literati took control of the entertainment business that this direction was reversed. With the rise of literacy in Western Europe came the power to abstract and to manipulate — the ability to think. Only then could Europe become dominant in world history. And writers were the driving force behind it."

"Do you have any band-aids?" Paris asked.

Allison reached into the medicine cabinet and came to his aid.

"And we here in North America are the inheritors of that grand tradition. But now we find literacy is on the decline, and who is waiting in the wings, ready to lead us back into oblivion? The musician!" Jeffrey thundered.

"Do you always think in such broad historical concepts?" Paris asked, grimacing.

"That's what reading and writing does to you," Jeffrey said, throwing the toilet paper into the bowl.

"But what really fascinates me," he said, waving a finger, "is how we find a circle within a circle, how these mythological truths echo into individual life. Look at us. How you, the musician, are stealing Helen from me!"

He flushed the toilet with a flourish.

"I didn't steal anyone," Paris protested. "Besides, the way I heard the story, Paris was the one who was seduced."

Jeffrey climbed back into the tub.

"Sure, but Paris will always see himself as a victim. The feeling of responsibility for your actions only comes with literacy. In an illiterate world, the gods, the fates, or, as they say today, the flow takes over!"

He shivered, then reached over and turned the hot water back on.

"So you sit here surrounded by the flow and with your literate consciousness organize it into a meaningful and coherent whole?" Paris asked.

"And all this time I thought all this would go over your head," Jeffrey chuckled.

He began typing furiously.

"You're just uptight because Mary's with me now," Paris said angrily, waving a band-aid. "So you're getting back at me with the only weapon you have, your tongue!"

Jeffrey laughed and continued typing.

"I'd like to match wits with you, Paris, but I never duel with an unarmed man."

Allison once again felt she had to intervene. She grabbed Paris by the arm and took him into the hall.

"No harm meant, brother. It's just the way he likes to talk. It stimulates his mind. He needs to feel he's creating something grand and eternal. That's part of what I do over here to help him, I listen to all this stuff."

Suddenly a loud Thunk resounded from the bathroom, the slap of dog-flesh on chrome. They hurried in. Jeffrey had passed out. They pulled him out of the tub.

"See?" Allison said. "If I hadn't have been here, he would have drowned for sure."

"Do you get paid for this?" Paris frowned.

"It's a labour of love," she said. "We learn a lot from each other."

He was very heavy. After they dragged him into the adjacent bedroom, Paris held him up while Allison rubbed the blood and water off with a towel. Then they slipped him into bed. He began to snore immediately.

"What a mess," Paris said, looking around.

"Intellectuals always leave messes behind them. I'm just glad I'm not his wife!"

They both dried themselves.

"Let's get the cat and leave," Paris suggested.

"How?"

"I've got an idea," Paris said, tapping his head. "Cat psychology."

He picked up the empty box and crept into the dining room. The cat was sitting on a pile of books in the corner. He calmly walked to the middle of the room and put the box on the floor, flaps open.

When he returned to Allison, he looked at his watch.

"Give her a couple of minutes."

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Cats can't resist anything new. Like kids. I know, I have to play for them."

After a few minutes had passed, Paris crept back to the dining room. Allison followed him and Neuro followed her, tail between his legs.

Paris raised a finger to his mouth. They all peered around the corner. The cat was nowhere to be seen. He sneaked over to the box, making as little sound as possible. Then he reached down and closed the flaps firmly. A scream came from inside, and a frantic rustling of claws.

Neuro wagged his tail rapidly and barked with joy.

Monday, the Eleventh

The energy level at the Alternative Art Gallery was high. A vernissage was being given for Lillith Warp; whose work, on the theme of 'Our Father', and whose reputation, for controversy, never failed to draw a crowd.

Mary had been asked to perform and to be in harmony with the theme she dressed as a nun. By the time she and Paris had arrived the party was in full swing.

At the top of the stairs to the huge loft which housed the gallery they were handed large styrofoam cups of wine. They squeezed their way through a buzzing horde of bohemians and into the main hall where all the art objects were on display.

On the walls hung all manner of phallic reproductions. As they worked their way along Lillith Warp's 'Wall-of-Fame' behind the rest of the assemblage, they could see why the works were drawing a reaction of loud laughter and rowdy comments.

The first one, titled 'Drapeau', consisted of an erect penis made from a policeman's nightstick with two bags of money for testicles. Beside it was a squadron of smaller nightstick-penises with handcuffs for testis entitled 'Drapeau's Gestapo'.

The next work evoked groans. It was called "Nietzsche". On the top of a cartoon mountain drooped a limp penis covered with syphilitic sores. From the mouth of the penis a bubble said: "Also sprach Zarathustra!".

"You think that's bad," Paris commented. "Look at this."

He stood in front of 'The Superman'; a phallus made of a wax hand in a Nazi salute with a Nazi armband. The testis were two bars of soap.

"Mary," a voice cried.

They turned around. Lillith hurried over to them, trailed by four or five adoring female students. She was tall and quite magnificent. Her body was angular and solid, like a man's, but had the requisite feminine curves. She wore high heels and had her pants rolled up to the knee, displaying a light layer of brown hair. She walked proudly, ignoring Paris and addressing herself to Mary. He felt uncomfortable but enjoyed the opportunity to look her over.

"Come on, sweet stuff," she said. "The big show is about to start, and you're my piece of living Kitsch!"

She rarely smiled, though one would expect from her work that she had a sense of humour. Her mouth was stiff, it didn't move at all when she talked. She seemed in constant pain. Her upper lip was drawn in tightly, exposing a few teeth, and giving her an air of ferocity. There was a surgical bandage on her nose, and a large bruise on one side of her forehead. Her eyes squinted accusingly and her face was clenched like a fist.

She put an arm around Mary and led her away. The students stuck their tongues out at Paris, then followed her off into the crowd. He gulped his cheap wine and moved on to the next piece.

It was titled 'Mick Jagger'. From a phallus made from a microphone hung two small plastic baggies of white powder. "Under My Thumb" blared from a speaker above.

Paris snickered.

"What this chick needs is a good fuck!" a loud voice said.

Paris turned around. It was the Bopper.

"But I must admit, it is a well-hung gallery!"

"What are you doing here?" Paris chuckled.

"Hey, what better place to pick up women than a women's gallery? And you know what artsy chicks are like!" he winked.

"I don't think it's that kind of a gallery," Paris said, jerking his head toward a couple of girls kissing in a corner.

"Oh, that? It's everywhere these days. But most of 'em come back to the old cockeroony sooner or later. Don't worry. Nature's on our side!"

They followed the motion of the crowd to the next piece. A large wooden sculpture of male genitalia stood on a white stand. Large spikes and nails had been hammered into every conceivable place, so it looked as if it were covered with hair. It was called 'Revenge'.

"Bitter, isn't she?" Paris said.

They moved further along. A wooden penis stuck up from the floor, stars and stripes painted around its base. A huge arrow had been shot through the center. It was titled 'Custer's Last Stand'.

The Bopper shook his head.

"And to think, it's our tax dollars that go into supporting this!"

The next piece was called 'History'. Three penises were made from newspaper maché; one limp, one erect, and one limp.

The Bopper laughed.

"I like this one."

He looked around furtively.

"Maybe I should try to fuck this chick."

Paris laughed.

"You'll never do it."

"It'll be a challenge," the Bopper said.

"Impossible," Paris insisted.

A seriousness darkened the Bopper's face.

"What? Never do it? Do you realized who you're speaking to?"

he said, incredulously.

"She's a bull dyke! A Mack truck!"

"I don't care," the Bopper said, indignantly. "She's still a woman!"

"That's debatable."

"OK. A case of Molson says I can!"

"And another case says you can't."

As they shook hands, a screech of feedback turned their attention to the stage at the far end of the room.

"Sisters, friends, lovers and others, like you media moguls and paunchy pilots of the press. My name is Lilly and this is my show!"

The Bopper moved in close.

"I chose the theme of 'Our Father' for this showing of my work for personal as well as political reasons. My old man was a complete loser—a write-off! That I wouldn't have minded so much, we're all victims of our fate, but the bastard tried to tell me what was real and what was not, something he knew nothing about, and how to live my life. I see my art as a continual working off of that, on all levels of my psyche, and in this I am not unique, fellow babes-in-the-wood. Today we are all faced with discarding the myth-conceptions of our gory and glorious patriotic and patriarchal past! Our Father is old Pop Culture. I portray him here in his nakedness so you can see him for what he really is. Know your enemy!"

The crowd cheered. The Bopper stood beside the stage, grinning.

"Thank you. You keep me going, which brings me to my next point.

Unfortunately artists do not live by genius alone. The grants to this gallery get lower every year. So to help pay the rent and the Hydro bills, I have designed some special articles of clothing which, while being useful, are still originals and works of art in their own right. They will be here all week so you can buy one for that man-in-your-life, whether he be your hairdresser or your gynaecologist. And here to model them are our brothers in the struggle against sexual tyranny; the boys from the baths."

A door opened behind her and ten naked men walked out, naked that is except for a small codpiece over the genitals. Each man was different physically and each had his own way of showing that he was gay.

The first was a corpulent little man who looked like Porky Pig, but swung side-to-side as he walked. His genitals were wrapped in a supermarket meat package and labelled '69 cents a pound'.

The second was a tall slim man, too soft to be boney, with a black moustache, who minced lightly. He wore a furry little codpiece with a long red feather which stuck out two feet.

The third had white hair and glasses, a dead ringer for Andy Warhol. His sexual organs were sealed inside a Campbell's soup can.

Each man walked down a ramp as models would, stopped, and made a full turn. The audience applauded each creation. There was a glint of coy pride in the model's eyes. For them, it was more than Lilly's artwork which was being well received. This mood intensified as each one appeared until they began to flirt outright with the men in the crowd with winks and mock-kisses. This aroused the audience even more, and soon whistles, hoots and catcalls peppered the applause.

There was a pinstriped codpiece with silver dollar buttons, and a

black leather one with a switchblade knife which popped open when the model tightened his buttocks. There was one with prison bars around the organs, a little door with a jailer's key in the lock; and there was one with a funny little engine on it which sent a piston churning in an obscene way.

"Aren't they beautiful?" Lilly asked, when the modelling was finished. "And remember, they are all available for a very reasonable price."

The crowd screamed at the double entendre.

The models left the stage and walked into the audience, causing a commotion.

"We have two special guests tonight," Lilly continued. "So please give your full attention to the stage. It is at a great effort and expense that, for your education and enlightenment, we have brought here the Primal Father himself, the man all men imitate and aspire to, in most cases without even knowing it. This man started a civilization which endures to this day. He has been immortalized in myth, legend, story and song. He lives on in all men, urging them to do the things which defy logic. That Lord of Lords and King of Kings: Jungle Jim!"

The door behind her opened and an ape-man ran out. He wore a military jacket covered with medals and swung a large club. He lumbered around the circumference of the stage, threatened the audience with his club, roared and grunted, then walked over to Lilly and the microphone.

"How are ya doin', Jimmy?" Lilly asked.

"Just fine, Lilly. Always great to be back in Montreal, great people."

He waved to the crowd, then bowed bashfully, hands behind his back.

"You know," Lilly said, "the world is pretty fucked up right now, and I'd like to ask you a question. Is there any hope for ideals like Truth, Beauty, Justice or Equality in a world so brutal and violent?"

The ape shrugged.

"I'd like to say yes. We've come a long way in all these years. Learned to eat with a knife and fork, drive a car, speak various languages, sing and dance, and not fart in public. But when it comes right down to it, and it always does sooner or later, it's gonna be you or me, and it ain't gonna be you!"

He laughed and let out a thunderous growl.

"Are you saying that all the victories we've gained in all these years, to protect the weak and free the oppressed, all our faith and work, is in vain?"

"Lilly, you can take man out of the jungle but you can't take the jungle out of man! And we who live in the jungle know that everything moves in cycles. That means civilization too. A society dominates, adopts ideals, and then weakens. At the very moment it thinks it has thrown off the skin of its animal past and is on its way to become truly 'civilized', then...bang!"

"Bang? What bang?"

"You'll know it when you hear it!"

"That's a very pessimistic outlook."

"I call 'em how I see 'em!"

"Well, thanks for dropping by, Jimmy."

"My pleasure, Lilly. Goodbye!"

He leapt in the air and beat his chest, emitting a bloodcurdling cry. Then he waved his club in the air and forced a path through the

crowd, bullying them out of his way.

There was a howl of boos.

"Always instructive to hear the man's point of view," Lilly said.

"But now, hold on to your panties, because our final guest is Entertainment personified, our own local queen of showbiz, our own Regina Vagina, Mary Monday!"

A Gregorian chant boomed from the loudspeaker. Mary slowly walked onto the stage with her hands together, in prayer. Her eyes were lowered in humility. A man Paris almost recognized pushed his way through the crowd to the stage and stood beside the Bopper grinning at Mary.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," the Gregorians chanted.

Mary dipped to her knees at center stage, and looked up to the ceiling in reverence.

All of a sudden a disco bass drum thumped from the speakers, and Mary rose up and began dancing to a disco version of the Lord's prayer. A high female voice wailed: "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

Mary danced all over the stage, gyrating and jumping to the beat. When she flung off her wimple, revealing her bright orange hair, the crowd screamed with delight and began to clap along with the beat. When she lifted her skirt, showing her long pretty legs in black net stockings and golden shoes, the man beside the Bopper yelled:

"More! More!"

"Forever, and eeeeeever..." sang the voice, "AaaaAAAsaaaMennnnnnn!"

Then the song broke into a standard disco rhythm break, everything from congas to synthesizers. Mary took off her nun's habit, piece by piece, flinging it into the crowd. By the time the singing had started

again, she had stripped to a red sequined bikini, black net stockings, golden shoes, and a long beaded rosary which she twirled like a pearl necklace.

Paris watched suspiciously. She seemed to be playing to the man in the front, beside the Bopper, and he was responding enthusiastically to every move she made. Paris wondered who he was, and as he did a pain shot through him like a knife wound.

She undulated her hips, and made obscene gestures with her tongue. When she kicked up her feet like a chorus girl, the naked male models jumped up with her to form a chorus line. Lilly, the Bopper, and the new man climbed up with them to join the line. They all kicked their legs higher and higher until finally they collapsed into a heap of giggling flesh.

The audience cheered, laughing and whistling. Flashbulbs popped, and writers from underground newspapers scribbled on pads.

"Thanks for the clap," Lillith said, grabbing the mike and gasping for breath. "Our favorite sex object and everyman's favorite female, Mary Monday!"

More applause, and Mary took a bow.

"So that's my little variety show, for what it's worth, I mean, I ain't Ed Sullivan but then he's dead. So now we'll put on some dancing music and have us a party!"

Rock music blasted out of the speakers and everyone spread out to dance. The whole room sprang to life. The models grabbed people from the audience and started it off. Lilly danced with the Bopper and Mary danced with the new man. He wore a leather vest, had long curly blonde hair and a curved moustache.

Paris was pushed back into a corner of the room. The wall was covered with one of Lillith's works called 'Phallicornia', an assortment of eight-by-ten glossies of Hollywood leading men with penises drawn on their noses in felt pen, graffiti-style.

"I didn't know you were interested in art."

He turned around. It was his stepmother. She wore a black silk dress, knee-length, with black nylons and black shoes. Casually draped over her shoulder was a white collar of baby seal fur. Her hair was almost as white, not because she was old but because she visited a hairdresser once a week, and it was in style.

"Do you like what you see?" she asked provocatively, noticing Paris's eyes glide over her.

"You're a good looking woman, but you wear too much make-up and you're getting fat!"

"And you're a young hippy who's soon gonna be an old bum!"

"Why do you come around here?" Paris frowned. "You belong with your friends, those other Mercedes ladies of Westmount Square!"

"But I adore Bohemians! Don't you know it's very chic to be seen at these affairs? You see that photographer over there? He's from the Star, so guess who'll be looking good in the Woman's section tomorrow? That little patron of the arts, yours truly!"

"Patron of the arts?"

"Yes. I'm not just slumming. I'm here to buy. Your father collects this stuff."

"What?" Paris choked.

"I didn't say he was interested in it, I only said he buys it.

Don't you know anything about tax deductions and investments? Of course

you don't. You believe in living hand to mouth or, as you call it, going with the flow!"

She cackled.

"But it's absurd for him to buy this stuff. The message of it is to put an end to everything he stands for!"

"We live in an ironic age. Anyway, it's only art, for God's sake! It's a wish, not reality. And that's something you're gonna have to learn soon, my little dreamer!"

"Well, you sure learned. How to be a successful gold-digger."

Her brows furrowed and her lips tightened. She pulled at her fur collar, nervously.

"What really bothers you is that there won't be any left."

"I don't operate on the same level as you. We all know why you married him, and why you keep the rest of the family away from him. But, personally, I don't give a shit. It's his loss, not ours!"

"I don't keep anyone away from him. He makes his own decisions. You're crazy, like your mother!"

Paris's face swelled with anger.

"You bitch! You're still jealous because she had kids with him and you can't. It's mainly your fault that she's in the hospital. If you had a drop of compassion in your pudgy little body, you might help bring a family back together, at least so's they could be civil to each other!"

"Family? What family?"

The tone of the argument had increased, drawing the attention of those nearby, but neither of the participants noticed.

"A fine family, a mental case and three kids who refuse to grow up!"

I didn't destroy your family, I was there to save your father from being destroyed by it. A musician, a poetess and a hockey player! You all figure you can flitter your lives away because when it comes to the crunch, your old man's money will save you. But I've got news, there won't be any bones left for you to pick!"

"Exactly. You will have already picked them clean!" Paris shook his fist. "You'd think a father would be proud of his children trying to make the world a little more beautiful, a little brighter. There's more to life than just amassing wealth!"

She flicked her baby seal, aggressively.

"Well, for one thing, there's buying art!"

She turned abruptly and stalked off, leaving Paris angry and frustrated. He shook his head. Every time he talked to her it was the same.

He walked along the wall, looking over at the dancers, trying to find Mary. He needed a little comfort now. He stood under a portrait of John Wayne called 'Get Off My Land', a shotgun penis with two reels of 35 mm film for testicles.

He saw the Bopper dancing with Lilly and Caboose, entertaining them with macho-man martial arts moves. Paris could see that he was coming on strong to Lillith. Caboose saw it, too, but didn't seem to mind.

He spotted Mary. She was still dancing with the moustache! He stood on his toes to get a better look and hit his head on the shotgun barrel sticking out of the wall behind.

"Watch out with that thing. It might discharge," a professorial type next to him quipped and then moved along.

Everyone was dancing slow. Paris's heart sank. The blonde held

Mary so tightly she seemed to melt right into him. His hands roamed all over her, unchallenged.

Paris staggered back. He felt betrayed. An emptiness opened inside him. He thought of those Al Capp cartoon characters who walked around with bullet holes in them that you could see right through. He felt as if he'd been hit with a cannon ball and was walking around with a gaping hole where his guts should be.

He walked over to the wine table. Allison was pouring styrofoam cups of wine from a gallon bottle as the Bopper gulped one down. Paris glanced back at the floor. Lilly was slow dancing with Caboose.

"I told you she was gay," he said to the Bopper, holding up his cup to Allison for a refill.

"She's bi for the right guy," the Bopper grinned. "I'm sure of it. But I can't rush her. I don't want to upset her friend. If need be, I'll go home with both of them!"

Paris grimaced and drank some wine.

"Did you see our stepmother?"

"Is she here?" the Bopper asked.

"She's in the other room, buying some of the pieces," Allison said.

"She's such a phony, with her diamonds and minks," the Bopper snapped.

"Gives me a pain!"

"She's a rich man's wife."

"She's an iceberg. Haven't you noticed that even when she looks good, she has no sex appeal at all? She dresses like a drag queen!"

"Maybe she is a drag queen!"

They all laughed at the thought.

Paris drained his cup and pushed it toward Allison for more.

"You're knockin' that back tonight," she observed.

"Nothin' else to do."

The Bopper looked over to the dance floor.

"Oh yeah, Mary's warming up to Coop, eh?"

"Who the fuck is that guy?"

"He's Le Coupeur, a separatist who hangs around with us Anglos trying to get us all to vote Oui in the referendum. Hasn't he come on to you yet?"

"He better not try. But he doesn't seem to be interested in politics tonight."

"Sexual politics, maybe."

Paris's head drooped.

"Come on," said the Bopper. "What does it matter? They're all the same. Maybe she's just flirting. Let her have her fun. Why don't you come with me and we'll cut in on Lilly and Caboose."

Paris drained the cup.

"What the hell."

The Bopper grabbed a couple of full cups and brought them along. He gave one each to Lilly and Caboose, made a polite bow and said:

"Mind if we cut in?"

Lilly poured the whole cup of wine down her throat and grabbed the Bopper.

"Alright, you Stanley Street Stallion, show me what you've got!

What makes you the highest scorer in the league?"

The Bopper laughed.

"You have quite a way with the ladies yourself."

"They know they can trust me."

"Hey, you can trust me. I never take more than I give."

"I can feel that. You're honest in your own way."

"You're a smart woman. Quite an unusual woman! How come you haven't hooked up with a guy? Don't you make it with guys at all?"

She laughed.

"I gave up on guys years ago. They're all such assholes! They all wanta clip my wings and lock me in their cage."

"I ain't gonna clip your wings."

She held him tighter.

"So maybe I'll give you a try?"

"Mmm. That feels nice."

She looked into his eyes.

"Look, I'll take a chance with you. I like to experiment once and a while. But there's one condition."

"What?"

"We do it my way."

"OK, maybe you'll teach me something."

"I mean it. From here on, I make the moves. I lead and you follow."

She swung him away and across the dance floor.

Paris was dancing with Caboose, but his mind was on Mary.

"Look, if you'd rather be somewhere else," she said, "it's OK."

He started, like a man awoken from a dream.

"Sorry," he said, looking down at her face.

She was quite pretty, very soft and vulnerable. She had a face like a twelve-year-old, big round eyes and pouting lips.

"It doesn't bother you that Lilly's with my brother?"

Caboose smiled.

"She gets him. I get you. Isn't that the idea?"

Paris looked shocked.

"You're not into it? Change is nice, and as long as everything's balanced, no one has to get hurt. Variety is the spice of life."

She kissed him on the cheek. He drained his cup and she drained hers.

"I'll get some more," he said.

He grabbed her cup and hurried to the wine table, where he met Mary.

"What're you tryin' to do to me?" he asked her, his voice cracking.

"What?"

She looked back in disbelief.

"You know what I mean. With that guy!" he said in a loud whisper.

"I don't know what you mean."

His hands were shaking.

"Look, you're hurting me. When I see you with him I feel...awful."

"Hey, don't lay a jealousy trip on me. I didn't think you were like that. It's a free country, you know."

"But we're living together! I love you."

"Cool down. Relax. I'll be back."

"When?"

"Maybe tomorrow, maybe the next day."

"What?"

"Look, I want a guy who's gonna groove with me, not throw a net over me!"

"How can you do this to me?"

"Oh, yeah. I'm doing it to you. You gotta go with it. You gotta adapt."

"I can't."

"You don't have a choice!"

She picked up two cups and walked back to the dance floor. Paris was stunned. His face was contorted, his emotions inside churning like a hurricane. Allison leaned across the table and put her hand on his.

"How would you feel if Adam did this to you?" he asked her.

"He wouldn't," she said. "Adam is Adam. But Mary is Mary. You can't change her. Let her be Mary. Isn't that what fascinated you in the first place?"

Paris grabbed two cups of wine and walked back to Caboose.

"Are you alright?" she asked, taking a cup. "You look wild."

"I feel hostile. I wanna hit someone!"

She stood close to him and brushed her cheek against his.

"I'll let you hit me."

He stared at her.

"Huh?"

"Don't play naive," she purred. "You know that some people like it rough, a little pain with their pleasure. I can't have an orgasm without it."

She bit hard into his neck.

"Oww!" he screamed.

He drew back and knocked her across the side of her face.

She fell to the floor. He knelt down guiltily and began to help her up.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean it. It's just that you bit me so hard."

She grabbed him behind the neck and pulled his face close to hers.

"Don't apologize, you animal. Take me home!"

Her tongue darted quickly across his mouth.

He lifted her off the floor and looked around, nervously. No one had even noticed, the music was too loud, and everyone was too drunk or too busy.

She took his hand and led him to the coatroom. There were two other couples in the room, necking among the coats. One was Lilly and the Bopper, the other was Mary and Le Coupeur.

Mary broke her hold and looked over at him, challengingly. He took Caboose into his arms and kissed her hard. She squirmed against him passionately. Her hands massaged his groin. He held the kiss for as long as he could then looked back at Mary.

She was gone.

"Well, since we're all going to the same place, let's go together!" the Bopper grinned.

They all stumbled down the stairs and into the Bopper's car, an old Ford station wagon.

"It's on loan while mine's in the shop," he explained.

"I live in St. Louis Square," Lilly announced.

As they drove off, the car bumped up and down brutally. They all looked at each other.

"A flat! Somebody must've let the air outa my tires."

"All of them?"

"Feels like it."

"What d'we do?"

"Fuck it! We'll go anyway. It's not my car!"

They bumped and jumped and rocked and rolled down the street, drawing looks from the pedestrians. Lilly laughed along with the Bopper.

)They were bouncing in their seats like water molecules in a boiling kettle. Caboose began giggling hysterically, People came out of bars and restaurants to watch them go by. Paris began laughing, too. They couldn't stop laughing, gasping for air and turning red. Not until they parked the car and stumbled into Lillith's apartment. There they collapsed on the floor, chuckling and snickering.

"Good, clean American fun," Lilly said, retrieving a bottle from the mantle piece.

They didn't need it, but they poured more anyway. Then the Bopper produced a little vial of white powder and a coke spoon. They all took a snort of that.

Soon, Lilly dragged the Bopper off to her bedroom. She picked him up and threw him over her shoulder. In no time at all Paris and Caboose heard a rhythmic banging on the wall, accompanied by shouts and screams.

Caboose whispered in Paris's ear.

"Wanna tie me up?"

He was so drunk he could hardly move. He looked at her. She was out of focus.

"OK, I'll tie you up," she giggled.

She took off his clothes, piece by piece, and rolled him onto a mattress in the corner. She tied his arms and legs together with brightly coloured scarves.

"I've never done it this way before," she gasped with excitement.

"I'm always the one who gets tied up."

She put on thigh-high leather boots and swung a leather lash. With one heel grinding into Paris's chest and the lash lightly touching his chin she said:

"Are you scared? You better be, you piece of scum! Tonight you're gonna get a beating you'll never forget!"

Then she squealed with delight.

"You shit! You nobody!"

She swung the lash across his legs.

"You nonentity!"

She whipped him across his genitals. He screamed in pain, and began squirming, trying to untie himself.

"You fucking asshole! You stupid turd!"

She began breathing hard. One of her hands stroked her vagina. She lashed him across his chest.

"You God-damn fucking pea-brained idiot! You're a nothing. A void!"

He was struggling against the scarves. She knelt down beside him, in a sexual frenzy.

"I'm gonna bite your cock off, you gutless coward!"

She leaned her head down to his crotch and took his genitals in her mouth. Then she bit hard.

"AAAAaaarr — Jesus!!" he yelled, and broke both scarves at once.

He kneed her in the chest, knocking her across the room. Then he looked down at his bloody groin. Anger welled up inside him. He jumped across the room and kicked her in the ribs. She grabbed his foot and began licking it. He kicked her again, knocking her away.

"Harder!" she sighed.

She grabbed his foot and pressed it onto her face, kissing and licking it all the while.

Paris looked at her in horror and quickly pulled back his foot. He grabbed his clothes and dressed hurriedly.

"What's the matter?" she asked, coming out of a trance.

"I'm sorry, I just can't help it. I've gotta go. This is not my scene."

He ran for the door, his red cape flying out behind him.

"You can't leave me like this!" she yelled.

Something smashed against the door as it shut behind him.

Tuesday, the Twelfth

In Atwater Park, high above the teenagers in their democratic denims and Adidas, and the hopeless winos sleeping on the benches, the stone face of John Cabot peered across St. Catherine street. He held up a hand to shade his eyes from the setting sun. What was the dead explorer looking for?

The Shadow looked back at him from inside the Montreal Forum.

"Why doesn't somebody blow up that stupid statue?" he said to nobody in particular.

He flashed his performer pass at the ushers and pushed spectators out of his way as he cut across the main floor. Soon the hockey season would start and it will be covered with ice. High above him were the flags of the Montreal Canadiens, Stanley Cup champions! He respected them for that. A champion is nature perfecting itself, he thought.

Fans peppered the banks of seats on either side. He sneered at them.

"Spectators," he mumbled. "They sit back and watch life play itself out. They don't have the guts to get in the ring themselves."

He clenched his fists.

"I'll show those marshmallows tonight!"

A little boy yelled: "Look, the Shadow!"

He waved, frantically.

"Hey, Shadow!"

The Shadow stopped and scowled. The boy was thirty feet away, about twelve. Pretty face, the Shadow thought, his pulse quickening.

The boy leered at him, grabbed his genitals in his right hand and yelled: "Eat my shorts!"

A sick grin spread across the Shadow's face.

"Anytime, kid. Anytime!"

But he couldn't make time with groupies now, he had to get ready for the fight. People were starting to file into the stadium in larger numbers. As he made his way to the dressing rooms more youngsters waved. He was an antihero to them, challenging all authority.

A dark character, he had been such an ugly baby that his mother had had morning sickness after he was born. He had grown even uglier with the years, but he had learned how to make ugliness work for him. He had become the bad guy of the wrestling world. Even other 'bad guys' looked good when they faced him. He could be worse than all of them.

It's a tough job, he thought, but somebody's gotta do it. If I don't, somebody else will.

Whereas with many wrestlers the image was merely an act, a contrivance to gain attention, the Shadow was not acting. This added conviction to his performance, which made him extremely popular.

Beauty is only skin deep, he thought, but ugliness goes right to the bone. He had always got a thrill from being bad, a convincing feeling which said to him: "This is it. This is me!"

It was a sense of power. He could remember it back in school when he carried a starter's pistol around in his pocket. He would corner a smaller boy and say: "I've been watching you and I don't like what I see. So I'm gonna rub you out!" When the gun went off it made such a loud bang that the poor child would think he had really been shot and shit his pants.

It was a God-like feeling, the Shadow mused. A power over life and death, a power to instill fear in people. It more than made up for

his ugliness. In fact, his large nose with its huge, cavernous nostrils, his great purple lips that hung like rotting fruit, his bald head with its missing ear, his great hairy hands, and his sweaty, putrid hulk of a body, all served to increase his potency.

"It's about time," Judas met him at the dressing room door. "You've just got enough time to make it!"

Judas, who also managed the Venus, had dabbled in wrestling for years, and had been quick to spot an exploitable quality in the Shadow. The Shadow wanted Judas to do all the business. He scorned that part of life.

"Don't worry," he sneered, "this guy is a push over!"

Judas pulled the cigar from his mouth, angrily.

"He's the God-damn champion, that's all!"

The Shadow climbed out of his street clothes.

"He's no champion. He never fights. Just takes all the holds you can give him 'til he's worn you out. How can someone be a champion and never fight back?"

"A win is a win. His opponents collapse from exhaustion!"

The Shadow threw his pants in the corner.

"Aw, go talk business with somebody. Don't worry about me. I'll win tonight!"

"OK," Judas walked to the door, leaving a trail of cigar smoke.

"I'll be back to bring you on."

The door slammed.

"Greedy little pig!" the Shadow muttered. "He thinks he owns me. He'd be nothing without me. The assholes I have to put up with!"

He slipped into his black tights and boots.

One day I'm gonna rule the world, he promised himself. Those money hungry businessmen will be right behind me, too. They'll think they're all using me, but once I've grabbed political power, I'll have them all shot!

The neurons in his brain clicked into the patterns of his favorite fantasy. He wanted to rule the world. He wanted to straighten it out.

Everywhere he looked he saw the decadence of socialism and democracy. Everywhere the weak were banding together and shackling the strong. That champion of nature, its highest achievement, was pinned to the ground by laws and regulations, the same way Gulliver was by the Lilliputians in the Walt Disney movie. It made him sick. The world had been turned on its head. And the crazy thing was that in their hearts the weak craved a champion to lead them.

He wanted to be that man. They turned out in thousands to watch him pummel his opponents in the ring, surely he could do the same in politics. He had joined organizations before but found the experience disappointing. He went to a meeting of Gay Rights but was disgusted when he realized it had been infiltrated by homosexuals. He tried the Canadian League of Apathy but no one ever showed up for the meetings.

Idiots! he thought, as he pulled the black cape over his shoulders.

All Canadian organizations were poisoned with parliamentary procedure, anyway. Power was always split between rival factions, so nothing could ever be accomplished. And Canadians seemed to like it this way! The only thing they agreed upon was how healthy it was to disagree. The country hung like loose clothes around an invisible emperor. The Shadow realized that there was no emperor. So the clothes hung, propped up by pins and hooks supplied by Uncle Sam.

The Shadow pounded his fist against the lockers. Judas opened the door and peered in.

"When I rule," the Shadow sneered, "everyone will have to suck my cock. If they do it well, I'll come in their mouths. If they don't, I'll grind my boot into their faces. No one will be allowed to approach me for any reason without first kneeling down to kiss my prick. I will surround myself with favorites, those who give me the most pleasure. Everyone will have to obey, because I will have the power!"

Judas grinned and lit his cigar.

"The cocksucker theory of world politics. But it's not like kissing the Pope's ring, is it? What about ethics and morality?"

The Shadow laughed sarcastically.

"Ethics and morality? That's just the padding in the hockey game, what those in power use to protect themselves. I don't wear armour. I give you the raw facts. If I kill, it'll be with my bare hands!"

He grabbed a coathook on the wall and twisted it until it snapped.

Judas pulled the cigar out of his mouth.

"Come on in, boys."

The dressing room filled with photographers, flashbulbs popping.

The Shadow growled at them and tore another coathook from the wall. He spotted a crucifix hanging above the lockers. He leapt up and grabbed it, crashing against the lockers with a loud bang. He held it out in front of them and, with his face red and swollen with rage, bent it into the shape of a swastika.

On the floor of the Forum, Paris and the Bopper squeezed through the crowd to their seats.

"This is terrific," the Bopper beamed. "Ringside!"

"How did ya get these tickets?"

"The Shadow left a whole pile at the Venus for us. He always gets a few seats for his family, so I guess that means us."

"Are we supposed to root for him?"

"Naw, nobody really roots openly for the Shadow, except the kids. But all his fans love to boo him."

Paris noticed that the front row was filled with most of the Venus regulars, including Le Coupeur and Mary. That's where he had seen him before! His heart sank and a shiver ran up his spine, like a chill. He slumped into his seat with a sigh, feeling like a flat string.

He sat right beside Mary. She looked at him briefly, then looked away, ignoring his glances. Conflicting emotions fought inside. Half of him wanted to grab her and take her away — be the hero who saves his girl from the clutches of another. But the other half realized that she had a right to live her own life, and if she wanted to go with him that would be her decision. So Paris sat there, paralysed.

The Bopper was watching his brother's face.

"Don't sweat it," he advised. "There's millions more out there. Millions of breasts, millions of legs, millions of asses!"

Paris looked back in horror.

"But she's my woman!"

"Ya know what a woman is?" the Bopper sneered. "A life support system for a cunt!"

Paris frowned and glanced at Mary. Le Coupeur's hand was on her knée.

A bell rang as Judas strode to the center of the ring and grabbed the hanging microphone.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he shouted. "The Montreal Society for the Liberation of Nature is pleased to present the battle of the decade, for the Bohemian Heavyweight Crown. In this corner, weighing two hundred and eighty two pounds, the Champion, Jesus of James Bay!"

A rotund, jolly man bounced up into the ring. He had a childlike smile on his face, radiating happiness. A ring of brown hair left a little bald halo on top of his head. A long brown beard hung from his chin. The crowd cheered wildly.

"And in this corner," Judas continued, "weighing three hundred and five, the challenger, a man who came from nowhere and brought it with him, the Shadow!"

The Shadow leapt into the ring, rudely pushing Jesus out of his way. The crowd booed and jeered. The Shadow grimaced at them, cupped his hands over his genitals and yelled:

"Eat my shorts!"

In one motion and with one voice the crowd responded. They all grabbed their genitals and yelled back:

"Eat my shorts!"

When the hubbub had subsided, Judas spoke.

"OK boys, shake hands, then come out fighting."

Jesus stuck out his hand.

"Praise the Lord."

The Shadow punched him in the face.

"No!" he screamed.

Judas pushed them away from each other, and they both retreated to

their corners.

The Shadow dropped his cape. He was all in black; shorts, tights, and boots. He also wore a black mask over his face to protect himself from the bright lights. He was allergic to strong light, a disease he had had all his life. Within half an hour in sunlight his face would swell horribly and he would be unable to breathe. After an hour in sunlight he would be dead.

Jesus wore only a loin cloth. He was not allergic to anything, indeed he had a resilience which had many times amazed opponents and doctors alike.

When the bell rang, the Shadow lumbered to the center of the ring, growling. Jesus bounced right up to him, unafraid, and stared in his eyes. He saw a look of wildness, like the eyes of a wolf. There was a mad, predatory shine as if he were capable of any act, no matter how barbarous or cruel. The Shadow had not been civilized; he refused to be civilized!

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," Jesus said.

The Shadow grabbed his right arm, swung him up in the air and brought him back down to the mat with a crunch.

"In this world, only the strong survive!" he roared.

Jesus staggered to his feet and held out his arms.

"Love thine enemies."

The Shadow kicked his arms away, grabbed him by the beard and swung him, head first, into the corner post.

"Kill or be killed!" he screamed.

The crowd rose to its feet and booed. The Shadow pulled down the back.

of his pants and gave them a view of his anus.

"Put it where the sun don't shine!" he yelled.

They all grabbed their crotches and screamed back, in one voice:

"Take a bite of this!"

Paris turned his head and looked back at the crowd. They were up on their seats, screaming and yelling with delight. His eyes swept up to the expensive boxes hanging high above. Leaning from one, sipping a martini, was his father. His face was expressionless. He looked like Zeus up there, Paris thought, looking on impassively while chance and the forces of nature shape the world.

His gaze then turned to Mary. He could feel the magnetism of her body beside him, her bare arms and legs giving off an irresistible aura of strength. The beauty of her face, with its child-like little nose and full, soft and submissive lips, drove his heartbeat faster. He wanted to possess her.

Le Coupeur noticed him staring at her. His eyes flashed a warning, a deep, primal hostility.

Jesus was on his feet again, smiling in spite of his bruises. He spoke to the Shadow in a soft tone.

"My son, you are trapped in your animal past. You must strive to raise your consciousness."

The Shadow roared like a tiger.

"There is no such thing as higher consciousness!"

He grabbed Jesus by the hair and swung him around the ring.

"That's an out-dated, elitist idea. Whether you're a dandelion, a gorilla or Albert Einstein, it's all the same!"

He slammed Jesus against a corner post and kneed him in the stomach.

"We don't rise to perfection through evolution. In nature, the most perfect biological form is the single cell!"

He Judo-chopped Jesus on the back of the neck, sending him to the canvas with a thud.

"And social progress is an illusion!"

Jesus, face bloodied, looked up from the floor.

"But we are all brothers and sisters. We must build a new, better world together, in peace and harmony."

The Shadow swung his boot into Jesus's face, breaking his nose and splattering blood over the first row of spectators.

"Fuck you and your new world!" he screamed, his face red and swollen. His eyes almost bulged out of his mask, and spit flew from his mouth.

"You want a world where the weak dominate the strong because there are more of them!"

The crowd was on its feet again, yelling insults at the Shadow. The group from the Venus in the first row were vainly trying to wipe spots of Jesus's blood off their clothes.

Jesus staggered to his feet once more. He pointed upward.

"God sees everything you do," he said in a hoarse whisper, suddenly aware of a loose tooth. "And one day you will be judged!"

The Shadow stamped his foot on the canvas.

"I don't need any of your pathetic symbolical reasons for existence!"

He ran at Jesus with his head down and butted him in the stomach like a goat. Jesus was thrown back onto the ropes, where he hung limply.

The Shadow had hit his head against one of Jesus's ribs, and this had opened the scar where his other ear had once been. Red blood began to pour out. He rubbed his eyes, looking for Jesus, but there was too much blood,

Jesus spread his arms and hung his head. A wire harness, invisible to the audience, was lowered from the roof. It dropped over his head and hooked around him. He snapped it into place, secretly.

Then he began to rise.

By the time the Shadow had taken off his mask and wiped the blood from his eyes, Jesus had been lifted out of reach. This sent the Shadow into a rage, leaping into the air, trying to grab Jesus as a spotlight followed his ascension up toward the press gallery.

The audience climbed onto their chairs once more, cheering for Jesus and booing the Shadow. They began to laugh at him as he ran around the ring, shaking his fists at Jesus. This enraged him more, and he ran to the ropes and screamed at them.

"You all feel strong when there's a thousand of you, but none of you have the guts to do anything!"

In one voice they yelled back: "Eat my shorts!"

The Shadow snarled like a grizzly bear and leapt over the ropes and into the front row. Spectators ran for cover as he swung at them with his fists, scrambling over seats, and over Paris and Mary. Paris grabbed her by one hand to pull her to safety, but Le Coupeur grabbed the other hand and pulled in the opposite direction. The Shadow grabbed Le Coupeur and, with a sweep of his hairy arms, threw him across an aisle, into the laps of two horrified ladies.

Mary screamed with terror, but Paris stayed calm, stepping between

her and the Shadow.

"Wow, what a show," Paris congratulated him.

Then he pulled a piece of crumpled paper out of his pocket.

"Can I have your autograph?"

The Shadow squinted at him, suspiciously.

"I don't usually give autographs until after the match," he growled.

He grabbed the paper impatiently and dabbed it on the side of his head, soaking it in blood.

"Now put it where the sun don't shine," he said, handing it back to Paris. "And get outa my way!"

"Good luck in your career," Paris bowed.

Then he grabbed Mary's hand and pulled her through the crowd.

"Hey," she protested, "I was with Coop."

"Not any more!"

"Are you telling me what to do?"

"At this moment, yes!"

Behind them the crowd was hysterical, in a complete panic. The Shadow was walking along a wall, screaming for blood. Above them Jesus hung, rising higher and higher.

She gave a strong tug, broke his grasp, and ran into the crowd.

"Mary!" he cried, and ran after her.

He caught glimpses of her between the hundreds of people fleeing in confusion. The sons and daughters of art professors, West End judges, East End truck drivers, Verdun shoe salesmen, La Salle factory workers, contractors from TMR, and Outremont separatists all ran swirling past in private panics of self preservation.

High above them all Jesus hung, up with the championship flags

dangling from the ceiling. The Shadow shinnied up a beam, calling threats and epithets after him, climbing like a gorilla.

Paris chased Mary to the exit. There, where the crush was most extreme, he saw her go down under the crowd. He elbowed and shoved his way through a busload of American tourists from Akron, Ohio, and over to her. She lay on the ground, out of breath. He pulled her to her feet.

"Come. You'll be trampled!"

She hung on to him as he fought his way out of the crush around the doorway. People ran into him, students from the McGill ghetto, and a socialist playwright from the Pointe, trying to push him out of their way. But Paris held his ground, finally pulling her to safety.

At that moment everyone heard a snap, then someone screamed. The fleeing crowd stopped and looked back. Jesus's harness had broken. He plunged down to the ring, hitting the canvas with a horrible slap, like the sound of dogflesh on chrome.

The Shadow screamed from his perch.

"That's it. That's my work! Don't touch him!"

He swung down on a long rope, like the hunchback of Notre Dame, landing on the canvas. He pushed everyone away from the broken body.

"Don't touch this canvas. This is my art. You will see it on display in a museum, later."

This sent the remainder of the audience into total hysteria. They fled for their lives. Out of the crowd Le Coupeur came like a charging rhino. He hit Paris in the stomach, knocking his breath away and sending him crashing against the wooden barrier. He recovered and swung a punch at Coop. Coop responded by wrestling Paris to the ground, where

they rolled around, kicking and punching.

They rolled all the way through the door and into the foyer, Mary trying to follow them. Out there, all hell was breaking loose. It overflowed with agitated people in constant motion like the molecules of water boiling in a kettle. For some reason the riot squad had cut off all exits but one, and were keeping the mass at bay while letting one person at a time saunter through the only open turnstile and into the street.

Paris and Le Coupeur swung punches at each other, hitting everyone around them with a stray foot or fist. These people joined in and soon a chain reaction spread the fight through the lobby.

A spotlight lit up the brawling multitudes. Bitz Little was there with her cameraman ready to record the impending riot.

"Whatever you do, hold onto that camera," she said. "This could win us an award!"

She thrust a microphone out over the crowd, turning up the volume of her headphones. She heard a whisper. It seemed to flow over the people like a Chinook wind, melting all hostility in its path.

The whisper said: "A miracle!"

The movement of the crowd completely reversed. All of a sudden they all rushed back into the arena. The lobby emptied of its swirling contents with a rapidity which reminded Bitz of the tide going out from the Bay of Fundy.

To the amazement of the fans clustered around the ring, Jesus was sitting up. He raised his hands and spoke to them.

"This is my body which is broken for you."

Cheers came back from the crowd.

Mary had been dragged back into the arena by the crush of bodies. Paris squirmed out of the clutches of Le Coupeur and ran back in after her. He could see that she had been pushed right up to the ring. In fact, in order to escape certain death, she had climbed up into the ring with Jesus and the Shadow. Paris elbowed his way up to her.

Mary clung to a corner post. The Shadow, enraged by the recovery of Jesus, leapt into the air and came down on him boots first, squashing him against the mat.

"And these are my boots with which I grind you into dust!"

The crowd booed. The Shadow leaned toward them and cupped his genitals in his hand.

A thin voice said: "Eat my shorts!"

It was Jesus, sitting up again.

The Shadow jumped all over the battered body, flattening it out once again.

"Eat my shorts!" the crowd chanted.

The Shadow waved a fist, then bent down and ripped Jesus's loincloth from his body and waved it in the air.

"Eat my shorts," they continued.

The Shadow took a big bite from the loincloth and began to chew. The crowd screamed with delight.

Paris pulled himself into the ring beside Mary. He could see Le Coupeur pushing his way through the crowd behind him, and the TV crew on his heels, lighting up his wake.

She gripped his hand.

"Can't someone stop this?"

He looked up at his father's box. The impassive face gazed from

above, without emotion. He looked out over the crowd, pressing forth in eager anticipation. No one was sitting down.

"This is the spectacle everyone came to see."

The Shadow dropped Jesus's loincloth and staggered, shaking his head. The bright lights were irritating his allergy. He had had his hood off for too long.

Mary carefully stepped over to Jesus and knelt beside him. She lifted his head in her arms and comforted him. A smile spread across his face.

Le Coupeur climbed into the ring and ran at Paris, who ducked out of the way. Coop then bounced off the ropes and flew back, right into the Shadow. The Shadow grabbed him and held on for support.

Bitz Little and her cameraman climbed into the ring. The camera and lights pointed at the Shadow. This was too much for him. Behind his puffed up face he lost consciousness. Le Coupeur tried to squeeze out of the way in vain. The Shadow fell on top of him, pinning him to the mat.

The camera and lights then panned to Jesus, who was holding Mary's hand. He felt the warmth of the TV lights all over his naked body, which looked like it had been run over by a steamroller. He gazed up at Mary's face. His penis began to stir. Up and up it went until it stood erect like a little tree.

The crowd gasped.

The camera zoomed in on Jesus's erection. With all the heat, smoke and dust floating in the air, and the cross beams of light from the arena reflecting back on the lens, it looked as if a halo had appeared around the tip.

Wednesday, the Thirteenth

The husky, hollow voice of Norman Nightbeat floated through McDonalds like the wind.

"And in sports last night, Jesus of James Bay retained his title by defeating the Shadow at the Forum in a wild match that almost erupted into a riot. Luckily, Montreal's finest were on hand to cool the fans down. Both contestants are now in satisfactory condition in the Montreal General."

Goldie and the musicians were eating hamburgers and ignoring the broadcast.

"So this is the big budget luncheon," Adam sneered, "Where the producer woos the reluctant artist into signing the contract?"

"What d'ya want," Goldie protested. "I told you that you can order anything on the menu."

"This food is to nutrition as a blowjob is to sex," Bluenose commented. "The only thing you can say for it is that it's fast."

"That's the way everyone wants it today," Goldie nodded.

"It's ultimate decadence," Adam talked through a mouthfull of french fries. "The triumph of matter over mind!"

"Yeah," Goldie replied, "but you don't matter and we don't mind!"

"I noticed he's eatin' it," Juke observed.

"Idealists have to eat the same shit we all eat," Goldie said.

"What choice do I have?" Adam complained. "America rules!"

"So what?" Juke shrugged.

"You don't mind being ruled by a foreign government?"

"Hey," Bluenose shouted, "all governments are foreign to me!"

"Quebec's ruled by foreigners," Le Levesquois said. "Who speak a

foreign tongue!"

"What d'ya wanna do," Juke asked. "Arrest us if we eat English Muffins?"

"Tabernacle," Le Levesquois muttered.

"What did he say?" Juke asked.

"He just spoke to his god in the sacred tongue," Adam explained.

"Canada has been smitten with frogs," Juke complained.

Le Levesquois sang: "The frogs are coming, the frogs are coming. They come from the north and they come from the south, so you'd better watch out or they'll come in your mouth."

"Not in this mouth," Juke vowed. "Never trust a country that speaks two languages."

"Is that a conservative I see before me?" Adam asked.

"Yeah," Le Levesquois agreed. "He's the guy who sits on a train facing backwards 'cause he wants to know where he's been."

"And ya know what a liberal is, eh?" Juke countered. "When you're drowning, he's the guy that throws you both ends of the rope."

"So vote NDP," Adam said.

"We'd all like to," Juke explained. "But we know that if they ever got elected, we'd all wake up the next morning unemployed."

"But you'd all have unemployment insurance," Adam insisted.

"OK, guys," Goldie broke in. "Cut the crap, and let's get down to business."

"Get her," Adam said.

"Don't ya think she looks like Trudeau in drag?" Juke asked.

"I dunno," Le Levesquois said. "I never caught his drag act."

"You don't hang around the right bars."

"When I deal with you guys I feel like Trudeau," Goldie nodded.

"It's like trying to go somewhere in a dogsled when the dogs are pulling in different directions."

"Dissent is the only thing that unites us," Bluenose said, waving his hands in the air. "In our hearts we all want to be rebels."

He opened his palm and held it in front of them.

"Picture a dam blocking a raging northern river."

He plunged the other fist into the palm.

"It's the social system blocking the free flow of our unconscious, to harness it and make it useful — socially acceptable. When you follow conventions you feel restrained, dammed up. But when you rebel you feel the raw flow of the river, it surges up in your veins. You feel so much energy you think you can change everything. That's why handfuls of rebels think they can change entire societies. It's not the justice of the cause, that's just an excuse to feel the energy. Because once you feel it, you know you can't be wrong!"

"So some people build dams and others blow them up," Goldie broke in. "But this beaver is building one right now, so let's cut the crapola. As soon as we're finished here, I'm going over to CKOK to lay my record on Norman Nightbeat; this city's number one DJ. And if I can score, we'll all be better off!"

"How're ya gonna get to see him?" Juke asked.

Goldie smiled and tapped her head.

"Besides the fact that I once went out with him, which always gets me through to him on the phone, I told him I wanted him to meet the son of the station's owner."

"Paris?" Adam asked. "He doesn't even talk to his father."

"Ah, but Nightbeat doesn't know that. He's just impressed by connections."

"Got it all figured out, eh?" Le Levesquois said.

"There is one problem," Goldie said. "I hired a chick singer to do the 'Danger, Love at Work' lines in the studio, and to breathe heavy in the rhythm break, but she's already under contract with another group, so I don't have a-chick singer to bring with me. That's Nightbeat's weakness, too. He loves groups with chic singers. So I need someone to bring with me, someone who looks good, she doesn't even have to sing. The shows we do will probably be mimed, anyway."

"A sex symbol?"

"We gotta sell the product!"

Paris and Mary ran through the door and up to their table, breathless and smiling.

"Venus and the Penis," Adam observed.

"Sorry I'm late," Paris apologized.

"We were with Jesus in the hospital," Mary said excitedly. "He's getting out tomorrow."

Goldie looked up at them, two lovers in their prime. Mary radiated a glow. Her red dress matched the color of her hair. She was like a bright package that leaps out from the shelf.

Goldie jumped to her feet.

"That's it. She's the one! I'm saved."

She reached into her purse and pulled out contracts.

"Here. Read these and sign them. If you have any questions, talk to me tomorrow."

She put her arms around Paris and Mary.

"Come on, children, we're goin' all the way with this one. I can smell it!"

On their way to the radio station, she explained what she meant to them. Mary became excited and Paris overjoyed that they might be working together. They had been together since the end of the fight. The flame of their romance now burned more brightly than ever before.

As Goldie signed her name in the security log in the hall of the CKOK building, the androgynous kitsch of the Bee Gees poured out of wall speakers like the cream filling of some gigantic Dunkin' Donut. The young guard was dancing behind his desk. Mary gave him a wink. He let out a yell and did a quick Wilson Pickett turn.

"Who is Norman Nightbeat?" Mary asked, as they stepped into the elevator.

Goldie smiled:

"I used to go out with him in the sixties. He was really something then, long blonde hair, a Zapata moustache, and a head full of beautiful ideas."

Her eyes rolled upward.

"He swept me off my feet. He was one of the founding fathers of underground radio when it hit Montreal in 69. We used to sit in the studio conjuring up mixes of all kinds of weird and wonderful music. We broke all the rules, it was free-form!"

"What ever happened to the good old days," Paris wondered.

The elevator stopped and deposited them in another grey hallway.

"The programmers are back in charge," Goldie said. "But Norman survived. He read all the trade magazines, kept up with the changes, played the right music, and hung in there. Now he's top DJ in the city!"

"That's sad, isn't it?" Paris asked.

"It's just the way it is," Goldie shook her head. "Sooner or later, ya gotta play the game."

They arrived at a double window at the end of the hall which looked into a studio. Norman Nightbeat sat at his control board with his back to them. A bald spot on his crown gave away his years in spite of a carefully coiffed 'new wave' hairdo around it. His clothes were bright and rode the crest of the wave of fashion, designer copies of punk styles. He pushed the rolling chair around his tiny space with efficient ease. On his right were three turntables, built into caverns on the side of a mountain of electrical equipment which climbed all the way up the wall. On his left was a bank of Ampex reel-to-reel tapedecks at control board level with another bank of cassette decks looming above them. In front of him, hanging over the control board, was a large microphone. The red light on it was like a beady little eye.

"Request time, now, on the Nightbeat show, comin' at ya from CKOK radio in Montreal!"

They could hear his voice from monitor speakers in the hall. There were monitor speakers everywhere in this station, even in the toilets. They saw him push a cassette into a hole high up on his left.

"CKOK, number Oooooonnnnnmne!" three singers crooned.

Norman picked up a phone and pressed a button.

"Go ahead, you're on the air."

"Is this Normie?" a teenage voice giggled.

"The one and only, lucky lady. Do you have a request?"

She giggled.

"Maybe, do you?"

"Yeah, sweetheart, but I can't tell ya what it is on the air!"

She squealed with pleasure.

"The last request I had was interesting," he said. "But unfortunately I couldn't oblige."

"Why not?"

"The microphone wouldn't fit."

"Oooo, naughty," she scolded.

"Naughty but nice," he corrected. "What's your name, dear?"

"Linda Bates."

"Then you'd be Miss Bates?"

"That's right."

"And your brother, Master Bates?"

"I don't know, does he?" she giggled and gasped. "I just love it when you talk dirty."

"Well, I love it when you love it."

He leaned back in his chair and scratched his testicles.

"Anyway, let's have that request."

"I'd like to hear 'Pissing in the River' by the Patti Smith Group."

"No sooner said than spun, and remember.."

"What?"

"When you masturbate tonight, think of me."

"Oooo I will, Normie. I will."

He pushed a cassette into an open hole, reached below and picked up a record. The red light on his mike went off.

"CKOK radio, Cocka Doodle Dooooo!" the cassette sang.

He started the next record and slid up the volume pot.

"We can go in now," Goldie told the others.

She opened the door and led the way. They all stood behind him, waiting until he finished his phone conversation.

"They're away for the whole weekend?" he was asking. "Well, I'll help you babysit your little brother. We'll have a little party at your place. Forget about your homework. I'll teach ya everything ya need to know!"

He scribbled an address down on a pad.

"OK, I'll come around the back so the neighbors won't see. Bye!"

He settled back in his chair with the satisfied stare of a junkie who has just had a fix.

"Is that the voice that sold a million records?" Goldie asked.

Norman jumped up, startled, and turned toward the door.

"You scared me," he gasped. "How long have you been here?"

Goldie smiled.

"Long enough to see and hear that you haven't changed a bit."

"Hey, change is my business!"

"Sure," Goldie teased. "You were a moon-eyed folkie wearing a sweater and sandals, out to save the world, then the Beatles came along and you wore a bowl haircut and Nehru collars, even cultivated an English accent, then you smoked hashish and grew you hair long, even went to India to study meditation, then you became clean shaven and slicked back your hair for the fifties nostalgia thing, then you went disco, grew a little moustache and experimented with homosexuality, and now this!"

"I am the king of New Wave radio!"

"Yeah but you're still the same. Still fucking teeny-boppers!"

Norman waved his wrist in the air.

"Ooooo. Do I detect a note of bitterness? Don't tell me you still carry a grudge."

He walked over to her and put his hands on her shoulders.

"So I like fresh smelling, tight little pussies. So what?"

Goldie sneered at him.

"So maybe some of us tired old cunts want a little of the action!"

"OK," Norman nodded, winking at Paris and Mary. "I'll put the show on automatic pilot."

He slapped a large tape on the reel-to-reel and cued it up. As soon as the record faded, he rolled the tape and slipped up another volume pot. His voice came over the air, introducing the next song.

"The wonder of technology," he chuckled. "Now let's go somewhere and fuck."

He grasped at Goldie. She slipped away.

"Not so fast, you animal. I didn't come here for sex."

Norman nodded.

"Ah, see?" he winked at Paris and Mary. "You try to do an old friend a favour and look what happens!"

"You can still do me a favour," Goldie said. "And for the station owner's son here."

Norman turned to Paris.

"That's what it says on my birth certificate."

They shook hands.

"And this is Mary Monday, our new discovery," Goldie added.

Norman took her hand.

"She's gorgeous," he commented, nodding.

He did a lot of nodding, seemed to nod at practically everything.

It was an exaggerated nod, the whole neck and head were involved. It was a habit he had picked up as a hippy. In those days they would smoke their brains out and sit up all night listening to music and nodding. The nod was a kind of reassurance that everything was in fact all right.

As they walked down the hall he put an arm on Paris's shoulder.

"Maybe you can help me here, Paris."

He stopped in front of the bulletin board, and pointed to a memo.

"Radio obscenity," it read. "Tomorrow morning at ten a meeting will be held to investigate charges that certain CKOK broadcasters have been guilty of public obscenity. The meeting will be chaired by Mr. De Kitschman himself. All CKOK broadcasters are expected to attend."

Norman stuck out his thumb and passed it in front of his throat.

"The station has been getting complaints from parents. But that's why the kids trust me! I have to turn off the parents. Unless you eliminate the old, the young aren't interested. That's the way it is! I added a lot of sleaze to my show, you know, 'New Wave', so the kids love it. But parents and religious groups hate me. I even heard about a militant woman's group that has a contract out for my life!"

"So what d'ya want me to do?"

"Ultimately it's gonna be your old man who passes judgement. As long as I don't use obscenities, just double entendres, we're legally safe. And a word like masturbate is medical, so it's OK. Like, I can say vagina but not cunt, you know? So I don't break any laws. But most radio owners are super-conservative. Controversy makes them shit!"

"Well, my old man is conservative all right. But he's not afraid of controversy, especially from citizen's groups."

Norman nodded, hopefully.

"Once his pet crocodile ate a local kid," Paris continued. "The outraged local residents banded together to fight him, but he just hired a cagey lawyer and squelched the whole thing. He has the same attitude toward citizens' groups as Drapeau."

"That's great," Norman nodded. "You make me feel much better!"

He nodded and slapped Paris on the back.

"So maybe now you can do us a favour," Goldie suggested.

"To my office," Norman said, pointing the way.

Both walls of the hallway were lined with racks of cassettes, all numbered.

"Commercials," he explained. "The real meat of the business."

They passed the record library. Paris peeked in. There were thousands of albums on the shelves, categorized by artist, style and tempo.

"This is the filler," Norman nodded. "Like the cereal in a hamburger."

"Shouldn't it be the other way around?" Paris asked.

Norman laughed with the big, hollow sound they had taught him in broadcasters' school.

"I don't make the rules!"

They passed the newsroom. A plump, sleepy-eyed man with a marshmallow face and a ridiculous little black moustache slumped over a teletype machine, waiting for it to spit out some news.

Finally, Norman opened a door and motioned them in. They all slipped through, into the blackness. Pinpoints of light flickered above. A full moon shone from the center of the ceiling, reflecting a spotlight glow in the middle of the floor.

"Wow," Mary said, excitedly. "It's like a planetarium."

On the floor, against the round outer wall, were cushions. Norman motioned for them to sit. He took the largest pillow, on a dais at the far end. This was obviously the throne.

"This is where I escape," Norman explained. "No matter what kind of weirdness is going on out there, it's always the same here. This is my center. Ya gotta have a center, ya know, otherwise the record won't spin."

Goldie reached into her purse and pulled out a disc.

"Here's our record," she announced. "See if it'll spin. It's an acetate I pressed this morning, so be gentle."

Norman cued it up on a turntable built into a plexiglass shelf beside the dais. Paris watched. Over Norman's head, right where the halo would be in a painting of a Saint, was a snapshot of his father standing next to a crocodile.

"This better be good," Norman nodded.

A bell rang out, jingling up their spines, then the bassline thumped away. They all watched Norman. He tapped his foot to the relentless beat, smiled when he recognized the clichés, sneered with satisfaction at the piano glissandos, laughed out loud at the rhythm break, then he took the needle off before it faded out.

"Sorry, Goldie," he shook his head. "I can't really play it unless it's charted."

Goldie leapt up.

"But how will it ever get charted unless someone plays it?"

Norman squirmed uncomfortably.

"This kind of disco is dead."

"It's what they're playin' in all the discos downtown," she insisted.

"Sure," Norman nodded. "But everyone knows that Montreal is always at least two years behind in any style. No one plays this shit any more in New York or L.A."

He shrugged.

"I can't play records just as a favour to friends. You gotta show me something new!"

He took the disc off the turntable and tossed it toward Goldie, frisbee-style. It curved in the air toward the wall. Mary jumped up and caught it just before it crashed.

"I'll show ya something new," she said, returning it to Norman. "Just play it again."

He slapped it on the turntable. She walked to the middle of the room and stood beneath the artificial moon. Her golden shoes glinted in the glow.

When the bell rang she unsnapped her dress and let it drop, revealing her sequined bikini, with feathers of all colours around her breasts.

As the bass began she stepped a foot out of the dress and kicked it away, her body swinging rhythmically to the beat.

Norman settled back on his pillow.

With her long legs she slinked around the moonlight, prowling like a cat, circling the room. This gave Norman a look at her from different angles. It was the body of a cat, long and lithe, a wedding of power and grace. Norman was particularly struck by how teenage she looked, with her slimness, her small budding breasts and her baby-face. She was his kind of beautiful!

She danced in half-time from one end of the room to the other, always returning to center-stage to face Norman. She knew who she was

playing to. At the far end of the room she looked tiny, a miniature ballerina, but then she would wheel right up in front of him, looming above him like a giant. This is pop art, he thought, sinking deeper into the pillow.

When the singing began she was right on it, mouthing the words so convincingly they seemed to be coming from her. She pointed at Norman and wiggled her hips.

"Danger, Love at Work!"

On each piano glissando she let her body drop, seeming to disintegrate, melting down into the floor. It was as if each glissando was part of some force from above which had struck her down. Then when the music picked up again, she would be in a new position, moving through a new pattern of gestures and positions. She seemed to portray the emotions, Norman thought, going from apathy through excitement to joy, and then back down through jealousy and anger to inertia. But within each cycle she implied hundreds more emotions, coming to the surface for a moment and then disappearing. She was making him feel something he always felt when he knew a record was going to be a hit. It was a connection, as if it was talking about his own life. When you hear a song, he used to say, it's as if you had been hearing it all your life, inside, and now it had finally gotten out. You don't buy it because it's a great piece of art, necessarily, although it might be, but you accept it because you recognize it!

During the rhythm break she went wild, dancing through a score of popular dances. She monkeyed, frugged, swum, watusied, twisted, hucklebucked, poneyed, hustled, jerked, mash potatoed, locomoted, tangoed, cha-chaed, rhumbaed, fox trotted, and slipped through all the steps in

between that made all these different dances part of one larger dance.

As the frenzy of the jungle drums built to the climax, her energy increased until she kicked up her leg and grabbed the shoe, flicking a switch on the side. It lit up, glowing like a golden planet. She repeated this with the other shoe. Then, up the wall she went.

Norman gasped.

In her bright golden shoes she seemed to dance through the universe, past stars and planets, up into the vast mystery of space. Round and round she moved, defying all laws of gravity.

This is very commercial, Norman thought. He imagined the crowd leaping to its feet at this point in the show. Thousands of teenagers at fifteen dollars a head.

For the final verse she stood on the moon, singing and pointing at Norman. Her hair hung down, flying out around her head like fire in the silver glow. As the music faded she slipped her feet from the shoes and summersaulted back to earth, landing center-stage, in the spotlight.

Norman jumped up and applauded. Goldie did the same, her mouth hanging open in disbelief. Paris ran over to Mary and hugged her like a bear. He was proud.

"Hey," Norman nodded furiously, "you've really got something there! She could make you rich."

He walked over to Mary and put an arm around her, whispering in her ear,

"Does she have you signed to a contract?"

Goldie pushed him away.

"You stick to your end of the business, I'll stick to mine!"

Norman nodded.

"OK, OK!"

A smile lit up his face.

"If you can guarantee she will perform the song, I'll play it."

"Do you think I'd get anyone else to do it? She could sell ice to Eskimos."

Mary smiled radiantly. Her chest heaved up and down. She was moist with perspiration. Paris kissed her.

"Are you sold, too?" she asked him.

"You are the end," he said. "For me, you are IT!"

He picked up her red dress and helped her climb back into it. He realized how committed he was, and a shudder ran through his body. This was it for him. She had taken him completely. He didn't even think of O any more.

She smiled as she felt him shiver.

"Sometimes you're very intense," she said, kissing him.

Norman opened the door. From the hallway the cold hard light of reality poured in. They could hear Norman's program from the monitor speakers, and the teletype machine whirring out world events.

"I've got a couple of concerts coming up," Norman said. "Big groups. Maybe we can get you in as a warm-up act. I'll back you if you can put a show together. The station is promoting them."

Goldie was elated

"Don't worry," she said, shoving the acetate back into her purse.

"We'll be ready."

She turned back to the lovers and motioned for them to follow.

Just before he shut the door behind him, Mary turned to Paris.

"Oh, I forgot," she said. "Could you go back in and get my shoes?"

"They're on the ceiling!"

Thursday, the Fourteenth

The Shadow had found only one consolation for being confined to a hospital room — the window. He spent most of the day and night sitting in front of it with binoculars. Because the Montreal General Hospital was perched on the side of Mount Royal, he had an unobstructed view into countless high-rise windows in the city.

At first he amused himself with simple voyeurism, but soon he was fantasizing the thrill of being an anonymous sniper with a high powered rifle. He had never actually murdered anyone, but he had promised himself that pleasure when the time was right.

He screwed up his swollen face and swept his gaze across the city, looking for a victim.

"What do ya see?" Le Coupeur asked him.

He was bedridden on the far side of the room, nursing broken ribs and a dislocated collar bone.

"Aww, couple of fags on a sunroof, a nudie in the McGill ghetto, a blowjob on St. Matthew. Nothing much, really."

"A blow..?" Coop strained himself to rise but quickly collapsed again, his face contorted with pain.

"Ahhh! Maudit chien!" he screamed.

The Shadow chuckled with satisfaction, and continued scanning.

"What's this?"

He fine-focused his glasses on a blurred, bright red image. It was Paris and Mary. His red cape flapped in the breeze, and her red hair glared in the bright sunlight outside. Walking with them was Jesus of James Bay!

The Shadow grimaced.

"How can that guy recover from such a beating so fast?" he wondered out loud.

"Who's that?" Coop asked, squirming for the least painful position.

The Shadow took the glasses from his eyes to see where they were.

Man and His World, what are they doing there? he thought.

"What's going on?" he growled, peering back into the binoculars.

"Where?" Coop sighed.

Near them, the Shadow could see a gathering of people. He recognized them, all the regulars from the Venus.

"They're having a party!" he shouted. "And they didn't even invite me!"

He felt betrayed. They were the only group of human beings he ever socialized with, so being excluded by them was a severing of his last connection with the world. Even with his allergy he could have gone for a little while, sitting in the shade. What really burned him up was how they had neglected to tell him about it. He felt they had done this on purpose. They had denied him even the opportunity of a refusal?

He pounded his fist on the window sill. To some, isolation inspired fear and depression. To the Shadow it meant anger and resentment.

"Why did I have to come?" Gump whispered into Sybil's ear. "I should be at home, finishing my thesis!"

"Because you have responsibilities," she reminded him. "He was one of your cases, and may I say the least successful one!"

They stood on the end of a small pier with the others from the Venus.

Everyone was dressed in Pilgrim outfits, black and white Puritan gear. The mood of the party was jovial, for Thanksgiving. There didn't seem to be any great outpouring of sadness for Twilight's funeral.

They all cheered when Jesus, Mary and Paris appeared over the hill. There weren't any other Montrealers on the island because of the bus and metro strike in support of the maintenance workers. They had all piled into cars and driven over for an afternoon of festivities.

"How did you guys get here?" Caboose asked Jesus.

"We walked."

"Across the water?" Lillith teased.

"Close," Jesus laughed. "Across the bridge."

"Yeah, that's close enough for Rock'n Roll," Bluenose nodded.

"Who has the urn?" Jesus smiled. "We might as well get the sad part over with."

Caboose held up a small plastic cosmetic case.

"It was the only thing I could find in pink," she explained.

"It'll do fine," Jesus said.

He led them to the end of the pier and began the ceremony.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to return Twilight's ashes, burned in the fires of experience, back into the ever-flowing stream of existence from which he sprang."

Caboose held up the receptacle for all to see.

"When Twilight and I lived together on St. Norbert Street," she explained. "He told me that when he died he wanted only two things: first that he be cremated and sprinkled over the St. Lawrence river; and second that his urn be pink. So today I'm happy to say we can grant both those wishes for our friend."

With tears in her eyes, she nodded to Allison, who stood upon a wooden box and read a poem specially composed for the funeral.

"Fellow small potatoes/Into the wet and warm go the slaves of history/We all find that death is real/meat-phantoms that we are/and it's mainly because of the meat/but death shall have no Dominion!"

A light breeze blew off the river. Seagulls circled overhead. A few sobs could be heard from the group.

"In and out of the sea of Time we swim/molecules of chemicals built up and then broken down again/But it all stays in the sea/You and me/even right here in Canada/Danger — Love at Work/Kiss my apocalypse/No sugar, please!"

A few people applauded her lines. To many of them, she expressed their thought processes exactly.

"So next time you hear the Great Steamroller of Fate/or the slap of dogflesh on chrome/remember it could be your own final personality change/so don't underestimate the superficial!"

They all joined in on the last stanza.

"Millions of heartbeats/Millions of breaths/Millions of lives/Tape ever rolling/Ampex without end/Amen!"

"Amen," Jesus repeated. "And let us give thanks for existence. It might not be ideal, but at least it's real!"

Jesus took the container from Caboose and held it over the water. As he opened it the ashes blew out onto the surface. The current caught them and they floated away.

The group applauded, as Twilight would have wished.

"Go with the flow," Jesus incanted.

The Shadow lowered his binoculars. The idea of death excited him. He sprang from his chair and strode into the hall, spied the orderly and motioned him over.

"Hey," he whispered. "Ya know that deal we were talkin' about before?"

The orderly nodded.

"Well, I could really go for it now!"

The orderly put up his hands.

"It's not that easy, you know," he said, shaking his head. "We have to wait for one to go, then sneak it down to the basement."

The Shadow made a face, then reached into the pocket of his dressing gown and pulled out a wad of bills.

"Does this get things moving?"

The orderly studied the money.

"It sure helps," he nodded. "Wow, there's a lot here. OK, Mr. Shadow, you wait here. I'll see what I can do."

He disappeared into the elevator.

The Shadow paced, delighted by the thought of how bad he was about to be. He rubbed his hands together in anticipation. His face was red and swollen.

It wasn't long until the elevator door opened once more and the orderly appeared.

"You're in luck," he whispered. "We've got one ready."

He led the Shadow into the elevator. They rattled toward the basement.

"What is it?" the Shadow asked eagerly.

"A thirteen-year-old," the orderly said. "You wanted a kid, didn't

you?"

"Perfect," the Shadow beamed.

"Went half an hour ago. Still warm."

The Shadow's eyes bulged with excitement. His blood was boiling. Beads of sweat stood out all over his bald head. He jumped up and down with glee.

"Shh!" the orderly warned, grabbing his arm. "We gotta be cool about this."

The elevator deposited them in the basement. The Shadow followed through a maze of hallways until finally they turned into a dark room. The orderly closed the door behind them and switched on a bare bulb overhead. In the far corner was a body wagon covered with a white sheet.

The orderly glanced at his watch.

"Ya better hurry, we don't have too much time."

The Shadow pulled the sheet off the body and looked down. A horrible, twisted grimace broke across his face. He looked over at the orderly.

"What are you trying to pull? He's crippled!" he said in a hoarse whisper.

The orderly gasped when he saw the hideous expression on the Shadow's face.

"Hey," he warned, nervously. "You didn't ask for perfection."

The Shadow lifted the orderly up by the throat and deposited him on a slab on the rollers. He strapped the orderly down and gave the slab an enormous push so it flew along the screaming rollers into the open door of the cooler. The door slammed shut.

The Thanksgiving celebration had begun. Goldie was so pleased about her success with her record that she had overcome her stingy instincts and brought cases of beer for everyone. She kept the bottles coming from the cooler in the trunk of her car.

They stretched out in the park uninhibited by police or the usual crowd of families. It was a bright fall day, the sun was warm, the trees were coloured and had just begun to drop their leaves.

"A perfect day for a picnic," Mary exclaimed.

"Maybe Jesus will turn the leaves into loaves," Lilly teased.

"We've already got the wine," Goldie said, holding up a bottle of beer. "Molson, the poor man's champagne!"

"And I'm sure you'll turn it back into water," Jesus said.

"Let's get the food," Paris suggested.

"It's in my trunk," the Bopper said.

They trundled off to the car.

"She cooks, too?" Jesus said, smiling at Mary.

"And you cook pretty good yourself," Judas said, shifting a cigar to the corner of his mouth. "That was some performance Tuesday night. Maybe we could do some business?"

Jesus eyed him suspiciously.

"Maybe."

Encouraged, Judas slid the cigar out of his mouth with a smacking sound, like a kiss.

"Where're you from, anyways?"

"I was born in California," Jesus said.

"Ah, the Holy land," Jeffrey added.

"Well I knew it couldn't have been Quebec," Juke said.

"Why?" Jesus asked.

"Because they wouldn't have been able to find three wise men or a virgin!"

"Tabernacle!" Le Levesquois shouted.

"How did you get to be called Jesus?" Judas asked.

Jesus took a swallow of beer.

"I was in the Jesus movement for a while. You know, down there you can wear sandals all year round. But soon I realized that wasn't where it's at. Everybody was trying to steer it in their own direction. So I set out to found my own sect. A church of my own revelation!"

He sat down. They gathered round him, interested.

"I spent a summer in the Mojave, meditating. I was visited by an angel, looked just like Mary — that's why I was so struck by her the other night. She explained that it was ecstasy everyone was after, escape from the prison of the personal self. That's why we all chase it in different forms: drugs, music, alcohol, sex, religion and romance. If a religion provides ecstasy, then it's bound to be strong. It would be ideal ecstasy, if you could imagine coming forever!"

"I get goosebumps just thinking about it," Caboose said, shivering.

"And who are your followers?" Jeffrey asked.

"Why, all of you," Jesus said. "You will be my disciples. We shall work together for the water of life to be turned into sexual juices, and a new flood of creativity and fertility be visited upon the earth!"

The group cheered and everyone kissed.

"What do you call this religion?" Jeffrey asked.

Jesus smiled.

"I call it Jissomism!"

The Shadow's disappointment left him with a sinking feeling inside. He had intended to make the act so dirty, such an act of defiance against all law or morality, and convince himself that he was soiling everything pure and holy in the world; because only by so doing could he ejaculate. Instead, a paralysing agony gripped his immense form. He had been denied satisfaction.

Maybe if I had killed and crippled him myself, he thought. Or shackled the parents to the wall and forced them to watch!

The orderly pounded on the glass door, his face blue.

"So long, sickie," the Shadow said, and switched off the light.

Entering the room, he noticed that Le Coupeur had managed to wheel his bed over to the window and was propped up, peering through the binoculars.

The Shadow stomped over to the window, grabbing the glasses from Le Coupeur.

"Gimme those!" he commanded.

He raised them to his big head, so lumpy that it looked like the dark side of the moon.

"What're those losers up to now?" he mumbled, peering through.

"So how did ya get into wrestling?" Judas asked.

"Chance," Jesus said. "It was the easiest way to make quick money, to give me time to follow my vision. Anyone can wrestle. No experience necessary. All ya need is a good name."

"And yours is as good as they come," Jeffrey laughed.

"Yes. So I got good at it. I became a good loser. That's how I got popular up here in Canada. They identified with me. But then, I

got so good at losing that I started to win. And the rest, as they say, is history!"

"That was genius," Judas said. "How did you come upon that idea. I mean, usually everybody wants to identify with a hero, a winner.. Someone who acts out all their fantasies for them."

"But I do win," Jesus laughed. "I just win by losing. I am the victim's victim!"

Paris and the Bopper returned with a large hamper of food. Mary pulled out plates and began to serve.

"What d'we got here?" Bluenose sniffed around.

"Burgers 'n Beans," she announced.

"Haute cuisine," Le Levesquois exclaimed.

Neuro the dog leapt up at Mary, tail wagging. She placed some on the ground for him. He gobbled it up. Goldie poured out some beer for him, too. The dog loved it.

"Everyone took a plateful and sat down.

"Doesn't your girlfriend want any?" Mary asked Norman.

"She only eats candy," he explained.

Mary looked around. Nobody was eating.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Red and gold beans?"

"And blue hamburgers?"

"Don't let the colours fool ya, the dog loves it."

"For one thing he's colour blind," Jeffrey said. "And for another he'll eat anything."

"It's very pop art," Allison laughed.

"C'mon," Paris urged. "It'll be fun."

Soon they were all gobbling up the food and laughing. It was so crazy to eat blue hamburgers!

Paris leaned over to Mary.

"You're amazing," he whispered. "You turn an average meal into something special."

"I raise mediocrity to its highest level," she exclaimed.

They all called for more beer, and Goldie obliged, filling Neuro's cup again as she passed.

Bluenose unpacked his saxophone and began to blow wild music. Allison danced, gracefully slinking between the guests. One by one, they joined in.

"I am also giving thanks today," Lilly announced as she pirouetted around. "Some rich mogul bought all my artwork. Imagine! The whole collection!"

Everyone cheered.

"So in my honor, I declare this dance a ladies' choice!"

She grabbed Caboose.

"Dancing is too good to waste on men," she laughed.

Caboose lifted her fist in the air.

"Impale the dominant male!" she giggled.

The Bopper nudged Paris and gestured at Goldie, Mary, Allison and Lillith.

"Look at that," he grinned. "Tired old cunt, powdered cunt, juicy cunt and tight ass!"

He extended his hand to Paris.

"Sex is too good to waste on women. Meet my wife!"

Paris eyed him.

"Oh? Wasn't Lillith all you expected?"

"And more," he said. "And by the way, you owe me a case of beer.

But, ya know, she'll only do it her way. How can ya go on with a woman like that? She needs someone who's completely 'submissive."

Then he grinned at Paris.

"Like you!"

Before Paris could respond, Sybil pulled him up to dance. Le Levesquois, Juke and X had joined in the music making. Everyone was dancing and laughing. The party had really taken off.

"I see you have recovered somewhat," Sybil told Paris.

He nodded.

"You were right, Sybil. I'm back on my feet."

She gave him a suspicious look.

"Are you on your own feet or are you being propped up again?"

A puzzled expression crossed his face.

"What do you mean?"

She shrugged.

"Oh well, never mind. Have a good time. But just remember, what goes up must come down!"

Mary cut in. Sybil curtsied gracefully and withdrew.

"Who is that?" she asked.

Paris thought he detected a tone of jealousy.

"Just my counsellor."

She kissed him lightly on the cheek.

"Well, you won't need a counsellor any more."

"Why?"

"Because we're gonna get married."

"What?"

"That's right. I was talking to Jesus. He said he'll do it.

Today!"

Paris felt his insides shake.

"Jesus said that marriage is a union of the sexual and the social. So we'll be publicly announcing our oneness. Like coming out of the closet. Isn't that nice?"

Paris nodded.

While the four musicians played, everyone danced: Sybil with Gump, Lilly with Caboose, Adam with Allison, Goldie with the Bopper, and Jeffrey and Judas alone. The only couple not dancing was Norman Nightbeat and his friend. They were in the bushes..

Bitz Little and her cameraman had arrived, and they began shooting the whole scene from different angles.

"Maybe we could do it in time for the late news," Mary said, thoughtfully.

Suddenly the dancers all parted and formed a circle. In the middle the dog had broken loose. He was dancing up a storm! He had become drunk on the beer, forgotten about his tail, and was becoming what he always sensed he was — human. He leapt up and down with the music, barked with joy, and rolled over and over.

"Damn!" the Shadow muttered. "It looks like a great party."

"Let me see," Coop reached up for the glasses.

"Back!"

The Shadow thumped him in the ribs. He screamed in pain.

"What's going on here?" a doctor asked, entering the room.

Le Coupeur whimpered, the orderly shrugged and the Shadow ignored him.

"Get away from that window!" he ordered.

The Shadow pushed Coop's bed across the room into the far wall with a crash.

"I meant you," said the doctor.

"No you didn't!" said the Shadow.

"The sunlight isn't good for you. It aggravates your allergy!"

"I'm in the shade. It's OK."

"I'm the doctor, and I know what it will take to cure you."

The orderly, shivering in a regulation blanket, appeared in the doorway behind the doctor. He broke into sustained, insane laughter.

"It's gonna take a whole lot more than what you know to cure him!" he squealed.

The doctor looked at him with surprise.

"He's a pervert," the orderly said, "Disgusting!"

"Shut up!" the Shadow scowled.

The doctor wagged a finger at them.

"When I return I want the orderly back on the job and the patient back in his bed," he threatened. "Or else!"

He turned and left the room. The orderly collapsed, whimpering.

"Where was I?" the Shadow asked, returning the binoculars to his eyes.

He scanned the horizon. Where were they? Oh, he thought, over to La Ronde! What's this? Climbing aboard the Ferris wheel.

"This is our own special Mayflower," Jesus said, helping them

into their cars.

"Well I guess so, eh?" the goofy operator said, snickering. "You'se dressed as pilgrims an' all."

"Maybe it'll take us to the promised land," Allison said.

"You'se all havin' a real good time, eh?"

They danced into their cars, two by two. Only Jesus went alone.

As he climbed into his car, he leaned close to the operator's ear.

"Remember the instructions?" he whispered. "There's a big tip in it for you at the end."

The operator gave him a big grin and nodded.

"Who are you'se people, anyway?"

Jesus slammed his door and buckled up.

"We are the Amor Corps," he announced.

Up they went: Lilly and Caboose, Goldie and the Bopper, Allison and Adam, Bitz Little and her cameraman, Jesus, Mary and Paris, Sybil and Gump, Norman Nightbeat and his friend, Juke and Le Lévesquois, Bluenose and X, Jeffrey, Judas and Neuro.

"You'se can stay up there as long as ya want," the operator said.

"You'se the only business I had all day."

It was a giant Ferris wheel, lifting them high above the ground.

The breeze off the St. Lawrence sang in their ears, and their cars rocked precariously. They could see the skyline of Montreal, with the mountain behind it. The cross glowed in the gathering darkness on the east side, and the sun sank on the west side, a fiery red ball.

The wheel came to a halt with Paris and Mary at the top.

Jesus stood up in his car, it swung unsteadily. He turned and faced Paris and Mary.

"It's like standing in a canoe," he commented.

He steadied himself by holding onto a crossbeam with one hand.

"Beerly degathered," he said. We have come here today to unite these two lovers in holy bedlock."

Bitz Little's camera backlit Jesus, so he looked, to Paris and Mary, to be surrounded with light.

"That didn't sound like it came from the Bible," Jeffrey shouted.

"I never use the Bible," Jesus answered. "You can't trust it. Not once in the whole book does God laugh!"

He looked back at the lovers.

"Mary, do you have the symbol?"

She reached into her Montreal Star bag and pulled out Eros, the little rosebush.

"Growing nicely," Jesus said. "Now both of you hold it while I lead the ceremony."

They put their hands around the peanut butter jar.

"We, Paris De Kitschman and Mary Monday, do publicly reveal our bond of love. We swear we will cherish and nurture it so that it may grow, and we consider this labour a joy. The fruit it bears may be bitter or sweet, but that's always better than no fruit at all!"

• He paused, and smiled at the lovers.

"We do," they said in unison.

"Great," Jesus nodded. "Now kiss!"

Jesus smiled broadly as they fell into an embrace. This was the first marriage he had performed and it seemed to be proceeding without a hitch. What's this? A huge harvest moon was rising right behind Paris and Mary. For a moment, as they held their kiss, they were framed in a

circle of golden light. Jesus was overjoyed. This must be a sign, he thought.

Paris didn't notice the moon. He was completely absorbed in their deep, long kiss. Blood didn't surge in his veins, it was rather a sweet contentment that he felt. A wholeness. He had found his other half. The problem was solved. The search had ended. The restlessness had disappeared. He was where he belonged. Safe. Home.

He couldn't tell if it was the hum of the city, or the wind off the river, but he heard in his ears white noise, the sound of all sounds. A happiness overwhelmed him, a joy that filled him with ecstasy. His whole body tingled.

He opened his eyes. She looked right back, her eyes warm and giving. He could see the moon reflected in them, a golden circle. It was full, like his heart. It shone brightly, and like his heart reflected the joy she had given him, that magic electricity, the light that needs no bulb except the human heart to sprout and grow.

The Shadow shivered involuntarily. He felt annihilated, non-existent. What were they doing down there? he wondered. Was this some strange ceremony which had something to do with his exclusion. That was what his instincts told him. They had not simply forgotten to invite him, they had purposely left him out!

He felt a rage building inside. With his own peculiar vanity he had always regarded himself as the life of a party. Granted, he sometimes inspired fear, but at least he wasn't dull! He assumed this was his own charm, his appeal. Had not he, in his own way, endeared himself to them? He had expressed their anger, their hostility. He had carried that burden for them. He knew they all had their own particular quarrels with Reality,

so he had been there to point out that any structure can be destroyed.

And this was the thanks he got?

I will have my revenge, he thought. They can't get away with this!

The doctor came storming back into the room, two male nurses beside him, like bodyguards.

"Seize that man," he said, pointing to the orderly.

The nurses walked over and picked him up.

"No," the orderly protested. "I can't.."

Spittle drooled from the side of his mouth. His face was red and contorted. Tears fell from his eyes. When they had dragged him halfway down the hall he let out a bloodcurdling scream.

The doctor held his ground in the doorway.

"Something weird is going on here, and I don't like it!" he said.

"What are you looking at?"

"A guy on Drummond Street doing it with a dog," the Shadow mumbled.

"With a..?" the doctor exclaimed, hurrying over to the Shadow. "Let me have a look."

The Shadow pulled back the glasses and pointed at the doctor.

"Aha," he shouted. "Heal yourself!"

"Give me those binoculars," the doctor demanded.

The Shadow cupped his hand over his genitals and shook them.

"Take a bite of this!" he scowled.

The doctor stepped back, warily.

"Do you really think you can do whatever you want in here?"

"I can do whatever I want, anywhere!" the Shadow sneered.

Much to the relief of the doctor, the two male nurses reappeared.

"This patient needs restraining," he said, pointing to the Shadow.

The nurses grabbed the Shadow. He ducked under one and butted him in the stomach with his head, then he elbowed the other in the groin.

The surprised nurses doubled over in pain.

"Emergency," the doctor cried. "Help!"

Orderlies and nurses appeared at the door.

"This man has gone berserk," the doctor screamed.

The white hospital employees piled onto the Shadow, smothering him with the very weight of their numbers. He was pinned to the floor.

The doctor loomed over him, a fanatical grin of satisfaction on his face. In his hand was a long hypodermic needle. Liquid squirted from the end.

"It's about time we calmed you down," he chuckled.

"No!" the Shadow screamed.

With a mighty heave he threw off his human blanket.

The doctor was knocked against the wall. He saw them grab the Shadow's gown and wrestle him down once more. But the Shadow pulled until the gown ripped apart, sending nurses and orderlies scattering across the floor. Then he saw the naked Shadow, a huge ape-like form, run from the room. He heard screams in the hallway and smashing of equipment. Then he looked down and noticed that the hypodermic was sticking in his leg. Then he fell asleep.